



From Rabbi Malkus, Head of School

The Power of the Word: Celebrating the Humanities at CESJDS

In a world increasingly dominated by headlines about artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and data science, it's easy to assume that the future belongs solely to STEM. But at CESJDS, we understand something deeper and more enduring: the future belongs to those who can ask profound questions, articulate compelling ideas, and navigate complexity with both intellect and empathy. In other words, the future belongs just as much to the humanities.



Rooted in the Jewish belief that words create worlds—“*Vayomer Elohim, 'Yehi Or' / And God said, 'Let there be light,'*” our tradition teaches us that language, stories, and interpretation are foundational to human experience. At CESJDS, we carry this sacred tradition forward in the way we teach reading, writing, history, literature, and ethical reflection across every grade level. And the results are extraordinary.

This edition of *The Lions' Roar* highlights how our exceptional humanities education takes shape across our divisions. In the **Lower School**, students engage in vibrant interdisciplinary projects that bring history, culture, and geography to life. As Rebecca Prigal shares, these learning experiences don't just develop academic skills, they foster our school's core values like *K'hillah / Community*, *Tikkun Olam / Repairing the World*, and *Torah Lishmah / Love of Learning* in our youngest students. From researching the Civil Rights Movement to exploring the cultures of countries around the world, students grow into curious, ethical thinkers with a deepening appreciation of their place in the global and Jewish communities.

In **Middle School**, students begin to bridge learning with action. As Rabbi Janet Ozur Bass and Deborah Feigenson explain, our humanities program empowers students to step into real-world roles: debating in a Model Congress, advocating on Capitol Hill, and engaging in meaningful community service. These experiences culminate in the 8th Grade Bridges Trip, where students travel to Atlanta, GA and Montgomery, AL to explore the American Civil Rights Movement, encounter living history, and reflect on their own responsibilities as Jews. They learn that to truly understand justice and community, they must live those values, a profoundly Jewish lesson.

In **High School**, the humanities reach their peak as students become writers, thinkers, and scholars in their own right. Dr. Tom Worden describes 11th grade, in particular, as a turning point where students refine their ability to construct nuanced arguments, explore identity through personal narrative, and engage deeply with literature's layered meanings. The skills they develop - analytical thinking, expressive clarity, and moral reasoning are foundational for college, career, and life. Our alumni consistently tell us that what set them apart on campus was their ability to read critically, write persuasively, and speak with confidence.

At CESJDS, we reject the false dichotomy between STEM and the humanities. Our excellence in humanities strengthens our excellence in STEM. Scientists and engineers who can write well, argue ethically, and think historically will shape a better world. And that is exactly what we prepare our students to do based on their Jewish values.

Let this issue of *The Lions' Roar* serve as a celebration of our school's leadership in the humanities. In the humanities, our students find both knowledge and themselves.



SCHOOL

- **The Lion's Tale** and **Dimensions** yearbook won Silver Crown Awards at the Columbia Scholastic Press Association spring conference.
- **The Lion's Tale** received 7 awards in the categories of best written, photo, and multimedia coverage on Jewish and Israel related topics from the Jewish Scholastic Journalism Association.
- Members of the **Class of 2025** were accepted into 126 colleges and will be attending 46 different colleges and universities including the University of Pennsylvania, Syracuse University, University of Southern California, Elon University, University of Texas-Austin, University of Michigan, Grinnell College, University of Virginia, and many more.
- The **CESJDS Rocketry Team** placed 2nd in the nation at the American Rocketry Challenge National Finals.
- 16 students were inducted into **Quill & Scroll**, the High School Journalists International Honor Society.
- 4 students were inducted into the **Hispanic Honor Society**.
- 8 members of the **High School Coding Club** qualified to compete in the American Computer Science League Finals.
- 16 students submitted original artwork to the **2025 Congressional Art Competition/8th District** and had their work featured in an online gallery.
- **Varsity Softball** went undefeated and won the regular season and PVAC tournament championships for the third year in a row.
- **Middle School Softball** won the PVAC tournament championship.
- **Middle School Baseball** had an undefeated regular season.
- **Varsity and Middle School Track** teams finished the season with 35 personal bests, 22 top-6 performances, 11 top-3 medal performances, 6 conference titles, and 3 school records.

STUDENT

- **Ephraim Blair** (Grade 10) was selected as the winner of the *Think The Vote* essay contest hosted by the Bill of Rights Institute.
- **Jordana Dauber** (Grade 11), **Mia Forseter** (Grade 12), **Jennifer Kelner** (Grade 12), **Yarden Wilkenfeld** (Grade 11), and **Eliana Wolf** (Grade 12) were named First Team for Varsity Softball.
- **Vivi Ducker** (Grade 12), **Sophie Schwartz** (Grade 12), **Eliana Wolf** (Grade 12), and **Sadaf Zadeh** (Grade 12) won Best of SNO (School Newspapers Online) for their *Lion's Tale* articles.
- **Ethan Dvir** (Grade 8) and **Michael Rubinstein** (Grade 11) were named Second Team for Varsity Tennis.

- **Ari Einhorn** (Grade 12) was named First Team for Varsity Baseball.
- **Eitan Errera** (Grade 9), **Mali Osofsky** (Grade 11), and **Rayut Weiser-Rosenbaum** (Grade 9) represented CESJDS at the National Bible Contest.
- **Abby Feffer** (Grade 11) set a school record in Shotgun.
- **Abby Feffer** (Grade 11), **Caden Mont** (Grade 12), **Judy Meridach** (Grade 11), and **Gabe Waldman** (Grade 10) won awards at the Nora School Photography Festival.
- **Mia Forseter** (Grade 12) was named Softball tournament MVP and Player of the Year.
- **Ayla Gerstenblith** (Grade 10), **Sami Goldin** (Grade 11), **Max Olin** (Grade 11), and **Ari Rein** (Grade 10) sang the national anthems at the Israeli Embassy's *Yom Ha-atzma-ut* event.
- **Hannah Jakobovics** (Grade 10), **Issac Janson** (Grade 10), **Selma Teichman** (Grade 10), and **Elianna Yares** (Grade 12) had their artwork featured in a gallery show at VisArts.
- **Adam Neshet** (Grade 9) broke the PVAC Track Meet record in the Long Jump with a school record mark of 17-9.5.
- **Adam Salomon** (Grade 12) and **Judah Trauben** (Grade 11) were named Second Team for Varsity Baseball.
- **Avi Wallace '25** received a bronze medal in the American Computer Science League finals.
- **Isaac Yourman** (Grade 12) set a school record in the 800 meter run.

FACULTY & STAFF

- **Rebecca Prigal**, Lower School Principal, participated as a speaker for a parenting symposium hosted by Chabad of Silver Spring.
- **Heidi Tackill**, Lower School Learning Specialist, published a children's book, *Kai and the Ocean of Feelings*, a heartfelt and empowering story that helps kids navigate big emotions.

ALUMNI

- **Eitan Armon '14** was highlighted in a *Washington Jewish Week* article for his appearance in the film *Looking UP*, which was screened at the Annapolis Film Festival.
- **Jillian Berman '07** published a book titled *Sunk Cost, Who's to Blame for the Nation's Broken Student Loan System*.
- **Yuval David '96** was named by the ADL as a Hero Against Hate.
- **Arielle Goldman '07** wrote and directed a play.
- **Rina Shimshi '24** and **Celia Shimshi '24** both won the Sephardic National Scholarship.

- **Ariel Hauptman '00** and Rabbi Abe welcomed a daughter and son (twins).
- **Liza Levin '08** and Jason Goldfarb welcomed a daughter.
- **Ted Sandler '10** and Melissa Sandler welcomed a daughter.
- **Jessie (Yishai) Edberg '20** and Zohar Shmuel were married.
- **Alex Missner '17** and Lauren Clore Missner were married.
- **Hannah Elovitz '09** and Tzachi Posner were engaged.
- **Avi Felman '13** and Elizabeth Vaynman were engaged.

COMMUNITY

- CESJDS Parent **Jennifer Werger Feldman** was sworn in as Alpha Epsilon Phi's National President.
- CESJDS parent **Benji Davis'** article discussing the challenges of Israel education was published in *eJewish Philanthropy*.
- CESJDS parent **Elias Saratovsky** published a powerful article highlighting the life-changing impact of Birthright Israel in *eJewish Philanthropy*.
- CESJDS parent **Rabbi Benjamin Berger** published an article exploring how we can support Jewish college students in building identity, community, and leadership in *eJewish Philanthropy*.

Kol HaKavod!



Lower School Log:

Bringing Our Core Values to Life Through Humanities

◆ By Rebecca Prigal, Lower School Principal



The Lower School curriculum includes a wonderful research program spanning many grade levels. These projects exploring history, culture, geography, and the arts provide our students with learning experiences that bring the humanities to life. These interdisciplinary studies encourage curiosity, critical thinking, and develop a deeper understanding of the world and its diverse people. The projects culminate in celebrations of learning during which students share their learning with their families. What is even more compelling than the skills honed and the content acquired is the way in which these explorations solidify in students the core values of our school.

These enriching examples of humanities learning at the different grade levels expose students to topics such as animals of interest, states and districts in the U.S., countries around the world, and major historical periods.

What develops concurrently is an appreciation for being connected to multiple histories as well as to our global community, setting a strong foundation related to our values of *K'hillah/Community*, *Pluralism*, *V'ahavta L'rei-a-kha/Loving Your Neighbor*, and *Tikkun Olam/Repairing the World*. These units of study support both skill development and content acquisition in such an immersive and engaging way, fully supporting our core value of *Torah Lishmah/Love of Learning*.



To get a better understanding of the journeys in humanities at our school here is just a taste of what our students delve into:

Second Grade: Through research about countries around the world, students gain knowledge of a country's geography, culture, and history. Their learning is demonstrated through writing, technology, visual arts, and music.

Third Grade: Students learn about ecological communities and First Nations People, a pursuit of study that fosters an appreciation of important history and geography, enhancing student empathy and critical thinking.

Fourth Grade: Students research a U.S. State, using the five lenses of social studies - civics, geography, economy, diversity, and history; an endeavor that helps them consider the rich tapestry of American life and experience.

Fifth Grade: Fifth graders have a number of research projects including understanding the U.S. Colonies, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement. Moving from colonial to more contemporary times as a way of understanding U.S. history through literature and non-fiction research further develops maturing critical thinking skills and provides for an engaging year of learning.

Enriching humanities learning helps to foster a sense of awe and a passion to learn more. In addition to developing the core value of *Torah Lishmah/Love of Learning*, these projects shape student appreciation for our core values of *K'hillah/Community*, *V'ahavta L'rei-a-kha/Loving Your Neighbor*, *Pluralism*, and *Tikkun Olam/Repairing the World*. These experiences help to strengthen student awareness of the global community and our interconnectedness with other people. While learning about others, our students develop a better understanding of themselves, their values, and their potential as members of the Jewish, American, and world communities.

Middle School Musings:

Bridging Education with Action: A Journey of Learning and Reflection

◆ By **Rabbi Janet Ozur Bass**, Assistant Middle School Principal and **Deborah Feigenson**, Middle School English Language Arts and Social Studies Chair



A humanities education in middle school is about more than learning history, literature, and culture — it's about understanding people, perspectives, and the world we share. Through stories, primary sources, and ethical questions, students begin to see the connections between the past and the present, between knowledge and responsibility. When students engage deeply with the humanities, they are not just learning — they are preparing to take informed, thoughtful action in their communities and beyond.

One of the ironies of education is that so often, students learn about taking action by studying others, but rarely do they have the opportunity to participate directly. In the Middle School, we believe that for students to understand our values and what it means to be human, they need to have educational experiences that allow them to live those values. Instead of only reading about how a bill becomes a law, students participate in a Model Congress where they write and debate bills. Rather than listening to a lecture on civic activism, students meet with their senators on Capitol Hill and advocate for issues they care about. When learning about the unhoused and those who are food insecure in our area, students participate in a day of action, doing service at shelters and food pantries throughout the area. Throughout their time in the Middle School, students participate in numerous experiential programs and projects such as these, culminating in the Bridges 8th Grade Capstone Trip to Atlanta, GA and Montgomery, AL.

In Atlanta, students spend the first part of the week exploring key sites from the history of the Civil Rights movement and the legacy of slavery. They visit the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where they can listen to the sermons of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the location where they were first delivered. They go to the CDC to meet with public health officials working on key health issues in communities with limited access to medical care. They explore the Rosa Parks Museum and the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum and Memorial. They spend an afternoon working at a food bank, giving back to the local community that hosts their Shabbaton.

One evening, students visit The Temple, a congregation that was active in the Civil Rights movement in Atlanta and that continues to be engaged in issues of justice in the community today. While there, students meet with a multi-generational panel of congregation members who share about their experiences with racism and antisemitism growing up in the South. This helps students develop empathy and understanding for the diverse voices within the Jewish community at the same time as they learn about the history of other communities within the American tapestry.

Students end their trip sharing Shabbat at a summer camp in the Blue Ridge Mountains. This first grade wide Shabbaton serves as a bridge to their High School Shabbatonim. After an extraordinary week of learning and exploring, students engage in several days of phone-free reflection, praying, and group bonding. This allows them to process all that they have learned and seen over the week while strengthening relationships with each other. They engage in that most human of all activities: connection.

The Bridges trip is exactly what its name implies — it is a bridge between the exuberant, sometimes confusing, sometimes chaotic experience of middle school and the demanding, dynamic, but sometimes overwhelming experience of high school, and beyond. Ultimately, a humanities education aims to cultivate informed, reflective individuals who can interpret complexity, ask meaningful questions, and take responsible action in a diverse and ever-changing society. Throughout the Bridges trip, students learn about the values of *Tzedek/Justice*, *Torah Lishmah/Love of Learning*, and *K'hillah/Community* by living them. Our Bridges capstone trip brings the goals of a humanities education to life by challenging students to engage with real-world stories of identity, history, and justice. It pushes them to ask meaningful questions, reflect deeply, and consider how they can take responsible action in a complex world.

◆◆ It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it. ◆◆

- Pirkei Avot 2:16

High School Highlights:

Humanities - A Life Sport

◆ By Dr. Tom Worden, High School English Teacher



“How are you ever going to be able to hold your own in an argument with your future partner if you don’t know how to write an English essay?” My response to students expressing doubt about the value of the work they were doing in my class. A joke, of course, but I was always only half joking. Some years ago now, when I expressed a similar concern about the value of the work I do teaching argument in the service of literary criticism, my partner assured me that with every argument my students undertake, they “blaze new pathways in their minds.” Over the years I have held onto this thought. From my experiences as an educator of nearly forty years, I steadfastly believe it to be true.

There is no more explosive year in a student’s development as a writer and critical thinker than eleventh grade. With every essay our students write over the course of that year, we see their minds opening to the possibilities that ever more nuanced and sophisticated arguments bring. Just the choice of the argument type that best fits the content of the point a student wants to make is a worthwhile learning experience. Of the types we teach in English — Appearance/Reality, Cause/Effect, Inconsistency/Resolution — research has shown that the Compare and Contrast argument format is particularly effective in building neural pathways in our brains. More than just an attempt at mastery of an argumentative strategy, learning this format often proves a formative event, the moment in which students make command decisions about what surprises them, similarity or difference, check down the side on which they land, and arrive at deeper conclusions. Students argue deliberately, purposefully, sometimes for the first time. From there they learn to combine argument types, blending, for example, compare and contrast with position paper formats to frame detailed observations in broader networks of secondary sources.

Personal writing in eleventh grade can also be very powerful. Composing their own personal narratives while reading Tim O’Brien’s evocative *The Things They Carried* our students discover the identity of expression unique to each of them. The result is often revelatory. For some students, the *This I Believe* essay is nothing short of a coming of age as, for the first time, they deliver a public speech on what sometimes can prove a surprisingly deep conviction. For example, in response to the camper who came to him for “actual guidance” in a matter about which he was “genuinely unsure,” one student concluded, “The most meaningful moments are the ones that mean more to others than they do to you.” Another wrote that he meant to “Live life with confidence, . . . keep learning from experiences, trust in the person you are becoming, but most of all, be happy.” In the personal writing our students go on to do in their personal narratives, even college essays, some take important steps in coming to terms with events in their lives that present challenges that might otherwise go unaddressed.

The close reading we teach in our classes, a version of the Hebrew *pshat* and *drash*, also offers an important set of skills. Part of the excitement of our jobs as English teachers is to introduce our students to the worlds within the works of literature we read. Navigating literal and the often multi-layered fabric of figurative, abstract meanings, we often discover interpretative possibilities previously unconsidered. Whether readers should take their leads from literal or figurative meanings and how far they should push on those deeper abstractions in determining salience present new and intriguing challenges.

◆◆ The Humanities offer skills that help us all play successfully on the field of life ◆◆

The business of literary interpretation does not find its bounds in literature. While characters are not real people, their psyches, however artificial, offer subtexts not unlike those which we encounter in the people around us as they navigate the often complex situations in which they find themselves. In learning to navigate these subtexts, we learn something about those people and ultimately the world in which they live.

In so many respects, then, the Humanities comprise not just another academic discipline. They offer skills that help us all play successfully on the field of life.

More Than Words: The Narrative Power of Giving

What inspires someone to give? At CESJDS, it's rarely just about numbers. It's about stories — personal, powerful, and lasting.

From the earliest grades, our students learn that storytelling is more than writing or reading — it's how we make meaning, understand one another, and connect across generations. In the Lower School, students explore their identity through personal narratives and Jewish holidays. In Middle School, they wrestle with historical perspective, ethical dilemmas, and Jewish texts. In High School, they refine their voice, engage in nuanced debate, and craft senior theses that reflect deep thought and moral courage.

At every stage, CESJDS uses the Humanities to teach students how to listen closely, think critically, and speak with purpose. Storytelling becomes a tool for learning, leadership, and empathy.

This same narrative power shapes our approach to development. Our donors, especially alumni and parents, support the school because their stories remain deeply connected to it: a transformative teacher, a Jewish moment that resonated, or a classroom conversation that changed your perception on life. Giving becomes a way of continuing the CESJDS story for anyone who walks through our halls, ensuring the next generation can experience the same depth, meaning, and joy that you experienced 5, 10, or 40+ years ago.

What are the JDS stories that live within you?

While the world around us continues to shift, CESJDS remains a constant — a place of belonging, meaning, and Jewish values. How might you help ensure that today's students can access the same transformative education that shaped your life or your family's story?

Every story matters. Every act of generosity strengthens the next chapter. *Join us.*



Meet the Development Team

The CESJDS Development team is focused on building a sustainable future by honoring the stories that shaped us, and engaging the people who lived them. Meet the team behind the fundraising, stewardship, and engagement efforts that bring our mission to life:



Sarah Shapiro, Director of Development

In my first month of working at CESJDS, I sat in on a High School class where students debated a moral dilemma from Jewish texts — thoughtfully, respectfully, and passionately. I remember thinking, “This is what we need more of in the world.” I’ve spent my career helping Jewish organizations in Greater Washington grow, but what fuels me here is knowing that our work sustains a generation of young people who are learning to lead with both intellect and heart. Every gift, every relationship, every story we share brings us closer to a future grounded in Jewish values and educational excellence. I believe our work is all about connection. The most meaningful conversations I’ve had aren’t about dollar amounts — they’re about what CESJDS means to someone’s life story.



Amy Forseter, Major Gifts Officer

What began as a warm welcome turned into a lifelong connection. When I moved to DC more than 20 years ago, I couldn’t have imagined how deeply my life would become intertwined with this community. My now-husband, Eric ‘93, introduced me to his circle of JDS friends — alumni whose bonds ran deep and who quickly became my own community. As our children became JDS students, my connection to the school grew even stronger. I stepped into volunteer roles, built meaningful relationships with fellow parents, faculty, and staff, and saw firsthand the power of this place. Throughout my career in the Jewish world — locally, nationally, and globally — I’ve come to believe that nothing shapes our future more than Jewish education. It’s where values are planted, leaders are grown, and identity takes root. Supporting JDS is my way of giving back to the community that has given my family so much, and of investing in a strong, vibrant Jewish tomorrow. I’d love to hear your story too — what brought you to JDS, and what has made you stay?



Maya Arber ‘17, Associate Director of Alumni Relations

Returning to CESJDS as a professional has been deeply meaningful. Walking the same halls I did as a student, I’m reminded of how much has evolved — and yet, the heart of JDS remains unchanged: a true sense of home and purpose.

From the University of Delaware to Herzliya, Israel, and back to Rockville, I’ve always been committed to building vibrant Jewish communities. Now, being part of the Development Team feels like coming full circle — helping shape stories, strengthen connections, and ensure today’s students experience the same lasting impact JDS had on me. It’s a privilege to give back to the place that gave me so much. I’m energized every day by the passion of our students, the dedication of our faculty, and the generosity of our community.



Michael Lurie, Development Events Manager

Only days after arriving at CESJDS for the first time, I found myself standing quietly in the hallway on *Yom HaZikaron*, peeking into a ceremony led by our youngest students. After a moment of silence, they stood tall and began to sing *Hatikvah* — every voice strong, every child knowing the words by heart. In that moment, I felt the power of this place: a school that cultivates not just knowledge, but pride, identity, and a deep sense of belonging to the Jewish people and Israel.

As a day school alum, I already understood the value of this kind of education — but seeing it now through the lens of a professional and community member has given me a renewed sense of purpose. Our students accomplish so much, and I’m honored to help share their stories and build a vibrant future through meaningful events that bring our families together. I’m inspired every day by what I see here, and I can’t wait to continue this journey as part of the CESJDS legacy.

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

- AUGUST 26**First Day of School
- AUGUST 28** Middle School Back to School Night
- SEPTEMBER 1**Labor Day - School Closed
- SEPTEMBER 4** High School Back to School Night
- SEPTEMBER 5**Upper School Eli '16, Lena '18,
& Shevi '22 Lerner Kabbalat Shabbat
- SEPTEMBER 9** Lower School Back to School Night
- SEPTEMBER 22** Erev Rosh Hashanah - School Closed
- SEPTEMBER 23-24** Rosh Hashanah - School Closed



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Letter from Rabbi Malkus 1
- Kol HaKavod* (Accomplishments) 2
- Lower School Log: Bringing Our
Core Values to Life Through Humanities..... 3
- Middle School Musings: Bridging Education with Action: A
Journey of Learning and Reflection 4
- High School Highlights: Humanities - A Life Sport 5
- More Than Words: The Narrative Power of Giving 6
- Meet the Development Team 7
- Upcoming Events 8