



From Rabbi Mitchel Malkus, Head of School

The Value of Partnerships at CESJDS

Among the many benefits of a CESJDS education is the robust and meaningful partnerships that our school shares with local, national, and global organizations in both education and other areas. These partnerships enrich the daily experience of our students, support the work our teachers do in curriculum and teaching, and help advance our school's mission to ensure a vibrant Jewish future.



At last count, CESJDS partners with over forty education and other organizations. The list of organizations is wide and diverse and our partners provide support for the school in many different ways. We have membership relationships with the Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington, Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools, and the National Business Officers Association to support our operations. We've developed school partnerships with Bishop McNamara High School, the Keshet School, the Reali School, and Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School to enrich our students' understanding and appreciation for the experience of peers across the globe. We have established co-curricular relationships with a variety of organizations including Player Progression Academy, Montgomery County Debate League, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, and Junior States of America. To support and enhance our core educational program we work closely with Sulam, Facing History and Ourselves, iTalAM, the ANU Jewish History Museum, and the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation. These collaborations are in addition to the special relationships we have with the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, JCRC, JSSA, the Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School, Hillel International, and many other local Jewish and non-Jewish organizations.

The great Jewish sage, Hillel, teaches in *Pirkei Avot*: "Do not separate yourself from the community." In Jewish tradition, being in partnership is regarded as one of the highest and most sacred of values. Jews do not cut themselves off from others. We don't believe in celibacy for the priesthood and are taught repeatedly not to remove ourselves from the world but to live fully and deeply within it because relationships and partnership are core to our identity.

In this issue of *The Lion's Roar* we will focus on three specific partnerships in more depth. You will learn about the special partnership our Lower School has developed with the **Keshet School** in Mazkaret Bayta, Israel, and how our students interact with their Israeli peers. Our Middle School will share about our longtime relationship with **Facing History and Ourselves** which supports our student learning, curriculum development, and professional development. Last, you will read about our new **Jacob (z"l) and Sharon Benus Social Entrepreneurship Program** in the High School and how it enables us to build on our partnership with **Leveling the Playing Field**, a social venture started by JDS alum Max Levitt '07.

Just as CESJDS gains a tremendous amount from our numerous partnerships, I hope you will enjoy learning how these relationships benefit our students, faculty, and families on a regular basis.



SCHOOL

- **CESJDS** is one of five schools in the country chosen to participate in the Ronald S. Lauder Impact Initiative, an initiative aimed at increasing engagement and enrollment in Jewish day schools.
- **Varsity Boys and Girls Cross Country teams** won the PVAC Championship and Maryland States.
- **Varsity Girls Soccer** finished second in the league and made it to the Finals.
- **Varsity Girls Volleyball** finished first in the league and won the championship for the first time since 1994.
- **JV Girls Volleyball** made it to the PVAC Championship.
- **Middle School Boys Soccer** finished the regular season undefeated and made it to the PVAC Finals.
- **MS Boys Cross Country** finished second in the PVAC Finals.
- **Varsity Girls Tennis** won the PVAC championship for the 4th consecutive time.
- **Shir Madness**, the CESJDS a capella group had a workshop with Micah Hendler, artistic director of the Jerusalem Youth Choir, which unites Israeli and Palestinian students who love to sing.
- Of the approximately 1.5 million juniors who took the PSAT last fall, **14 CESJDS students** were among the 34,000 who achieved National Merit Commended Student status in this year's National Merit Competition.
- **14 CESJDS students** were inducted into the Middle School Knesset representing their grades and fellow students in a leadership position.

STUDENT

- **Henry Brenner** (Grade 10) received 2nd place in the 2024 Nora Photography Contest.
- **Elisheva Cepler** (Grade 8), **Rose Kane** (Grade 8) and **Zev Michaels** (Grade 8) all submitted poems to the American Library of Poetry's Student Poetry contest and received notice that their poetry will be published in a new poetry book titled *Gifted*.
- **Elana Ernst** (Grade 10) shared an original poem at The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington's October 7th Commemoration.
- **Rachel Fagin** (Grade 11) was named Varsity Girls Volleyball Tournament MVP and PVAC Player of the Year.
- **Azaria Hileman-Shashoua** (Grade 12) was named National Merit Semifinalist. He is among 158 other students in Montgomery County and 16,000 students in the nation.
- **Elana Ernst** (Grade 10), **Eli Gale** (Grade 12), **Caleb Horwitz** (Grade 11), **Adan Magnas** (Grade 11), and **Penelope Terl** (Grade 11) were accepted into the Congressional Arts Competition gallery exhibition for their photography.
- **Netanel Simkovich** (Grade 11) completed the Marine Corp Marathon.

- **Nathan Szubin** (Grade 12) was the PVAC Runner of the Year and won the inaugural MD Cross Country Senior Male Athlete of the Year.

FACULTY

- **Paul Blank**, High School Jewish Text Teacher, completed the Marine Corp Marathon for the 16th time.
- **Brett Kugler**, CESJDS High School Learning Specialist, participated on a panel hosted by Ohel Children's Home and Family Services on "Top 10+ Tools to Start the School Year Strong."
- **Rabbi Mitchel Malkus**, Head of School, participated in a panel on "Seeking Civility in Uncivil Times: A Conversation About Schools, Pluralism, and Political Discourse," with other schools and thought-leaders from NAIS, Friends Council on Education, Sidwell Friends School, and more.
- **Jessica Nassau**, Director of Publications, is one of the headliners for the 2024 Jewish Scholastic Journalism Conference taking place this December in Los Angeles, CA.
- **Sue Rexford**, Director of College Counseling, participated in a panel discussion hosted by Beth El Congregation in Alexandria, VA for 10th - 12th graders to support Jewish students as they begin their search for colleges and how to navigate antisemitism that may be present on campus.
- **Dr. Dan Rosenthal**, Evonne and Elliot Schnitzer Family Jewish History Department Chair, wrote and published an article titled *Cultivating Respect in Teaching the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Lookstein Jewish Educational Leadership: How to Teach Israel Journal*.
- **Dr. Lisa Vardi**, High School Principal, spent six days this summer in Jerusalem, participating in the Shalom Hartman Institute's first Wellspring Summit for Educators with a group of approximately 90 K-16 Jewish educators from North America, the UK, and Sweden.

ALUMNI

- **Yuval David '96** was recently featured in *The Jerusalem Post* for his advocacy work.
- **Jack Gruber '14** was chosen to be a 2025 Strathmore Artist in Residence.
- **Sofia Guerson '24** won the 2024 Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF) for college freshman students.
- **Amy Zitelman '07** was one of 30 businesswomen recognized as a 2024 *Philadelphia Business Journal* Women of Influence honoree.
- **Eran Friedman '08** and Carrie Friedman welcomed a son, Isaac Pope.
- **Shira Gabry-Kalikow '06** and Adam Kalikow welcomed a son, Charlie Matan.
- **Samantha Goldman '01** welcomed a son, Silas Bard Goldman.
- **Josh Heckelman '09** and Jamie Heckelman welcomed a daughter, Claire Elizabeth.

- **Emily Odesser '09** and Adam Odesser welcomed a daughter, Romi Meitar.
- **Shirel Altmann '14** and Elliot Shimonov were married.
- **Isaac Dubrawsky '15** and Becky Rosansky were married.
- **Tamar Eisen '13** and **Jake Mintz '13** were married.
- **Michael Gould '13** and Maya Schreiber were married.
- **Zach Krame '05** and Jordan Crystal were married.
- **Neville Brodie '11** and Rachel Lilienfeld were engaged.
- **Maxine Elovitz '15** and Maia Carlisle were engaged.
- **Jacob Gross '16** and Abby Wolfe were engaged.
- **Zoe Kershner '09** and Garrett Goodman were engaged.
- Lower School Gurim General Studies Teacher **Rivka Magier '16** and **Yaakov Bellas '16** were engaged.

COMMUNITY

- CESJDS Parent **Guila Franklin Siegel** wrote an article for *MoCo 360* standing up to antisemitism after a recent public school vandalization.
- Past CESJDS President and Alum Parent **Norman Goldstein** spoke at Temple Isaiah during an October 7th Commemoration about his nephew Hersh Goldberg-Polin's plight as a hostage and ultimate murder. He called for active advocacy to free the remaining hostages and support for the people of Israel.



Lower School Log:

Teaching Jewish Peoplehood & Ahavat Yisrael/Love of Israel - The Keshet Partnership

◆ By **Daniella Friedman**, Judaic Studies & Hebrew Language Coordinator



In 2018, as part of an initiative by The Global Twinning Schools Network of the Jewish Agency, CESJDS entered into partnership with the Keshet School in Mazkeret Batya, an urban area in Israel. The Keshet School aspires to bring secular and religious families together to take an active part in creating a community together. The goal for our partnership was to create a connection between the students in the two school communities by sharing unique experiences and talking about their lives. An additional goal for CESJDS was to create opportunities for our students to use their Hebrew language skills and to foster their proficiency. The partnership was co-led by the teachers in both schools and by Mrs. Naomi Hozer, who was the Global Twinning schools coordinator. She continued in this role until the Jewish Agency stopped their sponsorship, in 2022. Luckily the teachers in our two schools felt so committed to this partnership that they continued the project without the Jewish Agency.

The partnership began with 3rd graders in both schools and continued until the students were in 5th grade. We developed several projects: some were asynchronous where the students talked about their schools, shared pictures, and talked about how they celebrated holidays in their communities and at home. A special highlight of the program was a project during Hanukkah, using the theme of “light” when the students in each school shared how they bring light to their community. Each year, a couple of the activities took place live via Zoom. The students “met” to jointly celebrate. Some of the memorable celebrations were a joint Thanksgiving meeting where the Israeli students learned about Thanksgiving and together decorated cupcakes that they baked in advance. In another meeting the students learned how to braid a challah with dough they had prepared in advance. Purim was also celebrated by students in both schools, performing skits for the holiday. A very special live meeting involved our students meeting a grandfather of one of the students in Keshet who fought in several wars and the mother of an Israeli student at CESJDS who was part of the Air Force military attache.

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While it was important to use Hebrew, the main goal was to create connections, and, therefore, CESJDS students who were able to speak or write in Hebrew used their Hebrew and students who did not feel they could communicate in Hebrew spoke in English. The same was true for the Keshet students. Students who were proficient enough in English spoke in English and students who were not, spoke in Hebrew.

Last year, we started with a couple of projects early in the school year before it became clear that the students at Keshet were not able to continue the partnership because of the toll of the Israel-Hamas war. This year we are pleased to share that our partnership will be renewed! Through the years, the students in each school have enjoyed the activities and always look forward to making more connections. This partnership teaches students the power and value of Jewish peoplehood.



Middle School Musings:

Partnering with Facing History and Ourselves

◆ By **Heidi Zansler**, Middle School Social Studies | **Deborah Feigenson**, Middle English, Language Arts, & Social Studies Chair | **Matthew Jacobson**, Middle School Social Studies Teacher



“The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do.” -James Baldwin

For one of our first activities in a Facing History and Ourselves professional development session, we started with a meaningful quote, such as the one above, and we discussed how we might both apply it in our own lives and bring it into our

classrooms. Using a quote as a gateway to discussion is one of the many teaching strategies we have learned in our partnership with Facing History and Ourselves, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping schools and teachers prepare students for civic life and better understand themselves and the world.

We became a partner school with Facing History and Ourselves when the Middle School was created, and the goal was to help our students explore the grade-wide themes of identity, community, and action in a meaningful way by engaging with history and examining it through the lens of individual choices and collective action. Over time, Facing History lessons and strategies became embedded throughout the curriculum, some of the lessons migrating to social studies classrooms, others landing in Jewish Identities and *Rikuz* classes.

When we teach a Facing History unit on Holocaust and Human Behavior in 7th grade, we explore how people choose to be collaborators, bystanders, or upstanders; that it was a choice to participate, a choice to elect the Nazis, a choice to comply with racist and antisemitic Nuremberg laws, and a choice to allow Hitler to consolidate his power and violate the treaty of Versailles. At every stage, someone made a choice, either explicitly or implicitly, and each of those choices changed the course of history.

Similarly, in 8th grade, we look at the history of civil rights in America and the role of choices at both the individual and institutional level. The grade-wide theme is “action,” so we explore the choices people can make in the fight against unjust institutions using the Civil Rights movement as a case study. Whether through the bus boycotts of the 1950s, the protests and marches in the 1960’s, or the legislative and judicial actions of the second half of the twentieth century through today, we examine the role of the individual citizens in holding institutions accountable.

We want students to examine the connections between individual choices and their impact on the community with the understanding that we are all in this together and what we do has impacts in other places. Our ultimate goal is to provide students with the building blocks to see the throughlines between history, the present, and the future. Whether they are learning about the Holocaust, the civil rights movement, or modern-day global challenges, we want them to understand that they are not merely observers but active participants in shaping the world. The choices they make today, informed by lessons from the past, will determine the kind of society we live in tomorrow.

Through our partnership with Facing History and Ourselves, we are not just teaching history; we are preparing our students to be thoughtful, ethical, and engaged citizens of the world.

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High School Highlights:

Leveling the Playing Field: Social Entrepreneurship in Action

◆ By **Matthew Landy '18**, Assistant Director of Athletics & Social Entrepreneurship Program Coordinator



In an inspiring initiative to foster the entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to *Tikkun Olam*/Repairing the World among our students, the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School (CESJDS) has launched the Sharon and Jacob (z"l) Benus Social Entrepreneurship Fellows program for students across the Lower School and Upper School campuses. More specifically, the High School Social Entrepreneurship Fellows program kicked off its programming with an engaging two-day "boot camp" experience in September, where students were immersed in the fundamentals of entrepreneurship and the impact of social ventures.

Led by esteemed entrepreneur Henrik Scheel, the boot camp provided students with a unique opportunity to learn directly from an expert in the field. Scheel's dynamic workshops emphasized not only the mechanics of starting a business but also the importance of aligning entrepreneurial efforts with meaningful causes.

The Social Entrepreneurship Fellows program aims to instill a sense of responsibility and community awareness in students, teaching them that successful entrepreneurship can be a powerful tool for social good. Leveling the Playing Field, a non-profit organization founded by CESJDS alum Max Levitt '07, is one example of a successful social entrepreneurial venture that has achieved great success for the greater good of communities across the country.

Leveling the Playing Field collects new and lightly used sports equipment and donates it to schools and youth organizations for students who are unable to afford the equipment they need to participate in the sports they love and desire to play. As Levitt explained in a recent interview with me, he founded the company after working in the sports industry for several years, primarily in football, where he identified several issues regarding the waste of "millions of dollars of sports equipment" that would often be "thrown away" only after a few uses. As a result, Levitt decided to start Leveling the Playing Field to override this glaring issue within the sports industry and to provide kids in less fortunate situations with access to sports opportunities they otherwise would not have.

Level the Playing Field showcases firsthand how our students can solidify their ideas and create a profound impact on their communities to facilitate lasting change. We regularly partner with Levitt's organization during the school's Lehman Day of Service. Our students typically organize a sports equipment donation drive leading up to their volunteer service activity. While onsite they help to organize collected equipment in the warehouse and meet with Levitt to learn more about his journey.

The Sharon and Jacob (z"l) Benus Social Entrepreneurship Fellows program is a significant addition to the School's curriculum, reinforcing our commitment to developing socially responsible leaders, like Levitt. The program aligns with the School's mission to empower students to make ethical choices and engage actively in their communities. During the boot camp, students formed teams of two to four members, encouraging collaboration and the exchange of ideas. This collaborative approach allowed them to brainstorm and begin developing their startup concepts, focusing on causes they are passionate about in the hopes of making a lasting impact in their local community and beyond. From environmental sustainability to developing more creative ways of documenting the life stories of elderly relatives, students explored a wide range of issues, highlighting their commitment to creating positive change through their entrepreneurial efforts.

Our High School Social Entrepreneurship Fellows will continue to work on their ideas for the remainder of the semester supported by volunteer CESJDS alumni and parent mentors with past and current experience in the entrepreneurial field. In fact, Max Levitt is set to speak with them during one of our program meetings. On Wednesday, January 15, students will have the chance to present their ideas to a panel of judges or "sharks" during the final Shark Tank presentation. At the conclusion of the Shark Tank event, the winning group will receive funding to help kickstart their startup idea and begin the process of implementing it into a real company that can create positive change in the world. We look forward to our students continuing to change the world.

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A Decision Grounded in Values

Kari and Elias Saratovsky, Parents of Liya (Grade 8), Dalia (Grade 4), and Ezra (Grade 4)

We can't help but laugh when we think back to how we stumbled through the early years of parenting. Every decision seemed monumental—and each step was met with plenty of advice from loved ones to strangers, who were eager to weigh in on our choices. We started with only a few vague ideas about our own parenting style, but there was one thing that was unwavering for us: we wanted to raise our children with a strong sense of Jewish identity.

As graduates of public schools, we knew firsthand that there was more than one way to nurture that identity. For us, it would mean sending our kids to Jewish summer camps, where they could form lifelong friendships and experience the joy of being Jewish. We would prioritize Friday night Shabbat dinners as our family's sacred time with one another and with close family friends. We would visit Israel as a family, introducing our kids to the beauty of the country, her people, and the vibrancy of the Jewish state. This approach felt like the right mix for us—a blend of connection, culture, and tradition.

But the events of October 7th shifted everything. In a world that feels forever changed, we felt a new urgency to lean even more deeply into the values that anchor us. Suddenly, it wasn't enough for our kids to understand their heritage; we wanted them to feel proud, empowered, and prepared to carry it forward. This led us to move our fourth grade twins and eighth grade daughter to CESJDS this year.

After spending 11 years in Houston, deeply rooted in a vibrant Jewish community there, our move to Bethesda three years ago left us searching for something similar. Jewish day school, which we once saw as an option rather than a necessity, suddenly felt essential for providing our kids with the continuity we value.

In today's world, we want our children to experience Jewish values not only at home but embedded into their everyday lives. The pluralistic approach of CESJDS offers them a space where these values are not an afterthought but a core part of learning, while being surrounded by peers who share the same ideals and hope for the future.

The decisions we make as parents today have even greater implications than they did when we started our parenting journey 14 years ago. Choosing a values-based education is one of the greatest investments we can make in our children's future. In partnership with JDS, we hope to give them a strong foundation in Jewish learning, a deep love of community, and an unwavering pride in who they are as individuals and as part of the Jewish people. We hope they'll grow into adults who, like us, find joy, strength, and resilience in their heritage, no matter what challenges they may face.



The Saratovsky Family



A Wonderful Start to the 2024-2025 School Year

The 2024-2025 School Year began with so much excitement for learning, friendships, and new opportunities. As a *k'hillah*/community, we learned about many aspects of the Jewish High Holidays and celebrated together, while also acknowledging and commemorating the difficult times our community has faced since October 7th and the ongoing war in Israel.

Check out some photos from the first half of the school year!



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

- **DECEMBER 23 - JANUARY 1:**
SCHOOL CLOSED Winter Break
- **DECEMBER 25 - JANUARY 2:**
Hanukkah
- **JANUARY 16:**
Upper School Winter Concert
- **JANUARY 20:**
SCHOOL CLOSED Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- **JANUARY 20:**
NO CLASSES Professional Development Day
- **JANUARY 24 - 25:**
Shabbat Across JDS (Sponsored by the PA)
- **FEBRUARY 1:**
Sara & Samuel J. Lessans 4th Grade *Havdalah* Ceremony
- **FEBRUARY 7:**
Class of 2025 *Siyum*
- **FEBRUARY 9:**
Class of 2025 Graduation



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