



# פירסומי פירסומי Pirsumei Pressman



PRESSMAN  
ACADEMY  
OF TEMPLE BETH AM

News and Highlights from the Schools of Pressman Academy

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BONNIE WEISS SCARED ME on my first day of ninth grade—her expectations were so *high*, she didn't even smile, and how was I ever going to do all of the work she expected? As it turned out, she was one of the most influential teachers in my education. In her class, we analyzed books as though our hair was on fire; we wrote drafts upon drafts, across many different genres; and received thoughtful and direct feedback on our work and our personhood. Her expectations for herself were just as high as—if not higher than—they were for us. When I entered education as a professional, I often used Bonnie Weiss as my model for excellence in teaching. Her values and standards applied whether I taught kindergarten, fifth grade or college-age students.

I believe (I hope!) we all have a Bonnie Weiss in our lives, someone who inspired us to learn more deeply and more fiercely. As I have thought more about Mrs. Weiss—and as I have collected more models of excellence in teaching—I have learned that while an individual may be excellent, it is the substance of a school and the support of leadership that grows a culture of excellence in teaching. One teacher who models excellence is wonderful; a school full of excellence can change the world. One of the reasons I am so proud to be part of Pressman Academy is that I know we breed a culture of excellence in teach-

## From the Head of School מנהלת בית הספר

### Excellence in Teaching

*Dr. Erica Rothblum, Head of School*

ing throughout our schools.

In this issue of *Pirsumei* you will read about the Excellence in Teaching that occurs here at Pressman Academy—from naming the qualities of excellence to collaboration across teams, from professional development to thoughtful instruction. Our staff strives towards excellence for themselves and grows a culture of excellence for our entire school. I can't wait for you to read about it!



# Early Childhood Center

האי הרוך

## Idea Exchange

Angie Bass, Early Childhood Director

WHEN IT COMES to attending meetings, my reputation is less than stellar. I do everything I can to avoid being in small rooms with lots of people talking, sitting on uncomfortable chairs, and having bad or no refreshments. Realizing that I need to regularly meet with my own staff, I had to devise a plan that would assure I would show up at my own meetings; I had to move away from the traditional “leader-speaks-participants-stifle-yawns” meetings. And thus Idea Exchange was born.

Once a week the Pressman Academy ECC faculty meet together. Rather than sigh and complain about daily difficulties, we dream, design, devise, and delight in new ideas. Then we back up those ideas with an action plan that supports growth for the students, the staff, and the school. We have challenged the measure of teacher excellence, replacing frontal, standardized teaching and cookie cutter projects with the facilitation of play, individual artistic expression,

social emotional growth, and learning that’s differentiated, out of the classroom and into the world. We call this sacred meeting time Idea Exchange.

I am blessed to work with teachers who do so much more than what is laid out in their job description. Teachers who embrace their role as communicators, facilitators, role models, researchers, coaches, storytellers, timekeepers, and referees. Teachers who take the chaotic, everyday life of a preschool teacher and fill it with teachable moments. The teachers use our time together in Idea Exchange, together with the collegiality and ideas shared, to grow professionally and personally. We are fully committed to raising the level of teaching through play and experience. These core values inform our teaching; bringing an open mind to our roles as teachers takes additional faith. Our teachers have learned that our commitment to children and to excellence will achieve what we dream of for our youngest students.



# Youth Learning & Engagement

הנוער הלומד והנרתם

## Professional Development Builds Excellence in Teaching

Lisa Clumeck, Jewish Learning Community Education Director

EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING is essential to connecting students to Judaism. Daniel Pekarsky, noted educational philosopher with a commitment to Jewish education, writes that “such excellence is as much a communal achievement as it is the achievement of individual educators; for it testifies to the seriousness of the community’s commitment to quality education.” The Jewish Learning Community (JLC) is devoted to giving our students excellent educational experiences; we know that one vital way to do so is to foster the professional development of our faculty.

Teachers’ commitment and dedication, combined with the willingness to connect with one another and invest in such professional development, are just some of the important qualities our staff brings to professional development (and,

by extension, to the growth of our students). By empowering our teachers to cultivate their talents and creativity through continuous learning and reflection, the JLC is bringing successes into the classroom and important educational opportunities to each of our students.

Every Sunday afternoon when JLC students return home from their day of learning, JLC teachers gather together in the Whiteman Conference Room for a professional development session. In these sessions teachers have the opportunity to learn *Torah* together, study and develop their teaching, and engage with one another through collaboration, imagination, and sharing content.

In each of these meetings JLC teachers are gaining new knowledge and techniques to bring to their classrooms; in addition, they are also creating a community and building a team. The JLC teachers have begun to reach out to one another outside of our dedicated learning sharing lessons, and sharing both classroom successes and dilemmas. Such learning transfers into each of these teachers’ classrooms, enriching the work that happens with each teacher’s group. As the teachers continue to build their community, they have gained skills for deepening the learning and community in their classrooms. These achievements in the pursuit of excellence in teaching have made the JLC’s professional development sessions a vital part of our teaching and learning.



# Elementary School

## בית הספר היסודי

### Finding Excellence in Teaching

Kimberly Medendorp, Interim Elementary School Principal

IN FEBRUARY OF 1997, I sat down with a friend in an Italian restaurant and said, “I’d become a teacher, but...” Five months later, I was standing in front of my first middle school English class in East Los Angeles and found myself to be the happiest I had ever been.

Now, 19 school years and many classrooms and experiences later, I find education and teaching to be a profession, career, and calling that requires excellence, personally and professionally. The requirement is not excellence personally or professionally, but *both*.

Second only to parenting, teaching sits at the intersection of who we are and what we do. In Parker Palmer’s book, *The Courage to Teach*, he writes, “...teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life... We [teachers] try to connect our subjects with our students, vulnerable to indifference, judgment, ridicule.”

In order for there to be excellence in the classroom, teachers need to be transparent with themselves, their class,

and the community. What does this look like? Here’s how I spot excellence in teaching:

1. Look for a teacher who is joyful. While all teachers have good and bad days, at the end of the day there is a joy that comes from that teacher, especially when he/she discusses the students!

2. Look for a teacher who is curious. Teachers need to be learning, exploring new ideas, and challenging themselves at the same level they require from the students. Ask a teacher what new thing she’s learned about recently.

3. Look for a teacher who is confident in him or herself. A teacher who is confident in who they *are* and not what they *do* is a teacher who can risk being real with their students and colleagues. Confidence also helps teachers be genuine and open, modeling appropriate responses to those challenging situations that arise.

4. Look for a teacher who is an expert with the age group and content. A teacher who knows the social, cognitive, and emotional benchmarks of the age group AND teaches quality content passionately is educational gold.

As a newcomer to Pressman, I am impressed by the many teachers who are showing excellence in teaching every day!



I carefully select prompts for *TaNaKH* daily warm-ups that focus on the curricular unit’s enduring understandings, and I relate them to my students’ lives. Similar

planning is part of my work as an Advisor. Through our *Kehillah* Unit, my advisees understand that when they and their peers feel safe, they can learn effectively. I ask my advisees to reflect and determine what tools they need to build a healthy and flourishing community.

In project-based learning, students work collaboratively to complete an authentic task; for example, become an expert on one aspect of Joshua’s leadership and teach it to the rest of the class, create an advertisement for studying the *TaNaKH*, or design an Advisory pledge of the essential commitments for a cohesive community. I thoughtfully choose teams ahead of time, being sensitive to students’ academic strengths and struggles, interpersonal dynamics, and the differentiated needs of learners. I assign specific roles to team members, often before class, to encourage strengths and challenge appropriately.

At the end of the day, when my students feel connected to each other, to me, and to the text we are studying, then our dedications are fulfilled and our learning is truly elevated.

# Middle School

## חטיבת ביניים

### A Day in the Life...

Laura Notowitz, Middle School Judaic Studies Teacher and Advisor

*“I AM STUDYING in the tradition of the Jewish people and I dedicate this learning ...”*

*“...in honor of my mom who had surgery last week.”*

*“...in memory of my grandfather whose yahrtzeit is today.”*

*“...in honor of my cousin’s Bar Mitzvah this Shabbat.”*

And so begins a typical day in *TaNaKH* class in the Middle School. When my students dedicate their learning, they feel a sense of connection and belonging to each other, to me, and to our sacred Jewish tradition. In *Conscious Discipline*, Dr. Becky Bailey writes, “Safety and connection with significant adults are the prerequisites for creating a sense of belonging.” Whether we are wrestling with a verse in *Sefer Beresheit*, translating biblical Hebrew, or navigating a tricky social situation during Advisory, my intention as a teacher and advisor is to ensure that my students feel valued, supported and inspired. Every detail of my planning, teaching, and reflection is guided by my goal that students know they are in a safe learning community in which they can explore, ask questions and take risks.



## Mazal tov, Morah Hanna

## מזל טוב למורה חנה

ON SEPTEMBER 21, THE STUDENTS and faculty at Pressman Academy attended a very special assembly. For one teacher, this assembly would be especially exciting...and surprising! It was a wonderful moment for the Pressman Academy family when our beloved art teacher, *Morah* Hanna Keynan, was awarded the prestigious Milken Jewish Educator Award.

Hanna began her time at Pressman as an assistant teacher in 2001, when she arrived here from Israel. She had studied art education in Israel, and used her artistic abilities to do beautiful bulletin boards at Pressman. Previous Head of School Rabbi Mitchel Malkus invited her to be the art specialist; reflecting on this, Hanna remarked, "He changed my life." She had one summer to plan before taking on this new challenge, and she quickly became an expert art teacher.

When asked about her vision for art education, Hanna reflected thoughtfully: "To reach every soul in the class.

To really get into their heart by sitting next to them and understand what they're doing. To praise their effort." She added, "I don't teach students to be artists. I try to expose them to other cultures, artists, techniques. I teach them to see, to notice details, to ask questions."

Hanna was emotional recalling the moment when her name was announced. "I had no idea! There are so many people here who deserve it," she said. "It was very flattering, such a feeling of achievement, pride, support. I'm proud as a woman, Jew, Israeli, my parents' daughter, my kids' mom. I'm very thankful to Dr. Erica Rothblum for nominating me and to previous Elementary School Principal Andy Polsky for all his support over the years."

The art on this page is just a sampling of the amazing work that happens under *Morah* Hanna's tutelage. *Mazal tov*, Hanna—we are so proud of you, and so grateful for your devotion to Pressman Academy!



# Kids' Page בן התלמידים

In each issue of *Pirsumei Pressman*, the Kids' Page highlights one of our three schools. This collage features our ECC students.



# Pressman Supporters

## תומכי פרסמן

### A Legacy of Love: The Robert Friedman Memorial Fund

ROBERT FRIEDMAN LOVED children. He always looked forward to spending time with his nieces and nephew and wanted more than anything to be a father. Unfortunately, that was not meant to be. On May 22, 2005, Robert passed away unexpectedly at the age of 40 due to complications of diabetes.

Robert's love of children inspired his parents, Elaine and Larry Friedman, to establish the Robert Friedman Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Elaine expressed, "It was a shame that Robert was unable

to have his own children; he would have been a wonderful father. I am grateful that we have the opportunity to honor his legacy so that he is able to take care of so many children and ensure the continuity of Jewish education."

Since its creation, the Robert Friedman Memorial Scholarship Fund has provided over \$125,000 in Pressman Academy scholarships.

It has helped Elaine and Larry in their grieving process to know that their son's legacy is one of giving and providing educational opportunity.

Temple Beth Am has been Larry and Elaine's home for over 45 years. It is where they met their best friends and experienced some of their greatest memories. It is where their children celebrated their *b'nei mitzvah* and learned to love Judaism. When the Friedmans speak of their opportunity to give back, Larry stresses the importance of investing in Jewish education.

He shared, "As a business owner I have invested in numerous things, but the greatest investment Elaine and I have made is in the children of Pressman Academy. They are our legacy and our future."

This year with Rabbi Jack's passing, the opportunity to support the Academy has taken on even more meaning to them. Larry continued, "We have a flourishing education center here that will be a critical piece of ensuring the Jewish future. We are grateful for the opportunity to play a small part in safeguarding its success while also honoring the legacies of Rabbi Jack and our son."

Larry and Elaine, you have done more than a small part. We are deeply grateful for your generosity, passion, care and love of our community and our children. Your love for the Jewish people and commitment to ensuring the Jewish future is a model for all of us.



## Kol Ha-Kavod! !קול הכבוד

*Kol ha kavod* to DS parent **Rabbi Ilana Grinblat** on her new book, *Castles and Catch: Spiritual Lessons Children Teach Us*.

ECC parent **Cathy Heller** was recently featured in a *Times of Israel* article about her success as a singer-songwriter!

*Mazal tov* to DS parent **Benny Zolkowicz** and his co-author Cam Baity on the upcoming release of their book *The Second Book of Ore: Waybound*, a sequel to *The First Book of Ore: The Foundry's Edge*.

The Jewish Women's Repertory Company's fall production of *Fiddler on the Roof* featured many members of the Pressman family. *Yasher koah* to

**Sari Abrams, Michelle Barton, and Nili Isenberg** (Pressman faculty members) and **Noa Kligfeld** (DS '15) for their performances and DS parent **Reyna Zack** for co-directing.



# Pressman Alumni

## בוארי פרסמן

### Rabbi Andy Green, DS '98

*Shalhevet School '02, UCLA '07, Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies '15*

RABBI ANDY GREEN LIGHTS up when asked about his time at Pressman Academy. He is exuberant in reflecting on his treasured Pressman memories. Rabbi Green loved *Kabbalat Shabbat* at Pressman, with “Doc” Ackerman on guitar. He reflects, “I knew *Shabbat z’mirot* because of this” experience. Rabbi Green expressed gratitude to Pressman for the immersive Jewish environment of Pressman, commenting, “...again and again, even through rabbinical school, I remembered things I learned on the kindergarten carpet at Pressman.” He thrived academically at Pressman, and appreciated the differentiated instruction and additional enrichment he received. Rabbi Green recalls his teachers with fondness, especially *Morah* Debbie Dubb, Ms. Inez Tiger (current Middle School Principal), Middle School teacher Trish Snyder-Davis, and previous Elementary Principal Andy Polsky.

Rabbi Green went on to Shalhevet School for high school, and earned his undergraduate degree at UCLA. Last spring, he was ordained at the American Jewish University’s Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies. In thinking about his education after Pressman, Rabbi Green credits Pressman with “empowering me to a leader on campus and to be a better rabbi.”

Rabbi Green currently serves as a rabbi at Congregation Beth El in Voorhees, New Jersey. Rabbi

Green is loving the rabbinate, where he sees himself as a “conduit for God’s love, helping others make meaning in times of joy and despair.” He is the proud husband of Charlene and father to 3-year-old Archer. Rabbi Rembaum and Rabbi Dorff were part of the Greens’ wedding—as Rabbi Green put it, “celebrating a moment that started at Pressman Academy.” On his office desk sits

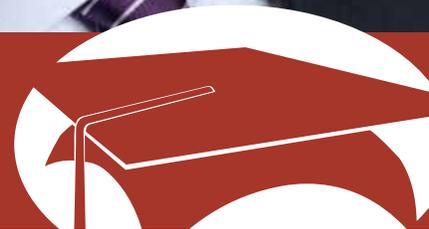
a photo taken at Pressman in 1990, of Rabbi Green and his future wife in the chapel at Temple Beth Am!

While Rabbi Green has traveled far from home, it’s clear that Pressman Academy is very close to his heart. Pressman is so proud of Rabbi Andy Green and all that he is accomplishing in the Jewish world!



## Class Notes

### זרישת סלום מבוארי פרסמן



*We are proud of our recent Pressman Academy graduates’ achievements!*

87 Students (out of 178) qualified for the **Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth**. 45 Students (out of 89) received the **Presidential Award for Academics**.

#### Class of 2015 Median ERB Scores:

- Verbal reasoning: 91st Percentile
- Reading Comprehension: 88th Percentile
- Quantitative Reasoning: 96th Percentile
- Mathematics: 94th Percentile

## Calling all Pressman alumni!

Let us know where you are and what you are doing!  
Write to us at [alumni@pressmanacademy.org](mailto:alumni@pressmanacademy.org).

Here are some alumni we’ve profiled recently on these pages.





**PRESSMAN**  
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**The Rena E. Ganzberg Education Center**

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**Jill Linder**, *Judaic Studies Principal*

**Inez Tiger**, *Middle School Principal*

**Angie Bass**, *Early Childhood Center Director*

**Michelle Porjes**, *Director of Student Services*

**Deborah Engel Kollin**,  
*Director of Operations*

**Lesley Bloom**,  
*Day School Admission Director*

**Rabbi Chaim Tureff**, *Rav Beit Sefer*

**Seth Rosenzweig**, *Director of Development*

**Erica Huls**,  
*Director of Educational Technology*

**Rabbi Yechiel Hoffman**,  
*Director of Youth Learning & Engagement*

**Deena Messinger**, *Editor, Pirsumei Pressman*



*Rabbi Jacob Pressman* מנצח

**Developing minds. Nurturing hearts.  
Instilling Jewish values.**

The Rabbi Jacob Pressman Academy is the dynamic educational center of Temple Beth Am. The Academy houses an Early Childhood Center, a Solomon Schechter Day School, and the synagogue's Religious School in the **Rena E. Ganzberg Education Center**. The Academy was named in honor of Rabbi Jacob Pressman whose spirit of innovation and tradition informs our many diverse programs. The Academy was founded in 1986 under the leadership of **Rabbi Joel Rembaum**, who served as the school's first Headmaster.

Pressman Academy is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and BJE (Builders of Jewish Education) of Greater Los Angeles. The school is affiliated with the Solomon Schechter Day School Network.



[www.pressmanacademy.org](http://www.pressmanacademy.org)