



A MESSAGE FROM
Rabbi Marshall Lesack '97
Head of School



Dear Barrack Community,

Honor-כבוד, Courage-אומץ לב, Kindness-חסד, and Community-קהילה. These Derech Eretz values are central to who we are as a school.

In the 2021-22 academic year we focused on strengthening and building our **Community-קהילה**, as the pandemic had kept us apart physically for so long. We successfully created many opportunities for our families and students to come together and reunite, culminating in a joyous community-wide celebration of Akiba/Barrack's 75th anniversary.

This summer, our leadership team reflected together on the world around us, knowing that fractious politics, civil unrest, violence, war, and the lingering pandemic have all taken a toll on our society and our students. Because kindness and understanding are what our whole world needs most right now, we collectively agreed that **Kindness- חסד** would be Barrack's Derech Eretz rallying theme for the 2022-23 academic year — and we've hit the ground running!

To launch our year of kindness, senior staff members recently read Dr. Bruce Powell and Dr. Ron Wolfson's book, *Raising A+ Human Beings*, which explores how students in a school environment steeped in Jewish values are ALL "enrolled in a class on AP Kindness", and can all aspire to achieve the highest grades in becoming thoughtful, generous, inclusive people. The team is excited to apply our learnings from this book to further a culture of kindness within our school community.

As a pluralistic school, we aim to teach our students to hear, understand and respect other points of view. As we learn and study together, we know that meaningful debate about important topics allows our students to develop knowledge, perspective, and informed civic responsibility. During faculty inservice this week, facilitators from Facing History & Ourselves led a workshop on civil discourse and respectful disagreement, advancing our ability to foster meaningful and respectful dialogue in our classrooms, hallways and larger school community.

Because respect for the dignity of all is essential as a precursor to all acts of kindness, at Barrack, we also endeavor to provide our students with tools and training to productively engage with those who have alternate points of view. This fall, all of our 9th grade Jewish Studies courses will incorporate a curriculum and approach from the Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies into their classes. The program aims to illustrate how students can exchange ideas, listen respectfully, and give—and get—constructive feedback without fear or intimidation, and is entirely rooted in and based on Jewish sources and tradition. It is our hope that we will be able to offer parent learning cohorts of this material during the year as well.

To help us kick off our year of kindness, we hope that our students and families will join us in participating in “Jewish Day School Day at the JRA” (Jewish Relief Agency) on Sunday, September 11. Together with Perelman Jewish Day School and other day schools across Philadelphia, we will help pack and distribute over 3,400 boxes of food (including some special treats for Rosh Hashanah) for low-income families in our community. Please [click HERE](#) to sign up and participate in this special mitzvah.

This is just the beginning of our year of **Kindness- דון**. We look forward to engaging our students and families all year long in opportunities to promote understanding, respect for one another, and the chance to do good.

Looking ahead to the beginning of school and the Jewish New Year 5783, I wish all of our students, faculty, and staff a productive and meaningful year of learning – filled with kindness.

L'Shalom,



Rabbi Marshall Lesack '97

Head of School
mlesack@jbha.org

Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy
272 S. Bryn Mawr Avenue
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
www.jbha.org

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