

L'Hitkasher



connection

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1:1 Learning and EIE

By: Rabbi Avremel Kotlarsky

Principal

It's hard to believe that the school year is over in less than 3 months! I think we are all happy that the winter is finally over- as we celebrate our Festival of Freedom, we can thank G-d for freeing us from all the cold weather and snow as well!

While it may have been cold outside, inside The Hebrew Academy we are all afire with many new initiatives to help our students achieve even greater heights of excellence. Many of these initiatives were introduced in the beginning of the year; throughout the school year, teachers and students have adopted new ways of learning. A brief overview from Mrs. Vaspol follows below.

But first some really exciting news about programs we are working on for the new school year.

First and foremost, we plan to initiate a **1:1 tablet learning program**. A 1:1 initiative creates a virtual learning environment that more closely mimics a student's way of learning outside of the school setting. Students will be given the opportunity to use digital resources to promote higher level thinking by teaching students to be a self-directed learner and using the information in a socially responsible and effective way.

Since November, we have been actively researching 1:1 programs across the country, visiting schools, talking with educators, testing devices from different vendors, and upgrading our network infrastructure to meet the demands of a 1:1 program.

What we found was that initiating a 1:1 program is very involved, costly, and time consuming for teachers, but has many benefits to students. If we want our children to be able to maximize their learning and be prepared for the demands of the future, then 1:1 learning seems to be the most powerful way of achieving those goals.

All of us are familiar with the basic staples of (secular) education- the 3 R's- Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic. There is a growing amount of educators who believe

that we also need to teach the 3 C's- Creativity, Communication and Collaboration. Going 1:1 with tablets in the



classroom will definitely enable us to draw out the creativity latent within our students; and teach them how to communicate and collaborate with others.

There is so much to share about what our vision of the future of education will be at The Hebrew Academy. The plan is to have an ongoing 'discussion' about our 1:1 learning program with our Hebrew Academy family-teachers, students and parents. We will keep you posted as the program unfolds and let you know how you can help to make this initiative a smashing success.

We have chosen the **iPad Air** as the device of choice for the younger grades, Nursery through 2nd grade. Our plan is for each student in 1st and 2nd grade, possibly Kindergarten as well, to have an iPad to use in class for 1:1 learning starting Sept. 2014. Nursery and Pre-K will have access to a cart of iPads to share at specific times. We will be piloting a program called **iStartSmart for the iPad** in the Nursery and Pre-K as early as May 2014.

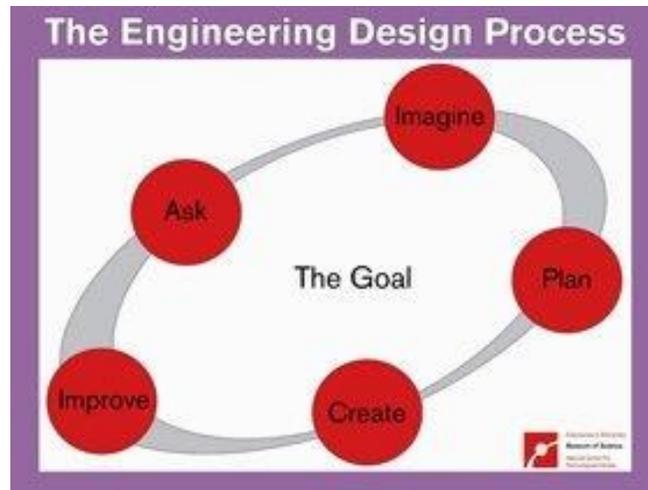
For 4th grade and up, our plan is to either use iPads or Windows 8 tablets. We are still evaluating the pros and cons of each, and will probably not make a decision until the summer.

Thanks to a very generous donor who is very keen on seeing us go 1:1, we have so far purchased 43 iPads for use by teachers and students. At this point we are preparing the iPads for deployment. Teachers will receive iPads first to become familiar with them and to receive training on their usage. Once teachers are ready to facilitate the use of iPads with their students, we will begin using iPads in the classroom. Most likely this will occur in Sept. 2014.

Another very exciting initiative we are hoping to implement for Sept. 2014 is **Engineering is Elementary**. We have been exploring adopting E.I.E for some time now, but when I visited a school in Los Angeles this past January and saw it in action, I knew it was something we needed to do for our students.

Schools across the country are focusing more and more on STEM, which stands for **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics**. **Engineering is Elementary** is an approach to learning that will not only increase our students' knowledge and skills in science and engineer-

ing, but will impact their learning of all subjects. It helps students think about what the issue is, possible ways of solving the problem, and implement the solution they devise. Indeed our belief at The Hebrew Academy is that students should take more ownership of their learning, and instead of spoon-feeding them the information, they should use their creativity and latent ability to find the answers on their own. The EIE process of **Ask, Imagine, Plan, Create** and **Improve** supports that approach, and will benefit all of our students, both in Judaic and Secular studies.



At The Hebrew Academy we constantly reflect on what we are doing, and seek to better our methods of instruction. We want to provide our students with the very best teachers, educational resources, facility, and learning experiences. We have a wonderful team of educators who are very devoted and dedicated to their students. We look forward to sharing with you more exciting developments at The

Hebrew Academy, and we hope to continue partnering with you in giving your children the best education possible.

With wishes for a Happy and Kosher Pesach,
Rabbi Avremel Kotlarsky

21st Century Learning @ THA

By: Mrs. Patti Vaspol
Director of Secular Studies

In order to prepare our students to meet the challenges and rigors set forth by the Common Core standards, several innovative programs have been implemented this year at The Hebrew Academy. These programs are exciting as well as very progressive.

In that writing is a major component of the Common Core and is required across all of the disciplines, this year we implemented a writing program created by Lucy Calkins, who is a leader in the field of literacy instruction. **Lucy Calkins' "Units of Study"** is a very comprehensive series, which focuses on opinion/argument, informational and narrative writing and is taught in Kindergarten through 5th grade. The "Units of Study" program pro-

vides scaffold instruction, which helps the students develop their ability to write. Our students' writing skills have improved significantly.

One of the goals of our school is to eventually become a 21st Century school. To that end, the use of technology is becoming an integral part of our education. As you know, each classroom is equipped with SmartBoards and computers. Through the use of technology, students can research information necessary for their assignments, create amazing PowerPoint presentations; and perform many other internet-based tasks. In grades 1st through 5th, interactive learning is conducted through Pearson's **SuccessNet** programs. Reading Street, Envision Math

and Interactive Science incorporate interactive activities. These programs provide exciting e-Learning experiences. Each student has his/her own access information; and the teacher can assign tasks for the students to complete during class as well as at home. In the middle-school grades – 6th through 8th, the science curriculum incorporates inquiry-based learning via the **PASCO** program. Each experiment is centered on an open-ended question. The students problem solve the solution through information synthesis, data analysis and critical thinking.

We are also using a website called IXL. IXL is a comprehensive math and language arts review site. It is designed to help the students learn at their own pace. The website is adaptive and adjusts to the students' level of ability. All of the student's answers are saved, so the teacher and parents can monitor the student's level of achievement.

To monitor student progress, The Hebrew Academy utilizes a program entitled "**AIMSweb**". Monthly, students in grades 3 through 8 take short reading and math assessments. AIMSweb identifies at-risk students; provides real-time reports at the student, class and grade levels; determines at which Lexile level the student is reading; and provides framework for RTI (Response to Intervention) and tiered instruction. The data collected provides important information which the teacher can use to drive instruction, provide remediation, etc. Mrs. Vaspol meets frequently with the teachers to discuss the information disseminated from all of the reports. In addition, three times a year (fall, winter, spring), benchmark assessments, which provide general education progress data, are also conducted.

Similar to the above program, students in grades 1 through 4 participate twice weekly in the **SuccessMaker** program. In the computer lab, students work independently on a personalized program that is computer-generated to address each student's needs – whether it be remediation or advancement. Weekly reports are generated, which indicate the student's level of achievement, areas of difficulty, etc. Mrs. Vaspol meets weekly with the teachers and reviews this information. Monthly cumulative reports are generated, which gives an at-a-glance overview of the student's progress.

All of the data collected via AIMSweb and SuccessMaker provides a true indication of how well the students are performing.

Another new program that we implemented is **Haiku**, which is a web-based Learning Management System. It allows students to connect to their classroom from anywhere at any time. Students can add their opinions to class discussions, vote in various class polls and take quizzes online with instant results. Haiku also allows students to collaborate and create wiki projects together, to post text, pictures, links, videos and more. Haiku helps students stay organized by displaying all upcoming assignments, tests, and events from all classes on a student's calendar.

If at any time you need assistance going on-line to monitor your child's progress, feel free to contact our office, and we will provide the necessary assistance.

It is the goal of our school to provide the students with exceptional opportunities to learn. The programs that have been implemented this year and additional programs and tools that we will utilize in the future are all part of the superior education that we strive to provide our students.

Think, Create, Imagine in THA Preschool

By: Mrs. Shternie Perline

Preschool Director

There is a very good reason why the children are so happy at **The Hebrew Academy Preschool**: the children are surrounded by warmth, love and a focus on engaged learning provided by caring teachers. The teachers at The Hebrew Academy are driven to adopt better learning strategies and implement our new initiatives for which the teachers receive ongoing training and coaching.

Our Preschool incorporates elements of **Reggio-Amelia** and **Montessori** into the curriculum. Reggio emphasizes the process rather than the product. Our teachers are interested in *facilitating* learning where the children participate in the learning process. Reggio believes that children are competent, capable, curious, and able to actively participate in their own learning versus a "blank" slate waiting to be filled with information.

Utilizing the Reggio approach, our teachers ask questions, explore with the children where their curiosity lies and follow the learning in that direction. The Reggio approach provides a framework from which children can explore ide-



as, problem solve, and project conclusions. Meetings begin with an inquiry or the teacher poses a problem the children can answer. In order to prepare our children for 21st century jobs, they will need higher level thinking and problem solving skills, and learn how to collaborate and work in groups.

Utilizing elements of Montessori, The Hebrew Academy prepares children to think, create, imagine, design, and collaborate well with others. The children learn that their ideas have merit and that their decisions are important. Montessori activities help children learn through play and to learn at their own pace. The children learn that making mistakes is normal and to learn from them. They learn to respect the views of others and to take responsibility for their actions.



Our preschool also provides many opportunities for learning through technology. The Toddlers, at only 2 years old, use the classroom computer for literacy development. We already have a strong literacy, math and science program in the Pre K (4 years olds) classroom and will be testing a new literacy and math program to accommodate both the Nursery (3 year olds) and Pre K classes. The new program, **iStartSmart for iPads by Hatch Learning**, will move us from the desktop to ipads and will make it possible for many children at a time to have access to the program. We hope to conduct the trial in May of 2014. Currently, the Pre K utilizes the **Waterford Program**, an individualized program for Literacy and Math. The program assesses each child's ability and then continues to challenge him/her further. In addition to the teacher's evaluations, the program provides reports on each child on an ongoing basis. Hatch Learning will also provide ongoing feedback to the teacher.

Preschoolers are exposed to **Ivrit** (Hebrew) from the youngest class. They become familiar with the **Alef Bet** from the Toddler age and will recognize all the Alef Bet letters by the end of Pre K, and be reading ready for Kindergarten.

Handwriting Without Tears, a program for learning handwriting, is used by the Nursery and Pre K classes. The Mat Man component, introduced in Nursery for the three year olds, uses the basic wooden shapes of the Alphabet letters, called Big Line, Little Line, Big Curve and Little Curve, to create a Mat Man with a face and body. After using this program many children come to realize that, for example, the arms are situated at the sides of the body rather than from the head. This sense of perspective will be necessary when forming the letters; to under-

stand where the curves and lines lie in relation to each other.

The Handwriting Without Tears program is then implemented in the Pre K, and the children learn how to write each of the letters correctly using the correct grip. This

program works together with other aspects of our curriculum, preparing the children to be reading ready for elementary school.

This year The Hebrew Academy adopted the **Universal Prekindergarten Program** which is the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core for English Language Arts and Literacy as well as for Math. It is also aligned with the New York State K-12 learning standards in sci-

ence, social studies, and the arts.

The Nurtured Heart Approach, devised by Howard Glasser, is the disciplinary approach we have adopted at The Hebrew Academy Preschool. It recognizes each child's greatness. The teacher, as reflector, enables the child to see his/her own greatness. The teacher makes no judgments; she is merely a reporter of the child's action or reflects back what he/she said. The teacher is continually on the lookout to reflect back positively to the child, so that the child will develop a very positive picture of him/herself. By putting energy into positive reflections and giving no or little energy to negative incidents, the teacher helps the child get in touch with his/her own greatness and enables the child to experience successes.

These are only some of the programs we have implemented at The Hebrew Academy Preschool. At a later date I will discuss some other programs we use such as Sparks P.E., Music and Movement, technology and the SMARTBoard, the Middot Program and Collaborative Activities.

Our preschool equips the child to be reading ready in both Hebrew and English, encourages higher level thinking skills and prepares the children to be well equipped to meet the challenges of elementary school. We value working collaboratively with the parents and believe the support of teachers, administration and parents working together is most effective in creating a happy, balanced learning environment for the children.

Come and watch the preschool children every day as they run into their classrooms. Their parents can barely keep up with them as the children cannot wait to get into their classes and see what the new day at The Hebrew Academy Preschool will bring. The smiles on their sweet faces attests to the exciting, engaged learning the children enjoy each day. One preschooler complained at pick up time: "Why does my daddy have to come so early?!"