



From Rabbi Mitchel Malkus, Head of School

Since its inception, the task of CESJDS has been not only the transmission of Jewish content, but the fostering of a sense of positive and joyful Jewish identity and belonging in all of our students. In recent decades, researchers in psychology have moved away from the notion of an identity that is developed and fixed, and have instead presented research which strongly indicates that identity is ever-changing and evolving. Fostering Jewish identity is therefore nuanced, because that identity is recognized as a shifting and multi-faceted thing and is part of a “broader self concept.” Educating for Jewish identity formation must also be a blend of experiential and the study of Jewish texts, holidays, history, Hebrew language, Israel, and philosophy. CESJDS has therefore developed both a rigorous content curriculum and a robust experiential curriculum.



What is unique at CESJDS from other Jewish educational settings is that our core value of and strong commitment to Pluralism enables our students to develop their Jewish identities in a dynamic environment where their peers, equally committed to their own Jewishness, may have very different conceptions of their Jewish identities. Rather than being confusing or difficult to develop one’s own identity in a pluralistic community, the research on identity development suggests that everyone develops an identity in relationships with and in distinction from those around themselves. When we see how others practice and express their Judaism, we articulate for ourselves and others what being Jewish means to us. In the process of asking questions of, disagreeing with, and living in community together, students develop their own Jewish identities and strong ways.

In this edition of *The Lions' Roar*, we explore how CESJDS fosters the Jewish identity development of its students across the different divisions. In the pages that follow, you will read how our extraordinary educators thoughtfully and meaningfully develop learning and experiences that enables our students to explore and concretize their identities in meaningful ways and in relationship with Jewish learning, practice, experience, and community. As I have the honor to watch our students’ Jewish growth and development on a daily basis at school, I hope this edition of *The Lions' Roar* will give you insight into how CESJDS imbues our students with a strong sense of who they are and what they believe as committed Jews.



SCHOOL

- 76 **CESJDS students** qualified for the Global Seal of Bilingualism in Hebrew.
- 2 **articles from *The Lion's Tale*** were reposted on the Jewish Scholastic Press Association's website and 1 was posted on the Best of School Newspapers Online website.
- The **Girls Varsity Tennis team** won the PVAC Championship.
- The **Middle School Boys Cross Country team** finished their season in 5th place.
- The **Boys Varsity Cross Country team** finished in 2nd place in the PVAC Championship.
- The **Girls Varsity Cross Country team** finished in 3rd place in the PVAC Championship.
- The **CESJDS Center for Excellence and Engagement in Jewish History** in partnership with the American Jewish Committee and many other sponsors held a Teen Summit on Israel, Gaza, and our Jewish World Today and also held a Vigil in solidarity with Israel.
- CESJDS opened its doors to **over 70 families who left Israel** because of the war. Students were integrated into our classrooms at both the Lower and Upper Schools.

STUDENT

- **Darya Dayanim** (Grade 12), **Serena Gill** (Grade 12), **Adin Halbfinger** (Grade 12), **Binyamin Hasenberg** (Grade 12), **Rena Katz** (Grade 12), **Simon Reich** (Grade 12), **Eliot Rogal** (Grade 12), **Ethan Safra** (Grade 12), **Nathaniel Shemony** (Grade 12), **Noah Sher** (Grade 12), **Daniel Simon** (Grade 12), and **Matthew Steindecker** (Grade 12) achieved National Merit Commended Scholar status in this year's National Merit competition.
- **Ari Howell** (Grade 12), **Daniel Schlactus** (Grade 12), **Gabriella Simon** (Grade 12), and **Jordyn White** (Grade 12) were named National Merit Semifinalists.
- **Tali Loeffler** (Grade 10) was one of nine athletes who were considered by Jewish Hoops America for Underclassman of the Year.
- **Netanya Shaffin** (Grade 12) participated in the National Conference of Synagogue Youth's summer program where she interned for the Nefesh B Nefesh in Jerusalem creating infographics and other social media campaigns to help educate her generation about Israel and Zionism.
- **Shani Schwartz** (Grade 12) made the 1st team for Jewish Hoops America.
- **Shani Schwartz** (Grade 12) in basketball, **Rachel Fagin** (Grade 10) in volleyball, and **Alex Reichmann** (Grade 12) in cycling were selected for the Pan American Games.
- **Eve Sharp** (Grade 9) finished in 6th place, **Shira Shapiro** (Grade 11) in 8th place, and **Mia Forseter** (Grade 10) in 11th place at the Girls Cross Country PVAC Championship meet.

- **Nathan Szubin** (Grade 11) finished in 1st place, **Jonah Berman** (Grade 11) in 5th place, and **Jedediah Milner-Gillers** (Grade 11) in 11th place at the Boys Cross Country PVAC Championship meet.

FACULTY

- **Cassandra Batson**, Middle School Principal and **Dorie Ravick**, Director of Lower School Admission are part of the YOULead Cohort for Prizmah.
- **Matt Cohen**, High School History and Psychology Teacher and **DJ Kaplan**, Director of Sulam@JDS, were honored as two of United Synagogue Youth's Double Chai Honorees.
- **Caitlin Horwitz**, Lower School Science Teacher, earned her Masters in Education from Johns Hopkins University.
- **Jennifer Kaye**, Volleyball Coach, was selected for the Pan American Games in Volleyball.
- **Kirsten Kirimlis**, Lower School Music Teacher, completed their Level 1 Orff Schulwerk Class at George Mason University.
- **Simone Nachman**, 2nd Grade Teacher, and **Jesse Ryan Nagelberg** were engaged.
- **Jennifer Newfeld**, Middle School Jewish Text Teacher, Digital Animation Teacher, and Jewish Life Chair, and **Rabbi Derek Rosenbaum**, Middle School Jewish Text Teacher and Department Chair, co-authored an article about the Middle School 7th Grade Toshba Curriculum that was published in the Fall 2023 edition of *Jewish Educational Leadership*.
- **Sue Rexford**, Director of College Counseling, presented a session for the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) titled, "Is It Time to Reimagine the College Admissions Process?"
- **Robert Shorr '14**, High School Math Teacher & High School Jewish Life Chair, was awarded a Master's in Jewish Education from The William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary.
- **Becky Silberman**, Director of Athletics, was named Jewish Hoops America Coach of the Year.
- **Benjamin Tellie**, Upper School Digital Arts Teacher, was published in *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* with his article, "Essay book review, Affect in Artistic Creativity: Painting to Feel."

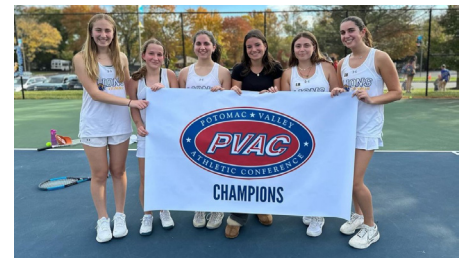
ALUMNI

- **Rebecca Kotok '95** was featured in a *Washington Jewish Week* article for her work in advocating for more active condemnation of the Hamas attack from MCPS.
- **Robby Lefkowitz '21** was featured in a *JNS* article about taking a leadership role in fostering Jewish Identity for other students and combating antisemitism on his campus.
- **Max Levitt '07** was featured in *The Washington Post* about his non-profit organization, Leveling the Playing Field Inc.
- **Coby Siegel '20** released three singles and a debut EP, *In the Meantime*.

- **Brett Stark, Esq. '03** co-founded and co-created Terra Firma National, a non-profit dedicated to creating holistic programs that meet the unique healthcare and legal needs of unaccompanied children and migrant families.
- **Jacob Stoil '03** was appointed as the Chair of Applied History for the Modern War Institute (MWI) at West Point.
- **Robby Lefkowitz '21** is taking a leadership role in fostering Jewish identity for other students and combating antisemitism on his college campus.
- **Adam Hammerman '11** and Lexi Hammerman welcomed a daughter, Sarah Elizabeth.
- **Daniel Lieber '04** and Rachel Gould Lieber welcomed a son, Asher Maor.
- **Julie Carmen '11** and Julian Herwitz were married.
- **Aaron Handelman '15** and Yarden Shuminer were married.
- **Sara Heckelman '17** and David Charendoff were married.
- **Meryl Kravitz '12** and Maxim Maron were married.
- **Emily Shoyer '13** and Matt Javitt were married.
- **Jacob Weiss '15** and Kimberly Shendell were married.
- **Jordan Kovalsky '10** and Casey Nathan were engaged.
- **Aaron Schonfeld '17** and Allie Kaplan were engaged.
- **Michael Weinberg '11** and Claire Diamonstein were engaged.
- **Izzy Zissman '15** and McKenna Moore were engaged.

COMMUNITY

- **Robin Hettleman Weinberg**, mother to CESJDS Alumni Alysse '16, David '11, and Michael '11, was named the new President of The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.
- **Lisa Levin**, CESJDS Parent, was selected for the Pan American Games in the Half Marathon.
- **Rabbi Fabián Werbin**, CESJDS Parent, was recently installed as rabbi of Kol Shalom.



Lower School Log:

Pluralism in Lower School *T'filah*

◆ By **Lisah Bernstein**, *T'filah* & Israeli Dance Specialist | **Sarah Roark**, Head Media Specialist & *T'filah* Specialist



“Buena Semana, Guteh Yoh, Sha-vu-a Tov.”

We begin each week of prayer by invoking a good week in multiple languages. By doing this, we embrace the CESJDS core value of pluralism as, “a principled commitment to the diversity of Jewish backgrounds, beliefs, and practices of our community of students, teachers, and parents.” Students learn that while we are in Maryland with our hearts in Israel, Jews live all over the world speaking different languages and following different styles and interpretations of Judaism. There is no one way to be a Jew.

The core value of pluralism is woven throughout the *t'filah* curriculum in the styles of prayer that we use and in the sources from which we pray. Most importantly, from Gurim through 5th grade, students are taught the *p'shat*/literal meaning of the prayer as a jumping off point for them to build personal understanding. During our *iyun t'filah* sessions, we offer a deeper exploration of the meaning and intentions behind the prayers we recite. Even our youngest students share their own thoughts and traditions.

In a spiraled curriculum, we incorporate traditional prayers done in a variety of *nusha-ot*/melodies and modes. Students learn Ashkenazi, Sephardi, weekday, and Shabbat liturgy and tunes for prayers. Contemporary prayer texts are integrated, such as the Debbie Friedman (z"l) *Mi Sheh-bei-rakh* prayer for healing, which we sing at every Thursday's Torah service. We often bring in “summer camp versions” of prayers; one can feel the summer *ru-ah*/spirit in these versions of *Or Hadash*, *Kol Ha-n'shamah*, and *Aleinu*. By including a wide range of backgrounds and traditions, the experience of praying becomes more engaging and relatable and it is the students themselves who bring in prayers they love from their own home synagogues or camp settings.

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There are many chances daily, monthly, and annually for students to act as leaders. At Whole School Kabbalat Shabbat, grades lead specific sections and 5th graders conduct the program. Annual events, such as the Yosef and Sima Nagler 1st Grade *Haggigat HaSiddur* and Sara and Samuel Lessans 4th Grade Havdalah Service give all students opportunities to lead. In 5th grade, students learn the crowning skill of how to chant Torah. Though they learn Ashkenazi trope at school, students are exposed to other styles and are welcome to chant in their own community's cantillation system. When guest Torah readers come to *leyn* for our 5th grade Torah service, they sometimes chant in a different trope. Hosting clergy from various local synagogues is another way that we enrich our *t'filah* experiences more generally.

For our sources of prayer, we use different *siddurim* as the students progress through the grades. In 5th grade, we alternate between two different *siddurim* during the week. One of the two, The Koren Aviv Siddur, is full of pictures, questions, and stories to give students multiple ways to reflect on prayer. Our *siddurim* offer both original and egalitarian texts to reflect the range of our families' practices and we use gender neutral language during our communal Torah services.

If you walk into any *t'filah* experience at the Lower School, you will hear, see, and experience the joy of beautiful voices joining together in an array of melodies, liturgy, and languages. Our services are a display of our stated pluralistic core value in which, “we unite through our shared values and cultivate respect and knowledge inspired by our differences.”

Middle School Musings:

Fostering Jewish Identity in a Pluralistic Jewish Middle School

◆ By **Jennifer Newfeld**, Middle School Jewish Text Teacher, Digital Animation Teacher, & Jewish Life Chair | **Rabbi Derek Rosenbaum**, Middle School Jewish Text Teacher & Jewish Text Department Chair



Michael Meyer, Professor Emeritus at Hebrew Union College, defines Jewish education as “the tool for making ascribed identity into chosen identity.” Our students are handed an ascribed identity: Jewish. Yet as they grow, learn and explore the world around them, and acquire increasing amounts of personal autonomy, they will also choose their own version of this religious identity. They must answer the question: “What does it mean to *me* to be Jewish?”

The early adolescent years are when students take those first initial steps along the path to choosing their personal identity, including their Jewish identity. In our middle school we embrace this time of exploration. We love seeing our students

walk in on the first day of 6th grade with one idea of who they want to be, and walk out three years later rising high school students who are more mature, poised, and comfortable with always being in the process of becoming.

In order to support them in this exciting time of individual growth and identity formation, our pluralistic *k'hillah*/community provides many opportunities to explore their values, beliefs, and passions. In our middle school, we aim for students to be able to seamlessly engage in various aspects of their lives, including their Judaism. They run basketball plays named after our Biblical ancestors. They travel to the south on the 8th Grade Bridges Capstone Trip to learn about what it means to advocate for racial justice as a Jew in America. They know it is Rosh Hodesh because we have extra time in *Zman Kodesh* that morning to pound on desks as we chant the *Hallel* service. On Purim we dress up in costumes and hear *M'gillah* together. They know they can't have a Math quiz during Hol Ha-mo-ed Sukkot because it's a time for visiting friends' and families' sukkot. They sing Hebrew songs with the choir. They can be a leader through the Jewish Life Committee. Our students live their school lives on a Jewish calendar, with pluralistic Jewish values at the core. They are exposed to an array of beliefs and practices as they begin to form their personal Jewish identity.

◆◆ We design our lessons so students can make meaningful connections between the content they are learning and the day to day experiences they are living in and outside the classroom. ◆◆

Their *Tanakh*, *Toshiba*, and Hebrew classes are interspersed among their Math, Science, English, and Social Studies classes. In our Jewish text classes, we structure our units to help students develop their skills of navigation, analysis, and intellectual curiosity so they have the ability to access texts independently. We design our lessons so students can make meaningful connections between the content they are learning and the day-to-day experiences they are living in and outside the classroom. They learn various models of leadership in *Tanakh*, how to engage in a productive disagreement in *Toshiba*, and how to authentically connect with our homeland in Hebrew. These experiences all happen without their parents present (this is a good thing!), alongside their peers, with guidance from their teachers.

Most importantly, CESJDS students do all of this within *k'hillah*/community. We prioritize fostering rich, unique Jewish identities. This holistic approach to identity building is what we believe will create the next link in our chain of tradition, a generation of Jewish leaders who lead from a personal sense of purpose.

High School Highlights:

Zman Kodesh/Sacred Time in the High School

◆ By Robbie Shorr '13, High School Math Teacher & Chair of Jewish Life



At 8:00 AM every morning, a gentle bell rings on the Annette M. and Theodore N. Lerner Family Upper School Campus to start the day, followed by a cheerful welcome and announcements presented over the loudspeaker. A seemingly normal beginning at any typical American high school. What follows next at CESJDS is anything but typical.

If you were to walk around our campus after morning announcements, you would notice many seemingly disparate activities taking place:

- Some students engaged in a philosophical discussion with a guest speaker
- Others participating in arts projects exploring Jewish ideas
- Some students discussing the Jewish themes in a novel
- Others quietly journaling
- Four different groups of students vibrantly leading *T'filot*/Prayers, each according to different traditions and customs

Though these activities might seem disconnected, they are actually all part of our dynamic *Zman Kodesh* (ZK) program. We begin each day with *Zman Kodesh*/Sacred Time because Jewish adolescents benefit greatly from the opportunity to engage daily with Jewish ideas, build community, practice mindfulness, grow as leaders, and explore their own Jewish identities.

In accordance with our core value of pluralism, we offer twelve ZK options for our students - four daily *Minyanim* and eight *Drisha* (Exploration) *Zmanei Kodesh* which approach Jewish identity through a variety of mediums. Furthermore, as we understand that adolescents are always grappling with their evolving Jewish identities, students are allowed to explore different ZKs at any point in the year. Student choice is key to the success of the program.

I consistently see the significant role that ZK plays in our students' social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Though many students also know me as a math teacher and coach, students approach me to discuss ZK most often. In these conversations, students share how essential ZK is to their time at JDS. They express how ZK has shaped their relationship with Judaism, spirituality, and community, and ask for suggestions for even more ways to deeply engage with ZK.

In addition to all of these invaluable benefits, our ZK program also provides students with a close relationship with a teacher outside of an academic setting. This relationship was so important to me as a JDS student and I have seen the significance of these student-teacher relationships in ZK continue to this day. Due to our rotating schedule, ZK teachers are the only teachers that a student will see every day. Students have consistently told me how meaningful it is to them to see the same teacher, serving as a spiritual and social/emotional mentor, first thing in the morning each and every day. Truly, we are blessed to have such an amazing ZK faculty.

Though all of our students have different needs, the needs to explore Jewish identity, build community, and start the day with mindfulness have never been more important. In providing opportunities for students to grow in all of these areas, ZK continually proves to be a key part of the CESJDS high school experience.

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Ignite the Night



Ignite the Night: A Memorable Evening for Our Community

Over 350 school parents, faculty, staff, and guests of our sponsors gathered at the Annette M. and Theodore N. Lerner Family Upper School Campus to unite at Ignite the Night 2023. In a remarkable transformation, the Cardo became a captivating starry night event space.

In these unprecedented times, CESJDS is guided by our values, including our core values of *Ahavat Yisrael*/Love of Israel and *K'hillah*/Community. Our guests appreciated the opportunity to be together to support one another and raise significant funds through our silent auction and raffle to bolster security and to support the students from Israel who are joining our school community. Thank you to everyone who donated items and services to the silent auction, and to those who bid, bought raffle tickets, and made donations. Your investment is making a difference.

Our guests were dressed in their finest and savored an array of culinary delights at the dinner stations, which included Moroccan lamb sliders, Chilean sea bass, Greek rice bowls, and wild mushroom polenta, to name a few. Guests also enjoyed our signature cocktails, the Starry City Manhattan and Cosmic Cosmopolitan, while indulging in a delectable dessert selection of homemade Israel-themed cookies, created by our own Director of Food Services Mark Glauser and his team.

Rabbi Mitchel Malkus, Head of School, and Ayala Nuriely Kimel, Board President, shared with everyone their gratitude for this opportunity to be together and celebrate the CESJDS community during this challenging time in world and Jewish history. They reiterated the deep connection between CESJDS and Israel, and our efforts to welcome families who are fleeing Israel into our school community.

Thank you to our event Co-Chairs Marissa & Justin Baer, Naomi & Adam Gerstenblith, and Becky & Elisha Simkovich, for their stellar leadership in making Ignite the Night a reality.

A special thank you to all of our sponsors for their financial support and friendship.

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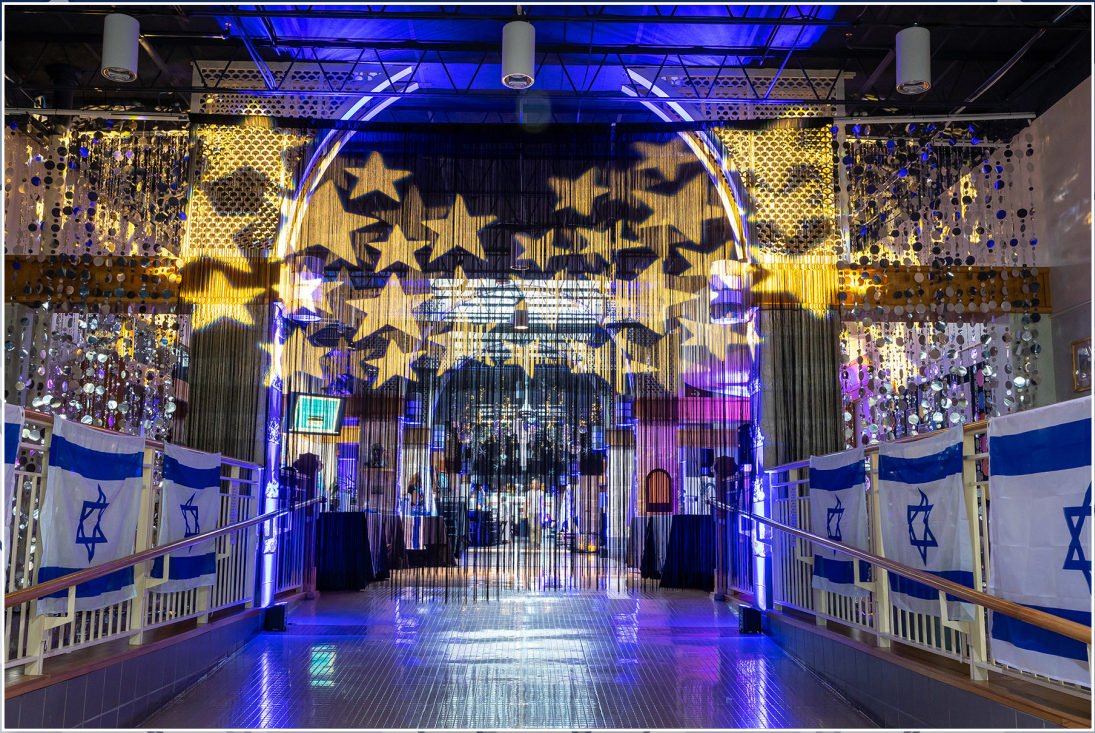
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בית מדרש צוריאל

Administrative Offices & Lower School Campus
1901 East Jefferson Street
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Annette M. & Theodore N. Lerner Upper School Campus
11710 Hunters Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20852

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **FEBRUARY 9:**
Dr. Stuart Lessans Class of 2024 Siyyum
- **FEBRUARY 10:**
CESJDS Alumni Mega Reunion Schmooze-A-Palooza
- **FEBRUARY 11:**
Class of 2024 Graduation
- **FEBRUARY 16-19:**
SCHOOL CLOSED Presidents Day Weekend
- **FEBRUARY 25:**
Class of 2024 Depart for Irene and Daniel Simpkins Senior Capstone Israel Trip



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from Rabbi Mitchel Malkus.....1

Kol HaKavod (Accomplishments).....2

Lower School Log: Pluralism in Lower School *T'filah*.....3

Middle School Musings: Fostering Jewish Identity in a Pluralistic Jewish Middle School.....4

High School Highlights: *Zman Kodesh*/Sacred Time in the High School.....5

Ignite the Night: A Memorable Evening for Our Community.....6 & 7

Upcoming Events.....8

