



THE ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL SCHOOL

OPENING MINDS,
BRIDGING DIFFERENCES,
LIVING JEWISH VALUES.

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM GUIDE

2016–2017

THE ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL SCHOOL
ALAN B. SLIFKA MIDDLE SCHOOL

THE ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The Abraham Joshua Heschel School is an independent school named in memory of one of the great Jewish leaders, teachers, and activists of the 20th century. Unaffiliated with any single movement or synagogue, The Heschel School sees as essential the creating of a community with families from a wide range of Jewish backgrounds, practices and beliefs. The school is devoted to equal participation—boys and girls, men and women—in all aspects of the school’s religious, intellectual and communal life.

The Heschel School is dedicated to the values and principles that characterized Rabbi Heschel’s life: integrity, intellectual exploration, traditional Jewish study and practice, justice, righteousness, human dignity, and holiness. It regards the texts of the Jewish tradition and the history of the Jewish people as fundamental resources for developing ideas, beliefs, behaviors and values to shape and inspire the lives of individuals in our time.

The school’s approach to education is governed by profound respect for students. It nurtures their curiosity, cultivates their imagination, encourages creative expression, values their initiative and engenders critical thinking skills. In an academic setting that values open, engaged inquiry, the school’s curriculum interweaves the best of both Jewish and general knowledge and culture throughout the day. Within the context of this integrated and interdisciplinary approach, the school honors the intellectual integrity of the core subjects.

Our educational ideals are drawn from the strands of the Jewish, Western and world traditions to which we belong. They are reflected in our deep concern for the whole child and the balance in each student’s academic, aesthetic, emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual growth. In addition, the school seeks to create an environment that encourages the professional and personal growth of teachers, administrators, and staff.

Among the specific goals of The Abraham Joshua Heschel School are the following:

- The Heschel School is committed to fostering a lifelong love of learning. It seeks to engender the understanding that the discovery of personal meaning and the growth of individual identity can emerge from the rigors of study.
- The Heschel School is dedicated to creating an environment of intellectual challenge and academic excellence.
- The Heschel School seeks to create an ethical learning community that encompasses the students, staff, parents and all those who join in the work of the school. The school values both the uniqueness of each individual member and the relationships they form with one another.
- The Heschel School is dedicated to cultivating the spiritual lives of its students and nurturing their commitment to Jewish values. The school helps students learn about and respect a range of Jewish practices and encourages them to embody these traditions in the way they live their lives; students learn the skills that enable them to participate fully in Jewish life.
- The Heschel School is dedicated to building bridges between different sectors of the Jewish community, and between the Jewish community and other communities, as expressions of our religious imperative to unite human beings through justice, shared humanity and mutual respect.
- The Heschel School is dedicated to engaging our students in a relationship with the language, culture, land and people of the State of Israel.
- The Heschel School is dedicated to inspiring its students to become responsible, active, compassionate citizens and leaders in the Jewish and world communities.

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL SCHOOL

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INTRODUCTION

The Heschel Middle School comprises the 6th through 8th grades. We provide a program that enables our students to make the transition from elementary to high school, and from pre-adolescence to adolescence, while recognizing and responding to the special needs and strengths of this developmental stage.

Recognizing that Middle School students must learn to balance being part of a larger group with their own individuality and the desire for nurturing with the excitement of independence, Heschel creates a setting that supports students' growing autonomy while providing the structure necessary to make their school experience meaningful and productive. Their interest in socializing finds outlets in community activities; their need to reflect, criticize, and debate is met through school publications and forums as well as in the classroom; their desire to achieve and perform is realized through sports, musical performances, and theatrical productions.

Academically, middle school students use these years to master the basic skills that give them a solid foundation in all of the disciplines. While we provide careful grounding in the skills of acquiring information, we also require students to use higher-level processes to select, research, analyze and interpret topics presented in the classroom. We emphasize the importance of intellectual curiosity and exploration, and encourage our middle school students to express their own connections to learning in ways that challenge them.

The Heschel Middle School program stresses intellectual growth within a curriculum of Jewish, Western and world traditions, and the equally important social, emotional, moral, aesthetic, and spiritual dimensions of a student's development. The Heschel Middle School student body assumes responsibility for developing and maintaining several *Hesed* (community service) and *Tzedakah* (charitable collections) projects, for presenting productions to the school and the larger community, leading the Middle School *Tefillah* services, as well as for performing other communal tasks. An electives program offers choices as diverse as visual arts, classic movie club, band, newspaper, and social action.

Every student participates in a Human Growth and Development program coordinated by our Middle School Social Worker. Students find additional opportunities and support in an advisory program and inter-grade programs emphasize community building. Students meet in their advisory groups to discuss matters that pertain to their own lives and the life of the community.

HUMANITIES

The Heschel Humanities program integrates English Language Arts with Social Studies by emphasizing interdisciplinary textual analysis and critical thinking skills. The classes challenge students to read deeply, consider multiple perspectives, and craft clear and cogent pieces of writing to help them communicate their ideas more effectively. Students learn to write by writing, receiving and giving feedback, revising, and rewriting. Research is a major part of the writing program, encouraging students to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources in print and online. Research allows students to pursue their individual interests within the framework of the program. Speaking and active listening skills are also refined to encourage higher-level thinking and discussion. Expressive reading and dramatization, both on stage and using technology, allow students to explore the aesthetic dimensions of language and literature while they enhance comprehension. While bridging connections to literature and to students' own experiences, classes focus on geography, economics, and current events. Using primary source material, the program attempts to integrate Jewish history and culture wherever possible, as well as broader ethical considerations.

SIXTH GRADE

In 6th grade the English Language Arts and Social Studies programs revolve around themes in history. Students study ancient Egypt and medieval Japanese society, focusing on the Tokugawa era. Using these two different times and places as a basis, students use a conceptual framework to explore how human beings organize themselves into the kinds of communities that help them to both survive and improve their lives.

The 6th grade literature program closely parallels the social studies themes and spans a variety of literary genres including folk tales, mythology and novels. These genres are explored through literary analysis and critical thinking. Independent reading complements the formal literature component of the curriculum.

Writing is an integral part of the curriculum. Vocabulary enrichment, spelling, mechanics, and grammar are all built into the process of learning to write. Using well-selected, substantive content, the writing program offers students effective tools for mastering clear communication. The writing program provides exposure to and exploration of many forms of writing in response to the themes of history and literature. In the 6th grade outlining skills and paragraph writing are emphasized.

Students also complete two or more research projects. Research allows students to pursue topics of interest in depth within the scope of the program. The students learn to find source material, use Internet sources, take notes, make outlines and create a works cited list.

SEVENTH GRADE

The 7th grade humanities program allows students to encounter great literature and diverse historical topics through a variety of lenses. The social studies program begins by examining empires, first on a global level in order to understand the general trends and impacts of different empires, and then through case studies in order to compare and contrast how different empires developed and to examine the ensuing response of their subjects. Students will also view the humanities content through the lens of “Revolutionary Changes,” a theme that helps students to reflect upon the revolutionary changes in their own lives as they go through adolescence.

Historical events form the foundation of the curriculum: the evolution and spread of Islam with a focus on the technological, cultural, spiritual, and intellectual revolutions that came from the connections created by that empire; the creation of colonial empires as European nations set out around the world; the fall of the Russian empire and the rise of the Soviet Union during the Russian Revolution; the impact of two “empires”-- the United States and the Soviet Union -- standing off against each other; how this stand-off in turn gave birth to a multitude of revolutions and dictatorial regimes through proxy wars and interventions (including its impact on the current tensions in the Middle East). Students begin to analyze the diversity of empires and the impact they have had around the world. They will also examine the elements common to “revolution,” and how change occurs in a historical setting. We discuss the effects of new ideas as human beings struggle to achieve personal, social, and political freedom. We look at what happens when a desire to maintain stability in the social order conflicts with individual freedoms.

Students compare and contrast original documents and writings from the time periods studied in order to hear the “voices” of history express their personal opinions, informed by the times in which they lived. This historiographic approach helps students see that personal values and biases affect the actual writing of history. Similarly, as we read a variety of textbooks and handouts throughout the year, students increase their awareness of the author’s bias, historical setting, and intention in writing a version of history.

Throughout the year, our study of history is often interrelated with our literary choices, or paired to highlight a contrast between the two. For example, as students revel in the new school year in the fall, so too will they engage in the revelry of William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Our serious historical studies of the fall are paired with the playful comedy as a way to enliven the start of the school year. Throughout the year, literature is taught through a close reading of the text, incorporating aspects of literary analysis as well as content. For example, in the spring semester, our study of the Russian Revolution is complemented by a critical analysis of George Orwell's satire, *Animal Farm*. Additionally, our journeys into each piece of literature are further supported by a focus on literary techniques. For example, in the spring, our study of one of our books, *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, is coupled with a concerted look at the power of a metaphor. Our analysis of this novel presents the foundation for a discussion about how social and political upheavals shape our individual freedoms.

Throughout the year, our program focuses on correct forms of writing, paying particular attention to rules of grammar and syntax, as well as expanding the student's working vocabulary. Both creative and expository writing skills and styles are refined. The format and production of analytical and argumentative papers are further developed as an integral part of our studies.

EIGHTH GRADE

Over the course of the year, we examine and discuss literature, historical documents, art, music, and media while reflecting on issues of social justice.

The following essential questions guide our study of English and Social Studies:

- Why is language so powerful? How can we use language to empower ourselves and to influence others?
- How is writing used to record and make sense of history, particularly painful moments in history?
- How does human bias affect the telling of stories and the recording of history?
- In what ways does literature reveal the values of a given culture or historical period?
- Are there universal themes in literature that are of interest and concern to all societies?
- How do economics and geography impact people's priorities and principles?
- How can we, as individual citizens, shape democratic processes and government by reading, writing, developing a sense of empathy, and speaking out?
- How has the meaning of "we" in "We the people" evolved over the course of American history? Whom does it include and exclude? How has that been reflected in literature?

Along with exploring these questions, students will hone their critical thinking skills by crafting analytical questions themselves.

Writing:

In addition to close reading and discussion, writing will be a major focus, with the goal of making students more effective communicators. We will work together on strengthening students' writing skills through:

- Daily journal entries
- Grammar and vocabulary work
- Critical and creative exercises in a variety of genres, reflecting the variety of genres we read
- Practice with developing a five paragraph essay that contains a strong thesis statement and relevant supporting evidence and analysis
- Revision and editing of work so that it is more clear and powerful
- Application of research skills to create a culminating term paper

- Writing conferences with peers and teachers

Literature:

Our study of literature will center on the following novels, plays, and memoirs, as well as on supplemental short stories, poetry, editorials, and song lyrics that will further expand class discussions:

- *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose
- African American slave narratives
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- *Night* by Elie Wiesel
- *Maus I* by Art Spiegelman
- *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
- Various graphic novels and National Book Award winning books in verse.

Historical Records:

While bridging connections to literature and to our own experiences in contemporary American society, we will delve deeply into historical documents, including primary sources, maps, and graphs, to explore the following topics:

- The Declaration of Independence
- The Constitution
- Pivotal Supreme Court cases
- Constitution Works (a mock trial program, dealing with First Amendment rights)
- From Slavery to Jim Crow; the legacy of race, eugenics, and bias
- The Harlem Renaissance
- The Great Depression
- Japanese Internment
- The Holocaust
- The Civil Rights Movement
- Immigration and nativism, specifically the waves of Chinese and Jewish immigration

MATH

The goals of the math program at The Heschel Middle School are: 1) to develop students' confidence and power in applying mathematical processes and principles to real-life and non-routine situations, 2) to assist students in becoming logical problem solvers, 3) to teach students to communicate mathematically, 4) to enhance mathematical knowledge through the use of technology, and 5) to enable students to see the beauty and wonder as well as the practical applications of mathematics in the world around them. Specifically, our program places strong emphasis on problem solving, flexible thinking, estimation, and real-life applications, with the expectation that students maintain and continue to develop proficiency in basic facts and algorithms.

The math program uses a variety of texts and ancillary materials to provide students with a broad array of concept presentations, practice opportunities and in-depth investigations. Our 6th and 7th grade program is based primarily on the *Big Ideas Math* and *Connected Mathematics* series. The texts present rich, mathematical ideas and concepts in which students explore interesting mathematical situations and make logical discoveries about their conjectures. In grade 8, three algebra texts are used: *Algebra Structure and Method*, *Integrated Course I*, and *Basic Algebra*. In addition to office hours, study halls, and additional classes, teachers provide extra one-on-one support on a scheduled basis to help students master the curriculum.

Manipulative materials, which have served as a mainstay in the mathematical investigations of previous years, continue to play an important role in our mathematics program. The role of calculators in the Middle School goes beyond checking work. Guided work with this tool can lead to very complex and important mathematical insights.

Teachers employ a wide variety of materials and experiences to foster learning. While independent work with paper-and-pencil computations do play an important role in the program, group investigations and project work also contribute to the learning process. The Middle School math program provides opportunities for students to work on problems individually, in pairs, in small groups and collectively, depending on the size and difficulty of the problems. In addition, the Middle School math program incorporates technology into many aspects of the curriculum.

Writing is an integral part of the mathematics curriculum. Students refine their thinking in the process of explaining their reasoning, developing a defense of how their solutions make mathematical sense, and/or presenting variations on a given problem. Teachers support students in their efforts to integrate techniques and rules of English Language Arts in their mathematics writing. When students correct errors in their work, they are encouraged to analyze and explain their thinking in writing. This process supports students' developing meta-cognition and logical thought.

The following topics are covered:

SIXTH GRADE UNITS

- Number Theory (Numerical Expression & Factors)
- Decimals & Whole Number Operations
- Ratio, Proportion, Percent (Fractions)
- 2D and 3D Geometry
- Statistics and Probability
- Linear Relationships

SEVENTH GRADE UNITS

- Number Theory (Integers, Rational Numbers, & Scientific Notation)
- Pre-Algebra (Equations & Inequalities)
- Fractions, Ratio, Proportion, Percent
- Linear Relationships
- Geometry – Solids, Volume, Surface Area, Plane Geometry Measurement
- Probability
- Data Analysis and Graphing

EIGHTH GRADE UNITS

Prealgebra

- Basic Algebra Concepts (Variables)
- Number Theory and Integers
- Equations and Inequalities
- Polynomials
- Factoring
- Fractions, Decimals & Percent
- Operations with Rational Expressions
- Linear Equations
- System of Equations
- Real Numbers (Radicals, Irrational Numbers)

Algebra

- Operations and Inequalities
- Real Numbers and Pythagorean Theorem (Radicals, Irrational Numbers)
- Polynomials
- Linear Equations and Equalities/Inequalities
- Factoring
- Quadratic Relationships

SCIENCE

The science program of The Abraham Joshua Heschel Middle School combines textbook and written material, laboratory experiments and most importantly, extended problem-solving investigations that allow students to develop their capabilities to the fullest. While faithful to the content in our curriculum, our science program allows for flexibility based on student interest.

SIXTH GRADE

Human Physiology

This unit examines the skeletal, muscular and circulatory systems of the body. Numerous lab activities to support the written material are undertaken. Students learn the architecture of the human skeleton and how the heart functions. They measure pulse rates and blood pressure, they dissect fish and chicken wings, and they type blood. Students apply their knowledge of comparative anatomy to gain an understanding of the laws of *kashrut* as related to the skeleton. They build models to understand the mechanics of muscle and bone movement.

Electricity

Students construct bulb holders and switches from aluminum foil and tape to study series and parallel circuits, resistance, electro-chemical cells, as well as aspects of static electricity. Students make a battery from a pickle and construct their own fuses. The relationship of volts, ohms, and amps is studied. Students also study the history of electrical science and the pivotal role of electricity in the development of our modern industrial and computerized society. A brief unit on electrical engineering connects the study of electricity to computers and computer programming.

Air Pressure & Aerodynamics

In this unit the concept of air pressure is demonstrated and studied in general, and applied specifically to understanding how airplanes fly. The history of human flight is discussed from the first hot air balloons through the Wright Brothers to the Space Shuttle. The concepts of lift, drag, thrust and gravity are applied to making and perfecting various designs of paper airplanes, culminating with the 6th Grade Paper Airplane Flight Contest on the last day of school.

Computer Science: *Scratch and Introduction to Robotics Using Lego Mindstorm*

Students are introduced to the worlds of creative computing and computational thinking using Scratch. They learn how to program through the process of creating games and applications which utilize fundamental programming concepts such as commands, loops, conditional statements, variables, messaging, arrays and functions. The games and applications the students create tap into a wide range of creative thinking skills combining different forms of media such as graphics, sound, storytelling, and motion. In addition, they help students learn about systems thinking. As the software they create develops and they make changes to the interface, rules, goals, rewards, the storyline, visual effects, and physics students learn to be better systems thinkers in evaluating how all of these facets of the game interrelate and affect the experience of their users.

Students are guided through the process of Design Thinking in which the products they create are designed for a partner. They first listen to their partner, with a focus on empathy, as they describe the type of application they desire. They then begin the iterative process of observing their partner use their application and listen to them talk out loud about whether the instructions are clear, what things they enjoy, and what things are difficult to accomplish. The students learn valuable lessons about user interface and user experience design as well as developing their empathetic listening skills.

Students are also given a brief introduction to physical computing using Lego Mindstorm Robots. They apply the computer science concepts they learned to make their robot interact with the physical world by utilizing many types of sensors and reacting with motors and gears that they create.

SEVENTH GRADE

Research Skills

Students will begin the first part of the year with an introduction to the scientific method and measurement, which are fundamental for exploring the laboratory. The laboratory is an integral part of the seventh grade science curriculum. Students will perform over a dozen experiments and be responsible for keeping an in-class notebook for their notes and lab journal entries. They will be accountable for completing comprehensive lab reports following each experiment.

Physics and Engineering

This basic understanding of scientific method and measurement, including an overview of Excel, will allow students to engage in an introduction to physics. They will study Newton's laws and explore the concepts of velocity, acceleration, friction, and inertia. A combination of labs and classroom lectures and activities will help them develop an age-appropriate familiarity with these advanced topics.

Students will then have the opportunity to see these physical concepts at work through their participation in the Rube Goldberg project. This intensive and hands-on unit will draw on both engineering and physics principles, as students are tasked with designing and constructing their own Rube Goldberg machines. Rube Goldberg was an engineer who rose to fame by conceptualizing and drawing overly-complex and often humorous machines to solve simple problems. Our students will practice the engineering design process, utilize their physics knowledge, take meticulous measurements and notes, and work together in groups to systematically tweak their creations and render them operational. This interdisciplinary unit will also require students to create a machine with a Passover theme.

Neuroscience

The final component of the first half of the year is a newly introduced neuroscience curriculum. Seventh graders will learn about the complexities of the human nervous system, with an emphasis on the brain, its functions, and neural pathways. The unit will conclude with an opportunity for students to independently research a question of their choice, and ultimately present their findings to the class in a five minute presentation. This exploration will at once demonstrate how much we know about neuroscience, and how much remains to be discovered.

Chemistry

The second half of the year will engage students in the discovery of the atomic model. Students will debate theory, conduct independent research, utilize computer simulations, and explore weekly labs to enrich their understanding of this topic. A fluency with the Periodic Table of Elements will be developed. The class will then learn about atomic behavior as they explore bonding and the different properties of ionic, polar, and nonpolar covalent bonds. They will be introduced to the chemical explanation "color" and will apply those concepts to understanding flame tests, neon lights, and fireworks. The year will culminate with an introduction to acids and bases.

Computer Science - *Advanced Scratch and Robotics, Introduction to Web Design and Development Using HTML/CSS/Javascript, Introduction to Arduino*

Students will continue the application of their computer science skills by creating and solving advanced challenges using Scratch and Lego Mindstorm Robots. Students will learn to modularize their code and make it more efficient through a process of refactoring.

Quickly they will move onto creating their own web page and engaging in broad discussions and deeper thought about the power, current, and possible future utilizations of the Internet. Technically, they will become proficient in HTML and in styling their web pages using CSS, and creating interactive features using Javascript.

The final major emphasis of this unit will be in learning to program the Arduino circuit board. Students will assemble a wide range of electrical circuits, learn about analog and digital, input and output. They will transfer the programming skills to the Processing language and engage in virtual prototyping.

EIGHTH GRADE

Chemistry

Students will begin the year refining their science research skills and exploring the nature of chemical reactions. In a unit inspired by the popular television show, “Shark Tank,” students will have the opportunity to apply their understanding of chemistry, engineering, and computer science in an innovative way as they design their own innovative product. They will demonstrate how they designed their product, priced materials, and figured profit margins when they present a case for investment to an “expert” panel.

Simultaneously, students will continue to broaden their technical understanding of chemistry as they discover different types of energy and how to manipulate reactions rates in the laboratory. They will further examine and test the effects of changing the rate of biochemical reactions. They will then be introduced to working with acids and bases and the effectiveness of different indicators. Through their weekly lab reports, students will improve their research skills and data analysis and begin synthesizing the knowledge they gained in the classroom and laboratory.

Students will apply all of these skills when they design and conduct independent research. They will work in groups to collaborate on ideas and challenge their understanding of chemical reactions. They will test their design and conduct their own analysis in the lab. Students will be expected to present their findings in a poster presentation midway through the year.

Computer Science: *Advanced Product Design Using Arduino and Processing*

In the eighth grade technology sequence, an emphasis is placed on encouraging students to think about the application of their technological skills for creating products needed by society and solving problems in the world at large.

As students prepare for their trip to Israel, they will be exposed to the country’s vibrant startup culture and read excerpts from books such as *Startup Nation* and *Let There Be Water*. Students will learn from guest lecturers on topics related to entrepreneurship, conservation, agriculture and design.

Students will research innovations specifically related to water conservation and to agriculture. They will then apply this knowledge combined with their accumulated technical skills to create innovative devices with the Arduino circuit board, sensors, pumps, and motors, that can be used to help grow and cultivate fresh vegetables here in the city. Students will start by creating automatic watering devices using soil moisture sensors and pumps and move on to designing innovative alternatives to existing products within the broad sectors of horticulture, agriculture, food and nutrition.

Research will be conducted on sites such as Kickstarter to identify gaps in the market in terms of the services provided by existing devices as well as their price. Finally, students will be given an introduction to effective communication of the value of their products and learn about marketing and even cognitive psychology drawing on resources such as Oren Klaff’s *Pitch Anything*.

Human Genetics

Eighth graders will spend the latter part of the year studying human genetics. The unit will allow students to study heredity, traits, and basic biology through inquiry-based learning and an application of mathematical skills to genetic science. The labs and lectures will increase students’ understanding of the role genetics plays in the world around them. They will spend some time working with microscopes, furthering the connection between the large-scale world that surrounds them, and the small-scale processes that allow their environments to function.

Ecology

The students will conclude the year, and their middle school science education, with a mini-unit on ecology and gardening. The Heschel Middle School is fortunate to have access to our rooftop greenhouse, and the students will have the opportunity to study both the theory and the application of urban agriculture, ecological ideas, and their civic duties in this sphere.

JUDAIC STUDIES — INTRODUCTION

The Middle School Judaic Studies program focuses on texts and contexts, balancing creative and formal approaches to text study in order to make the learning experience transformative and personally meaningful. Students study Jewish texts in the many different stages and styles of Hebrew from Biblical through Rabbinic to contemporary times. They search texts for themes of Jewish identity, individual and communal values, human nature, history, and Jewish beliefs and practices. Students seek historical, cultural, sociological and philosophical contexts for understanding the Jewish experience both in individual and universal terms. Through their learning Middle School students become equipped to cultivate a commitment to *tikkun olam* - the belief in behaviors that repair an imperfect world - by deepening and broadening their self-understanding and responsibility as members of the Jewish people.

In our Hebrew Language classes we concentrate on contemporary use of the language with emphasis on four language skills: reading and listening comprehension, and written and oral expression. We learn stories and poems that acquaint students with the fascinating world of Hebrew literature, through themes of Jewish and Israeli culture that are of both universal and particular Jewish interests. We learn units in grammar as well.

Our Judaic Studies program strives to equip students with the knowledge, concepts, language skills and experiences necessary to nourish and sustain their connection with Judaism and the Jewish people, to understand how their Jewishness informs their roles as citizens of the world, and to help them appreciate the creative power of religious and intellectual inquiry.

The Judaic Studies program in the Middle School includes the following areas: *Ivrit* (Hebrew Language and Literature), *Tefillah* (daily prayer), *Tanakh* (Bible) and *Torah She'be'al Peh* (or “TSBP”; Rabbinic Texts and Traditions). *Eretz Yisrael* and *Medinat Yisrael* - the Land of Israel and the modern State of Israel - are integrated throughout the program, as are the study of and preparation for Jewish holidays.

HEBREW LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (*IVRIT*)

The Hebrew Language program is designed to help students:

- Strengthen and enhance their ability to communicate effectively in spoken and written Hebrew.
- Expand their vocabulary.
- Broaden and deepen their understanding of grammatical structures and strengthen grammar skills.
- Develop knowledge and appreciation of the depth and variety of Hebrew literature.
- Strengthen the connection to the State of Israel and its people, and to the Jewish holidays.

Hebrew Language Arts classes concentrate on contemporary use of the language with emphasis on four language skills: reading and listening comprehension, and written and oral expression. The curriculum consists primarily of Israeli literature over time, as well as Israeli periodicals according to class level and interests. Some of the selections are original and adapted from Israeli literature and textbooks designed for grades 4–8, and some are developed in school. The texts are selected to deepen student appreciation of Hebrew literature and their understanding of Hebrew grammar. The topics addressed in the collection introduce the reader to themes of Jewish and Israeli culture that are of both universal and particular Jewish interests: childhood and maturity, relationships between people, parents and children, the land of Israel, the Holocaust, Jewish holidays and Jewish history. The themes and content provide students with rich opportunities for oral discussions, to express themselves in writing, and to practice higher order thinking skills. We are also gradually incorporating additional technology use into our classes. In the advanced level groups (6th, 7th and 8th grades), students participate in an independent reading program in which they read unabridged books outside the classroom. Students choose the book they want to read based on their personal preference from a designated list for their level.

The program in 6th grade integrates a curriculum for learning Hebrew as a second language that has been developed by NETA–CET (Center for Educational Technology in Israel), and the materials described below for 6th grade. It uses technology to support the development of reading and listening comprehension as well as oral and written expression.

Following is a selection of materials used in the Middle School program; there may be some variation between the groups.

HEBREW READING PROGRAM

Sixth Grade

<i>Agadat Beit Hamikdash</i>	folk tale
<i>Rosh Hashana Poems</i>	Various
<i>Elohim Natan Lecha Be'Matana (song)</i>	David Halfon
<i>Kova Kesamim</i>	Lea Goldberg
<i>Et Ha'kesef</i>	S. Yehaiev
<i>Masaot Binyamin Harevi'i</i>	Tal Sela
<i>Nisim Veniflaot (abridged version)</i>	Lea Goldberg
Sixth Grade Hebrew Performance (Play or Movie)	

Seventh Grade

<i>Hasidic Story</i>	Shai Agnon / Shalom Ash
<i>Ha'etrog Ha'mechoar</i>	Rivka Elizur
<i>Amen (song)</i>	Hamutal Ben-Zev
<i>Honi & the Carob Tree</i>	Rabbinic Story
<i>Fiddler on the Roof (movie)</i>	
<i>Bilu (reader)</i>	Various
<i>Uri (abridged version)</i>	Ester Streit-Vurzel

Eighth Grade

<i>Hasidic Story</i>	Based on R. Israel Baal-Shem-Tov
<i>Halevai (song)</i>	Ehud Manor
<i>Sara Giborat Nil"i (abridged version)</i>	Dvorah Omer
<i>Korot Kita Ahat (abridged version)</i>	Binyamin Tene
<i>Brosh (song)</i>	Ehud Manor

The Land of Israel in Poem and Song:

Lo Sharti Lach Artzi

Shir Moledet

Eretz Eretz

Ein Li Eretz Aheret

Reflections on Israel Trip

Rachel

Natan Alterman

Shayke Paykov

Ehud Manor

Students

TEFILLAH (PRAYER)

Tefillah is a time we meet together in order to contemplate and express how we see ourselves in the world, in relation to the Jewish people past, present and future, and in relation to God. In the Middle School we build community during *Tefillah* in several different ways, reflecting the growth and evolving interests of our students. In 6th and 7th grades, students come together on Mondays and Thursdays (Torah reading days) as a full class for *Tefillot*. Frequently on these occasions, more so in 7th, there are in-school *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* celebration of class members. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays students meet in smaller groups for a short *Tefillah*.

In 8th grade from Monday through Thursday students will participate in a *minyan* of their choosing. In one, students will read from the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays and recite a greater number of the traditional *tefillot*. They will be recited using common tunes, and the *minyan* will seek to understand their words and roles in the service more broadly: Why do they appear in the order that they do? Why and when are they changed or omitted? In another, students will study specific *tefillot* in depth, with group discussions and also quiet time for reflection and private journaling. In addition to the *tefillot* themselves, this *minyan* will explore outside sources like philosophy or current events.

On Fridays *Tefillah* is longer for all the grades: 6th graders use the opportunity to study a section of *Tefillah* in more depth, and 7th and 8th graders choose from a wide variety of *Tefillah* options, or electives, depending on what different style might interest them most. For example, students may choose from *Tefillot* that are particularly musical, artistic, or still traditional. And finally, in all grades, the Torah *She'be'al Peh* curriculum integrates an in-depth examination and analysis of certain parts of *Tefillah*.

Teachers engage students in all the various aspects of prayer throughout the three years of Middle School, with added focus on the following themes:

Birkot Hashachar

Each morning we begin our *Tefillah* with the morning blessings. In these blessings we find our place of gratitude, acknowledging our essential needs being met. As we deepen our understanding of these blessings, we encounter the best versions of ourselves that we strive to become. For example, upon reciting the blessing of “Who gives sight to the blind,” we might consider a person we did not notice on a particular morning whom we could have helped, or something we wish we had paid more attention to. Upon reciting “Who straightens the bent,” we might ask what makes us feel bent over, how we can improve and straighten up, or help someone else do the same.

The Shema and its Blessings

The thematic structure of the *Shema* and its blessings speaks about the process of receiving the *Torah* at Mt. Sinai and walking through the wilderness toward the Promised Land. By imagining ourselves at the beginning of time, at Mt. Sinai and in the wilderness, we gain greater perspective regarding ourselves and the world we inhabit.

The Amidah and its Structure, Themes and Meanings

The *Amidah* provides a way for each individual Jew to stand before God and speak from the heart. In order to understand the *Amidah*, students must be familiar with the concept of approaching God and standing before God, the literary structures of the *Amidah*, biblical precedent for talking directly to God, and then the content of the separate blessings.

We enter this exploration through the notion that we can approach God. The contents of the *Amidah* imply a partnership between people and God, especially the thirteen middle blessings, since every single one of these blessings requires not only human initiative but something beyond human capacity as well. It is as if we are saying that we need God's blessing, as well as acknowledging that God is the source of blessing, while also offering our blessing to God.

Hallel

On holidays we read selections of Psalms that offer gratitude and praise to God. These passages form not only a core prayer service, they also highlight certain aspects of our narrative as a people. The study of these Psalms can deepen the experience that students have when singing them to melodies that are an ingrained part of our school community.

Tefillin

In 7th grade as part of their *Torah She'be'al Peh* curriculum, students have the opportunity to study the *mitzvah* of *Tefillin*. They study the texts inside the *Tefillin*, investigate the meaning behind the structure and design of the *Tefillin*, and experience putting them on according to Jewish traditional practice. This process offers students the opportunity to ask questions, practice wearing *Tefillin*, and get comfortable with this often unfamiliar practice.

Shabbat Tefillot

The Tefillot of Shabbat, particularly the Psalms of Friday night, reflect the creation narrative of the Book of Genesis, which culminates with the establishment of Shabbat. We consider not only the origins and spiritual content of these prayers, but also how they have spawned a tremendous range of choices for meaningful and moving prayer experiences.

Tefillah L'Shlom HaMedinah

As a regular part of the Torah service in 8th grade, and at times throughout the community when Israel is especially on our minds, we recite the Prayer for the State of Israel. This is particularly true in the 8th grade as we prepare for our trip to Israel. We therefore study this prayer's origins and language, reflecting upon its messages for how and why Israel is central to us.

TANAKH (BIBLE)

The *Tanakh* (Torah, Nevi'im/Prophets and Ketuvim/Writings) is the record of the ancient experiences of the Jewish people, and is considered the sacred foundation literature of the Jewish people. Middle School *Tanakh* study is driven by this concept, and our primary goal is to acknowledge the influence that the text has on us as its descendants, as well as the personal and collective struggles that we experience in seeking to understand its meanings. We are committed to teaching our students how to confront the largest questions and concerns of the *Tanakh*, helping them identify the parts of the text that address them and providing the means to, and the appropriate environment in which they can, articulate their own responses to the text.

The *Tanakh* is also the record of the ongoing conversation between the many different voices of our people and the many different voices of God. Our goal is to assist and encourage our students in the task of making the text's voices

resonate meaningfully. Alongside the study of the language and style of the biblical texts, the thinking of traditional and modern commentators and scholars is used to further enhance the process of interpreting the many messages of the *Tanakh*. Students are encouraged to acquire the tools that will enable them to approach a section of *Tanakh* on their own with confidence, and are also encouraged to join the great interpretive process and tradition when we ask them to recognize the nuances of the text and respond in an original, creative way. Drawing, drama, composing poetry, writing essays and making charts are some of the ways students enrich, personalize, and enliven the study of *Tanakh*.

Our *Tanakh* program includes the study of selections from *Chumash* (the Five Books of Moses), *Nevi'im Rishonim* (First Prophets), *Nevi'im Achronim* (Later Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (the Writings).

SIXTH GRADE

The 6th grade studies selections from the book of *Shemot* (Exodus). Students explore the narratives comprising the immigration to and persecution in Egypt, the resistance to and accommodation of the persecution policy, the development of Moses from passionate youth to towering law-giving leader and poet, the Exodus from Egypt, the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, and the desert narrative up to and including the Revelation at Sinai and the Golden Calf.

Students are encouraged to come to an understanding of the meanings of the words in the passages that we read, and to understand the general structure of the plot. They are then asked to read the text closely and to consider it analytically. They also are trained to delve into the worlds of *midrash* and *parshanut* (interpretation and commentary) as philosophical, theological, linguistic and historical questions are posed by the text and by the students themselves. And finally, the class is encouraged to consider the more general implications of the text in terms of the sociopolitical and cultural context of the time in which it was written and in comparison with the contemporary world.

SEVENTH GRADE

In 7th grade we study the book of *BeMidbar*, which tells the story of the Jewish people during their forty years journeying through the desert to the Land of Israel. This book chronicles the beginnings of a nation and a culture where there was none before. In our studies we emphasize the themes of journey, becoming a nation, and contending with the new social and physical challenges presented by the wilderness of the desert. Traveling through the desert provides the Jews with tests and preparation for their future as a nation, and our class evaluates the Jews' successes and failures through these travels. We also compare the new generation with the old generation, asking whether the Jewish people change in the desert and whether their relationship with God changes.

In 7th grade we emphasize a close textual understanding of the various themes, topics, and ideas that we study. Accordingly, the overarching goal of the program is to teach the requisite skills for reading, understanding, and interpreting the Bible as a unique Hebrew text. A crucial element of this program, then, is the teaching of the Hebrew text in Hebrew, while using English when necessary.

Here too, students are encouraged to come to an understanding of the meanings of the words in the passages that we read, and to understand the general structure of the plot. They are then asked to read the text closely and to consider it analytically, and with outside commentaries. And finally, the class is encouraged to consider the more general implications of the text in terms of the sociopolitical and cultural context of the time in which it was written and in comparison with the contemporary world.

EIGHTH GRADE

8th graders start to study *Tanakh*, beyond their continuation of *Humash*. In addition to studying Deuteronomy/*Devarim*, which is the final book of the Torah, we also include the books of *Yonah*, *Yehoshuah*, *Shoftim*, and *Shmuel I*. We teach an ambitious amount so that students can enter high school familiar with central

biblical topics. Our curriculum reflects an emphasis on the national development of Israel concomitant with preparations for our own entry into Israel: models of biblical leadership and governance, the establishment of a central authority in Jerusalem, and the renewal of a national covenant with God which includes a political dynasty in the form of the Davidic line.

In the 8th grade we continue to emphasize a close textual understanding of the various themes, topics, and ideas that we study. As in the 7th grade, the overarching goal of the program is to teach the requisite skills for reading, understanding, and interpreting the Bible as a unique Hebrew text. A crucial element of this program, then, is the teaching of the Hebrew text in Hebrew, while using English when necessary.

We focus on learning the text from three different perspectives. First, students are encouraged to come to an understanding of the meanings of the words in the passages that we read, and to understand the general structure of the plot. Only after this is achieved are students asked to read the text closely and to consider it analytically, and with outside commentaries. Finally, all are encouraged to consider the more general implications of the text in terms of the sociopolitical and cultural context of the time in which it was written and in terms of the contemporary world.

Sefer Yonah

We start with the Book of *Yonah* during the first month of 8th grade for two reasons: first, to introduce the students to one of the books of the prophets and the associated concepts that we will return to in the Books of *Shmuel*, *Yehoshua*, and *Shoftim* – for example the concepts of *Navi*, *Nevuah*, *Tochecha*, and *Teshuva* (prophet, prophecy, rebuke, and repentance). These concepts are easily introduced by the book of *Yonah* because of its short, clear, and engaging story. Second, we chose this particular book because it builds a direct bridge to the holidays through this book's relevance to *Yom Kippur*.

The primary theme that we teach in the Book of *Yonah* is repentance (*Teshuva*), the ways a person receives pardon for misdeeds against God and man. In considering this theme we address several major questions, for example: Does God want man's repentance? What is the value and goal of *Yom Kippur*? And how and why does God extend his kindness and forgiveness?

Sefer Devarim/Deuteronomy

Literally, the book of *Devarim* means “words.” The name emanates from the fact that the book reiterates much of the major content and plot of the previous four books of the Bible. However, the book also contains a large amount of new material, and for this reason, we do not approach the book merely as a recapitulation. Instead, we look at it through the eyes of the person who delivered most of these words: Moses. Thus we approach the book as a revisiting of past events with historical perspective, and with the goal of providing a vision for the future of the Jewish people, a people whom Moshe is about to leave.

The primary themes that we explore include the specifics of Moshe's vision for the new society in Israel. What are the laws and values that he believes this society should affirm? In addition, we explore Moshe's memories after forty years in the desert. What lessons does he draw from them? And finally, we discuss Moshe's parting blessing. What kind of leader was Moshe, overall?

Yehoshuah and Shoftim

We teach selections of these two books to familiarize students with the major political and theological issues and basic geography of the biblical narratives describing the conquest of the Land of Israel. This includes the notion of the “*ma'agal hahozet*,” the ways in which history repeats itself in the biblical worldview. In studying selections from these

books, our program emphasizes governance by tribal confederacy, shifting paradigms of leadership from priest to prophet and then from prophet to military leader.

Sefer Shmuel I

We teach all 31 chapters of *Shmuel I* as a single unit in the 8th grade. We review only the basic plot in some of these chapters, and for others we explore the language and grammar of the text through literary analysis and biblical commentary. The primary theme of this book that we teach is the centralization of Jewish leadership in the land of Canaan. In exploring this topic, we discuss the connection between the Book of *Shoftim* and the Book of *Shmuel*: anarchy as the force that creates a need for permanent leadership; the differences between religious and secular leadership; and God's view of ideal leadership.

TORAH SHE'BE'AL PEH (ORAL TORAH/RABBINIC TEXTS AND TRADITIONS)

In *Torah She'be'al Peh* we learn the rabbinic texts and traditions that are derived from and layered upon the *Tanakh*. Students consider the ways in which we are continuing a conversation that began more than two millennia ago, whereby we explore and attempt to define what it means to be Jewish and to live a Jewish life.

SIXTH GRADE

The *Torah She'be'al Peh* program in the 6th grade lays the ethical and spiritual groundwork for religious and moral thinking and practice in the Middle School. This course of study also trains students in rabbinic language and thought as well as in philosophical argument.

During the first half of the year students systematically explore a variety of original rabbinic texts which codify and analyze ethical obligations to human beings. Topics studied include:

Mizvot Ben Adam LeMakom -Responsibilities To God

- *Shofar and Rosh Hashana* – Exploring the Obligation to Hear Shofar on the New Year (*Mishna*)
- *Hilchot Tefillah shel HaRambam* - The Rules of Prayer, Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *Siddur*, *Hassidic Masters*, Original Prayers
- *Prayer in the Mishna* - The Main Principles and Problems of Prayer as Debated in *Mishna Berachot* 4:3,4,5,6; 5:1
- *Berachot Lifnei Achila* - Blessings Before Eating Food, *Mishna Berachot: Chapter 6, Selections from Talmud Bavli*

Mitzvot Ben Adam L'Chavero (obligations between man and his fellow man):

- *Shmirat Kavod Haver* - The Obligation to Protect Human Dignity (*Mishna*)
- *Lashon HaRah* - Destructive Speech (Torah, *Chafetz Hayyim*)
- *Hilchot Tzedaka* -The Laws of *Tzedaka*, (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*)
- *Gemilut Hassadim* - Acts of Loving Kindness (*Midrash*, Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*)
- The Differences and Similarities Between *Tzedaka* and *Hesed*
- *Hilchot Bikkur Cholim* - The Laws of Visiting the Sick, (*Shulchan Arukh* - Karo and Isserles)
- *Nichum Aveilem* - The Norms of Comforting Mourners

Within the 6th grade *Torah She'be'al Peh* program we devote time before holidays to study texts and intensively review holidays, history, norms, and customs. The holidays studied include the High Holidays, *Sukkot*, *Hanukkah*, *Tu B'Shvat*, *Purim*, Passover, *Yom HaShoah*, *Yom Haatzmaut*, and *Shavuot*.

SEVENTH GRADE

Seventh Grade *Torah She'be'al Peh* empowers students as Jewish decision makers with the study of rabbinic texts and ideas, and deepens their understanding of commonly encountered rituals and holidays. Our holiday units emphasize the connection between the biblical origins of the holidays and the later Rabbinic interpretations that shape many of today's rituals. We study the ritual of *Tefillin* (phylacteries), exposing students to the richness of this practice from a traditional perspective and providing a framework for finding our own meanings within it.

During this year in particular we explore the growing voices and roles in the community that our students have as they become Jewish adults. As they visit each other's communities to celebrate their *Bnei Mitzvah* outside of school, in school our pluralism curriculum causes them to consider their personal beliefs and practices and the organized Jewish community as a whole. Representatives from each of the four major denominations visit the classroom to reflect upon their own personal journeys and communal affiliations. We examine what it means to openly, honestly and respectfully accept each other and learn from one another with our differences.

Students also expand their study of Mishna, the foundational document of Rabbinic Judaism. Students develop their ability to access this ancient text directly, thereby including themselves in the chain of our interpretive tradition. Specifically, this occurs in 7th grade within the context of the laws of returning and acquiring lost objects from tractate *Baba Metzia*, learning the details of these laws and using them as jumping-off points for reflection upon the Jewish legal process. *Baba Metzia* focuses on ownership and property law in Jewish life, showing how the Rabbis explored the nature of personal responsibility in the context of a larger community. We give careful consideration to the values embedded within the laws; we consider how Jewish jurisprudence embodies the larger themes of our religion and the ways that everyday behaviors can add meaning to our lives.

EIGHTH GRADE

The course is designed, through the study of classical Jewish texts and commentaries, to explore the themes of physical and spiritual space, as well as ritual practices that have traditionally been central to Jewish life. We examine in depth the Biblical passages and Rabbinic interpretations of the traditional obligation to reside in a *Sukkah*, which raises the issue of the tension between the permanence and temporariness of physical space. The potential sanctity of physical space is also considered within the context of the *mitzvot* of *Peah* (the corners of the field) and *Bikkurim* (first fruits), which through the fruits of the land show kindness towards others and gratitude towards God. We reflect upon spiritual space and time through our study of *Shabbat*. And finally, we explore in increasingly sophisticated ways the meanings and rituals of each holiday.

The primary selections of text for this course come from *Tanakh* and *Mishna*, with selections from the *Talmud* as well. We emphasize the relationship between text skills and ideas. Each unit is organized around reflective questions such as: Do specific places help build certain relationships? Do we need to connect to the land of Israel to build a relationship with God?

ISRAEL STUDY AND EIGHTH GRADE TRIP

Israel is studied throughout the Middle School curriculum in both Judaic and General Studies. The language, culture, history, geography, holidays, personalities, and current events of Israel permeate the daily life of the school. In *Tanakh* and *Torah She'be'al Peh*, we focus on our ancient ties to the land. In *Ivrit* and Humanities, our attention turns more towards the land, people, and establishment of the modern State of Israel.

The *Ivrit* program draws on materials that reflect the modern state of Israel during its early formative years up to today. Through novels, poems, short stories, newspaper accounts and song lyrics, students are exposed to many views of Israel past and present.

In Humanities, the History of Zionism curriculum traces the historical connection to the land from Rabbinic sources through the founding of the State in 1948. Students study many aspects of the latter half of the 19th century, including the impact of the *Haskalah* (Enlightenment), the rise of anti-Semitism, assimilation and the solutions generated for the future survival of the Jewish People. Religious, political, cultural, and labor Zionism are studied as exemplified by *Rav Kook*, *Ahad Ha'am*, Herzl, Jabotinsky, and A.D. Gordon. Each of the *aliyot* (waves of immigration) is studied to examine who came and why, their impact on the indigenous Arab population, and their cultural legacies and how they contributed to the establishment of Israel.

The curriculum then continues to explore these themes and more from 1948 until today. Topics we address include the country's absorption of numerous and diverse populations, major wars, Arab-Israeli relations, aspirations for and roadblocks to peace, branches of Israel's government, and technological innovativeness.

The 8th grade trip to Israel emphasizes several themes in order to help students form concrete, personal, and meaningful connections to the land and state of Israel. We experience Israel's natural environment from the challenges of the wilderness to the lushness of the north. We encounter our history as a people in Israel from biblical to contemporary times through all its rich and varied manifestations. And we interact with a modern and vibrant State of Israel full of diverse people who contribute to a complex society, celebrating her many awesome accomplishments and reflecting upon the significant challenges she faces.

ART PROGRAM

Abraham Joshua Heschel's advice for young people was to build a life as though it were a work of art. In the Middle School art program we build works of art. The emphasis is on the process, rather than the end result. Risks are celebrated as often as successes. Our hope is that the joy will be the journey.

In addition to references to fine art, middle school students are asked to consider art in the world around them. How are they influenced by design? How can they use art as a tool in their own lives? How does artistic expression help them develop their identity? How does art help them expand their awareness?

While the specifics change from year to year, the core goals are the same at every grade level and are as follows:

- The 6th grade art program incorporates a study of a wide range of art materials and media, such as drawing, painting, clay and printmaking. Throughout the year, students focus on color and composition, non-traditional/unpredictable compositions, thumbnail sketches, enlarging work, and printmaking.

- The focus of the 7th grade art curriculum is the human figure. Students will learn perspective, gesture drawings, and traditional rules of body proportion. Throughout the year, 7th graders will draw, paint, collage, sculpt with clay, wire and paper mache.
- 8th grade students start the year with two different self-portrait projects. One is in the form of a drawing and the other is a plaster mask. The rest of the year is dedicated to an Art History unit where the students research and present information on artistic movements and various artists. They finish the year with a graduation project.

New projects are introduced each year, and are matched to the goals of each grade.

Over the three years, the Middle School student is introduced to the following materials: pencil, pen and ink, tempera, acrylic and watercolor paints, gouache, cut paper, magazine and hand-painted paper collage, clay, block print, wood, and wire. Students work from their imagination, from models, from still life and from memory.

TECHNOLOGY

Heschel students are immersed in technology. The Middle School has three mobile labs and a permanent computer lab, so that there is ample hardware available for our students. Students in all grades learn to use computers for word processing, spreadsheets, video editing, and visual presentations. These “technical” skills are integrated into the math, humanities, and Judaic studies curricula as needed. The Middle School also offers units of instruction in computer science, coding, and engineering. For additional information, please see the Science section of this document.

HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT (HG&D)

The Human Growth and Development (HG&D) program in the Middle School uses group activities, discussion, art, and role-play planned around issues that often arise in particular grades. The program also includes community-building exercises, as well as opportunities to address issues raised by students about their relationships with each other and with adults in school.

SIXTH GRADE

For 6th graders, the initial theme is adaptation to Middle School. Our class meetings then center on: the power of positive self-talk, the harm of put-downs and the power of encouragement, dealing well with anger, conflict resolution, Internet safety, Internet behavior, cell phone etiquette, friendship skills, how to make amends, decision making, how to be an activist instead of a bystander, the value of being a role-model, and two separate gender classes about puberty and hygiene.

SEVENTH GRADE

For 7th graders, themes focus on Bar/Bat Mitzvah – meaning and etiquette, self-awareness skills, conflict resolution, peer-mediation training, Internet etiquette: being mindful of your on-line presence, the connection between thought, feeling and action, positive choice-making, media literacy, identifying and building healthy relationships, drug and substance abuse prevention workshops, and two separate gender classes on sex education and positive body image. Throughout the 7th grade year students participate in workshops, given in separate gender groups that focus on communication skills and understanding life stages that are particular to this age group.

EIGHTH GRADE

In the beginning of the year, students learn about goal setting, forgiveness, and building a supportive community. Students are then divided into separate gender groups to allow them to be more comfortable as we reflect upon and discuss the following subjects: gender stereotypes, positive body image, media messages that are harmful to self-image, women's history in the United States, women's rights around the world, and healthy eating. 8th graders also remain in separate gender groups for five classes which address sex education from the perspectives of Jewish values, biology, respect for self and others, and qualities of a healthy relationship. Finally, as a continuation of the work they do in 7th grade, the 8th grade has several drug and substance abuse prevention workshops.

HEALTH EDUCATION

The aim of the health curriculum at the Heschel Middle School is to teach students the prescription for and benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle. Through a combination of nutritional, anatomical and physiological studies, students examine the impact their lifestyle choices have on their health, longevity and wellness. The overriding goal of the program is to help students develop healthy living habits they can adopt and maintain throughout their lives.

LIBRARY / MEDIA CENTER

The beautiful Middle School Library/Media Center is the heart of our school. It serves as a classroom, movie theater, meeting room, study hall, research center and browsing area for the entire Middle School, students and staff alike. The continually developing collection of print and digital materials complements and enriches the curriculum. The print collection includes a wide variety of subjects such as classic and current fiction, biographies, graphic novels, reference, a full range of non-fiction, *Sifrei Kodesh* and all kinds of Judaica. The library subscribes to about 25 periodicals of interest to both students and teachers including the daily *New York Times*. We are also very proud of our collection of audiobooks, music CDs and DVDs which are available for circulation. Students and teachers especially enjoy the variety of DVDs. Among others, these include documentaries, Israeli movies, as well as a broad and eclectic selection of classic films. In addition to these resources, we lend out ipods and ebook readers to our students and teachers for a variety of uses. The ipods are often used to provide audiobooks to support the required reading curriculum. Both the ipods and the ebook readers are also available for pleasure listening and reading as any other print or non-print resource might be.

Desktop and laptop computers with internet access are available to students and faculty in the library. The sixth grade takes a mini-course in Library Skills, which concentrates on learning how to use our library as well as learning basic research methods. The course also lays a foundation for information literacy and recognizing reliable internet resources. We strongly encourage our students to belong to the New York Public Library, an invaluable resource for any New Yorker.

The Heschel School offers the community access to a number of online subscription databases for research purposes such as Proquest and Lexis/Nexis Scholastic as well as Oxford databases and Jstor. Usernames and passwords may be requested from the librarian.

Our library catalog is available for searching online through the Heschel website. It can also be accessed at <http://hcl.hl.scoolaid.net/bin/home>.

MUSIC PROGRAM

The main goal of the Middle School Music Program is to bring students closer to music, which means different things to different students. Beginning in the 6th grade students learn to play a band instrument (flute, saxophone, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, or drums). In 7th grade students learn to play in a band ensemble or choose to join a choral music class. Eighth graders may continue advanced ensemble work or advanced choral work—in preparation for performances throughout the school year, and culminating with their graduation cantata. Over the three years students spend here, they are exposed to many of the following music education experiences:

- Learning about different instruments
- Understanding the basics of music notation so that they can play music
- Creating Music with: large conducted groups (instrumental and choral); small theme groups; solo work
- Non-directed music exploration

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The physical education curriculum is centered on a comprehensive program of health-related physical fitness designed to engage students in both the physical and educational components of Physical Education, as well as to provide each individual with the means of recognizing and maximizing his or her own personal fitness level. The curriculum is concentrated on three core areas of fitness: cardiovascular fitness and flexibility, strength training and conditioning, and skill acquisition from exercise and athletics. The curriculum is organized into thematic units lasting from three to five weeks, which incorporate instruction and practice in these core areas into a specific sport or fitness context. Facilities include the middle school gym, Riverside Park, and the 5th floor fitness room containing a variety of fitness machines and basic weight-training equipment.

Educationally the program aspires to both teach and inspire the students to take an active interest in their own health and well-being and to realize the meaning and benefits of good health habits and a physically active lifestyle. As sports and game play are an integral part of the Physical Education curriculum, the teaching and appreciation of sportsmanship and fair play is paramount. Sensitivity toward others, respect, and responsibility are taught as cornerstones of sportsmanship and we require a demonstrated sense of sportsmanship, at whatever age-appropriate level, to participation in competitive sports.

INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS

The Heschel Middle School fields interscholastic teams include coed soccer, girls' volleyball, and cross country running in the fall, boys and girls basketball in the winter, and track and field, tennis, and softball in the spring. Priority on teams is given to 7th and 8th grade students. Well over three quarters of the Middle School student body currently participate in the sports program, and Lower School students look forward with excitement to wearing the Heschel colors once they reach Middle School. Participation is made available to any interested student and no "cuts" are made. The program only requires each student to make a commitment of time and effort to participate in scheduled practices and games, and to maintain the requisite standards of sportsmanship.

MIDDLE SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF BIOS

Jenn Altman is excited to be returning to Heschel for a second year. She grew up in Atlanta and originally came to New York in 1997 for graduate school. She earned a Masters in Judaic Studies at NYU and a second Masters in English Education at Teachers College. After teaching high school English in a Westchester public school for twelve years, Jenn returned to Atlanta only to discover that she had become a New Yorker. A board member of Limmud NY who has studied at Pardes and Hartman, Jenn was moved and inspired by the text study that opened the 2015-16 Heschel school year. She is grateful to have joined such a welcoming, thoughtful and pluralistic Jewish community.

Joseph Ancowitz will return for his ninth year as director of The Heschel Middle School music program. Originally from Westchester, Joe has been living in New York City since 2000. He studied at The University of Miami then transferred to The New School University where he earned a BFA in music performance. In his youth, he performed on Broadway in “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.” Now a professional musician, he has performed at various venues around the city, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. His main instrument is trumpet, and he is also a singer. In addition to music, Joe enjoys cooking and fine wine.

Deborah Anstandig is excited to join the Middle School Judaic Studies team. Most recently, Deborah spent the year at Harvard where she earned her MEd in Learning and Teaching with a concentration in Instructional Leadership. For the previous 6 years, she taught Tanach, wrote curricula, and mentored new teachers at SAR High School. She is a graduate of Yeshiva University's Stern College, the Pardes Educators Program with a Masters in Jewish education from Hebrew College. Deborah has facilitated a variety of professional development programs including JNTP Mentor Training, Ayeka, and the Teacher Leadership Program at Brandeis. Deborah loves exploring new places and meeting new people, especially when she can reach them by bike! Deborah also loves to swim, drink tea, and experiment in the kitchen.

Shosh Balk is looking forward to a sensational second year at the Heschel Middle School, where she teaches sixth grade Tanach and eighth grade Toshba (TSBP). Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Shosh was an animal rights enthusiast from an early age whose first job was working as a veterinary assistant; however, she is glad that she switched up her career ambitions to pursue Jewish education! Shosh relocated to New York City to earn her BA/BS in Jewish Studies and Psychology from Stern College, where she was Student Council President. Prior to that, she spent a year-and-a-half of intensive Torah study at MMY in Jerusalem, and continued to indulge her passion for learning at the Drisha Institute upon her return. She began her formal teaching career at SAR Academy, followed by the Ramaz School, while completing her M.S.Ed. at Bank Street College of Education. A pianist of 22 years, she has accompanied several theater productions, most recently as the musical theater director at Central High School. Shosh performs with several award-winning a cappella groups. She enjoys hosting murder mystery parties, jumping on backyard trampolines, anti-gravity yoga, story writing and storytelling, and being in the outdoors and on the move as often as possible. As her students know, she is totally obsessed with the etymology of names and cannot wait to learn all the names of her newest students!

Jan Cohen is thrilled to return to Heschel for her 11th year as a middle school math teacher, following a 25-year career in finance, in which she specialized in derivatives. Jan has three children: Sarah (Matthew), Benjamin (Margery), and Jonathan (Orissa). Jan has eight grandchildren--Gila, Isaac, Ruth and Hannah, Zehava, Ophira and Emerson, and Moses. Aside from her grandchildren who light up her life, Jan loves to read and draw. Jan and her husband Fred share many interests including opera, gardening, hiking, cycling and adventure travel. Jan graduated from Cornell University with a Bachelors in Architecture, Drexel University with a Masters in Business Administration, and Brooklyn College with a Masters in Middle School Math.

Shevon Collins, having spent her summer in the sun, is excited to be back. This will be her thirteenth year teaching physical education and coaching volleyball, tennis, and basketball. A three-sport athlete, she graduated from Hunter College with a BS in Physical Education. Each year she looks forward to coaching and developing a winning attitude in each student and athlete. Besides paintball and playing tennis, her interests have expanded to include collecting sports cards and autographs. She has amassed a wide collection of autographs of her favorite female athletes, one of whom is Ronda Rousey, best MMA fighter. She hopes to see you at the game. Gooo Heat!

Karen Dorr is delighted to return to Heschel for her eighth year as an 8th grade humanities teacher and as advisor for the student news magazine, The Heschel Herald. Karen, a native of New York City earned her Bachelors at Hunter College. After a five-year stint in Washington, DC where she worked for CBS News, Karen moved to Los Angeles where she was an award-winning senior executive and executive producer, supervising and producing movies for television. Deciding to change careers, she returned to her first love, teaching, and pursued her Masters degree at California State University. Karen earned a California Credential in Humanities and in Special Education. Prior to joining Heschel, she taught seventh and eighth grade Humanities and writing at Milken Community Middle School of Stephen Wise Temple in Los Angeles. With Facing History and Ourselves Karen traveled to Israel to help develop curriculum on Jewish Peoplehood with the Tel Aviv Diaspora Museum. Karen lives on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with her husband and standard poodle. They have two sons: Jonathan, who is a producer and composer in Los Angeles, and Jesse, who lives and works in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Batsheva Flombaum's name comes from the city of her birth, Beer Sheva. Maybe that is why she hates snow and loves the view of the desert. She graduated from high school in 1972 and, as part of an army program, spent four years studying at a seminar for teachers, Beit Hakerem. She graduated with a license as a Hebrew and Bible teacher and subsequently earned a BA in Hebrew and Biblical Literature from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. When she joined the army, she served as a teacher for illiterate soldiers for three years. For more than twenty years, she has lived in New York with her husband and three children. She has taught at the Kinneret Day School, at SAR Academy, and at various afternoon Hebrew schools.

David Frankle is originally from Ohio and earned his undergraduate degree at Ohio State University. After making aliyah to New York City he earned an MSW from Hunter College, worked for a number of years for New York State as a Psychiatric Social Worker and, after postgraduate training, maintained a private practice as a psychotherapist. He returned to school for a Masters in Education from Brooklyn College and taught science and math in a New York City public middle school before coming to Heschel. David spent a summer in Israel as a teenager and as a college student was active in the Hillel Foundation at Ohio State where he taught classical Israeli Folk Dance. David also was a recent participant in the Kivunim Israel Summer Institute for Jewish Day School Teachers. David lives in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn with his wife Naomi, their son Seth who is a student at Temple University in Philadelphia, and Spike the dog. David enjoys reading, fixing things, yoga, discussing current affairs with Spike and commiserating about the Mets with Seth. David is looking forward to beginning his twelfth year as a part of the Heschel community.

Jacob Garmaise is excited to be returning for his eleventh year at the Middle School. Jacob is a Judaic Studies teacher and the Middle School Tefillah and Hesed Coordinator. Jacob enjoys developing Hesed/volunteer opportunities for and with students, and helping to facilitate meaningful and student-friendly tefillot and Bnai Mitzvah celebrations. In the classroom, Jacob encourages students to look at texts from multiple perspectives, to explore their applications and meaning for the present and to search for their underlying values. He is excited to be teaching 7th grade Tanach and 6th grade Torah She'b'al Peh this year. Jacob grew up in Montreal and Ottawa and earned a BA in Religious Studies and a BEd from York University in Toronto. He is a graduate of the Pardes educators program in Jerusalem, and has an MA in Jewish Education from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Jacob previously taught fifth grade general and Judaic studies at the Toronto Heschel School. In his free time Jacob enjoys playing backgammon, biking, cooking, learning guitar, and eating Montreal Bagels.

Rotem Guaron is excited to begin her second year at Heschel teaching Hebrew language. She arrived last year as a *shlichah* (emissary) from the World Zionist Organization. In Israel she lived in a small town called Gadera. Rotem is a graduate of Achva College, where she earned a B.Ed. with high honors in Hebrew language and special education, and her Master's degree with honors in special education. Subsequently, she worked as a lecturer at Achva College, training student teachers. Rotem is also a Bible and Israeli culture teacher. She enjoys hiking, meeting interesting people, and visiting new and exciting places. Rotem is a great vegetarian cook and baker.

Rachelle Haddad is happy to return to Heschel for her fifth year as a middle school math teacher. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Mathematics at Binghamton University, and her Masters degree in Secondary Mathematics Education at Hofstra University, along with her NYS teaching certification. Rachelle grew up in Long Island and now resides in Manhattan. She enjoys taking walks, cooking, going to parks, and visiting Florida and Israel.

Yossi Hoffman will return for his third year as the EC/LS/MS technology support specialist after nearly three years as the Digital Media Manager at the Rabbinical Assembly. He studied computer science and music technology at NYU. Yossi grew up in Nyack, NY, but, despite the overcrowded subways and overpriced apartments, he has spent the past decade living in New York City. He is also a freelance photographer; he studied photography at the School of Visual Arts. Yossi loves biking, has a passion for cooking, and photographs his dinner way too often.

Shoshana Jedwab is thrilled to be returning for her twenty sixth year of Jewish Studies teaching at The Abraham Joshua Heschel Middle School. Shoshana teaches Bible, Tefillah, and rabbinic studies and helps envision and implement the experiential holiday programs as Middle School Jewish Life Coordinator. Shoshana Jedwab was the 1996 winner of the Gruss Excellent Teachers Fund Award for Creativity in Jewish Education. She holds a BA from Stern College and pursued an MA in Jewish History at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and was a Drisha Institute Scholar. Shoshana is also a percussionist, and singer-songwriter of sacred music. Her first album, "I Remember" is out in 2016. Shoshana's daughter, Raya, will be in Heschel's second grade this year.

Donna Josephs is the Social Worker for grades 6-8 at Heschel. Donna has an MS in Education and an MA in Philosophy, both from Yeshiva University. She earned her MSW from Fordham University and she received specialized training in Expressive Art Therapy at The New School for Social Research. Donna has been involved in both Jewish and social-emotional education for several years. She was a principal of an afternoon congregational school in Manhattan and she is the author of a Tefillah curriculum, entitled Open the Door to Our Hearts. Donna is the founder of an educational consulting company that teaches social emotional skills to school-age children, teens, teachers, and parents. Donna has created and implemented EQ (aka HG&D) programs in schools in New York and in Los Angeles. Donna was raised in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. She loves the beach, animals, art, studying Italian, and traveling (as much as possible) with family and friends. She is very grateful to be working with the Heschel community.

Gabrielle Kaplan is thrilled to be returning to the middle school at Heschel for her second year. Having previously commuted to teach math to middle schoolers in Newark, NJ, she now relishes her walk to work each day, rain or shine (not to mention the hundreds of Podcasts listened to on that walk). Gabrielle earned her BA in Psychology from Brandeis University, and spent two years studying in Israel as well, which has served her well among the Hebrew speakers in her office. It is safe to say that in her first year at Heschel, Gabrielle taught the biggest variety of subjects, as well as the largest number of individual students, which has certainly prepared her for whatever this coming year will bring. Originally from New Jersey, she now loves to spend her summers traveling, and in particular discovering the joys of hiking and magnificent music -- occasionally, even at the same time.

Michal Kaplan Lancewicki is very excited to start teaching Hebrew at Heschel school, after being a teacher-emissary of the World Zionist Organization in Tennessee for the past year. Her educational experience includes teaching Hebrew for young people and adults, as well as lecturing, guiding, and tutoring in several technological educational organizations in Israel. Previously she served the Israel Defense Forces for eight years as an officer and an information systems analyst, and was released with the rank of major. Michal has a teaching diploma and a Master in Business Administration from Tel Aviv University and a B.Sc. (cum laude) in Industrial Engineering from the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology. Michal enjoys traveling with her husband Tomer, cooking, dancing, doing crafts, and watching good movies.

Judy Katz is delighted to be returning to The Heschel Middle School as a part-time writing teacher. A longtime producer of public television and documentary film, Judy holds a BA in English from Barnard College, where she graduated with honors, and an MFA in Poetry from Sarah Lawrence College. Her poetry has been published in *The New York Times Book Review* and various literary magazines. She has taught writing at Marymount College, Sarah Lawrence's Summer Course for High School students, and to artists teaching writing in the public schools. Judy grew up in Memphis, TN, where she attended the Hebrew day school and Yeshivah high school, and where, she says, it could be argued the writing teacher saved her life.

Aviva Kirchman is delighted to continue at the Heschel Middle School as a Hebrew learning specialist. She enjoys sharing poetry, current events, and media articles with small groups, and seeing students take their Hebrew skills to a new level. Born in Tel Aviv, Aviva earned her MSc in Pharmacology from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, followed by a Masters in Special Education at Hunter College. At the Melton Center in Jerusalem, she completed courses on teaching Hebrew as a second language, as well as Bible studies with Nehama Leibowitz. Aviva has participated in several teaching workshops, taught in the Resource Room, and developed programs for Hebrew speakers in the Lower and Middle Schools. Travel on summer Kivunim trips, and music have added a special flavor to Aviva's life. In addition, Aviva enjoys singing in the Park Avenue Synagogue chorus. She and her husband Ernie have been "city people" in New York, along with daughter Dana, her husband Mark, and their sons Sam and Ben. Daughter Ronit is a musician and composer, and lives in Los Angeles with husband Scott and sons Alex and newborn Theodore.

Babette Marciano is proud to join the Heschel family as an art teacher, filling in for Liat Siegel while she is on leave. Originally from Los Angeles, Babette has been teaching art in New York City for the last ten years. With a BA in Fine Arts and Art History and an MA in Art Education, Babette has studied at Yeshiva University, Adelphi, School of Visual Arts, as well as Slade School of Fine Arts, London. She lives on the Upper West Side with her husband Dan and two sons, James and Martin. In her free time she enjoys, painting, adventuring, cooking, traveling and almost anything with her boys.

Jonathan Martin is greatly looking forward to his third year as the Middle School Technology Teacher. For the past eleven years he has been a full time teacher at both independent and public schools crafting engaging inquiry based courses in computer programming, mathematics, and economics. Prior to teaching, he worked for Microdesk developing GIS software and helping engineers streamline their design processes. He has a Master's Degree in Secondary Mathematics Education from Saint John's University, a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering from Lafayette College, and obtained his licensure as a professional engineer. Jon loves live music and connecting with many different tech and creative communities in the city via meetups and workshops.

Linda Messing has been teaching at The Heschel School since its inception in 1983 during which time two of her sons attended and graduated from our school. Linda graduated from UCLA and did her postgraduate work at Hunter College and Columbia University Teachers College. She has been the mathematics curriculum coordinator, and has taught all grade levels. This year she will work part-time in conjunction with the resource center.

Linda Michelson, the Middle School's administrative assistant, begins her thirteenth year at Heschel. She really enjoys working with the middle school students and the warm atmosphere at the school. Linda has a son who coaches rowing at Wesleyan. Linda is also a certified yoga instructor and classically trained cellist and when she is not working she is practicing yoga and playing music.

Rabbi Jack Nahmod is entering his seventh year as Middle School Judaics Head and Rabbinic Advisor N-8. He joined The Heschel School from Solomon Schechter Westchester, and before that he was at Beth Tfiloh Community School in Baltimore. Jack grew up in Chicago, where for many summers he had the perfect summer job, as a vendor at Cubs and White Sox games. After graduating from the University of Michigan and Chicago Kent College of Law, Jack practiced environmental law for six years before deciding to become a rabbi. Living on the Upper West Side, he earned a Masters Degree from the Jewish Theological Seminary and then was ordained by Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School (which was housed in Heschel High School for two years). During rabbinical school, Jack worked part time in far-flung places like Los Angeles and Austin, and nearby at the Manhattan JCC, 92nd Street Y and NYU Hillel. Jack, his wife Yael, and their three children live in White Plains.

Ido Naor joined the Ivrit team at Heschel after teaching for almost a decade at a high school in Jerusalem. Ido earned an MA in Bible Studies from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a second MA in Linguistics. Ido has two amazing children (Elinor, age 4, and Shai, 2.5) which means he doesn't have any free time or quiet time but IF he had he would probably pick up a guitar and play and sing, or maybe bake something in the kitchen. Whenever they have a chance Ido and his family go hiking and camping. Ido is excited to be back for another great school year.

Rivke Pianko is excited to become a member of the Judaic Studies faculty at The Heschel Middle School. She joins from Westchester Hebrew High School, where she has taught Judaic Studies for the past nine years. Rivke graduated from Stern College for Women with a Bachelor's in Judaic Studies, Bernard Revel Graduate School with a Master's Degree in Modern Jewish History, and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Physical Education from Queens College. In 2012 she was awarded the Young Pioneer's Award from the Jewish Education Project. In addition to learning and teaching, Rivke enjoys playing basketball, jogging around the reservoir in Central Park, and coloring mindfully. She looks forward to becoming a member of The Heschel family!

Jenny Picower is very happy to be returning to Heschel for her eighth year as a Middle School Learning Specialist. Jenny grew up and still lives on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. She studied Cultural Anthropology at Marlboro College in Vermont and spent a year in Nepal studying Tibetan thanka painting and living with a Tibetan family. Jenny earned her Masters degree from Bank Street College of Education and has been teaching and tutoring for twenty-three years. When she's not working, Jenny enjoys reading, visiting museums and galleries, exercising, taking photographs, traveling, and spending time with friends and family.

Eugene Rabina, a member of Heschel's 2008 High School class, is excited to return to his old stomping grounds as a Judaic Studies teacher. Eugene earned his B.A. from The New School, where he studied translation from Hebrew, Arabic, and French to English. He has also studied Talmud and Jewish law informally at YCT Rabbinical School. Eugene spent the past three years in the nonprofit world at Bikkurim, maintaining his ties to Heschel by working as a substitute teacher in the HS Limudei Qodesh department and co-coaching the Debate team. He is a self-described typography geek and enjoys hiking and crime novels.

Jude Roberts is the Middle School Assistant Head, and is beginning her nineteenth year at Heschel. Jude started off as a teacher (in Connecticut and Japan) after earning her BA from Drew University in English and Theatre Arts, and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Sacred Heart University. She then spent some years in theater here in New York before returning to her education roots. Jude enjoys just about everything athletic--cycling, running, softball--as well as writing, travel, cooking, and theatre. She's also a huge fan of the San Antonio Spurs. Huge.

Rebeca Rydel is thrilled to return for her seventh year at The Heschel School where she will continue teaching Hebrew in the middle school and serving as chair of the Hebrew department. She is looking forward to another exciting and rewarding year with Heschel students, parents, faculty, and staff. Rebeca earned her BA from Hebrew University in Jerusalem and her MA in Education and Jewish Studies from George Washington University. She was trained as a Hebrew as a second language teacher by the IDF, where she served as a Hebrew teacher to new immigrant soldiers and later on as an officer, training new soldier-teachers to teach Hebrew as a second language. After the army she earned certification as a Hebrew as a second language teacher at the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University. Currently she is studying TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) at Hunter College. Over the past 20 years, Rebeca has taught Hebrew in Israel, Russia, and the USA to children, adolescents and adults, and has also mentored other Hebrew teachers. She also served for five years on the College Board SAT II Hebrew Language Test Development Committee. She is a member of Heschel Notes - the Heschel adult choir and has a great time singing songs from around the world. She loves city life and enjoys hiking in nature and traveling. She also enjoys reading, the performing arts, and Israeli music.

Eliot Safier is excited to return for his third year at The Heschel Middle School as a math teacher and curriculum coordinator. Originally from Memphis, TN, Eliot moved to New York City to attend Yeshiva University where he graduated with a BS in Finance and went on to complete his Masters in Adolescent Education from St. John's University in 2013. He has spent the past five years teaching middle school math. Eliot continues to have deep connections to his southern roots, as he is a passionate fan of the Alabama Crimson Tide, Memphis Tigers and Memphis Grizzlies.

Mollie Sandberg is excited to return to Heschel as a sixth grade humanities teacher. She graduated from Vassar College in 2010 with a BA in American Culture, concentrating in American Literature and Education. Mollie also has an MA from Bank Street College of Education in literacy and general education. She is excited to share her love of reading, writing and social studies with her students at Heschel!

Yasman Sassouni, Middle School Learning Specialist, is delighted to start her 15th year at Heschel. Born in Iran, Yasman is fluent in Persian. She holds two Masters degrees, one from New York University in Social Studies Education and the other from Columbia University in Special Education/Reading Disabilities. Yasman has taught history, writing, and study skills for more than 25 years. She also has a private practice in New York City. She is an avid history buff, especially regarding all things relating to Abraham Lincoln. Yasman lives on the Upper East Side with her husband, Farshad and their two daughters, Leila, who is a 7th grader at Hunter College High School, and Talia, who is in kindergarten.

Anna Savant is a teacher and actor from San Francisco. She has a Master of Arts in Teaching from Occidental College in Los Angeles and is a graduate of the New Actors Workshop in New York. She has spent most of her career overseas teaching English language arts, social studies and drama at the Munich International School in Germany and Nishimachi International School in Japan. She is very happy to be teaching drama and directing productions in the Middle School.

Liat Siegel is looking forward to returning to Heschel for her twelfth year as the Middle School art teacher. She holds a BA from the University of Wisconsin and an MA in Art Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. She is excited to inspire, encourage, and instill in her students a deep desire to learn how to express themselves through the visual arts. She lives in Chelsea with her husband Paul, and two beautiful daughters, Tali and Mica. Liat will be on maternity leave with her third child in the fall but is looking forward to coming back to school in the spring.

Joshua Silver is thrilled to be moving to the Middle School after two years of teaching 5th grade. Prior to joining Heschel, he was at Friends Seminary, where he taught in the middle and upper schools for nine years. This included five years of teaching eighth grade history. He also taught history for three years at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School. He attended Swarthmore College, where he earned a degree in history and completed his education courses and student teaching assignment. He has been involved with the educational organization Facing History and Ourselves for eleven years, attended multiple diversity conferences, and took part in an archaeological excavation in Peru. Josh is a father of two and spends most of his time on outings with his children and cooking for his family. He is very excited to see the 7th Grade this fall.

Robin Segal Skolnik can't believe that she is beginning her nineteenth year as the Middle School librarian! A graduate of Barnard College and the Columbia University School of Social Work, Robin adjusted her career aspirations after many years of volunteer involvement in projects promoting books and the love of reading. This past year she again taught the Library Skills course to the sixth grade and shared her love of old films with the students in Classic Movie Club electives. Robin is very proud of our middle school library and she strives to keep books relevant in the lives of our students and faculty. In her time away from Heschel, Robin enjoys a busy family life in Forest Hills with her husband, Gerry. Robin is very grateful to be the mother of four and is especially thrilled to be the grandmother of four adorable grandchildren, Dafna, Liav and Hadar Skolnik and Calanit Warren.

Lori Skopp is entering her eleventh year as the Middle School Head at Heschel, and her second year as K-12 Curriculum Director of the school. Prior to joining Heschel, Lori served as the Associate Head of the Solomon Schechter High School of New York, where she also developed and directed the school's Science Research Program. Before entering the Jewish Day School world, Lori was the Director of Education at the New York Academy of Sciences for eight years. Lori has a BA in Geography from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an MA in Technology Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. Lori is also a graduate of the Avi Chai-sponsored Day School Leadership Training Institute. Lori lived, studied, and worked in Israel for seven years, and is a fluent Hebrew-speaker. Lori's hobbies include Hebrew songs (singing and playing the piano/guitar), swimming, cycling, running, walking, exploring the far reaches of the five boroughs, reading, and hiking. She and her husband, Michael, have three children: Adiel, Amior, and Ma'ayan (Heschel High classes of 2012, 2014, and 2016).

Sandra Susser Berkowitz is thrilled to be returning to Heschel for her seventh year teaching seventh grade humanities! Sandra earned her teaching certification alongside her BA in English from Barnard College, Columbia University, and has a Masters in Adolescent Literacy from Hunter College, where she studied how to best assist students who struggle with reading and writing. Sandra is currently an Adjunct Professor in Hunter College's Department of Curriculum and Teaching. She is passionate about involving students in all aspects of literature as we grow together as readers, writers, and thinkers. Exploring text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections, Sandra views the classroom as a community and is highly anticipating her joint venture with this year's seventh grade. Outside of school, Sandra enjoys tutoring, dancing, writing poetry, and participating in flashmobs. You can often find Sandra raiding the library for new books to read, eating peanut butter (forbidden by school policy!), and playing with her many adorable nieces and nephews.

Marilyn Tawil is in her twentieth year of teaching and advising in the Middle School. She previously taught English and Social Studies to sixth and seventh graders at the Yeshiva of Flatbush and the International School of Brussels. Marilyn holds a BA from Brooklyn College and an MA from Bank Street College of Education, where she specialized in Adolescent Education. She enjoys sharing her love of reading, writing and history with her students.

Mari Tetzeli is thrilled to be returning to the Middle School as the Humanities Curriculum Coordinator. She also serves as English Department Chair in the High School. Mari has taught grades 5, 8, 11, and 12 at The Heschel School over the past 12 years. She has also taught 11th and 12th grade at Roslyn High School and the Solomon Schechter High School of New York, as well as 9th and 10th grades at Saint Ann's. Mari holds a BA in Comparative Literature from Brown University, where she also earned her teaching certification in English for grades 7-12. She also has an MA in Religious Studies and a PhD in Education from Stanford. When not teaching, reading, or hanging out with her husband and three children, Mari can be found swimming laps, biking one of the many NYC bike paths, or cleaning out a closet or two at her home in Brooklyn.

Sara Timen is excited to return to Heschel for her third year as a seventh and eighth grade science teacher. Proudly originating from Cleveland, Sara graduated with a BA from the University of Pennsylvania and holds a Masters in Education from Fordham University and a Masters in Public Health from Columbia University. Sara spent eight years working at a health care policy think tank before transitioning back to education. She lives on the Upper West Side with her husband and two daughters. In her free time Sara enjoys running, yoga, vegetarian cooking and spending time in Riverside Park with her family.

Adina Zablocki-Hacohen is thrilled to be returning to Heschel for her second year. She moved to New York last year with her husband Shuky from Israel where she was teaching Judaic Studies at a Middle School in Yerushalayim. She is currently completing her Master's degree at Hebrew University in Bible Studies. Previously she served in the IDF as a commander and teacher for new immigrant soldiers. She has spent most of her summers at Camp Yavneh in New Hampshire. Besides teaching, Adina enjoys bike riding, swimming, baking, travel, and Broadway musicals.