



## From Rabbi Mitchel Malkus, Head of School

### The Power and Promise of the Arts at CESJDS

At CESJDS, we believe that the arts are not an enrichment, they are essential. They awaken the imagination, nurture the soul, and build bridges between intellect and emotion, between the individual and the community. Whether through paint or percussion, movement or melody, our students learn not only to create but to see the world anew, to understand that the arts and meaning are intertwined.

The arts are powerful because they speak a universal language. They offer our students an opportunity to explore their identity, to take risks, and to express themselves beyond what words are able to. They remind us that each brushstroke, note, or dance step is both deeply personal and, when shared, profoundly communal. At CESJDS, the arts are exceptional not just because of the talent of our students and faculty, but because of how they are woven into the very fabric of who we are, a Jewish school that celebrates creativity as a sacred act.

From the joyful hum of the Lower School art room to the rhythm of the Upper School Music Studio and the harmonies of our High School ensembles, the arts at CESJDS thrive at every level. Each division contributes uniquely to our shared culture of creativity. In this edition of *The Lions' Roar* you will learn about the arts across our school.

Rebecca Prigal, Lisah Bernstein, Kirsten Kirimlis, and Courtney Conner, write that in our Lower School, the arts are intentionally interwoven into daily learning, deepening connections across subjects and Jewish life. Students explore the world through music, visual art, and dance, discovering how creativity enhances understanding. The integration of Israeli and Hebrew dance connects movement with meaning, helping students embody Jewish values and traditions.

In this edition's Middle School Musings, Jake Rulnick shares how he discovered his love of art in our very own studios, guided by mentors who encouraged exploration and courage. Now, as the Middle School Visual Arts Teacher, he fosters that same spirit in his students. Last, you will read about Music at the High School level. Gary Prince takes us up close to students' experience from the Instrumental Ensemble to the Honors Music Composition program, creativity flourishes in every note.

Across divisions, our students learn that to create is to connect. To themselves, to one another, and to something greater. In Judaism, *hiddur mitzvah* teaches us to beautify our rituals, to elevate holiness through creativity. So too, in every art form at CESJDS, we elevate learning through beauty and meaning.

As you read this edition of *The Lions' Roar*, I expect you will see that the arts are not merely a discipline we teach, but they embody so much of what CESJDS is. In every note, brushstroke, and dance step, our students bring Jewish ideas to life, adding light, color, and song to our world.



# כל הכבוד (Accomplishments)

## SCHOOL

- 69 students earned the **Global Seal of Bilingualism**, demonstrating Functional Fluency or higher in English and at least one additional language. Of these, 67 achieved this distinction in Hebrew, 6 in Spanish, and 1 in Arabic.
- **Upper School Rocketry Team** has been chosen to participate in the 2025-2026 NASA Student Launch Challenge.
- **High School Boys Cross Country** won first place at the PVAC Cross Country Championship Meet.
- **High School Girls Cross Country** won second place at the PVAC Cross Country Championship Meet.
- **Varsity Girls Volleyball** won second place in the PVAC Championship.
- **JV Girls Volleyball** won first place in the PVAC Championship for the first time in CESJDS history.
- **Middle School Boys Soccer** won second place in the PVAC Championship.
- **Varsity Girls Tennis** won second place in the PVAC Championship.

## STUDENT

- **5 students** earned the global seal of bilingualism in Hebrew plus an additional language:
  - **Ori Ben-Nun** (Grade 12): Arabic and Hebrew
  - **Ruby Kotok** (Grade 12): Spanish and Hebrew
  - **Sophie Moyal** (Grade 12): Spanish and Hebrew
  - **Ben Amdur** (Grade 12): Spanish and Hebrew
  - **Lilah Waldman** (Grade 12): Spanish and Hebrew
- **Ella Arking** (Grade 12), **Dara Blecher** (Grade 12), **Alex Bushman** (Grade 12), **Hadriel Dayanim** (Grade 12), **Joshua Dori** (Grade 12), **Claire Elbaum** (Grade 11), **Jonathan Gordon** (Grade 12), **Micah Harkavy** (Grade 11), **Ryan Klepper** (Grade 11), **David Schanzer** (Grade 11), **David Spieler** (Grade 11), and **Penn Stein** (Grade 12) performed at the annual 2025 Maryland Music Education Association conference
- **Hadriel Dayanim** (Grade 12), **Aliza Elias-Bachrach** (Grade 12), **Julian Goldberg** (Grade 12), **Jonathan Gordon** (Grade 12), **Jennifer Kelner** (Grade 12), **Malka Lederman** (Grade 12), **Tyler Portnoy** (Grade 12), **Oliver Silver** (Grade 12), **Lilah Waldman** (Grade 12), and **Isaac Yourman** (Grade 12) have been named Commended Scholars from the National Merit Scholarship Program.
- **Ellie Rosenthal-Strisik** (Grade 12) was featured in *Bethesda Magazine* for creating a website, College for All, a groundbreaking resource to help neurodivergent students navigate the college search process.

## FACULTY & STAFF

- **Natalie Levitan**, High School History Teacher, wrote an article in *edutopia* about how intentional assignment design can motivate students and deepen engagement—unlocking future opportunities through clarity, curiosity, and purpose.
- **Grace McMillan**, Nancy and Paul M. Hamburger Jewish Text High School Department Chair, joined colleagues from across the region at the Learning Circles at CJM program, bringing her expertise in Jewish texts to a conversation on LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- **Gary Prince**, Upper School Instrumental Music Teacher, was selected to present “Improvisation Games for Mixed Ensembles” at the 2025 Maryland Music Education Association.
- **David Solomon**, Debra Herman Berger Director of Arts Education, was selected as a Helen Hayes Judge for Washington Theatre and has begun a three-year term.
- **Benjamin Tellie**, Upper School Visual Arts Teacher, was accepted into a three-minute thesis competition (3MT) to discuss his dissertation at George Washington University. Benjamin’s research involves, in part, his work as an art teacher at CESJDS.

## ALUMNI

- **Danielle Jeweler ‘97** was featured in the September/October issue of *Bethesda Magazine* as one of the Women who Inspire.
- **Matthew Lawrenz ‘20** was selected to be a Ballboy at the 2025 US Open.
- **Aliza Lesser ‘25** was named one of this year’s Emerging Scholars by Maharat.
- **Aviva Braier ‘15** and Aaron Burstyn welcomed a son.
- **Sam Krosnick ‘10** and Rachel Krosnick welcomed a daughter.
- **Evan Waghelstein ‘07** and Dara Waghelstein welcomed a son.
- **Staci Smith ‘11** and Jesse Schwartz were married.
- **Mattie Watson ‘20** and Sol Feder were married.
- **Eliana Gropman ‘19** and Noah Lincke were engaged.
- **Ethan Missner ‘19** and Lily Khabi were engaged.
- **Gabe Roark ‘15** and Julia LeMel were engaged.
- **Josh Singer ‘12** and Stephanie Miller were engaged.
- **Max Ungar ‘12** and Sydney Sanders were engaged.

## COMMUNITY

- CESJDS Parent **Dana Marlowe** was featured in the September/October issue of *Bethesda Magazine* as one of the Women who Inspire.
- CESJDS Parent **Rabbi Fabián Werbin** was featured in *Washington Jewish Week* on creating a Jewish Home in Rockville.

## Kol HaKavod!



# Lower School Log:

## Arts Integration in the Lower School

◆ **Rebecca Prigal**, Lower School Principal, **Lisah Bernstein**, T'filah Specialist, **Kirsten Kirmilis**, General Music, Strings Orchestra, and CESJDS Singers Specialist, and **Courtney Conner**, Art Specialist



At CESJDS, the arts are intentionally woven into the elementary curriculum to enhance learning, foster creativity, and deepen connections to Jewish values and global cultures. Through music, visual art, and dance, students engage in meaningful experiences that support academic and personal growth.

**Music:** Music serves as a dynamic vehicle for both self-expression and collaboration. Using the Orff approach,

students create musical presentations as they would share ideas in other curricular areas. This process nurtures creativity and develops partner and group working skills needed across the curriculum.

In addition to supporting skills needed across subject areas, music provides opportunities for global exploration. For example, in Second Grade World Day, students study the traditions of specific countries by learning traditional songs, playing authentic instruments, and exploring cultural materials through books and media. This fosters respect for diverse cultures and develops a broader worldview.

**Visual Art:** Visual art instruction supports fine motor development in the early years and expands into interdisciplinary projects as students progress through the grades. Beginning in Gurim, art activities complement the Handwriting Without Tears program by emphasizing top-down drawing and strengthening hand muscles through page-filling color exercises. As students advance, projects connect directly to literature, social studies, and Judaic studies learning. Examples include:

- **Second Grade:** World Showcase art projects highlight the cultures of the countries each class studies.
- **Third Grade:** Art room activities support the First Nations social studies project, with students creating artwork connected to folktales and tribal traditions.
- **Fourth Grade:** Students design Havdalah art projects in conjunction with their Judaic Studies learning and create 3D textured maps of U.S. states as part of the “50+2” social studies learning.

Through these projects, students experience art as both a mode of personal expression and gain a greater understanding of history, cultures, and traditions.

**Dance:** Dance provides students with an opportunity to internalize Judaic studies and Hebrew learning through physical expression. Israeli dance is taught using Hebrew songs that align with prayers, texts, and Jewish traditions. For instance, first graders celebrate receiving their siddurim with dances inspired by prayer songs, while second graders learn Shabbat dances that connect to their classroom studies.

As students move into the upper elementary grades, dance deepens their connection to Jewish values and Israel. Third graders integrate dance, script, and song in their study of Israel; fourth graders participate in a grade-wide Havdalah dance that emphasizes unity and heritage; and fourth and fifth graders may choose to join a voluntary dance troupe, *Horah Arayot*, performing for the community and further developing their sense of connection to the global Jewish community.

By connecting music, art, and dance to core academic subjects and Jewish learning, students gain opportunities to think critically, collaborate effectively, and express themselves creatively. These experiences cultivate joy in learning while strengthening cultural awareness, Jewish identity, and a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

# Middle School Musings:

## Returning to the Den

◆ Jake Rulnick '21, Middle School Visual Arts Teacher



My love of art began in Mr. Benjamin Tellie's classroom during my sophomore year of high school at JDS. Inspired by some older boys who were painting at the table next to me during 2-D Art Z'man Kodesh (ZK), I asked for a canvas and some pointers on which paint to use. I picked up a brush, and the rest was history. I fell head over heels in love with painting. In addition to the impact of the warmth of the art-room, materials, other students, and books in the classroom library, Mr. Tellie's support and that of the other teachers in the department pushed me to experiment, take chances, and explore my budding identity through artistic expression.

In subsequent semesters, I signed up for every art class I could, taking 2-D Art and Design, Ceramics, Graphic Design, and 2-D Art and Design again. I couldn't get enough, and when I graduated from JDS in 2021, I kept in close touch with Mr. Tellie and visited the art classroom as often as I could on visits home from college.

This past spring, I had the opportunity to return to JDS in a professional role as a teacher's assistant to Mr. Tellie and Dr. Solomon, as well as to be a substitute teacher. I entered with a passion for art and a strong interest in education, and I left with a reinforced sense of my commitment to the field and the satisfaction of discovering my joy on a daily basis (as well as a job for this spring!). I really loved working with middle school students, many of whom are beginning to find their artistic style and to use art as an outlet. I often

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returned home to the dinner table with tales of the jokes circulating around the classroom or the satisfaction of helping a student with their still life project.

This year, I am overjoyed to be joining JDS as the Middle School Visual Arts

Teacher, where my longtime mentor, Mr. Tellie, will now be my colleague. As an educator, I strive to teach students tools with which they can articulate their self-expression and delve further into their identities as students, artists, citizens, family members, Jews, and friends. I will seek to blend art history with alternative design, Jewish values with national holidays, and traditional Western media with those native to this land and many others. I hope my students will see me as a resource to further their education and also as a caring ear to share their concerns, goals, triumphs, and trials. It brings me great delight to continue the legacy of the arts at JDS by inspiring the next generation of makers and thinkers of the Greater Washington Jewish community. I look forward to sharing my progress as I work towards this intention.

## Celebrating 60 Years!

Join us marking six decades of learning, community, and growth.

See all our 60th anniversary events at [www.cesjds.org/pages/jds60](http://www.cesjds.org/pages/jds60)



Celebrating 60 Years & Counting

# High School Highlights:

## Music at CESJDS

◆ By Gary Prince, Upper School Instrumental Music Teacher



Music strengthens our bonds and brings our JDS community together! Whether in class, at lunch, community time (CT), Kab Shab, or an assembly, students are always learning and making music together.

The centerpiece of our High School music program is the Instrumental Ensemble class, which brings together students of all grade levels and instruments to develop their skills and learn to play as a group. No audition is required. The unique setup of our music program allows me to choose and personally arrange music to fit our students' skills and interests, to devote significant time to practicing improvisation, and to allow students themselves to create the music we play. Over my six years as the Instrumental Music Teacher, these ensemble classes have continually grown in size and skill. It has become the norm for students to repeat the Instrumental Ensemble class again and again, and for the ensembles to perform an eclectic repertoire of jazz and music from around the world at our Winter and Spring Concerts, our Blecher Family Arts Chai-Lights celebration, and at our weekly Kab Shab.

Students who have taken Instrumental Ensemble twice may now enroll in Honors Music Composition, a new opportunity for our most motivated music students to develop their skills and to take on a leadership role in their ensemble. In addition to participating in the Instrumental Ensemble class, Honors Music Composition students create original musical compositions and arrangements to be performed by their peers, compile a music portfolio, and set individual musical goals. These students work closely with me to develop their skills in and out of class. The 2025-2026 school year is our second year of offering Honors Music and already so many students have enrolled, that we are now offering Honors Levels II and III for those who wish to further challenge themselves. Thanks to our new Honors program, more and more of our ensemble's repertoire is completely student created and student led, an incredible and rare achievement for a High School music program.

In addition to classes, JDS offers an array of extracurricular and informal music making opportunities, including our amazing acapella choir *Shir Madness*, Pit Orchestras for the musicals, Zimriyah Band, and performance opportunities at Daniel Pearl World Music Day, Blecher Family Arts Chai Lights, or any given Friday at Kab Shab. Anyone can become part of the musical community at JDS, whether they take a class, sign up to perform at a special event, or drop by during CT to enjoy our newly renovated music room. Instruments are always available in the music room for students to play, and I am always happy to talk about music with anyone!



# In the Spotlight: Alex Feder '01

## Lead Tour Guitarist for Linkin' Park

Alex knew early that music was his path. In middle school, he played in a cover band with friends, including JDS alum Benji Friebling '01 and current JDS parent, Stu Tipograph '01. He describes his defining moment at Benji's Bar Mitzvah: "His guitar teacher joined us, and we covered *Sunshine of Your Love* by Cream. And that was it. Honestly, that was the exact moment that I was like, 'This is the thing that I want to do.'"

What JDS gave him went far beyond stage time. "When I was at JDS, the music program was really small. Nobody else was pursuing a serious music career. Nobody was going to music school. So it was a lot of self-motivation." Even so, JDS widened his sense of possibility. "In our senior year, we started something called JDS-Fest. It was my baby. I played in three of the four bands." It was the first time he heard his music truly amplified: "It was a mind-blowing moment in the JDS Auditorium. It was the exact same feeling I felt playing Wembley Stadium 25 years later. I like playing music that I care about. That's probably the most important thing."



Alex playing music with friends

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He credits his thirteen years as a student at JDS—and the relationships he built—as critical to securing his current job: lead tour guitarist for Linkin Park. "My audition process was basically seeing whether these guys liked me enough that they would consider wanting to be on an airplane with me, be in a dressing room with me. I take pride in being a pretty easygoing person. Those are skills that I learned at JDS."

That emphasis on people shapes his perspective on success. "I think people always think that [to find success] you have to practice this much or take this type of lesson, it's not." The lesson he carried forward: "There are a million people out there who can play great. The only way that you find success in the music industry, or really any other part of life, is by connecting with other human beings."

The JDS community continues to travel with him. He regularly meets up with friends from JDS at shows and when he's in their cities: "It's really nice to feel that I have a wide network of Jewish people who I can connect with, lean on, hang out with, and get dinner with whenever I'm in their city. I have several active text chains with different groups of JDS friends."

Alex carries his strong Jewish identity around the globe. "I am very

publicly Jewish; it's all over my Instagram. When answering questions from fans, I'll always reference being a Jewish kid or growing up at a Jewish school. I feel very proud of it." JDS also shaped how he shows up in public and private: he strives to be the same person online and off, resisting the polarizing pull of social media—"that's not what I learned at JDS. It's not what I learned from my parents." When the feeds get loud, he resets: "I'll turn my phone off, go have coffee with a friend, maybe call somebody who I love and who I know loves me." His compass stays simple: "More than anything else, I just try and be a mensch."



Alex in concert with his band, Linkin Park.



Alex backstage with JDS friends Jake Ravick '01/Parent, former teacher Karri Oakes, and Nathan Bortnick '01.

Photos courtesy of Alex Feder '01.

# CESJDS' Newly Renovated Upper School Music Room



Thanks to a generous donor, as CESJDS marks its 60th anniversary, students returned to a transformed Upper School Music Room. “Our newly renovated Music Room looks better, sounds better, and is more organized than ever before!” shared Gary Prince, Instrumental Music Teacher. “We made significant improvements to our soundproofing so that music classes are now less disruptive to assemblies booked in the Theater at the same time.” Additionally, campuswide upgrades to the gym, Beit Midrash, and theater sound systems elevate concerts, assemblies, and showcases. The space now matches the strength of CESJDS’s robust music program. “Seeing resources going into the music program is really nice. It feels like what I’m doing is so important that they’re willing to invest in it,” said senior musician Josh Dori. To learn more about making a meaningful impact on the CESJDS community, contact **Sarah Shapiro**, Director of Development, at [sshapiro@cesjds.org](mailto:sshapiro@cesjds.org) or (301) 692-4877.

## The 2025- 2026 Year in Arts

As the school year begins, CESJDS is proud to announce this year’s Season of the Arts. Our performances, concerts, and showcases are among the most anticipated events of the year—celebrated by students and the entire school community alike. These programs create meaningful experiences and lasting memories for all who take part. We invite you to join us in celebrating our talented student artists throughout the year.

### Daniel Pearl World Music Day

Friday, October 31, 2025

Honoring the memory of journalist Daniel Pearl, CESJDS participated in an international network of world music concerts, fostering Daniel’s desire to create a “harmony for humanity” through music. Our day featured multiple student-run concerts.

### The Joan and Marvin Rosenberg High School Musical

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

- Thursday, December 11, 2025 7:00 PM
- Saturday, December 13, 2025 8:00 PM
- Sunday, December 14, 2025 4:00 PM

The hit musical comedy about six quirky children competing to be the Putnam County spelling champion! Full of audience participation!

### Upper School Winter Concert

Thursday, January 15, 2026 7:00 PM

Join us for an evening of music featuring the middle school and high school bands, the middle school choir, and *Shir Madness* a cappella choir, as well as music arranged and composed by our advanced music students.

### The Barbara and Allan Topol Middle School Musical

*Newsies, JR.*

- Thursday, December 12, 2026 7:00 PM
- Sunday, December 15, 2026 2:00 PM

Our middle school students will “Seize the Day” and bring the Disney musical to life! Fun for the whole family.

### The Blecher Family Arts Chai-lights

Wednesday, May 20, 2026 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Our signature event! Hundreds of students artwork, performances by students from both campuses, and hands-on arts making booths. Don’t miss our yearly celebration of creativity!

### Upper School Spring Concert

Tuesday, June 2, 2026 7:00 PM

Our middle and high school bands and choirs perform once again as we close out the 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
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- DECEMBER 11, 13, & 14** Joan and Marvin Rosenberg High School Musical: *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee!*
- DECEMBER 14 - 21** ..... Hanukkah
- DECEMBER 15 - 19** .. Middle School Innovation Minimester
- DECEMBER 18** ..... Fanaroff Family Hanukkah Musical
- DECEMBER 22 - JANUARY 2** ..... Winter Break
- JANUARY 8** ..... 8th Grade Weinberg Family Science Fair
- JANUARY 15** ..... Upper School Winter Concert
- JANUARY 16** ..... Stillman Family KabShab
- JANUARY 18 - 20** Capital Jewish Hoops Invitational Varsity Basketball Tournament



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