

פרסומי פרסמן

# Pirsumei pressman

NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SCHOOLS OF PRESSMAN ACADEMY  
FALL 2017/5778

Pressman Academy



OF TEMPLE BETH AM

## Developing Minds. Nurturing Hearts. Instilling Jewish Values.

FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL

ממנהלת בית הספר

Dr. Erica Rothblum



This past May, our eighth grade class produced and presented a *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day) assembly for our 3rd-7th graders. In the sanctuary, they presented a program that included original art, music, poetry and stories. They filmed the story of a survivor. They sang and prayed and read memories. The other students received an education about the horrors of the Holocaust; our eighth graders demonstrated the

mission of our school.

Pressman Academy is a school that develops minds, nurtures hearts and instills Jewish values. This isn't simply a statement painted on the walls and hanging on frames; it is a living and breathing mission that guides our work. And it was on display that morning in the sanctuary as our eighth graders demonstrated what they knew; they used their talents and empathy to teach others, and ensured that the memory of the 6 million victims would not be forgotten.

While this was one larger demonstration of our mission statement, evidence of our mission abounds throughout our school every day. I see our students' minds developing as they speak Hebrew to teach about Israel in their third grade class celebration, when they construct ancient Egypt out of blocks in the ECC, and when they solve complicated algebraic problems in math. I know our students' hearts are nurtured as they take deep breaths to become calmer, as they speak about bullying in Keshet class, and as they receive accolades at the Art show. I can feel the values in their souls when the middle school students embark on a *Tikkun Olam* project or when they come to a shabbat program outside of class time.

In these pages you will read more about the ways our mission is a living statement. Enjoy reading about our classrooms and synagogue programs - the spaces in which this holy work happens - by the people who do it every day. I think you will be impressed!

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- Dr. Erica Rothblum

Early  
Childhood  
Center

הגיל הרך

# Nurturing Hearts.



*“Boker tov banim, boker  
tov banot, boker tov  
la’morim ve’lamorot...”*

I am in a meeting in my office and I hear bells ringing in the hall; the signal calling all the kids to line up. I can't help but smile in anticipation of my favorite part of the day. Every Monday through Thursday morning, the 3 and 4 year olds gather together to greet the morning ECC style, and what a wonderful way to start the day. We sing, dance, talk, and connect with the children. We raise flags and say the Pledge of Allegiance and sing *Hatikva*. Birthdays are extra special as the birthday child helps to lead.

During line up, we begin with connection, an important part of “nurturing hearts”. We sing, *“All I really need is a song in my heart, food in my belly, and love in my family”* which serves as a loving

reminder of what's important in the life of a child. We even sing the song in Hebrew, using TPR (total physical response, a Hebrew Immersion Technique). We end line up with a daily ritual from Conscious Discipline - we hold up our index finger as a candle to bring light to our school, then we take a deep breath and join pinkies to show we are united as one school family, we then rub our hearts to we remember to treat each other with kindness, and finally, we touch our palms to our foreheads to remind us to use our thoughtful brains. We are now ready to begin the day as a school *kehilla* to prepare the children and staff for a day filled with *nissim v'niflaot*, miracles and surprises, for a happy day - *a yom sameah*.

There's never a dull moment when you work with preschoolers. They bring their “A-game” every day, and we must stay engaged every moment. While we are ready with the tools necessary to accept every challenge, and meet the needs the children send our way, it is through our connectivity rituals that we build the trust required for each child to feel safe and loved.

By Angie Bass, ECC Director



Elementary  
School  
בית הספר היסודי

# Developing Minds through Singapore Math.



STEAM (an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) is the new hot topic in the world of education and has become a statement for how we develop the minds of our students here at Pressman Academy.

Math education is no longer about students gathering knowledge as a set of singular subjects to be mastered. Recognizing we needed to change the way we teach mathematics to children, we introduced Singapore Math in Kindergarten through third grade, with the intention of growing the program each year through fifth grade. The fundamentals of Singapore Math push students to look beyond the bounds of singular math facts and develop an intrinsic understanding of number sense. Singapore Math fosters the growth of critical thinking in order to develop the minds of our students into fluid math thinkers who can understand and analyze problems mentally, visually and algebraically.

Singapore Math is rooted in the belief that true mastery of concepts develops students' math comprehension in a way that memorization simply cannot. Students spend more time, with greater rigor, on fewer topics in order to develop deep understanding. The goal is to develop conceptual mastery, which will in turn allow students to think of math and numbers in a more fluid state so that students not only know *how* to find an

answer, but they also understand the *why* of an answer. These critical thinking skills will be applied in other STEAM classes when a student thinks to ask *why* many plants need sunlight, *what* makes a computer program run, or *how* a roller coaster works.

In order to build strong STEAM students, we have to ensure that students have a toolkit that provides them with the necessary skills to think critically and creatively in every content area. Developing students' minds so that they can see beyond the pages of their books and start to ask and understand the *how* and the *why* is what Singapore Math is here to do for our students.

By Siobhan Carrol, Math Department Chair

“Singapore Math fosters the growth of critical thinking in order to develop the minds of our students into fluid math thinkers who can understand and analyze problems mentally, visually and algebraically.”

- Siobhan Carrol

Middle  
School

חטיבת ביניים

# Developing Minds through the Humanities.



When thinking about developing minds, it is critical that students not only develop subject mastery but also that they understand how to integrate and synthesize their knowledge. In an effort to proactively address this need, the Pressman Academy Middle School created a humanities department, combining Language Arts and Social Studies; and I had the privilege of teaching sixth grade

Ancient Civilizations. Throughout this year, some of our work included:

- Exploring the appropriation of ancient architecture by building a to-scale model of the Parthenon and comparing its influence upon the construction of the Lincoln Memorial in the form of an information essay.
- Collaborating on multimedia presentations that examined the development of the ancient Olympics, which were first held in honor of Zeus at Olympia, and its bearing upon the modern version of the Olympic games.

- Writing original scripts and creating iMovies based upon our reading of the Greek myth The Twelve Labors of Heracles. The examination of this text, of course, led to their indictment of the Disney film “Hercules” as they critiqued it for its departure from the original myth.
- Using Minecraft Education Edition to reconstruct the former Falvian amphitheater later named the Colosseum and wrote comparative essays that noted the similarities between this monumental structure and modern stadiums in the United States.

In short, after a year of studying the classical world, we have worked together to discover points of continuity and discontinuity between the literature, history and architecture of antiquity and the society in which we live. Now when the students enter the classroom, embracing their iPads in one hand and a copy of Shakespeare’s *Tragedy of Julius Caesar* in the other, it is obvious that we are able to develop minds as our students engage with these interrelated histories.

By Olanna C. Mills, Ph.D.



Youth  
Learning &  
Engagement

הנוער הלומד והנרתם

# Instilling Jewish Values.



Temple Beth Am's Youth Learning and Engagement (YLE) works in partnership with Pressman Academy to help the school's mission of instilling Jewish values. Our YLE team actively involves students in an array of opportunities. Most of this learning is designed to take place after school and on weekends, and these informal activities center around ritual

and social activities. The aim is to complement school learning by instilling Jewish values and enriching minds and hearts within the Temple Beth Am community.

We offer many opportunities for our children to take a Jewish journey within this community. Starting in second grade, we encourage participation in our youth groups: Mahar (for 2nd & 3rd graders), Kadima (4th through 6th graders), and Jr USY (7th and 8th graders). These youth groups create opportunities for students to explore their Jewish identity in a safe space where they can have fun with their friends. *Hallah* baking, making sushi in the *Sukkah*, or creating a chocolate seder are lively, invigorating and playful encounters with Jewish traditions.

Shabbat programming allows Pressman Academy students and their families to participate in Jewish experience that they can only read about during the school week. The TBA Family Shabbaton and the Epic programs provide entire families an

opportunity to experience the joy of Shabbat with other families of their community while also providing real world situations for parents to witness their children applying the skills and knowledge acquired through the school's curriculum.

As sixth grade students begin to enter the process of becoming *B'nei Mitzvah*, the *B'nei Mitzvah* Cohort program offers middle school students a supplement to their academic and spiritual learning. The Cohort program is designed as a whole-family experience to enable parents and middle schoolers to reflect on and discuss how they can identify and develop meaning within their *B'nei Mitzvah* journey, while balancing the many pressures and opportunities of middle school life.

Finally, our oldest middle school students are invited to join student-only Moving Traditions sessions, which provide students a space to dig deeper into their emotional and spiritual questions of becoming a teenager. The program uses Jewish texts and values to encourage clarification and creativity.

A school that is embedded in a synagogue allows us the opportunity to provide child and family programming that can compliment a school curriculum, bringing it to life -- this holistic and comprehensive partnership allows us to truly and thoughtfully instill Jewish values.

By Rabbi Yechiel Hoffman

# An Alumni Family The Grobs-20 years at Pressman!



Sharon and Brad Grob were truly committed to giving their children a Jewish education. Not only did they choose Pressman Academy for their children. Sharon became an integral part of the Kindergarten program at Pressman where she taught for 14 years. Today, Sharon is retired - though she has never really left Pressman! Sharon can be found two days/week at The Lainer Library of Pressman Academy where she is an active volunteer. Josh ('03), Elisheva ('07) and Rivka ('13) are proud of their Pressman roots.

After studying abroad at the Hebrew University during his junior year of university, Josh decided to make Aliyah. He graduated with a degree in Jewish History from Bar Ilan University, and then served for two years in the IDF's Education Corps. While at Bar Ilan, he met his wife, Anna, and together they moved to Chicago though they plan to move back to Israel in the next few years. They have a beautiful baby daughter, Liel.

Elisheva fondly remembers traveling to Washington, DC on the 8th grade class trip with Mrs. Lewis, "Seeing all the history come to life in the museums, the monuments, and buildings was incredibly special. On the trip I kept hearing all about the cherry blossom festival in the springtime and knew that I wanted to come back to DC to see the mall covered in pink flowers one day." Elisheva's vision came true as she graduated from American University, and she experienced the cherry blossom festival every year! She worked at *Make a Wish*, and she is now in graduate school at Loyola University in Chicago.

Rivka, the youngest Grob, spent her gap year in Israel on USY Nativ 36. She has made Aliyah, and she will enter the IDF in November.

From Pressman Academy to Israel, from Washington D.C., to Chicago, Pressman's mission has shaped the Grob family. We hope that the Grobs will continue their love for Pressman for many years to come!

## Alumni Updates

### **Matt Lavi** (Class of '02)

Currently Matt Lavi is working in real estate in Los Angeles. He recently returned from leading *Birthright* and *March of the Living* trips. Matt is actively involved in AIPAC and AJC as well. Some of his teachers were delighted to see him return to Pressman as a speaker and member of The Bureau of *JQ International*. He spoke movingly to the Pressman faculty at a Professional Development Day, regarding inclusivity and creating an environment of acceptance for young people to be themselves.

### **Becca Abeles**

After graduating from UC Berkeley, Becca joined the IDF as Madagit - a fitness instructor for a combat battalion. She has returned to LA after being in Israel for 2 ½ years. She has begun her post- baccalaureate at San Francisco State University.

### **Jen Abeles**

Jen graduated from University of Colorado in Boulder in 2015. She has moved to Greensboro, N.C. to work as a fellow at The American Hebrew Academy, a college prep boarding school for high school students.

### **Amanda Abeles**

Amanda is about to finish her junior year at The University of Oregon where she is majoring in International Studies, with a minor in French. She studied in France over the Summer.

### Aaron Schimmel

Aaron (Class of 2008) was an intern over the Summer at Hillel International in Washington, DC.

## Kol Hakavod כל הכבוד

JQ International recently honored COURTNEY MIZEL (P '19) with The Community Leadership Award on May 7, 2017.

MEGHAN STEIN, Pressman Third Grade Teacher, received her Masters in Teaching from the American Jewish University and received the Lois Rothblum Award for Excellence in Teaching.

LAURA NOTOWITZ, Middle School Judaic Studies teacher, received The Mickey Weiss Award for Outstanding Alumni from the American Jewish University on Sunday, May 21, 2017.

DR.SARAH BENOR (P '17, '19, '22) and TOM FIELDS - MEYER (P '99, '08,'12) recently published *We the Resilient: Wisdom For America From Women Born Before Suffrage*.

Mazal Tov to Simonette and Leo Grifka (class of 2001) on the birth of their son, William.

Mazal Tov to Max (class of 2000) and Tammy Rabin on the birth of their third child in Israel.



# Supporting our School.



I will confess: I have sent calls to voicemail when I thought an organization was soliciting me for money. I used to feel embarrassed that I could not give a lot, or I did not understand why they would want my money. Maybe you have had these doubts or questions when you have received a call from your undergraduate university, an organization to which you previously donated, or a friend's

cause. My thinking shifted when another fundraiser told me to think about donating as an "opportunity to invest in something you believe in" and that my gifts are signs of my priorities. That clicked for me, and I have answered fundraising calls with more openness ever since!

"I also learned that giving is not about HOW much you can give; it is about WHY you give and your intention behind it."

Here at Pressman, we conduct a school-wide campaign to raise funds for Annual Giving. Annual Giving supports our annual operating budget and bridges the gap between tuition and the actual cost to educate our students. These funds help our school to provide materials to students, to hire and retain the best teachers, and to provide Professional Development. We celebrate our donors by showing the percentages of how many have donated for each class in our school newsletter, HaShavua.

We are always educating our community on the merits of giving and work on dismantling the myth that giving is only for those who have extra. One of the most meaningful gifts we received last year was by a parent who did not have a lot of extra money to give. She told us that they could not give a large gift, so they would not be giving. Another parent, an Annual Giving Ambassador for their fellow school families, explained that it isn't about the size of the donation, it is about contributing to something bigger than oneself. Once this parent understood, she gave a meaningful gift to our community.

When you give, and it is deeply meaningful to you, it emanates throughout your body and soul to know that you are furthering your community and the greater Jewish community, locally, nationally and worldwide!

## Come chat with me about your interests and giving!

Emily St. Lifer

Development Associate

Temple Beth Am/Pressman Academy

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## Calling all Pressman Alumni! A message from Michelle Barton and Inez Tiger

If you are an alumnus of any of the Pressman Schools, we'd love to hear from you! Please send us an email to share what's going on with you: news about yourself, news from high school or college, your family, your work, a new job, an engagement, a wedding, a baby, or anything you'd like the Pressman community to know about. Have you made the team? Written a book? Started grad school? Climbed Mount Kilimanjaro? We would love to *kvell* over you!

Email us at [mbarton@pressmanacademy.org](mailto:mbarton@pressmanacademy.org) and [itiger@pressmanacademy.org](mailto:itiger@pressmanacademy.org)

**Dr. Erica Rothblum** Head of School

**Michelle Barton** Elementary School Principal

**Laura Notowitz** Interim Judaic Studies Principal

**Inez Tiger** Middle School Principal

**Angie Bass** Early Childhood Director

**Sarah Tannenbaum** Director of Operations

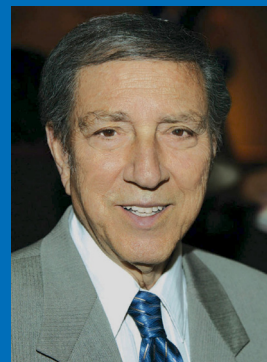
**Michelle Porjes** Director of Student Services

**Rabbi Yechiel Hoffman** Director of Youth Learning and Engagement

**Hilary Hellman** Director of Resource and Development

**Essia Cartoon-Fredman** Editor, Pirsumei Pressman

## 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 Day School Network.

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