



Inside SCHECHTER

January 12, 2024 / 2 Shevat 5784
Weekly Parashat : Va'era

Candle lighting: 4:21 PM
Shabbat ends: 5:27 PM

"The Big Idea" kicks off for a third year!

On Tuesday, you could feel the energy and excitement as our 7th and 8th graders kicked off the third year of **The Big Idea**. For just under four weeks they are leaving their standard schedules behind as they immerse themselves in one of 4 exciting mini-courses!

What makes The Big Idea so BIG?

The Big Idea is a capstone educational experience that is **cutting-edge in the field of middle school education and the first of its kind both locally and nationally!** (see article below).

"A Day in the Life!" is one of the four mini-courses. * Some of the concepts students will explore in this course include: *What does an astronomer do all day? Is it true that you need steady hands to become a surgeon?*

What does it take to become a chef, professor, or senator?

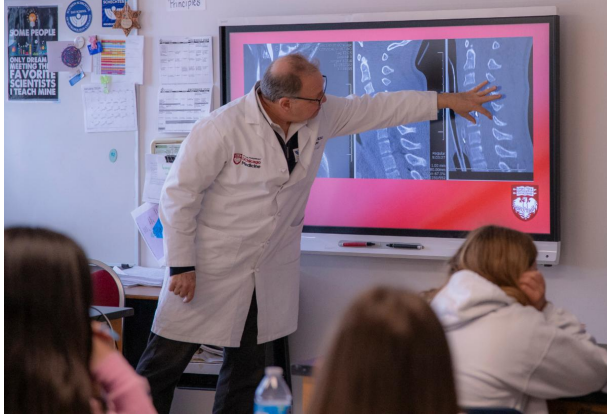
Students will learn elements of storytelling techniques and investigative journalism. Stay tuned to hear what final project they develop!

To kick off the topic, Dr. Martin Herman (SSDS '71) visited the classroom and shared what it's like to be a neurosurgeon. He told students that he is a proud Schechter graduate and is thrilled to be back at Schechter after so many years. He added that Schechter was a driving force to inspire him to become a surgeon -- he even wrote in his 8th grade yearbook that one day he wanted to be an orthopedic surgeon!



"The Big Idea allows our students to take a deep dive into a topic of their choice — one that they would never get during a typical school day. It excites me to be able to lead this completely immersive and hands-on learning experience with our students."

— Suzy Hakimian, 7/8 Science Teacher



What makes "The Big Idea so BIG?

- 1** For just under 4 weeks, 7th and 8th graders immerse themselves in one of 4 mini-courses – created around real-world topics – through an interdisciplinary lens of social studies, language arts, science, Hebrew, math, and Judaic Studies.
- 2** Our students are in the driver's seat of their education. After an initial brainstorming session generating 100+ ideas, they choose their top 4 topics.
- 3** Student leaders work with our outstanding faculty and a team of leading national educational consultants to give voice to what they and their peers want to study.
- 4** Courses feature expert guest instructors, field trips, content and skill-building across disciplines, and a final project (think Shark Tank!) celebrating their learning.
- 5** By combining 7th and 8th grades, students expand their social circle and build new friendships.

**** In the next few weeks, look for more on the three addition other mini-courses: Anatomy of... Suspense!, Sci-Fi Entrepreneurship, and Spycraft: The History and Practice of Espionage.***

Our deepest thanks to The Harvey L. Miller Family Foundation for providing the funding to launch this innovative program.

Schechter Athletics: where LIONS roar!

This winter, there's a lot of action going on in the Etta and David Jonas Gymnasium as the Schechter LIONS head into the final month of regular season games. **Nearly 40 7th and 8th grade girls and boys are playing on the teams, including**

one of our Israeli students who played while she was here.

This fall, 50 students participated in Cross Country, Flag Football (new this year), Instructional Golf, and Soccer. There's also a lot of interest for late winter and spring offerings, which include 5th/6th Intramural Basketball, 5th-8th grade Volleyball, and 5th-8th grade Track.



"There are so many reasons why I loves athletics at Schechter. I love witnessing the payoff of hard work and determination, seeing students win and lose with grace, watching students build relationships with teammates, and feeling the support of the community."

— Alicia Honan, Athletic Director

Want to see the game schedule? Contact [Alicia](#)

Thanks to boys coaches: Doug Bennett (head coach) and Johnathan Bennett (assistant coach), and girls coaches: Johnathan Bennett (head coach), Tali Lupovitch (assistant coach) (Judaic Studies Teacher and SSDS '10), and Maya Kashizadeh (SSDS '20).

Schechter faculty invests in professional growth

Schechter faculty is committed to ongoing learning and growth. Before welcoming students back after winter break, teachers gathered for a day of professional development that included *t'fillah*, planning time, reflective practice, and community building. They also explored ways to further modify and differentiate curricula and examined how their own educational philosophies align with one another.



"At Schechter we understand and value professional development and want to ensure our teachers have time to dive deeply into topics, think about student



learning and growth, and have significant time with their colleagues to plan curriculum." —Suzanne Mishkin, K-6 Sager School Principal

Winter-themed sensory learning at the ECC

This week, the Ginsburg ECC *yeladim* had a hands-on mission: rescue classroom objects trapped in ice! Using pipettes and warm water, they worked to free items frozen within blocks of ice, discussing the melting process along the way. The *yeladim* also brainstormed other ways they could solve the problem, and they generated creative ideas, including using hammers and salt.

“Sensory learning is such a powerful educational tool in early childhood. By fully engaging their senses in a task, young children reinforce existing knowledge, investigate unfamiliar concepts, and learn to create innovative solutions.”

—Zahava Berman, Director



Kol Hakavod to our driven alumni and community leaders

Kol Hakavod

to **Rena Shoshana Forester (SSDS '06)**, who is using her skills as a certified yoga teacher and her background in elementary and special education to provide therapeutic yoga classes for people in Israel who have been impacted by Israel's war—the majority are wives and children of reservist families.



Rena made aliyah in 2017, was profoundly impacted by the current war in Israel, and wanted to find a way to give back. She recently started working with a 4-year-old boy who has been suffering from emotional challenges ever since his father left for reserves on October 7th. Her yoga classes are helping him to trust, relax, breathe, and just enjoy life.

"My Schechter education instilled in me the knowledge of what it means to truly help others and to rise to that occasion in times of need. It also provided me with the skills and tools to be able to be of service."

Contact [Rena](#) to learn more about what she is doing or find out how you can help,

Kol Hakavod

to **Lexi Levin (SSDS '13)** and **Shula Horton (SSDS '15)** for serving as two of the three co-chairs for Birthright Israel Excel's Global Summit, taking place this April in New York City. Birthright Israel Excel, a fellowship arm of Birthright Israel Foundation, connects future Jewish leaders in Israel and the Diaspora. Founded in 2011, the community now numbers about 1400, and the annual Global Summit gathers members for a weekend of inspiration, connection, and innovation.



A Highland Park native, **Lexi Levin** attended RZJHS and participated in Model UN, Write on for Israel, and Varsity Tennis. She received a degree in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University, where she served as Chair of Diversity & Inclusion for her sorority SDT, and also channeled her passions into Tamid Group and Consult Your Community, a pro-bono consulting club. She now lives in New York City, where she works as a management consultant for Deloitte across the tech/social media industry. This is Lexi's second year as a Birthright Israel Excel summit chairperson.

"I truly attribute so much of who I am to my parents' decision to send me to Schechter. What separates Schechter is not only its standard of excellence, but the love that fills each hallway and classroom. Growing up in a community that genuinely wanted the best for my future and personal development gave me the confidence to succeed academically, professionally, and socially." —Lexi Levin (SSDS '13)

Shula Horton attended Deerfield High School and served as Student Council president, School Chest Co-Chair, and the Chair of the Teen Committee at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Shula has a degree in political science and a minor in business from Vanderbilt University, where she served as President of Women in Business and as a campus tour guide.

Shula now lives in New York City and works for Brighthive, an AI-enabled software startup serving the education and workforce segments. Shula was part of Birthright Excel's 2021 cohort and is excited to be taking on the role of Birthright Excel Summit chairperson.



"My time at Schechter made me the person I am today. From an early age, it instilled in me the value of *tikkun olam*, which has since driven my decisions and pursuits. The Schechter teachers and community, more than any other environment, taught me to be kind and empowered me to serve as a leader." —Shula Horton (SSDS '15)

Thank you to this week's Day of Learning sponsors!

Every day at Schechter, students receive the gift of an outstanding education.

You can help support a day of learning with a \$250 sponsorship to celebrate a child, honor a friend, mark a special occasion, or remember a loved one.

[Learn More](#)



DAY OF LEARNING SPONSOR

Thursday, January 11, 2024

In honor of

Isaac & Nathan Kind

who are both celebrating
birthdays this week!

Love, Nonnie and Papa
(Leslie & Jonathan Kind)



DAY OF LEARNING SPONSOR

Friday, January 12, 2024

In honor of
our daughters

Dr. Mia Adler Ozair (SSDS '85) &
Dr. Lena Kushnir (SSDS '88)

With much love & gratitude,
Angie & Larry Adler



Next week's SunDay FunDay offers early childhood STEM

Join us with your 3-6-year-olds (and bring your friends!) for a FREE interactive coding workshop led by our innovative Schechter Makerspace team. **Click the flyer to register.**

SCHECHTER



SUNDAY FUNDAYS

January 21,
2024

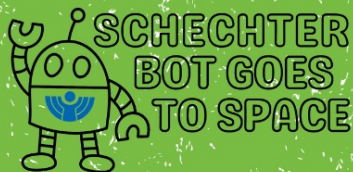
Introducing a **free** monthly drop-in program
designed with your playful **3-6 year old** in mind!

9:30-10:30 AM
Schechter Northbrook Campus
3210 Dundee Road, Northbrook

Register at:
[schechter.org/
sunday](https://schechter.org/sunday)

Tiny Tech Makers

Your child's inner techie is ready for take-off! Guided by our very own Makerspace team, we'll program robots through hands-on coding activities to navigate an out-of-this-world maze.



Thank you to our partners:



MORIAH ECC



PJ Library

North Suburban Synagogue
Beth El
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A partner with the Jewish United Fund in serving our community.

At Schechter, we believe education is a life-long journey.

**We are thrilled to provide two free virtual lectures
next week for our community**



**Join us for our upcoming virtual programs! Click a flyer to register.
Grandparents: this first event below is just for YOU!**

January 16, 2024 | 6:00-7:00 PM CST

How to Bring Shabbat to Life with Grandchildren

Join the Jewish Grandparents Network for a fun hands-on workshop with Jonathan Shmidt Chapman, current Schechter parent, master Jewish educator, and theater artist. Jonathan will present a range of activities that use creativity, drama, and play to activate the weekly celebration of Shabbat with children ages 3–8.



Enjoy Jonathan's brand-new and easy-to-follow Shabbat Discovery Kit, available for participants to download for free.

 REGISTER NOW

The following event is open to ALL adults in our community:

January 17, 2024 | 7:00-8:00 PM CST

Exploring within the Met Museum: Jewish Themes and People

with Laura Resnikoff, retired Columbia Business School Professor and 11-year volunteer guide at the Metropolitan Museum of Art



Join us as we explore how themes in the Hebrew bible are presented in a diverse collection of art at the Met Museum.

 REGISTER NOW

Orot offers virtual program series for grandparents

Orot: Center for New Jewish Learning has adapted its renowned Peaceful Parent Project® program for grandparents — introducing specialized texts and topics that resonate with their unique experiences and roles.

This new initiative is led by **Dr. Jane Shapiro**,

parent of four Schechter alumni and a proud Bubbie of six (pictured with two of her grandchildren). Her identity and experiences as a grandmother deeply inform her approach to teaching and mentoring.

The series begins on January 23rd and includes four sessions with recorded meditations by Schechter parent, Rebecca Minkus Lieberman, customized for grandparents.



[Register Here](#)

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