Bronfman Jewish Education Centre supports teachers and students

COOKI LEVY

Bronfman Jewish Education Centre (BJEC), an agency of Federation CJA, enhances the success of administrators, teachers and students in Montreal Jewish day schools. In partnership with the schools, BJEC provides targeted professional development opportunities in both the Judaic studies and general studies domains.

In support of our schools’ Judaic missions, which are central to BJEC’s work, BJEC sponsors numerous programs (including the Zimria, the Moot Court of Jewish Law and the Canadian National Bible Contest), Israel advocacy and engagement opportunities, and professional learning communities for Judaic studies teachers. Most recently, BJEC established the Laxer Family Jewish Studies-STEAM Project in support of the ongoing professional development of Judaic Studies teachers in the domains of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) and educational technology. Working with Jerusalem Educational Technology Solutions, in collaboration with BJEC educational technology consultant Keren Ludvig, our schools are now able to incorporate STEAM techniques into the teaching of Jewish text, to deepen engagement and stimulate integrated learning.

Student acquisition of French fluency is an important goal for our day schools. BJEC supports their efforts in several ways, including the recent engagement of BJEC French literacy consultant Dr. Chantal Dufour-Martel. BJEC also offers a number of community-wide French programs to enhance student experience organized by Stephanie Nussbaum, including the Grade 1 Chansons québécoises program, the Grade 3 Jeunes Artistes program (which exposes students to renowned Quebec authors) and the Grade 4 Jeunes artistes program (which teaches students about Quebec art).

BJEC’s long-standing Response to Intervention initiative – a multi-tiered approach to the early identification and ongoing support of student literacy in French, English and Hebrew that is overseen by BJEC educational consultants Dr. Carly Rosenzweig and Hilary Greenstone – has had long-term impact on teaching and learning. The use of data to analyze student learning enables teachers to employ appropriate strategies and materials for student success, enabling students to remain in a trilingual system.

Building school capacity and sustainability is another important aspect of BJEC’s mandate. Through its affiliation with Prizmah, the umbrella organization of all Jewish day schools in North America, BJEC now participates in the Data and Analysis for School Leaders (DASL) project. DASL allows schools to analyze key data in the areas of finance, enrolment and other operations, in light of national or regional trends, and in comparison to a customized group of day schools.

In addition to its other programs, BJEC will work with our schools in an effort to achieve a culture of healthy social and emotional development. In response to the increasing awareness of student anxiety and stress across North America, and building upon the successful community-wide mental health awareness initiative of last spring, BJEC will sponsor a week of workshops for professionals and parents aimed at improving understanding of, and creating practical strategies to help students cope with, heightened anxiety.

Finally, BJEC is pleased to partner with Ometz and the Association of Jewish Day Schools to offer a unique program featuring renowned speaker Deborah Gilboa. Gilboa will address parents in a community-wide event on the evening of Dec. 10, and work with our professionals on Dec. 11, on the important topic of “The Power of Failure or Building Resilience in Children.”

Cooki Levy is the executive director of the Bronfman Jewish Education Centre.
Authentic learning at Azrieli Schools

The students at the Azrieli Schools, which include Talmud Torah Elementary School and Herzliah High School, are encouraged to learn in an authentic context across all disciplines throughout the comprehensive English, French and Hebrew curriculum.

“Our dedicated group of teachers use a unique teaching methodology, ensuring topics covered are put into a real-life context, training our students to be problem-solvers,” says Dr. Karen Gazith, Azrieli’s interim head of school.

Each student is regarded as an individual through a reflective, perspective lens that encompasses the whole child, both academically and socially. “Students learn best when something is authentic, ensuring learning that is both meaningful and purposeful,” points out Dr. Gazith. “We have a very strong, passionate group of educators and administrators continually working to enrich our students, ensuring their success in the ministry exams, while preparing them for their future endeavours.”

The talented group of senior administrators also include Michelle Toledano, Lorne Grintuch, Claudine Habre, David Azerad and Ellie Grumberg. At both the elementary and high school, teachers are encouraged to bring their individual passions to the classroom, thus ensuring that students graduate with a full toolbox of skills. Azrieli’s challenge-based curriculum forces students to think critically, in order to prepare them to fully immerse themselves in Quebec society and beyond.

Grade 4 Torah studies teacher Candice Hasson is continually challenged in her quest to make the tenets of Torah and Tanakh relatable to today’s modern world. “Torah studies can be made real and relevant to my students,” says Hasson. “One of our very successful projects is to link the premature birth of Moshe to a fundraiser for the Tiny Miracles Fund at the Jewish General Hospital, raising funds for the purchase of incubators. Helping premature babies to survive may help a baby born today to grow up to be someone such as Moshe, assuring his or her position as a leader.”

Grade 3 English and math teacher Cara Webb cares deeply about the environment and has designed many of her lessons around various environmental issues, such as studying famous artists using recycled materials, joining other teachers in bringing an active bee hive to the school, banning Styrofoam and plastic bottles and tending to the community garden. “It is really incredible to see how the students learn that they can make a difference through their efforts,” says Webb.

A unique pairing at the high school level sees science teacher Patrick Malca teaming up with Jewish studies teacher David Wallach. “We have a very interdisciplinary approach across all disciplines, presenting real-life challenges in the classroom, enabling students to relate more deeply and with more understanding to the many concepts we present,” says Wallach.

The two have introduced many innovative student projects, such as a design for an electronic stair lift that adheres to the laws of Shabbat. “Our goal is to provide authenticity in challenge-based learning,” says Malca. “There is fluid motion from learning to application.”
Innovation in learning is key to Akiva School’s success

For over 50 years, Akiva School has stayed true to the founding principles of its educational philosophy: individualism, creativity in learning and Jewish pluralism. Rabbi Eric Grossman, Akiva’s head of school, says that these three principles remain the relevant, steadfast pillars of the elementary school, as Akiva begins its 51st year.

The school’s innovative trilingual curriculum is centred on inquiry and innovation and is designed to foster the development of critical thinking skills. “We are also keenly focused on how our students can become bilingual and productive in French-language acquisition, preparing to take their places in Quebec society,” says Rabbi Grossman.

With construction almost complete, Akiva School will launch the first elementary-level French Language Lab in the province in the 2019-20 academic year, with creator Magali de l’Arc, the school’s director of French language, at the helm. “Using an interactive computer-based platform, our students will have the opportunity to advance their oral language skills in a way that tailors to their needs and passions,” says Cindy Warren, Akiva’s director of communications.

To complement the Language Lab, a newly developed French and Quebecais Culture Enrichment Program, run by Jo-see Gendron, has been developed. It will include in-school interactive activities, as well as outings to French-Canadian cultural venues and French-language interactions with local Quebecois.

“It is quite appropriate that we take the lead in French-language programming, as Akiva has always been an innovator in language instruction, having developed the hallmark for language instruction in Hebrew through the Tal-Am Program authored by Tova Shimon and her team,” says Rabbi Grossman. “We are always piloting new and innovative ways of learning for our students, with our overriding goal to make learning interactive, engaging and interesting.”

Hebrew studies will also benefit from the Language Lab, with Tali Sibony, the director of Jewish studies, and her staff engaging students in virtual reality tours of Israel, where they will have the opportunity to practice their Hebrew speaking skills in the streets.

The development of the Language Lab follows on the heels of the successful Innovation Lab, which is designed to foster learning in science, technology, environment, art and mathematics. “The Innovation Lab has allowed our students to experience hands-on, program-based learning and has become not only an integral part of our school’s curriculum, but an anchor of the school where something creative, fun and educational is always going on,” says Warren. The goal of these initiatives is to integrate technology into project-based learning at all grade levels.

The new school year will also see the introduction of a school-wide Kabbalat Shabbat program that will see the entire student body gather together on select Fridays to celebrate the music, prayers and traditions of Shabbat as a community. Parents will be invited to attend and share in the joy of welcoming Shabbat together, beginning in January.

“True to the school’s mission, administrators and staff are committed to each student’s academic success, personal growth and development of Jewish identity. “We stand out at Akiva as a school that is always at the cutting edge of innovation in learning,” says Rabbi Grossman.

An open house will take place Nov. 13 at 7 p.m. For more information, visit akivaschool.com.
When Jewish education becomes a family affair

BEN LIGHT
KVELLER

In the 1980s, my father and I did parent-child Hebrew classes (before it was cool). Every Saturday afternoon after religious school, my father arrived at our temple and we spent 90 minutes studying Hebrew with three other families. One of the most memorable parts of that experience was the fact that my dad and I did this together.

When I asked to quit confirmation class at the beginning of Grade 9, my parents said I could if it was replaced with something else that furthered my Jewish education. My father had a friend who was studying with his son on Sunday mornings at a nearby yeshivah, so we joined them. We started each Sunday by putting on tefillin and saying the morning prayers, followed by Torah study with one of the rabbis at the yeshivah.

My parents believed that Jewish education was extremely important. They made this point to me by making it a family activity. Now my wife and I have tried to make the same point to our daughter. For most of her school years, our family attended a program called Shabbaton at the local temple. The program's structure was simple. Instead of dropping our daughter off at religious school on Sunday mornings, we attended as a family on Saturday afternoons. The afternoons began with a brief service or song session, then the children headed off to Hebrew or Judaic studies while the adults had a Torah study session led by the senior rabbi or one of the other members of the clergy. We came back together for parent-child Hebrew (which is now cool) and concluded each afternoon with the Havdalah prayers.

The impact of the Shabbaton program on our family is anything but simple. At the core, it is about building community. We have had the good fortune to develop wonderful friendships throughout our time in the program – friendships with like-minded adults who are also making a bold statement to their children that Jewish education is a family activity.

Each academic year has a unique theme that the children follow with their teachers. The adults also address this theme in the texts we study with the rabbi. One year, we addressed “The Great Questions and Answers in Judaism.” This led to some very thoughtful discussions with the rabbi that continued after the formal study sessions concluded. Another year’s topic was “Standing at Sinai Is an Ongoing Experience.” These are relevant and interesting areas of study, and allow us to relate what we are learning to our daily Jewish lives.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
Choosing a Jewish school for our children

The Association of Jewish Day Schools (AJDS), represented by its director general Sidney Benudiz, is an independent organization representing nine French and English elementary and secondary Jewish schools in Montreal. AJDS provides strong educational leadership to its members and is mandated to advocate on their behalf.

Choosing a Jewish education for our children is a choice made to ensure that they are solidly rooted in their identity but well-prepared academically to assume their roles as leaders in the greater community. Our schools are licensed in Quebec and offer a rigorous academic curriculum, as well as a rich and diversified program of Jewish studies. They strive to deliver an education that is inclusive, affordable and accessible to all, and one which meets the twin challenges of providing students with a pathway to Jewish life and the foundation to thrive in Quebec.

A successful graduate of our schools is one that is excited about being Jewish, is committed to Israel, has internalized Jewish values, has the language skills to live and work in Quebec, has acquired a sound knowledge base in all academic areas and has developed critical thinking and sound decision-making skills to take his or her place in the world. Our students learn the importance of relationships and effective communication as they build a support network of friendships that will last a lifetime.

To learn more about the schools that will meet your children’s needs, take a look at our electronic brochure at ajdsmontreal.org, and also find out the schools’ open house dates.

We urge you to visit our schools. Come see connected learning in action. Make the right choice for your child. Feel the power Jewish day schools have to ensure the future of our community.

---

Choisir l’école juive pour nos enfants

L’Association des Écoles Juives, représentée par son directeur général Sidney Benudiz est une organisation indépendante regroupant 9 écoles primaires et secondaires, francophones et anglophones à Montréal. L’éducation juive est un choix pour que nos enfants soient solidement enracinés dans leur identité mais aussi bien préparés acadéquiquement. Nos écoles offrent un programme d’études laïques et juives rigoureux, riche et diversifié. Elles s’efforcent d’offrir une éducation inclusive, abordable et accessible à tous et qui réponde au double défi de tracer la voie vers une vie juive pour les élèves et de leur fournir les outils nécessaires pour la réussite. Nos diplômés sont engagés envers Israël, ont assimilé les valeurs juives, et ont les compétences linguistiques pour vivre et travailler au Québec. Ils ont acquis une solide base de connaissances dans tous les domaines académiques, développé leur pensée critique et apprennent l’importance des relations et de la communication efficace en construisant un réseau de soutien d’amis qui durera toute une vie.

LCC covers all the bases in preparing students

With its spacious Notre-Dame-de-Grâce campus, mixing verdant playing fields with state-of-the-art facilities, Lower Canada College (LCC) combines more than a century of tradition with a thoughtful, forward-looking approach to education. Parents who choose LCC know they are getting excellence in academics, world-class resources and a sense of community—an environment that will both challenge and nurture their child. Charting the path of an education, however, means thinking beyond high school—it also means preparing for university. It comes as no surprise that LCC makes extraordinary efforts to get its students ready to apply for post-secondary education.

As early as middle school, LCC students are introduced to some of the factors that will come into play when they apply to university. Keeping up good grades is part of the equation, of course, but so are transferable skills and the ability to communicate well and advocate for themselves. Students are encouraged to develop their problem-solving abilities, to be adaptable and able to ask thoughtful, pertinent questions.

By the time they hit high school, more intensive prep kicks in. Students begin regular counselling with LCC’s three dedicated academic advisers seven times a year in Grade 9, increasing to 10 times a year in grades 10 and 11. These meetings start as a way to identify strengths and skills and explore potential academic and career paths. Students will eventually practise the writing skills that will be required for their applications, plan timelines and, by Grade 11, begin to complete applications to CEGEPs and other post-secondary schools.

According to Kim Tulloch, LCC’s director of academic advising, it’s important for students to avoid comparing their path with that of their friends or anyone else. “Sure, the end goal is the same—admission—but what that looks like is a very individual process in terms of interests and aptitudes, program choices and extracurricular opportunities. Everyone has to run their own race.”

In addition to one-on-one advising, LCC students can take advantage of an array of helpful programs: a career speaker series, university and CEGEP tours, information sessions with university and college representatives, SAT prep courses, as well as online resources. They even have an after-school optional workshop called Common App Wednesdays in which Grade 11 students are walked through step-by-step instructions on how to prepare applications for Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

“Applying to university is more involved and competitive than it used to be,” notes Tulloch. “We try to offer students as much guidance as possible. As long as they stay true to themselves, a challenging and rewarding post-secondary future awaits.”

Montreal’s Leading Global School

Citizens of the world start here at home.

Open House

General
September 21, 2019
9 am to 12 pm
September 24, 2019
9 am to 12 pm
5 pm to 8 pm

Kindergarten
October 29, 2019
9 am to 11:30 am

Lower Canada College
admissions@lcc.ca
514 482 0951
4090, avenue Royal
Montréal (Qc) H4A 2M5
lcc.ca

LCC is an English coeducational K-12 school leading to the MEES Secondary Leaving Diploma / LCC est une école anglophone mixte de la maternelle à la 6e secondaire menant au DES du MEES.
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

In addition to learning from the rabbi, we learn from each other. We share parenting lessons, family traditions, perspectives on current events and spend time deepening our relationships with other members of our community.

We learn through art, music, drama and other non-traditional methods. We focus on the importance of tzedakah and giving back to our community as well as those who are less fortunate. We support other families in our community who are struggling with illness or loss.

And we do it all as a family.

I have watched my daughter develop meaningful relationships with children of all ages, as well as with other adults who participate in the program. She has been mentored by many of the older children and she has mentored those who follow her. She has served as a madritchah (teacher's aid) at Shabbaton, working with the younger children and helping them on their journey to become more active members of the temple and Jewish community.

My daughter truly feels that the temple is a second home. Her experience is an example of part-time Jewish education that works well. Like many others, my wife and I turned to our congregation to deliver an educational experience with personal meaning and impact. We have not been disappointed. We found that our congregation offers much more than a traditional “sit-behind-the-desk” education – indicative of a change in other communities, too. Increasingly, part-time Jewish education offers innovative, dynamic educational opportunities that inspire Jewish life and build community.

So how does this all play out with the kids? When our temple's main facility was undergoing renovations, and as we began planning our daughter's bat mitzvah, there was some question of where her service would take place. But in her mind, there was never a question. The temple was the only place she could imagine going through her formal transition into Jewish adulthood. Shabbaton is the primary reason why she felt this way.

When my wife and I made the decision to join the Shabbaton community, we did so with the hope that it would clearly demonstrate to our daughter how much we value her Jewish education. We value it so much that we were willing to pay with our most precious commodity: our time.

The outcome of this investment has been greater than we ever could have imagined.

Kveller.com
A passion for learning at JPPS-Bialik

JPPS-Bialik, a stellar private Jewish day school in Côte-St-Luc, fosters academic excellence and core Jewish values in a caring, child-centred holistic milieu. The JPPS (K-6) and Bialik (grades 7-11) campus at 6500 Kildare Rd. is enriched with cutting-edge indoor and outdoor facilities.

Fall 2019 is particularly exciting for Marnie Stein, the principal of JPPS, and Avi Satov, the principal of Bialik. After four years of rigorous preparation, JPPS became the first Jewish day school in Canada to receive official accreditation for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme implemented in K-6. Bialik preceded its elementary counterpart with IB accreditation in 2016, becoming the first private Jewish co-educational day school in Canada to offer a Middle Years Programme implemented in grades 7-11.

JPPS-Bialik has come full circle with IB programs cultivate self-directed learning and globally set evaluation standards. "Our students are well-prepared for post-secondary education," Satov said, noting how competitions like the Moot Court involve critical inquiry.

Bialik students participated in the Prizmah Moot Beit Din International Court Competition, which was held in North Carolina in April. Students debated ethical and legal issues. Two Bialik teams won their respective divisions.

At the elementary level, JPPS Grade 6 students consistently excel in national mathematics competitions. The first Jewish day school in Montreal to offer STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) studies, JPPS introduced a successful multidisciplinary approach.

Stein and Satov’s combined experience in teaching and administration total 42 years. They are both products of the Jewish day school system and passionate about their profession. Stein and Satov have made a long-term commitment to their leadership roles, thereby ensuring stability in the JPPS-Bialik community.

“It is an absolute privilege to continue to serve as co-head of school of JPPS-Bialik and principal of JPPS, where we offer our students a superior academic experience, as well as a strong community characterized by acceptance, warmth, kindness and joy. We take pride in teaching our students about the value of character – respecting themselves and one another, making positive contributions to their school and the global community and thinking critically and creatively,” said Stein.

Satov concurred and commended the staff. “Our teachers care and want to see each student thrive. They collaborate on subject-specific units at every grade level. Critical analysis, communication and research skills are integrated into the curriculum. JPPS-Bialik students are infused with a sense of Jewish identity and community-mindfulness.”

JPPS-Bialik co-head Marnie Stein, left, and co-head Avi Satov look forward to fall 2019.

JPPS-Bialik’s diversified range of academic, athletic and enriched programs are tailored to meet individual needs. JPPS scheduled an Open House on Thursday, Nov. 7, at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. Kindergarten applications will be accepted for the school year 2021-22. Bialik’s Open House takes place Wednesday, Sept. 25, from 7-9 p.m. For inquiries, call 514-731-3841, or visit jppsbialik.ca.
Navigating the parent-teacher conference

LAUREN KRAMER
SPECIAL TO THE C.J.N., VANCOUVER

It’s seldom convenient for parents to make it to a parent-teacher conference. Usually they are challenged by carpool obligations, long days at the office, exhaustion, dinner preparation and conflicts with more pleasurable pastimes – say, a fitness class they love. But attend they must, say educators, because parent-teacher conferences are necessary, useful and impactful for everyone involved in their kids’ education.

While some parents are simply unable to attend the consultation, or choose not to participate, these situations can have far-reaching consequences, cautions Michelle Toledano, elementary school principal at Azrieli Schools in Montreal. “If you don’t attend, you miss a valuable opportunity to connect with your child’s teachers and really get an overview of how your child is doing,” she reflects. “There are subliminal messages that you send to your child that you’re not valuing education or their academic progress. You send a message to the teacher as well, that you’re not invested.” If your schedule prohibits attendance, reach out in other ways, she suggests. “Send an email and show an interest. Demonstrating your investment in your child’s education is key to their success.”

Eric Petersiel, head of school at Leo Baeck Day School in Toronto agrees that “communication between the school and the parents is vital to students’ success,” but says the parent-teacher conference is one element that “fits into a long process of open communication around student progress between home and school.”

Leo Baeck uses a robust computer program that gives parents and students access to their assessments and unit plans from the start of a unit instead of just at the end of term. This enables parents to log in and read about what’s expected of their child, and how he or she is progressing from the get-go, eliminating surprises. “There’s no longer a specific point in time when communication between the school and the parent will occur,” says Petersiel. “It’s an ongoing relationship.”

Parent-teacher conferences are short and don’t deliver the time to have meaningful conversations with educators, he added. “If this were the only communication, it would be unsuccessful. It has to be considered as just one touchpoint in a series of communication and progress reports.”

Russ Klein, head of school at King David High School in Vancouver, concurs. “Particularly at high school, these conferences are so short that they don’t present an opportunity to get into details of any serious nature. You can’t fix something in five to seven minutes,” he said. “You have to view the parent-teacher conference as a door to open communication, not a place for resolution.”

Still, the meetings are useful in developing a relationship between parents and teachers. “Parents are our partners and we partner better with people we know and have empathy or understanding with,” Klein said. “It’s good for the teacher to know the parent and feel that they’re on their side, that they want their kid to learn and do well. It’s also good for the teacher to know how and if this is a parent that can support their child – because some parents can and others can’t. It gives the teacher insight into what the child is experiencing at home and can create more empathy, which can improve the teacher-student relationship.”

The consultation can be different in high school than in elementary school, notes Rob Dagleish, director of teaching and learning at Gray Academy of Jewish Education in Winnipeg. “In high school, we try to hand over the responsibility for the education to the student. Still, there’s a major benefit for everyone in having parents attend a conference. They get to touch base with the school and remind themselves of the ultimate mission: to make their child responsible for their education.”

Wondering what to expect at the conference? “Expect to be informed and communicated with,” Klein said. “Expect your teachers to give students extra help if and when they need it. And think of your student’s teacher as a partner, rather than an adversary. Too many parents today believe everything their child tells them. It’s much harder to paint someone into a box when you have met a teacher and know that he or she wants something good for your child. When you’re not looking at things from a deficit, I think you get better outcomes.”
We still desperately need Holocaust education

**AMANDA SILBERLING**

**ALMA**

I grew up in Boca Raton, Fla., a suburb so Jewish that the entire school district of Palm Beach County gets Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah off from school. Yet, even in Boca Raton – the kind of place where you spend each weekend of your middle school life at another bat mitzvah – the principal of a local high school recently wrote in an email to a parent: “I can’t say the Holocaust is a factual, historical event because I am not in a position to do so as a school district employee.”

The principal was later demoted and relegated to an administrative position, and the Palm Beach County School District denounced his commentary as “offensive.” Still, it is not easy to reverse the damage that occurs when an educator validates the opinions of anti-Semitic Holocaust deniers.

At the public schools I attended, it was quite routine for survivors to visit our classrooms, reliving their traumas again and again in order to teach us to resist injustice and to recognize the signs of an impending Shoah. In Jewish communities, we learn from a young age that humanity has the capacity for destruction. For us, the Holocaust never felt like a distant memory, because survivors were among us. They were our neighbours and the grandparents of our classmates. It felt real, because it was.

Now, as migrants are held in conditions so inhumane that they are compared to concentration camps, we must remind ourselves of how we felt the first time we learned about the Holocaust – how when we were young, we vowed “Never again,” and meant it.

I witnessed a Holocaust survivor give testimony for the first of many times when I was in Grade 4. After, I laid awake at night, imagining what would happen if a Nazi were to wrench me from my home and sentence me to an unthinkable terror. I begged my parents to let me sleep in their bed, fearful that, in the middle of the night, we could be separated forever.

“It’s in the past,” my parents told me, groggy from being shook awake in the wee hours of the morning. “It won’t happen again.”

Of course, my parents just wanted me to calm down and go to sleep, but what they told me was wrong. Such horrors of humanity are not relics of the past. I can’t help but wonder what parents might say now when their children crawl into their beds in the middle of the night, afraid of separation at the hands of a ruthless regime.

Recently, thousands of Jews have urged the defunding of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency as part of the grassroots group Never Again Action. Alyssa Rubin, one of its organizers, has said, “We have a responsibility as a people whose history included these kinds of atrocities to identify the signs and prevent them from happening.”

As a scared fourth-grader, wide awake in the middle of the night, I wondered how we allowed the Holocaust to happen – how people could be so cruel to one another. In a college seminar on literary representations of the Holocaust, I continued to wonder. Now, I ask the same questions as we learn more about the conditions of migrant detention centres like that of Clint, Texas, where scabies, shingles and chicken pox are rampant, where sick children are quarantined together in a cell with no toilet, where some migrant children have even died in custody. I ask how it is possible, during a time when the U.S. government is guilty of crimes against humanity, that a high school principal can deny the existence of a political system that killed millions of people just 70 years ago.

Sometimes, even when we think we know the answers, we continue to ask the same questions again with the hope that, this time, we might understand. But even when we cannot understand why, we can study history to understand how. As Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi writes in The Reawakening, “If understanding is impossible, knowing is imperative, because what happened could happen again.”

Still, U.S. President Donald Trump refers to reports of disease, hunger and abuse at the border as a “hoax.” It’s not too different from a high school principal doubting the evidence that the Holocaust is a “factual, historical event.” When women in migrant detention centres tell visiting members of Congress about the psychological warfare deployed against them, their personal testimony isn’t taken seriously. Similarly, despite the wealth of recorded Holocaust testimony, educators can still deny the genocide as historical fact.

Our greatest weapon against injustice is our knowledge of how to fight back. When we learn about genocide, we inevitably ask ourselves difficult questions: What responsibility do we, as individuals, have in protecting each other from injustice? What does it mean to be a bystander, and how do we know when it’s time to intervene?

I mourn the deaths of the Jews, the disabled, the gay men and the others who were killed by the Nazis, knowing that if I lived in Europe in the 1930s, it could have been me. But my Holocaust education taught me that it doesn’t matter that it could have been me. What matters is that it could have been any human being. Even when we are not personally in danger, it remains our responsibility to serve as defenders of basic human rights. It’s not just the Jewish thing to do. It’s the human thing to do.
How to build a no-risk, $46,800 education fund for free

JOSH GREEN  
jgreen@thecn.ca

Welcome back ♥ ברוכים הבאים ♥ Bonne rentrée to our beloved students, parents, teachers and staff! We can't wait to greet you and have you join us at 
FUN RUN 2019  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15  
our exciting kick-off to the new academic year!

With Jewish day school tuition being what it is, the cost of post-secondary education may not seem outrageous, but neither is a few thousand dollars a year (or in some cases, much more) anything to sneeze at.

However, with proper planning and patience, sending a child to college or university should not only be affordable, but may not even require setting money aside from your paycheques. In fact, thanks to benefits and grants from the federal government, most parents should be able to amass more than $46,000 to put towards their kids’ post-secondary education, without taking any risk.

As soon as a child is born, parents are able to apply for the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), a non-taxable monthly allowance to help families with the cost of raising children under the age of 18. The size of the stipend will primarily depend on the family’s net household income and the number of eligible children and their ages.

An additional amount is available to provide assistance for children with a mental or physical disability.

For each child under six, families will receive a maximum of about $553 per month. That ceiling is lowered to $467 per month for kids aged six to 17. The amount parents pocket then begins to diminish once their combined net income surpasses $31,120, and based on how many kids they have.

For instance, parents who have their first baby and a net household income of $35,000 can expect $530 a month, while if the same couple earned a combined $60,000 or $100,000, they would respectively get $385 or $255 per month.

This essentially free money can then be leveraged into even more free funds by putting a portion of it into a registered education savings plan (RESP). That’s because the federal government also provides grants of at least 20 per cent on the first $2,500 contributed to an RESP per year, until a lifetime maximum of $7,200 is reached.

Low- and middle-income earners qualify for additional grants of up to 20 percentage points on the first $500 added to the plans per year, though the same lifetime maximum still applies.

Revenu Quebec will also match these funds at half the rate of the federal government through a tax credit called the Quebec Education Savings Incentive (QESI), which is capped at a lifetime maximum of $3,600 – however, the RESP trustee must be proactive in applying for the credit within the three years following the year in which the contribution was made.

By earmarking about $208 a month from the CCB toward the RESP, parents can take full advantage of the grants available without dipping into their own wallets. (If you’re not particularly good at remembering when you need to move money from one account to another, consider automating the process through a monthly transfer.)

After about 14 years, the family will reach the combined lifetime grant maximum of $10,800, while also having allocated $36,000 in non-taxable child benefits, for a sizable post-secondary education fund totalling $46,800.

It should be noted that those who qualify for the additional grants will reach the lifetime cap earlier—in as little as 12 years. If these people decide not to continue contributing without the added incentive of the grants, their RESPs won’t be quite as large, but could still top out at a respectable $40,800.

These numbers are baseline figures that don’t require any risk and, barring any changes to the programs, promise guaranteed returns. However, if parents are looking to amass even larger education funds, there is a way to do so, although it involves varying levels of risk and could actually result in the opposite of the desired outcome.

That’s because the “savings” part of an RESP is a misnomer, and funds can actually be invested in various financial products, from guaranteed investment certificates to bonds and stocks. The money could also be used to purchase mutual funds or exchange-traded funds, allowing for a more diversified portfolio.

While some may have difficulty taking full advantage of this strategy—the CCB is supposed to help with the costs of raising a child, after all—the principle holds true, and even contributing $500 a year will result in a no-risk education fund that surpasses the $11,000 mark.
Parenting college-age kids

LAUREN KRAMER  
SPECIAL TO THE CJN. VANCOUVER

A s parents navigating the world without a ‘how-to’ guide, it’s not always easy to know when to step back and when to be actively involved, particularly when our children head off to college. How involved should parents be in their kids’ college education? And where do you draw the line between demonstrating support and interest, versus behaving like a hovering helicopter parent?

A few years ago I attended a talk by Julie Lythcott-Haims, who published the book *How to Raise an Adult* in 2015. Previously a dean of freshmen at the University of Stanford, Lythcott-Haims witnessed an excessive amount of helicopter parenting. “My freshmen students seemed to be like drones in their own lives, driven by someone else and constantly tethered to home and parents by their phones, the world’s longest umbilical cord,” she reflected in her talk.

She described how parents would email asking for their children’s passwords so they could register them for classes, parents calling her “unhappy with the grade a professor gave their child” and parents wanting to know where their kids were at all times. “I would rail against this absurdity,” she said. “I’d give a speech to parents each year, telling them, ‘Trust your child, they have what it takes to thrive. Trust us at the university. And now, please leave!’”

There’s a delicate balance between involvement and over-involvement in a young adult’s college education, says John Ippolito, associate professor at York University’s Faculty of Education.

“Kids can benefit from parents’ perspectives and input, but parents have to be careful how they share their perspectives. You can get some really overbearing parents who push their kids to fulfill life goals that kids aren’t ready for, or don’t want to follow. Parents can exert so much pressure that their kids begin to crack, and mental health issues become common.”

How do you know if you’re a helicopter parent? Ippolito says you’re doing okay if you and your kids can have a meaningful discussion about their education. “To me, that’s an indication of a healthy relationship with a child. But if one person in the conversation ends up screaming and running out of the room, something is wrong.”

It’s natural for us to want to protect our kids, Lythcott-Haims said. “We love our children fiercely and we’re fearful about what the world has in store for them. But we make the mistake of thinking we must cloak them in our arms instead of preparing them to be strong out there. So we end up being overprotective, over-directive and doing excessive handholding with our kids – being like a concierge in their lives. We treat our precious kids like bonsai trees – we plant them in a pot, but we won’t let them grow.”

Chances are many of us have been guilty of some helicopter parenting in our lives, so, in the interests of our kids’ growth, here’s how to know when you’re stepping over the boundary – so you can step back in time.

You’re a helicopter parent if…

- You have been known to call your kids’ instructor/professor, suggest they graded an essay/test/exam unfairly, and insist that they reconsider the grade.
- You proofread and edit your kids’ college essays because you want them to get the best results possible.
- You need to be certain your kids are taking the ‘right’ classes and/or spending time with the ‘right’ friends.
- You know your kids’ passwords so you can register them on time for courses.
- You feel compelled to step in and prevent your kids from making mistakes.

If you looked hard at yourself you might admit that you live through your kids and don’t have much of a life of your own.
New on campus? Jewish groups are here to help

STEVE ARNOLD
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

Most of the Jewish students heading to university for the first time are doomed to spend their first few weeks feeling like they’re the only Jew on campus.

In a lonely fog they will wander through the student union building wondering where to get a good corned beef on rye, find a group for a Shabbat gathering or someone to talk to about that professor spewing anti-Israel lies under the guise of education.

That loneliness doesn’t have to last – the lucky ones will find a campus Jewish Students’ Association, a Hillel chapter or a Chabad House to fill their need for a Jewish connection.

A motherlode of information for new Jewish students is contained in the joint Hillel-CIJA catalogue Going Somewhere: The Canadian Guide to Jewish Campus Life. In its pages students can find instruction on everything from where to find kosher food, estimates of Jewish population at each school, Jewish campus groups, where to find the synagogue for their denomination and, most important for students of any religious or cultural background, where to find the best on-and-off campus bars.

What’s available for Jewish students varies widely across the country, driven mostly by the Jewish population of a province, a municipality or a specific school.

The Hillel-CIJA guide, for example, warns the estimated 50 Jewish students at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon they’ll find it hard to eat kosher on campus outside of the Chabad House where there’s always a Shabbat dinner waiting. On the other hand, if life starts to beat them down there’s a rabbi available through the chaplaincy service.

Saskatoon has the smallest Jewish population reporting to the Hillel guide. At the other end of the scale is McGill University, where an estimated 3,500 Jewish students give it the largest population in the country.

There, the on-campus Hillel group offers services including recommendations for kosher sandwiches at a nearby Second Cup coffee shop, a Hillel House for students needing some Jewish ambience, a chapter of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Jewish fraternity, (AEPI has another 15 chapters across the country) as well as local chapters of Israel on Campus and Birthright Israel. There’s also an on-campus association for LGBTQ Jewish students.

The best known on-campus Jewish student group is Hillel International, the 95-year-old organization based in Washington D.C. with 18 campus chapters across Canada representing 37 schools and more than 22,000 students. In Ontario the organization has active units on nine campuses representing 13,000 students.

Ilan Orzy, director of advocacy and issues management for Hillel Ontario, said the best value of groups like Hillel is “as the central place on campus, with full-time professionals, for Jewish students to have a home on campus where they can meet people of all backgrounds, Jewish and non-Jewish students alike, and contribute to their campus community.”

The students drawn to Hillel, he said, come from a broad range of Jewish backgrounds and experience, but “the common denominator – for most – this is their first time away from home and the first opportunity to develop their identity away from their parents. Having access to an established community of Jewish students on campus ... is crucial in supporting their Jewish journey and ensuring a successful campus experience.”

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
With the support of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), Hillel also helps Jewish students by acting as an advocate on issues such as working with administrators to provide kosher food options to more complicated issues such as the mischaracterization of Israel and Judaism by some faculty.

“When a Jewish student experiences difficulties on campus, CIJA and Hillel work hand in hand to ensure our students can overcome these challenges as best we can. We also enact a number of proactive initiatives to ensure certain challenges are dealt with before they arise such as advocacy training for student leaders, coalition building with other clubs and student unions, and much more.”

Another popular support for Jewish students is the Chabad House found on every campus in Ontario, except for Thunder Bay, started over 50 years ago by Western University philosopher and Chabad Rabbi Yitzchok (Irving) Block. Rabbi Moshe Goldman, Chabad shaliach serving both the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University (they are literally down the street from each other) said while his goals are the same as Hillel’s, an important difference is that he and his wife will be at the universities “forever” while other organizations undergo frequent changes of personnel.

“At Waterloo, one notable success has been the creation of a kosher residence program – students requesting access to kosher food are placed in housing where they can prepare their own meals. "This way the university is accommodating the needs of the Jewish students to maintain a kosher diet, so we’re happy, the students are happy and the university administration is happy because this doesn’t cost them anything," Rabbi Goldman said.

A mainstay of Chabad efforts, he said, is the weekly open Shabbat dinner that, at Waterloo, draws up to 100 students a week to a table where they can share time with Jewish students from the entire spectrum of life in a family-like setting.

“Another thing that’s unique about Chabad is we’re all here on campus with families, so when students come over it’s a family environment, it’s a house with a bunch of little kids running around, something that is so homey and comforting and welcoming for students and just facilitates that kind of personal connection we’re trying to achieve," he said.

Other services include yeshiva studies for students wanting to continue that learning and regular religious services.

“What we hope to accomplish is to create personal relationships and friendships among the students. The biggest impact we can have is to develop a network of personal relationships with students. That’s the best way we can make a contribution to Jewish identity, Jewish continuity, fighting anti-Semitism and intermarriage. Everything we do is just a vehicle to support the relationship between the rabbi, the rebbetzin and the students.”

McGill University in Montreal, has the largest Jewish student population in Canada.
Solomon Schechter Academy marks milestone, paves way for future success

Solomon Schechter Academy (SSA), the largest Jewish elementary school in Montreal, is celebrating 50 years of academic achievement steeped in Judaic values and is ensuring that it’s equipped to endow today’s students with the tools they need to become the leaders of tomorrow.

SSA students develop a passion for academic excellence and a lifelong connection to Jewish traditions, said head of school Steven Erdelyi. “Though these hallmarks of an SSA education remain as true today as they were at the time of the school’s founding, our school is a dynamic learning environment that has evolved with innovative technology and continued teaching excellence. A significant number of former students continue to choose SSA for their children. We look forward to showcasing the history and future of our school at 50th anniversary events next year.”

The creation of the Amiel Early Childhood Centre on MacDonald Avenue in 2011, along with the Mel Hoppenheim Family Foundation Theatre Centre, freed up space in SSA’s main campus at 5555 Côte-St-Luc Rd. Renovations to the elementary school included the Azrieli SMART Floor, which serves as a hub for SSA’s STEAM program, and the Beverly and Harvey Greenberg Makerspace, which offers coding, green-screen video production, 3D printers and more, enticing students to think creatively.

“In recent years, SSA has significantly enhanced our French program,” said assistant head of school Julie Schneider, citing survey results, which show that parents are delighted that their children are fluent bilingual, or about to be. “We have an English section and a Section française, but all students graduating in Grade 6 write the Langue Maternelle ministry exams for both languages. They are well-prepared to enter the high school of their choice, whether private, public, English or French.”

Erdelyi added that, “On average, our senior students perform over two years above grade level in mathematics. They begin learning Hebrew in preschool and become fluent within just a few years. We are very proud to be one of three schools in the world that offers Grade 6 students a trip to Israel.”

Jewish studies are very important to the school and SSA competes annually in a Bible contest with Jewish day schools across Canada. This year, a student from SSA placed second in Canada and first in Quebec. Likewise, the school’s model Seders at each grade level motivate students to carry on the tradition for future generations.

Having a teacher and a teaching assistant in each class ensures that students receive individual attention, enrichment and support. Working parents can opt to enrol their kids in extended day and PED day childcare programs. Erdelyi takes pride in SSA’s inclusive policy related to team sports. Every child in grades 5 and 6 is given the opportunity to shine in basketball, hockey, soccer and ultimate frisbee. SSA sports teams participate in Greater Montreal Athletic Association and Jewish day school leagues.

Other SSA initiatives range from earning “citizenship certificates” for community-mindedness and demonstrating good values, to receiving “Franco-fun pins” for speaking French in and out of class.

SSA’s preschool is full for 2019-20, with a wait pool for 2020-21. Open House takes place Tuesday, Nov. 5, from 7-9 p.m. and Friday, Nov. 8, from 9-11 a.m. The morning session features a Kindergarten classroom visit. For information, visit solomonschechter.ca, email learn@solomonschechter.ca or phone 514-485-0866.