

DOWNTOWNDESK

Winter 2015, Issue 4

KEEPING IT REAL: INTEGRATING SCHOOL WITH LIFE

I know a rabbi in Los Angeles who decided to speak only Hebrew to his children so that they would learn the language naturally and painlessly. Their mother and everyone else in their lives spoke English. I once asked the four-year-old daughter what language her father spoke to her, and she answered, "Hebrew." Then I asked her what language her mother spoke, and she responded, "Normal."

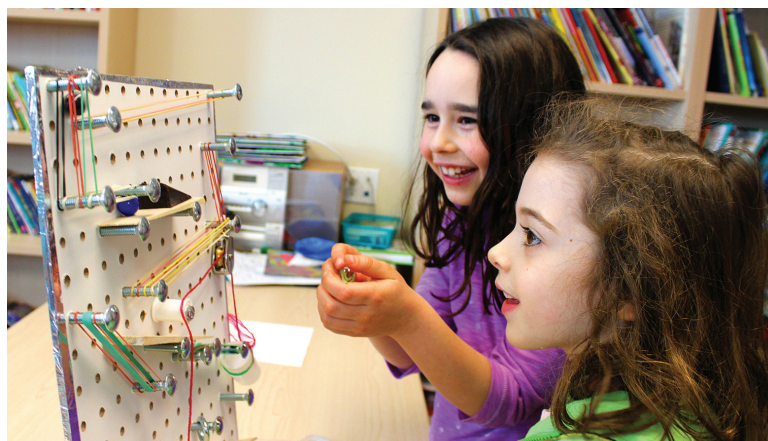
Most Jewish day schools have separate Jewish and general studies departments. At Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School, our teachers teach "both sides of the curriculum." Our integrated approach eliminates the sense of "Jewish vs. Normal." We send the message that Judaism has relevance and meaning to our everyday lives.

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The traditional division of a school day into subjects such as English, Science or Math is not necessarily relevant to a student in elementary school. These subjects are artificial constructs that do not fully reflect or do justice to the interrelated nature of reality or the real life experience of children. At Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School, our units integrate multiple Jewish and general subjects. The "Big Ideas" and "Essential Questions" upon which our curriculum is built are rarely limited to a single subject.

In Grade 5, the complex phenomenon of "Perspective" inspires a variety of explorations and experiences throughout the school year. In Language Arts, our students discover how the narrator's point of view shapes the way we understand a short story

or poem. In discussions on Jewish prayer, they reflect on how a person's beliefs and prayers might change as he or she moves through different stages of life. With a pencil and sketch pad, the students learn



Science is made exciting, fun and relevant by applying the principles of simple machines to toy making. Grade Two students share their creations with the school community during the annual Toy Fair.

how to represent depth, distance, and relationships among objects through perspective drawing. By linking one subject to another and by reinforcing Big Ideas in multiple classes, our emphasis on integrated learning maximizes the lessons' relevance to our students' lives.

Relevance is at the centre of our integrated curriculum. When our faculty designs units, we are constantly searching for overarching themes and looking for opportunities to match content across different disciplines. But true integration goes beyond what we write on a curriculum document. It is what takes place within the consciousness of our students. Perhaps even more than adults, young students integrate and digest naturally that which has meaning in their lives. We have a responsibility to offer them meaningful experiences that support their efforts to master the challenges and harness

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Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School

INSPIRING CURIOSITY HONOURING DIVERSITY CREATING COMMUNITY

SELF-EXPRESSION IN FOIL!

By incorporating the various techniques involved in foil relief, Grade Two students planned designs of their own choices. The resulting artwork is striking in terms of the unusual visual effect and also the breadth of imagination created through this medium.



IDENTITY IN FOCUS

Family Education events, which take place in every grade at Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School, provide an enlightening opportunity for family members to truly experience the integrated learning that takes place in our classrooms. Students, teachers, and parents share a unique, multi-sensory experience that weaves together many components of the curriculum.

The annual Grade Four Siddur Ceremony gathered students and their families to celebrate each student's individuality as a culmination of their integrated unit on

personal identity. As the students stepped into the sacred space of the intimate Michael Bernstein Chapel of the MNjcc, their voices joined together in Hebrew song, demonstrating their broad understanding of prayer and their developed connection to

their Jewish roots. In the Spoken Word performance that followed, students shared their heartfelt and often humorous compositions that highlighted their identities as Jews and as Canadians. To further celebrate Jewish identity, the Core and Hebrew teachers presented each participant with his or her own siddur. This siddur joined the collection of Jewish mementos such as the haggadah, matzah cover, and chanukiyah that each student has created over the years at our school.

After this unique and moving ceremony, our engaged community of learners continued the program in a nearby room. Here, the Native Canadian



Students share joyful moments during their ceremony celebrating Jewish identity.

totem pole was used as an artistic representation of personal identity. Working together with their families, students used an assortment of items that had been carefully chosen to design and build a unique totem pole structure. Each one-of-a-kind sculpture was as unique and special as each creator. Examining the completed products, it was easy for the classmates and teachers to match the work of art to its artist, based on the personality and individuality of each student.

The diverse works of art, along with the newly-acquired siddurim, represented a rite of passage as our Grade Four students celebrated experiences that defined them as Canadian, as Jewish, and as Canadian Jews.

A student proudly displays his totem, created as part of the Grade Four unit on Personal Identity.





OUR BODIES, OUR LIVES



In Grade Five, the final unit addresses the relationship between our lives and our bodies: how our bodies shape our lives and how our lives shape our bodies. The unit includes the Ontario Curriculum science expectations regarding the healthy functioning of various systems of the body such as the respiratory or nervous systems, but branches out into a robust probing of the effects of unhealthy systems on one's life.

Students begin the unit by researching various organs and systems and are then challenged to ask more broad-based questions: What is an illness? What is a chronic condition? What is the difference between a lifelong condition and an illness? Through exploring these questions, students learn about cancer, epilepsy, ADHD, autism, dyslexia, eating disorders, and some other realities of being human. By reading non-fiction texts, exploring literary and artistic representations, hearing the life stories of visitors to the school, and engaging in intense classroom discussions, our students discover what these illnesses and conditions represent as well as appreciate the relationship between these illnesses and conditions and the choices we make about our lifestyle.

With the knowledge and concepts that students take from this unit, they go forth with a deeper understanding of how to better shape their lives through a new awareness of how their bodies work.

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the opportunities they encounter every day. With everything we teach, we have to be able to answer on behalf of our students the question: "What does this have to do with me?" When the answer is clear, the learning quite literally comes to life.

Relevance is at the centre of our integrated curriculum. With everything we teach, we have to be able to answer on behalf of our students the question: "What does this have to do with me?"

I recently had the privilege of hearing two of our Grade 3 students share what they had learned in their integrated unit on "Forces." With a sly look in their eyes, they began their talk by bumping into one another to demonstrate the phenomenon of a direct physical force. Over the course of the next several minutes, they spoke with authority and enthusiasm about the different kinds of forces that affect their lives. They talked about gravity, magnetism, and static electricity. They described a set of in-class stations that enabled them to explore the role of force through activities such as bowling and a tug-of-war. They explained that indirect forces such as advertising can lead children to beg their parents (another kind of force) to buy them toys or sugary cereals. They shared what they had learned about social forces through contemporary literature, Bible stories, and role playing that enabled them to work through real-life situations. The students themselves were a force to behold. Apparent in their excitement was a deep sense of connection with what they were discussing. They weren't just describing a unit of study; they were sharing significant experiences that had meaning in their lives. The learning had been absorbed and integrated, and it was now a part of who they were.

At Paul Penna DJDS, we are committed to "keeping it real," to making our education relevant. This is how we ensure that our teaching will transcend the boundaries of the classroom and will guide and support our students long into the future.

Dr. Dan Goldberg, Principal



Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School

INSPIRING CURIOSITY HONOURING DIVERSITY CREATING COMMUNITY

Proudly located in the Miles Nadal
Jewish Community Centre

750 Spadina Avenue, 2nd Floor
Toronto / Ontario / M5S 2J2
416.928.3537 / info@djds.ca

YOUR GENEROSITY. OUR GRATITUDE.

Our success matters to you! We know this from the generous donations received from community philanthropists, from our parent community, and from networks of relatives and friends.

As news of the need for fundraising reached our supporters, the successes mounted:

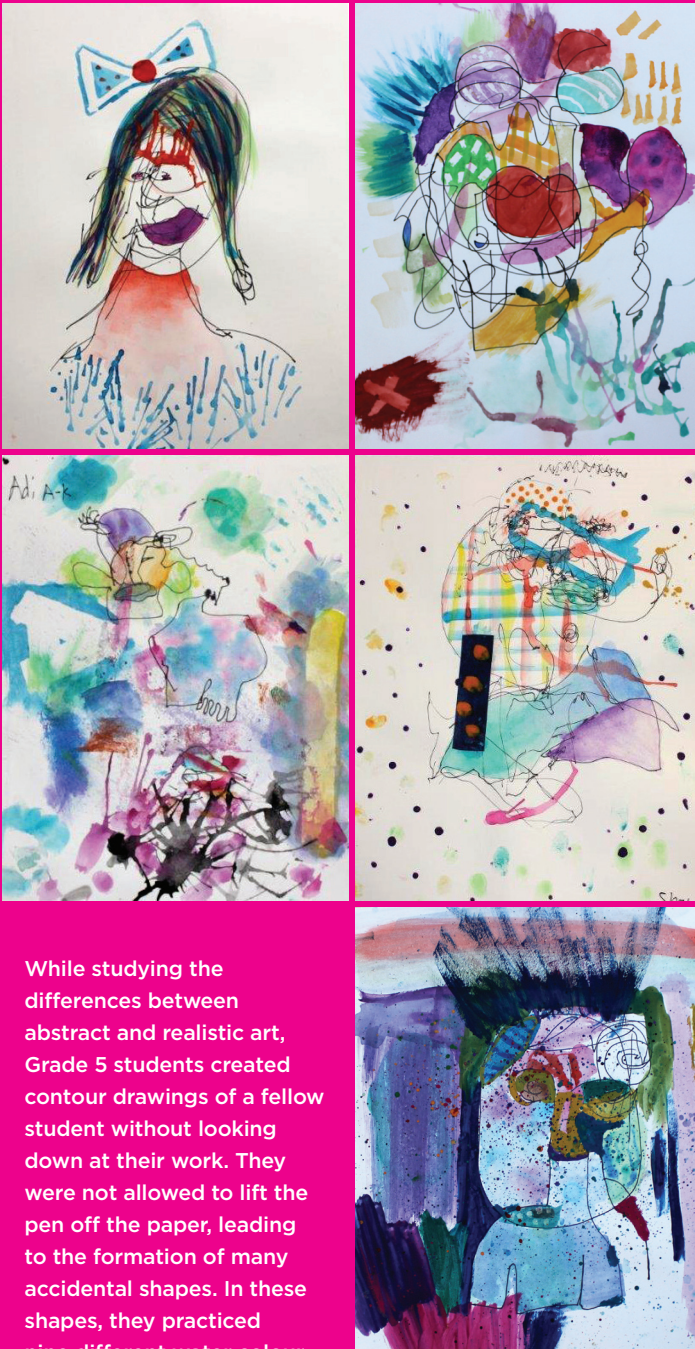
- We quickly received a large matching gift that inspired other donors to act. Within two weeks, the entire school community matched the original gift!
- At our major fundraising event, the DJDS Dance-A-Thon, we doubled the success of the previous year — a tremendous achievement, given that the event is only in its second year.
- Our remarkable year of fundraising ended with a large donation that allowed us to purchase a new Smart Board, an innovative and dynamic teaching tool that enriches the educational experience of our students.

This year, we are setting the bar high once again. Our goal is simple: to double our fundraising dollars! We set the bar high because we know that our success matters to you.

Paul Penna DJDS is instrumental in growing Judaism downtown. We create community. We inspire curiosity. We honour diversity. We ensure that the next generation of Jewish children who learn, live, and stay downtown receive the education they need to sustain those values throughout their lives.

Thank you for your support!

To make a contribution or to discuss giving opportunities, please contact Pauline Pankowski, Director of Development, at 416-928-3537 or pep@djds.ca.



While studying the differences between abstract and realistic art, Grade 5 students created contour drawings of a fellow student without looking down at their work. They were not allowed to lift the pen off the paper, leading to the formation of many accidental shapes. In these shapes, they practiced nine different water colour techniques. Through this unit, as our students explored the role of abstraction in the development of modern art, they also learned how the advent of the camera released artists from the confines of realism.

"Paul Penna DJDS is a vibrant school, filled with passionate, committed teachers and students, and fundraising is a top priority. By offering a match, we hoped to motivate and inspire our school community to give generously. We are now in awe of our community. To have met our challenge in only two weeks is beyond anything we had hoped, and we thank them for stepping up the way they did."

Paul Penna DJDS Parent and Donor