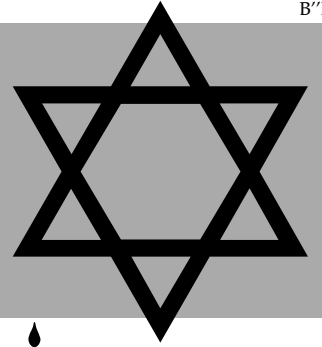


# MONTHLY



Monthly Newsletter from Charlotte Jewish Day School

**CJDS** Charlotte Jewish Day School

JANUARY 2, 2008 24 TEVET



# GUESSES



# WHO?

# Mariashi's Message

## Best Friends – Worst Enemies

*I'm in the middle of reading Best Friends, Worst Enemies – Understanding the Social Lives of Children by Michael Thompson and Catherine O'Neill Grace and would love to share some excerpts with you. The authors give recommendations*

*Together with you, we continue to partner to help our students treat each other with respect and earn the respect we would all like for them to have.*

### FOR THE SCHOOL:

#### Create A Moral School And Instill Ethical Standards

Using moral guidelines for our students, such as posting a rule, "You can't say you can't play," are ways to impress our goals with the children. There is an anti-bullying organization that recommends three basic planks regarding bullying, 1) We will not bully other students; 2) We will help others who are being bullied by speaking out and getting adult help; and 3) We will use extra effort to include all students in activities at our school.

The plank of including all students is the best. *"It isn't enough just to make a rule against forbidden behaviors. To change a school culture and climate, you need to go the extra mile; you have to make the extra effort to include all students in activities at our school."*

*"I believe that a school must have an ethos and a moral code that stands against excessive exclusion and social cruelty. Will any school be able to stop exclusion entirely? No, certainly not. But it remains the number one social problem from pre-K through twelfth grade. I believe it is a moral problem. Professor Tom Lickona was asked to define a moral school. His answer was, 'A moral school is a school where people spend a lot of time discussing what a moral school is.' Tom means that if we all keep talking about how to be a moral school, our antennae will be up, constantly monitoring our behavior and that of the children we teach. We will pay attention to how we treat one another – not for the purpose of catching people in the act and deciding whom to punish and whom to praise, but for the purpose of making our moral standards clear."*

We are very fortunate that we are a Jewish school and that our moral compass is provided by the Torah. The source for rules of human decency and kindness is the Torah, and we are teaching the children from the source.

#### Be Proactive

*"It is always easier – and more effective – to do preventive maintenance. Friendship groups are an example of a proactive response to creating an atmosphere of kindness and support. These groups are selected and put together by teachers and counselors to include a range of classmates who might not otherwise seek each other out. At first the groups are led by a school counselor who helps them see that they can make friends outside of their original clique or circle. 'It is not uncommon,' says Tissie Bean, lower school counselor, 'to see a group of third graders, walking toward the Pink House, where the groups gather, with their serious faces and their lunches, heading toward a meeting that they have called to discuss a friendship problem.'"*

I am pleased that Linda Stewart, our social worker has already begun these meetings with different mixes of children in groups that they may have not chosen themselves. They may eat lunch, work with clay, play games, or just talk. In fact, when I had a discussion with a group of girls, they asked me if they could play a game that Ms. Linda had taught them. It was a game that required introspection and an opportunity to reveal some deeper feelings. I was impressed that this is what they would consider enjoyable.

#### Encourage Good Citizenship

*"The second plank of the antibullying platform – help other students who are being victimized rather than do nothing – is a key to good citizenship. Many of the best interventions against social cruelty focus extensively on the bystanders, the people who wouldn't initiate vicious teasing or violence and might not condone it but don't do anything themselves.... No matter what, they can be encouraged to take an active role in maintaining respect and civility in a school. Some of the most intractable problems of exclusion I have seen in schools have involved children who stepped forward, spurred by their own conscience,*

*and were ostracized for getting 'high-status' people in trouble. A new group ethos of helping others, reaching out, and not tolerating aggression must replace that blind loyalty and protection of the aggressors. Creating an atmosphere that encourages kindness one to another should, and can, also support values that are fundamental to being members of the human family."*

This has certainly been a focus of ours and students have been firmly told that if they punish the student that comes to share a problem with us, the consequences will be severe. If anything, a child needs to feel safe and able to share their worries, concerns, and hurts.

## **Take A Systems Approach Include Everyone In The Conversation**

*"At the classroom level, interventions can consist of clear classroom rules, regular class meetings, role-playing, reading, cooperative learning, and class activities with a common goal. On an individual level, educators began a system of 'serious talks' with bullies and victims, helped rejected children with their social skills without blaming them for being excluded, and organized neutral students to be activists against cruelty."*

He also suggests that, on the parent level, the school should provide education and parent meetings that address these issues. One of the messages we try to get across to our children is a zero tolerance policy towards bullying behavior. I can't say we are 100% successful, but I can see we have many more students approaching teachers, our social worker, and myself when they experience or witness bullying. We can certainly not accomplish this goal without parental input, informing us of these situations occurring, because many times they happen under the radar or even outside of school. It is a work in progress and certainly, as Dr. Thompson says, needs to be a team approach with all involved.

## **Harness The Power Of Teachers**

*"Research has shown that teachers who use cooperative collaborative teaching methods, in which popular and unpopular children and their various talents are showcased to one another, and where children depend on one another, can make a real difference in improving the day-to-day life of relatively unpopular children. Sometimes it is the parents who resist such efforts more than the children. A mother once said to me, her voice full of a sense of injustice, 'Dr. Thompson, the teachers at this school don't let children pick their lab partners!' Clearly she thought I was going to agree with her that this practice is terrible. My answer disappointed her. 'Good for the teachers', I said."*

We are certainly moving in the direction of using the same approach, because we have found that too many children are hurt by the "popular" choices that go on. Different strategies are used to avoid the hurt that comes from partner grouping. Some people might disagree and say that we need to toughen up our kids. I can't see the benefit, and to be perfectly honest, I don't see that "toughening up" serves the child in the future. I can remember as far back as fourth grade, when I was not a very successful ball player, and I was always the last one picked by the captain. I believe that if I found myself in that situation again, it would be just as painful. What good does that serve? The school and teachers could help avoid some of these situations by using different strategies when organizing smaller groups.

## **Work In Your Community For Smaller, More Caring Schools**

*"It is a step in the right direction that around the country the old warehouse junior highs are giving way to more moderately-sized middle schools, or K-8 schools that keep a family-like environment through middle school. If I could design psychologically safe schools, every elementary school in the United States would go from kindergarten through grade eight and would be no larger than four hundred children."*

You can imagine how pleased I was to read this and to know that our new structure is recommended for good social development.

When I came across the following, I was floored, because we just finished our talent show and witnessed ourselves what an amazing opportunity we offer our children.

*"One of the most moving things for me is to attend our 'coffee-houses,' which are talent shows open to anyone who shows up. There's no audition. That gives the message that we are looking for a wide range of voices, not just the same few who always get the leads in the school plays. And everyone's contribution is welcomed, and attended to, and applauded. Kids feel safe to take risks they might not have considered before."*

I hope these little snippets from the book will entice you to read the whole book. Although it confirms much of what we believe and do at the school, I have gathered more ideas to present to our faculty and look forward to seeing less and less hurt among our children.



## MRS. GAMLIN'S Technology Class

Recently, I introduced an award-winning software package called KidPix to the kindergarten class. This graphics software gives the children a fun and educational tool to use their imaginations and create art projects while learning their way around the keyboard and using fine motor skills. The children enjoyed learning how to open

text boxes and adding their names to their art using the caps lock and shift keys.

First graders have been using their right and left mouse clicks, and shift and control keys, to produce different color and geometric effects in Paint. In January, we will use Paint tools to learn about different art techniques. Second grade students have just completed their fairy tales in Word, integrating clip art, and resizing, relocating and reordering (placing clip art on top of clip art). Next, we will work in Publisher.

The poetry books created by third grade students have evolved beautifully with tools such as word wrap, word art, thesaurus and spell check. In January, we will move on to scavenger hunts on the Internet. The Chanukah research that fourth graders just finished evolved into interesting and informative Word documents. They just began using the Internet to gather information, then put that information into their own words and give credit to sites they used for research. I have a strong feeling that they will excel (hint, hint) at the next software package they will use.

Fifth graders completed their Powerpoint animal projects. Working in groups of three, these kids have researched copyrighted in-

formation using key words and put together amazing presentations with bibliographies. Next, we work on presentation skills, because every great Powerpoint slide show needs a great presentation!

Many families will have computer access over break. At school, we have a very strong Internet filter, in addition to regular monitoring of the PC stations, so we have taken precautions against many kinds of inappropriate websites reaching the children. Please reinforce computer safety at home by taking the following steps:

- If you have any questions about what your child is learning in my technology class, including names of software packages that we use (you might want to purchase some of them for home use) or web sites that are appropriate for your child's age, please email me at [agamlin@cjdschool.org](mailto:agamlin@cjdschool.org).
- If your Internet service provider comes with a parental filter, please use it. At my house we have Road Runner service, and Road Runner tech support easily led me through the steps I needed to take to set up the filter.
- Keep computers in well-trafficked areas in your home. You might want to use the computer in a home office, and to stay in the room while your children use the Internet. You can even set up their own "Favorites" so that they can go to any one of those pre-selected websites without making typing errors that can lead to inappropriate sites.
- Ensure that your child is taking frequent breaks from looking at the screen. During longer lessons, I have the older children look around the room, focus their eyes on something far away, and wiggle their fingers.

Together, we can provide safe environments for our children to learn about and enjoy the world of computing! Have a wonderful winter break.



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 26 Tevet – Ariel Godel
- 05 Shevat – Gracie Wasser
- 12 Shevat – Sophie Wasser
- 13 Shevat – Rachel Ouslander
- 17 Shevat – Paula Bravver
- 20 Shevat – Schneur Gordon
- 21 Shevat – Zach Kurtz
- 21 Shevat – Amanda Kurtz

## PARSHIOT FOR JANUARY 2 - 31

### 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 (Pharaoh) 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.

### Beshalach

Beshalach is where the Jews high-tail it out of Egypt. As soon as they look back, they hear the Egyptians shouting to their chariot drivers, "Follow those three million people, and you'll get a good tip!" As it turns out, they follow the Jews straight into the sea. A little girl once told her parents, "Today we learned that after the Jews crossed the bridge, Moshe detonated the bridge just as the Egyptians were midway across the sea and they all drowned!" When her parents gave a look of surprise, she responded, "Well, you'd never believe what we actually learned today in school!" The song "Az Yashir" sung by Moshe and the Israelites (after the splitting of the sea) made it straight to the top of the charts and has been in the daily morning prayers ever since!

### Yitro

As if there weren't enough special effects in Beshalach, Yitro includes the giving of the Torah on Har Sinai, the Ten Commandments (voice 20% by Hashem; 80% by Moses), the sounding of a heavenly Shofar, and the first laser light show (actually it was Hashem's thunder and lightning). Yitro also includes the conversion of Moshe's father-in-law, as well as the conversion of all the Jewish people (since this was their spiritual origin, all Jews were considered converts at Har Sinai).

There is a new exhibit of portraiture in our CJDS Museum. The students can view famous portraits including da Vinci's Mona Lisa, Holbein's Henry VIII and Warhol's Muhammad Ali.

It is interesting for the children to see how portraits have changed (and stayed the same) over many centuries. Also, I hope all of your grandparents and special friends enjoyed the Family Tree cards they received for Chanukah. All of the classes enjoyed putting them together. This month, the kindergarten class created line pictures of faces, looking at shapes and placements of eyes, noses, and mouths. They also completed an autumn collage showing how the leaves change color as it gets cold. First grade discussed how a line, while it looks abstract, could actually tell a story. Starting at one end of a paper, they drew a line as it takes twists and turns through an imaginary neighborhood. Not only did they end up with interesting pictures, but it was also an introduction to maps that they will learn more about in Mrs. DiFilippo's class. The first grade also used their thumbs to create the bodies of some of the bugs they had learned about in science class, embellishing them with legs, eyes, and tongues! To coordinate with their science unit, the second grade did two projects related to the human



## Mrs. Lerner's *Art Class*

body. First, they drew individual face parts with oil pastels, and then they cut them out and put them back together as cubist-like creation. They also drew pictures of people in action poses, highlighting where their joints bend. After talking about Joseph's dreams in the

parsha, we talked about how Marc Chagall's paintings are dream-like. Then, the second grade drew pictures of their own dreams. Third grade worked with textures and patterns, creating a textured landscape using texture rubbing plates and designing patterns for Joseph's coat of many colors. They also spent time practicing their watercolor technique, painting autumn trees. Fourth grade moved on in their chronology to the Renaissance, studying the paintings and inventions of Leonardo da Vinci. First, they created an updated look for the Mona Lisa and then used their imaginations to produce their own inventions. They also created chalk pastel drawings in the style of Georgia O'Keefe. It was all about perspective and proportion in the fifth grade this month. The students took turns posing for one another as the class tried their hands at figure drawing. They also saw how using a vanishing point allows you to draw a room in perspective. Finally, we talked about the relative proportions of parts of the body.