



## **Shira Forester (SSDS '11):**

Schechter alumna Shira Forester (SSDS '11) propelled her passion for Jewish education and love of children into her career as a Judaic Studies teacher at the Luria Academy of Brooklyn, New York. "I teach Tefillah, Chumash, Yahadut, Mishna, Parashat Hashavua, and Chagim to 4th and 5th graders in a mixed-age, Montessori classroom," she said. "It's a pretty busy daily schedule!"

Following her graduation from Schechter, Shira attended Rochelle Zell Jewish High School and the University of Wisconsin, where she received a degree in Rehabilitation Psychology and Certificate in Jewish Studies. She spent her summers working at Camp Ramah in Wisconsin and her school years teaching Hebrew school at Beth Israel Center in Madison.

At Camp Ramah, Shira worked as a counselor and a Rosh Eidah (unit head) for a number of Schechter students and alumni. "It was always fun to connect with other Schechter folks while at Camp Ramah," she said. "Even though we attended Schechter at different times and were so far away from Northbrook, we had a special bond."

During her junior year of college, Shira participated in the Nachshon Project in a cohort of 40 college students from around the country. Together, they studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, traveled throughout Israel, and explored their Jewish identity and the role it might play in their future careers as leaders in the Jewish world. She felt inspired by her work at camp and teaching, and realized her passion for leadership and Jewish education. Through the Nachshon Project, she received a highly-sought-after Fellowship to pursue a master's degree in Jewish education at the William Davidson School in New York City, which led to her teaching position at Luria Academy.

Shira said her Schechter experience played a huge role in her work today, and noted that she thinks about Schechter nearly every day. "I think about what skills I learned as a student at a Jewish Day School and think about ways to make my students feel excited about Judaism," she said. "I also remember the morning announcements ending every day with the reminder to *work hard, play safe, and be a mensch*. I try to live by all of these values and teach the same to my students."

Shira added that her Schechter teachers, including her mother Hamorah Forester, inspired her and helped instill a love of and commitment to Jewish life and learning. "I really did learn from the best," Shira said. "Now that I am an educator, I am in awe of how hard my Schechter teachers must have worked to provide my classmates and me with a quality Jewish education."

Outside of work, Shira enjoys spending time with friends, walking in Central Park, and playing board games. "I am still in touch with many of my friends from Schechter, and it's always great when I bump into other Schechter alumni, like on the streets of New York City."

*Shira's sister, Rena (SSDS '06), made aliyah a little over five years ago and currently lives on Moshav Talmei Elazar. She has made a name for herself teaching people of all ages, all over the world, to connect to their own inner teachers, feel calmer, and lead fulfilling lives. Rena is self-employed as a Professional Holistic Health Educator, teaching people in many capacities including as part of Bat-Mitzvah prep, Rosh Chodesh ceremonies, workshops, and personalized programs. She recently led a workshop for Schechter faculty and staff! To learn more, contact Rena at [rena@renashoshana.com](mailto:rena@renashoshana.com)*

*Shira's brother, Benjy (SSDS '08), will be ordained as a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary on May 18 and will join the Anshe Emet clergy team in July. After graduating from Washington University in St. Louis, Benjy served as the Joint Distribution Committee's Jewish Service Corps Fellow in Budapest, Hungary. Since starting rabbinical school, Benjy has interned in a variety of Jewish contexts, including the Center for Small Town Jewish Life in rural Maine, Columbia, South Carolina,*

