

MONTHLY



A Monthly Newsletter for Charlotte Jewish Day School Parents and Staff

JANUARY 4, 2006 14 TEVET



Cleaning Up The Creek With Our Fifth Grade Students

PHOTO AT RIGHT:
Harold and Barry Klemons help Joel Truzman present new bench to CJDS.



From the “Terrible Twos” to the “Preteens from Another Planet”

If you are the parent of a 10- to 12-year old child, you are probably wondering if someone has switched the adorable youngster you have enjoyed all these years with a forgetful, “spaced-out,” altered personality replacement almost overnight. This recent article from *The Charlotte Observer* will shed some light on the changes occurring in your child’s brain during these years and help you to cope with the many changes yet to come. Fear not—this, too, shall pass. Can puberty be far behind??

Teen Angst Might Be Necessary To Grow Up

Vital Brain Cell Loss May Explain Difficult Moods

by Robert S. Boyd,
McClatchy Newspapers

Scientists are gaining new insights into remarkable changes in teenagers’ brains that may help explain why the teen years are so hard on young people – and on their parents.

From ages 11 to 14, people lose a substantial fraction of the connections between cells in the part of the brain that enable them to think clearly and make good decisions. This loss is a vital part of growing up. It clears out, or “prunes,” unneeded wiring to make way for more efficient information-processing in adults.

“Ineffective or weak connections are pruned in much the same way a gardener would prune a tree or bush, giving the plant the desired shape,” said Alison Gopnik, a professor of child development at the University of California-Berkeley.

The pruning process “appears to follow the principle of use-it-or-lose-it,” said Jay Giedd, a child development expert at the National Institute of Mental Health, in Bethesda, Md.

“Neural connections or synapses that get exercised are retained, while those that don’t are lost,” Giedd said.

Like teenage pimples and body hair, changes inside the head can be upsetting.

“It certainly seems possible that nor-

mal adolescents who are experiencing these brain changes can react emotionally,” said Ian Campbell, a neuroscientist at the University of California-Davis Sleep Research Laboratory.

“Teens may process emotions differently than adults,” said Giedd, who calls the teenage brain “a work in progress.”

Girls typically start pruning their brain cells about a year before boys do, but the loss ends up the same, Campbell said.

To figure out why teenagers are often moody, uncooperative and irresponsible, scientists make images of their brains. Their tools include electroencephalograms, which record brain waves, and functional magnetic resonance imaging, which measures activity in various regions of the brain.

“In the past decade, brain changes in adolescence have become the subject of intensive research,” Campbell said. For instance, he and a colleague at UC-Davis, psychiatrist Irwin Feinberg, attached EEG recorders to the skulls of two groups of children – one of 9- to 11-year-olds, the other of 12- to 14-year-olds – while they slept. The devices showed that the brain waves were 25 percent weaker in the older children than in the younger ones, the scientists reported in the December issue of the *American Journal of Physiology*.

These waves are produced by electrical vibrations in brain cells, or neurons. The more neurons vibrate in concert, the stronger the wave.

Campbell compared the effect to

“crowd noise within a stadium. When all the members of the crowd yell together, the noise is very loud.” Similarly, in the brain, he said, “the intensity is strongly affected by the number of neurons oscillating in unison.”

Synaptic pruning is a good thing. It brings about “an improvement in speed in information-processing and a greater ability to build the long neuronal chains required for complex problem-solving,” Campbell said. “There are situations in which less is more.”

However, the loss of synapses makes it much harder for an adult to learn a new language without a foreign accent or to achieve first-class athletic or musical skills.

Other crucial changes occur in the teenage brain parallel with pruning. According to Giedd, “a major rearrangement of brain structure and function takes place during early adolescence.”

Regions that specialize in language, for example, grow rapidly until about age 13 and then stop. The frontal lobes of the brain, which are responsible for high-level reasoning and decision-making, aren’t fully mature until adulthood, around the early 20s, according to Deborah Yurgelun-Todd, a neuroscientist at Harvard’s Brain Imaging Center in Belmont, Mass.

“Adolescents are more prone to react with gut instinct when they process emotions,” Yurgelun-Todd said. “But as they mature into early adulthood, they are more able to temper their gut reactions with reasoned responses.”

PARSHIOT

JANUARY 5 - JANUARY 31

Vayechi

Ya'akov asks Yosef to swear he will bury Ya'akov in the land of Israel. Yosef's two sons, Efraim and Menashe, get a blessing from their Zaydie. He pulls the switcheroo and puts his right hand on the younger boy (Efraim), a sign that he will have a great descendant (Yehoshua). Ya'akov gathers his twelve sons to tell them when Moshiach will come.... Wish you could know, too? Sorry, Hashem made him forget before he told them.

Shemot

Pharoah tries unsuccessfully to combat the growth spurt of the Jewish population in Egypt through forced labor. According to the Talmud, Hashem helped the Jewish cause by giving Jewish parents sextuplets. Being before the era of the mini-van, this created a transportation problem, but hey, you can't have everything. Baby Moshe surfs the Nile, and Batya tries her hand at advanced lifesaving. Moshe runs into something that would stump the best of fire chiefs, the "sneh," a bush that was on fire but did not get consumed. This symbolized Hashem's empathy with the suffering of the Jews (the divine presence dwelling in a painful thorn bush).

Vaera

Did you ever wonder why we're obsessed with the number four at Pesach time? Four questions, four cups, four sons, etc.? Parshat Vaera gives us the answer when Hashem tells Moshe (Moses) that the cries of his suffering children are being heard, and that he will redeem them.

The Torah uses four different expressions of redemption: I will take you out, I will save you, I will redeem you, I will take you as a nation. Little did Moshe know that this would provide the theme for years of seder nights to come, not to mention a popular motion picture! This parsha is also doomsday for the Egyptians, as they are smitten with seven plagues. Thought there were ten? You'll have to wait for Parshat Bo for the last three!

Bo

In Parshat Bo, Paroah (Pharoah) is hit with the final blow— the plague of the firstborn. This actually caused a small revolution in Egypt. When the bechorim (firstborn) are notified that their goose will be cooked, they complain to Paroah. He turns a deaf ear to their plea, in spite of the fact that he and his son are firstborns. The firstborns start a revolt, demanding that the Jews be freed. Incidentally, don't think that Judaism celebrates the downfall of our enemies. In fact, during the seder it is customary to pour out some of the wine during the reciting of the ten plagues, to show that we may not rejoice at others' suffering!

Also noteworthy in this parsha is the first mitzvah given to the Jews, the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh. And just when the people thought they were getting a handle on the calendar after 2448 years of practice, Hashem pulled a fast one and declared that the new year will still be the first of Tishre (Rosh Hashanah), but the first month of the year will be Nisan, based on the redemption from Egypt.



Morah
Donna's
Ivrit

On December 14 we had a lovely time entertaining some of our schoolmates with two plays about "Why a zebra wears pajamas" and "What Dr. Goof-li says about food groups." The plays were such a hit that parents may even get to see a version of them at graduation.



All the children became fashion designers this month! To get us in the spirit of “A Night at the Races,” each child designed their own jockey silks. Kindergarten painted like the “messy meanies” they read about in class, using all different kinds of brushes and sticks to experiment with paint. They also practiced their cutting techniques, cutting out shapes for Chanukah cards. First grade learned how lines in a picture can mean something. They imagined they were going on a road trip, stopping and starting and going up and down hills and drew the lines that represented that. This project will give them a head start for learning about maps in Social Studies. Also, after talking about how pictures can tell stories, they created cards showing part of the Chanukah story.



Mrs. Lerner’s Art Class

Having learned in Science about how joints work and arms and legs bend, the second grade practiced drawing bodies in action poses. With the help of our resident ceramicist, Linda Stewart, third grade sculpted clay dreidels. Fourth grade continued their survey of art history; this month looking at Impressionism. They used a special printing technique to create a vase with flowers in the manner of Renior. Fifth grade learned about the surrealist painter Rene Magritte who used ordinary objects in an unusual way. To create surrealist drawings of their own, they first drew a picture of the shoe they were wearing and then imagined that it wasn’t really a shoe but something else. Their imaginations went wild, turning their shoes into things like boats, dogs and butterflies!



Q. What are Kosher Laws?

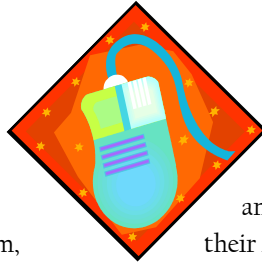
A. Kosher Dietary Laws are derived from biblical laws and rabbinical extensions.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

14 Tevet	Daniel Cremisi
17 Tevet	Daniel Kipnis
17 Tevet	Dylan Selkin
4 Shevat	Gabby Hernandez-Hensen
5 Shevat	Elana Burack
5 Shevat	Gracie Wasser
7 Shevat	Diana Turk
12 Shevat	Sophie Wasser
12 Shevat	Madison Goldfeld

Mensch Rule 14
 If someone bothers you and you can just walk away without a problem, do so. If someone is hurting you or others, let your teacher know.

CJDS kids are great! I am having so much fun introducing the kids to new topics, new software and new projects, and the kids are soaking up the information. Much of the Technology curriculum corresponds to and enhances the grade level curriculum, although from time to time, we will take a slightly different course from what it going on in the classroom. Here's what we've been up to lately:



MRS. GAMLIN'S Technology Class

Kindergarten is using KidPix, the software to write their names using text boxes. While many are new to KidPix, the software we are using, they have mastered typing their names, and modifying the text using font type, font size, bold, italics and underline. Now that they they've signed their canvases, it's been time to create art using KidPix-what fun!

1st graders have been learning about inputs and outputs. We've been using Paint to open text boxes, and begin typing and editing text that are opaque and transparent. We've used right and left mouse clicks to create geometric designs and reviewed all shapes in Paint. The class is doing so well saving their work, logging off and shutting down the computers.

Editing someone else's fairytale wasn't enough for the CJDS 2nd graders! This past month, they wrote and illustrated their own edited fairytales in Word! They inserted clip art and used image order to enhance their stories. What carefully illustrated, imaginative tales, I have from our 2nd grade class!

Our poetry books are nearly complete, and the 3rd grade

class used the thesaurus, spell check and their eyes to make sure they used the words they wanted. They also used Word Art to create a picture poem, and thought of words that began with the first letter of their first name to make tongue twisters.

Now that the 4th grade knows so much about Word's formatting techniques, they were ready to tackle a research topic. This year, they went on various pre-selected sites on the Internet to research Chanukah. After their research was completed, they opened a new Word document and created their report, incorporating advanced formatting techniques such as word wrapping and image control.

The 5th grade classes are completing their Powerpoint presentation on their mammals. They are incorporating styles, background, animation, and transitions to enhance the appearance of their document. Next, we'll be working on adding speaker notes and presenting our animals before the rest of the class. I believe they will be ready to go to the office and make a sales and marketing presentation next! By the way, ask your 5th grader the name of a small, hybrid auto that is a palindrome.

The kids are doing so well incorporating their knowledge, but as you know, the only way to Carnegie Hall is to practice, practice, practice! Please let your children show you what they are doing in class and allow them time to get into Paint, Word, or PowerPoint to play and practice.

