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akiba

schechter

newsletter student life.
milestones.
community.

TAMMUZ 5771

SUMMER 2011

this issue

- ▶ GRANDPARENTS VISIT PRE-SCHOOL 2
- ▶ 5 QUESTIONS WITH... 4
- ▶ CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE 4
- ▶ ISRAEL TRIP 6
- ▶ COMMERCE IN THE CLASSROOM 7

Israel Trip 2011



Find more photos, tidbits, trivia and community on our Facebook page, Twitter Feed, and YouTube channels. Shortcut: go to www.akibaschechter.org.

For the first time in 12 years, Akiba's graduating grade class took a 10-day trip to Israel. In the Negev, students hiked Matzada, slept in Bedouin tents, **rode camels**, and studied the constellations. Page 6.



10

DAYS THE 8TH GRADERS SPENT IN ISRAEL



1 PLACE TAKEN BY 8TH GRADER SHIRA BASA'S SCIENCE FAIR PAPER ON THE PHYSICS OF MUSIC. SHIRA PLACED FIRST IN THE STATE.

109,743

PAGES READ BY THE 1-8 GRADERS DURING THE ANNUAL BOOK CONTEST



250

GRANDPARENTS & SPECIAL FRIENDS VISITED US IN MAY



FROM TOP: Birthday cakes of the topography of Israel for Yom Ha'atzmaut, Grandparents Day activities in the Pre-School, an ice-skating collage by the Downstairs Green Room, Miss Jr. Teen Indiana, and the 8th graders in formation.



inside

- 3 WELCOME
- 4 5 QUESTIONS WITH...
- 5 THE MUSIC MAN
- 5 D'VAR TORAH
- 6 ISRAEL TRIP
- 7 COMMERCE IN 201
- 7 100TH DAY OF SCHOOL
- 8 WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

MISS JR. TEEN INDIANA, A TITLE WON BY SHOSHANA ZACHARIAS (8TH)

CONTINUED: The cover of a Kindergartener's book during the Young Authors unit, Sienna Kohl at the Annual Shuffle, and a watercolor created by a Pre-Schooler.



8 THE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT HIGH SCHOOLS OUR 17 GRADUATES WILL BE ATTENDING





on my mind

A New Tradition

Summer in Chicago means warmer weather, art festivals, and more time with family. At Akiba-Schechter, summer brings Pre-School Camp, the smell of fresh paint, and curriculum planning. This summer, however, one additional element is at play: the exuberance of 8th graders and their chaperones (including yours truly) returning from Israel.

Since this was the first trip an Akiba-Schechter graduating class has taken to Israel in 12 years, it was met with some doubt: "Are you *sure* we're going?" "I'll believe it when I see it!" It also took two years of planning and fundraising; Thursday lunches sold by the 8th graders became a new Akiba tradition.

But the trip did happen, and it was an experience that we will never forget.

Many impressions will last: the camaraderie of our 8th graders, reuniting with our B'not Sherut (Israeli civil service participants) from the past three years, seeing the thriving, modern society of Israel, walking – literally – in the footsteps of our forebears, participating in the Jerusalem Day parade, meeting Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger, visiting the JUF's



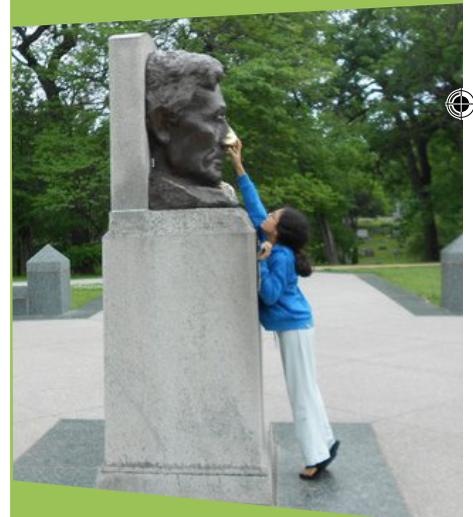
partnership region of Kiryat Gat, Lachish and Shafir. Not only did this trip reinforce a direct connection with the land our students have been studying all these years, it served as a powerful tool to ensure their connection to the community – even as they move on to high school, college, and beyond – as full citizens and contributors to American and Jewish society.

The Israel Trip is only one of many diverse experiences that our children have at Akiba-Schechter. Check out our Q&A with ATT Teacher of the Year Nominee Mara Katz, reflections on this year's school musical, and the 7th grade trip to Springfield, IL. Our tagline – "inspire. challenge. nurture" – is more than just a nice-sounding statement. At Akiba-Schechter, we live it.

Elliot Cohen
Director of Operations

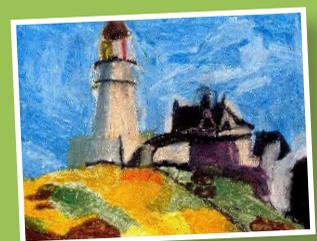
LAND OF LINCOLN

While the 8th graders were flying to Israel, the 7th grade took a two-day trip to Springfield, IL. Highlights included a private tour of the capitol building, Lincoln's home, the newly built Lincoln Museum, a Frank Lloyd Wright mansion, and more. Below: Leah tries to touch the President's nose. Turn to page 4 to learn more about the 7th grade Chicago Project.



AKIBA TRIVIA

Can you identify the original painter of this classic masterpiece, reinterpreted by Tomer Keysar (5th)? Find the answer at www.akibaschechter.org



Q>A

5 Questions with...

Mara Franken, Kindergarten Teacher

Q> How long have you been at Akiba?

A< I started six years ago. The first year I was in the Peach Room, and since then I've been in the Kindergarten.

Q> Why did you become a teacher?

A< I always wanted to be a teacher. When I was in Kindergarten, I wrote "teacher" on my list of future goals. As a senior in high school, I had the opportunity to intern for half a day in the profession of my choice, and I went back to my grade school to help in the classroom. In college I majored in elementary education.

Q> Do you have a philosophy for teaching that guides you?

A< So much about school is about being comfortable, and when you can achieve that, you can do a lot. I can be rather silly in class.

I have a karaoke machine that I will bring and am unashamed to sing to, and the kids and I have dance parties. I also involve the kids in my life. They hear a lot about my dog and my husband; they even voted on the dress and cake for my wedding.

Q> What is the best and worst part of teaching?



Mara helps lead a shabbat sing-a-long during the Summer Program.

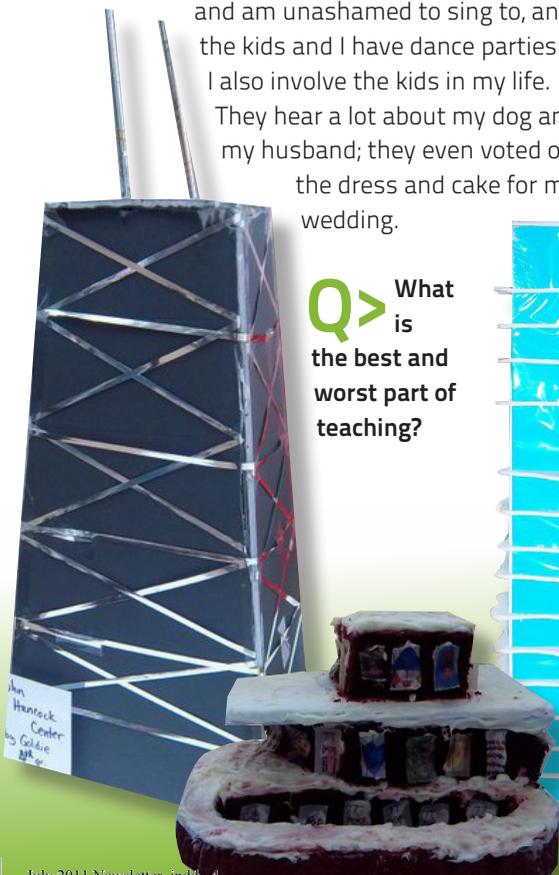
A< The best is the priceless things kids will say. The end of the year is the worst! I always think I'll never love a class as much as the one I have to say good-bye to, but then of course I do. I dread doing report cards at the end of the year because in the middle of doing them I'm always crying as I put my love for the kids into my comments.

Q> If you weren't a teacher, you'd be:

A< A chef! My family had a restaurant when I was growing up. It was like in the sitcom Cheers. Even after the restaurant closed, my grandmother went into catering, so I've always been around food and cooking. It's one of my favorite things to do in the classroom. There's so much teaching you can do through cooking: writing the recipe on the board, counting and measuring the ingredients, following instructions. For me it's such an accomplishment when a child learns how to crack an egg.

LEFT: Ms. Kass' 3rd/4th graders built replicas of landmark Chicago buildings during their Chicago architecture unit.

RIGHT: Nica May's replica of a Frank Lloyd Wright window, part of the 7th graders' Chicago Project. Each student chose an essential question to answer. Example: Design a new landmark building that will harmonize with the existing skyline.



The Play's the Thing

A musical brings the whole school together

Every year, Akiba-Schechter produces a musical. Last year's was Fiddler on the Roof, this year's was The Music Man. "The play," as everyone calls it, involves the whole school. While 7/8th graders typically take the leading roles, 5/6th graders take on smaller parts, and 1st - 4th graders, as well as Kindergarteners, provide the chorus. Everyone was humming "76 Trombones" – students, teachers, even parents – before the first curtain even rose.

For those who don't want to be on stage, there are many ways to be involved: designing the set, building props, or rushing about as "grips." During the two months prior to the performance, the school is abuzz with preparations. Cast and design crew meet for two afternoons every week after school to rehearse.

While a musical production is a lot of work, it is also an opportunity to learn many skills: those of performing and those of teamwork and responsibility. And not to forget, after all the hard work, what can be more rewarding than the glow on the kids' faces when they take their bows?



A Torah Thought: School's In for the Summer

RABBI JEFFREY HOLMAN, DIRECTOR OF JUDAIC STUDIES

Why are we surrounded by so many mitzvot? One of the great classic works of Jewish thought, Sefer HaChinuch, writes that our personalities are affected more by actions than by words. Practicing good acts affects us more than just reading or hearing about good deeds. As parents, we know that the children learn more from our actions, than our lectures. That's why now is the time of year that the real learning begins. It is a summer of opportunity to learn in the way that children learn best.

As we make lists of our summer plans, let's include those things that will help us to grow. What will I pack for our trip? What volunteer opportunities can our family take advantage of? What mitzvot can we do as we travel? However we enjoy the summer vacation, may it be an opportunity for recreation, enjoyment and personal growth. Have a terrific vacation!



TOP: Professor Harold Hill, **LEFT:** Chipooopi, **RIGHT:** Marian, Emirilil and Mrs. Paroo at piano lessons. **BOTTOM:** The 4th of July Pageant.

Day 1

"Being here... it's been not even an hour at this point and it's one of the strongest and most powerful feelings I've ever had. It's not a fleeting feeling. It sounds silly, but right now I can hardly keep the smile off my face, my heart in my body, and the tears—no joke—from falling down my face. This thing that I feel as I'm staring lustfully out the window is a mixture of pride, happiness, and finally, I'm-at-the-place-I've-wanted-to-go-my-whole-life ... This experience will stay with me forever. Have a great trip, guys."—Devora



Day 6

"A summary of the busride: Gavi got a makeover, Talia did too, Mr. Cohen conducted a sing-a-long, and we all sang Happy Birthday to David. Then we went on a long, beautiful hike through a canyon and along a waterfall [Ein Uvdat]. Now we're back on the bus eating Bisli."—Lena



Israel
2011



Ground Speed 644 mph
Altitude 35000 feet
Outside Air Temperature -65 °F
Distance to Destination 4072 m

"Dear 2011 Graduates, I never thought the day would come when we would go our separate ways ... But we are not leaving each other. We will always be a part of each other. At this moment we are sitting in Newark's airport—all of us talking and laughing. It hasn't really hit us that this is one of our last moments ... I thank each and every one of you for being amazing individuals that together created the best, kindest, most caring, and coolest 8th grade I could ask for. I will miss you all so much.

For the last time,
Gavriel Schankerman"

Day 11

A Town of Their Own

'The wheels on the bus go round and round...'

In planning their own town during a unit on commerce, the 1st/2nd graders in Mrs. Rapp's class allowed for public transportation, although the bus required more human labor than mechanics to move. The children knew, however, that what makes the world go round is not a bus, but money. So, upon arriving at the town, all "customers" were provided with \$1,000 of spending money by the bank tellers. There were many places to spend it: a lemonade stand, a post office, and of course a ride on the bus. The point? The math involved in counting money and giving the right change seems effortless when you're running your own business!



100 Days!

Students like to count the days to winter, spring, and summer break. But Kindergarteners at Akiba-Schechter also count until the 100th Day of School, which is always a great celebration in the Kindergarten. This year it was extra fun because they shared it not only with their parents and other Pre-School classrooms, but also with their 3rd/4th grade buddies. Together they read about 100 school days, created pictures of themselves with 100 pieces of paper, and sorted cheerios, raisins, pretzels and gum drops into 10 x 10 paper grids. They drew pictures of themselves at 100 years old, made patterns using 100 blocks, and baked muffins and put them into the shape of the number 100! With their visitors, the children also went on a scavenger hunt around the classroom, following clues to find ten different locations in the room where 100th Day treasures were hidden. Later, the treasures and treats went home in goodie bags labeled "Happy 100th Day!" Never has counting ten by ten been so much fun!



TOP RIGHT: JULIAN AND ELLIE SERVE AS BANK TELLERS IN ROOM 201'S "TOWN." ALL VISITORS RECEIVED \$1,000 UPON ENTERING.

ABOVE : 4TH GRADER NAOMI READS TO HER KINDERGARTEN BUDDY, BELLA, ON THE 100TH DAY OF SCHOOL. **RIGHT:** 100 GROWING LEAVES. BULLETIN BOARDS LIKE THIS ONE ABOUNDED DURING THE 100TH DAY CELEBRATIONS.



OPPOSITE: *Top right:* Posing for a photo with former B'not Sherut and tour guide Elkana Bar Eitan in front of Cholon's Museum of the Deaf. *Top Left:* Glimpsing Israel from the plane window. *Middle, from left:* Looking down below from a mountain top, eating dinner in a Bedouin tent, the Dead Sea, foliage in bloom at Har Hertzl, bonfire in the Golan. *Bottom, from left:* Devora Kliensky looks up from the celebration at the Kotel on Yom Yerushalaim. **THROUGHOUT:** excerpts from the students' group journal.



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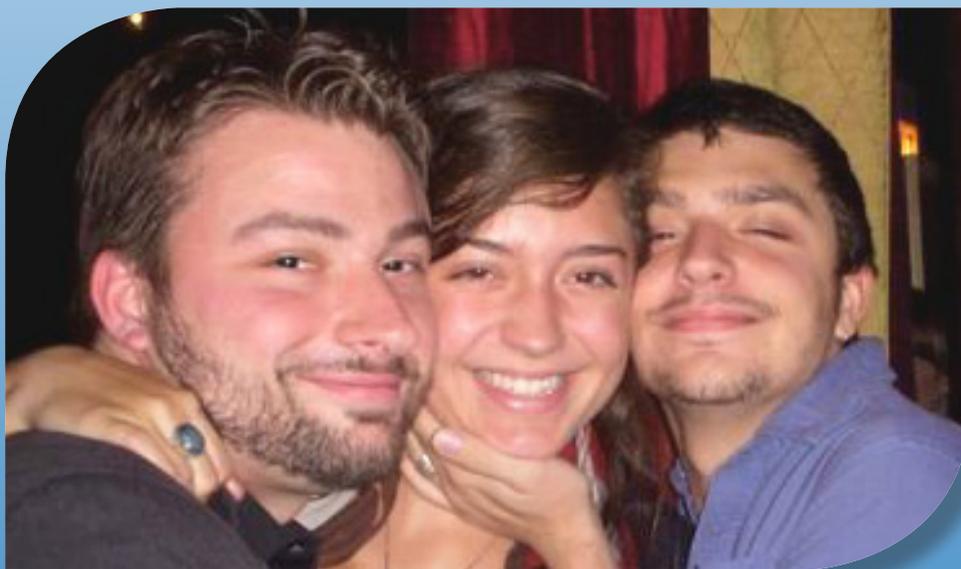
Where are they now?

Up close with Akiba alumni

When asked what he remembers most vividly about Akiba-Schechter, Jason Loeb ('97) answers without waiting a beat.

"Spaghetti Dinners. The plays. The Wizard of Oz and Fiddler." Oddly enough, though, it wasn't the theater that he pursued after high school; it was teaching. Specifically, English. Jason earned his undergraduate degree from Syracuse University and then went on to DePaul University, where he completed a Masters in English Literature and Education. That coursework came in handy at the South Side Perspectives Charter School where he taught for the last three years, and will serve him well again this fall, when he begins a new position at UIC College Prep.

"It's kind of weird," says Jason, "but in learning Talmud at Akiba and the [Ida Crown Jewish] Academy, I loved that argumentation and persuasion. Teaching English played right into that." Jason says he needed to "give back," since he was blessed with such an excellent education at Akiba. "I felt driven to pick up a career in public service because of the teachers I had. Teachers like Ann Esse and Bill Coleman ... who had a passion and an enthusiasm for what they taught in the classroom. They paved the way for thinking about teaching and how I might spend my life and career."



FROM LEFT: JASON ('97), WITH SIBLINGS SARAH ('06) AND JACOB ('05) LOEB, ALUMNI OF AKIBA-SCHECHTER. IN 2008, JASON AUTHORED A BOOK ON EDUCATION.

Jason's school environment is slightly different from the one he experienced at Akiba, partly because of the low-income neighborhood in which it's located—where, he says, the stakes are so high that skill-building and academic benchmarks take front and center. "At Akiba it wasn't just about teaching the student, but the entire person. Giving us a background for life. Giving us the knowledge, passion and experience to lead a Jewish life on our own ... and be involved in the Jewish and larger world community."

Jason is probably a good example of that. In 2008, he married Melissa Giamou, with whom he plans to start a family

soon. Melissa works for the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer organization and, like Jason, devotes significant time to volunteering in the Jewish community. When the time came for dating and marriage, he says, "Of course I was going to marry someone Jewish, raise a Jewish family, and be a member of a Jewish community. Those are conscious choices I made because of the education I received at Akiba."

Teaching isn't the only form of gratitude though. Indeed, when asked what advice he might offer to current Akiba students, Jason doesn't stop to think. "Always say thank you to Millie. Not just for band-aids, but for everything."