



THE UHI BULLETIN

The Weekly Newsletter of United Hebrew Institute, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, USA

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL



Rabbi R. Nemetsky

In the field of education, there is an ongoing debate concerning how to balance the information that children learn versus the critical thinking skills that they should develop. Obviously, students need both.

However, in some (progressive) circles there is a trend towards less emphasis on the quantity of information as well as other rote or mechanical aspects of what would be called a traditional education.

For example, do students need a good handwriting if work is done on a computer? Do students need to know how to spell if there are spell checkers? Is memorizing the multiplication table necessary in the age of calculators and smart cell phones that can calculate much faster than most students? Ultimately, what system will best prepare the students to be successful throughout their lives?

This brings to mind an educational consultant who worked in a school making the following statement. "They must train the students for the world of tomorrow. Most of the jobs that these students will take have not yet been created." She made this prediction approximately twenty years ago. By now, even the students who were then in kindergarten are already in the workforce. I dare say that practically all the possible vocations still exist. There are professions such as law, medicine, and accounting; there are vocations such as electrician, auto repair, menial labor and artisans.

By practically any measure, although the specifics of the jobs may have changed, the variety of opportunities for employment has remained constant. Thus, if we wish to prepare students for the world of tomorrow, it would serve them well to observe the world of today. Is someone who can do mental math well more valuable to his employer? Is a neat handwriting an asset that enhances communication? Is it acceptable to misspell a word when a spell checker is unavailable?

I pose these questions rhetorically, because I feel that given two candidates for a position, I feel that I would look for someone who had additional skills. In addition, I feel that a person who is

capable of working independently will be more likely to perceive errors that cross his/her desk. In other words, the skills that enable a student to function without technology have the additional benefit of sensitizing a person to appreciate better written communication.

It is important that our students learn how to function independently, accurately, efficiently, and effectively. There are few shortcuts to mastery. It requires the time, effort, and ability to apply acquired skills even if they seem rudimentary. Basic skills are the building blocks for future success, both in the classroom and in the workplace.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Raphael Nemetsky



מזל טוב!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Dec. 20 Light first Chanukah candle
- Dec. 21 Chanukah Luncheon
- Dec. 22 First Grade Siddur Presentation
- Dec. 26-Jan. 1 Midwinter Break
- Dec. 26 UHI Candle Lighting at JCC 5:30



The Forest or the Trees

Barbara Welch

The study of history is replete with facts. When one studies the past, one needs to learn the answers to the five basic questions of who, what, when, where, and why. Only then can the events of long ago be placed in the perspectives of time and place. These are the “trees” of the study of ancient civilizations.

Recently, the fifth and sixth grade students worked with Dr. Robert S. Gardner and students from his course entitled Education 360: Social Studies in Early Childhood and Elementary Education at Wilkes University. This is part of the ongoing partnership between Wilkes and UHI. Gardner’s students presented information on the use of hieroglyphics, how the Rosetta Stone was discovered by the French soldier Pierre-Francois Bouchard, and how Jean Francois Champollion broke the code of the hieroglyphics. These “trees” or facts enable the students to learn a bit about history, information they might not have known before.

After the students learned the facts, they then proceeded to write their essays on this important discovery. But while simply listing the facts can be a worthy task, what is even more meaningful is analyzing those facts and drawing conclusions based on the information. In short, determining the historical significance of any event or period in history is what makes the study of history interesting and more complete. So what did our students learn? They learned that the amazing discovery of the Rosetta Stone and the breaking of its code gave the world far more than just a mere glimpse into a very interesting and advanced ancient civilization. It enabled the decoding and study of thousands of hieroglyphic symbols that appear on the temples and monuments in Egypt revealing to the world information that up to that time had been a mystery. They learned that in the study of history not only the “trees” or facts are important but also by focusing on the “forest,” or historical significance of it, the



Come and See Geveret Pernikoff

This time of year is always an exciting time. Everyone is looking forward to Thanksgiving, Chanukah, to the first snowfall and the coming winter break. Our first graders are also looking forward to what is, for them, a very special day . . . December 22. This important day marks a milestone in their Hebrew education. On this day, they will receive their very own brand new Siddur (prayer book). It is a highly anticipated occasion. The students have mastered the intricacies of the Hebrew alphabet, they know how to read well, and now they are eager to recite their daily prayers like the “big kids”, in their own new real Siddur.

The entire student body will be attending the festivities at the “Siddur Presentation”. Everyone will assemble in the main auditorium at our Center. All the parents, grandparents, Rabbis and teachers will be there. The first graders will present a musical play entitled “Shabbat”. On the back wall of the stage will hang a replica of the “Kotel”, the Western Wall of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The program is designed to inspire the children and the audience with the importance of receiving the first Siddur.

The Siddur is given each year by Attorney and Mrs. Larry Keiser, in memory of their beloved young son, Jonathan R. Keiser (Yosef Reuven OBM), a former student at our school. The family has graciously and generously been donating the Siddurim for twenty years. We wish to thank them sincerely.

All are invited to come and enjoy this special day with the first graders of the Israel Ben-Zion Academy of the United Hebrew Institute as they present “Shabbat” at the Siddur Presentation on December 22 at 10:15 A.M.

COME AND SEE

