



# Inside SCHECHTER

December 1, 2023 / 18 Kislev 5784  
Weekly Parashat : Vayishlach

Candle lighting: 4:01 PM  
Shabbat ends: 5:06 PM

## Introducing our new 7th and 8th grade *specials* teachers!

One of the hallmarks of the Sager School curriculum is “specials”—unique courses featuring creative arts, STEM, and more. In the upper grades, students individualize their experience by electing topics based on their interests. **7th and 8th grade specials recently received an upgrade: our oldest students can now choose to create and teach their own specials!**

Student leaders are responsible for preparing lesson plans and providing introductory instruction for a six-week special under the support and guidance of a faculty specialist.



Based on interest survey results, 6 student-led courses are underway, with new courses after winter break:

Makerspace/Sublimation Printing: Drew Gallo, Makerspace/Laser Cutting: Yotam Marom, Board Games: Joey Goodman, Soundtrap Music Software: Cole Batt, and Ceramics: Ellie Salmi and Annabelle Kuzmin. *Kol Hakavod to these student teachers!*

7th graders Ellie Salmi and Annabelle Kuzmin teach ceramics to their classmates.

**“In the last rotation, Noa Bareket (SSDS ‘24) volunteered to take over Mrs. Rubinstein’s Innovation Studio special and masterfully taught peers how to use Procreate—a professional-level drawing software for the iPad. I realized that expanding this opportunity could be transformative. We believe it’s critical for 7th-8th graders to have a voice in which specials they take; now they have a voice in what is offered. The specialist team is excited to offer this avenue for students to explore their passions, share what they know, and develop leadership skills.” — Debbie Harris, Director of Educational Technology**

Literary Society proudly presents the latest issue of  
*Schechter Inspector*

Literary Society—one of the many *chuggim* (clubs) open to 5th-8th graders—gives students the chance to cultivate reading and writing skills through the creation of an electronic publication.

“The *Schechter Inspector* debuted last year and includes creative stories, cultural reviews, and features on Israel, sports, travel, animals, and more. The students are all thrilled to share their hard work with the community!”

—Amy Schwartz, Club Sponsor and 7th Grade Language Arts Teacher

Read Schechter Inspector

## SCHECHTER Student Voices



“I joined the Schechter Inspector to help improve my editing skills, as well as my writing. I believe this experience is an important opportunity for the entire 5-8 shahar, especially for 5th and 6th graders who are beginning to hone their writing skills.”

“I joined for fun times. I think it’s important for everybody to make new friends.”

“It is important that I’m able to write stories and have the ability to express myself.”

“I have learned how to write stronger and longer paragraphs.”

“I have gained the ability to be able to be creative by myself.”

*Kol Hakavod* to the student participants:

**Editors:** Drew Gallo and Adam Aranyi; **Writing Staff:** Jonah Anisfeld, Lexi Barrett, Abbie Berman, Jonah Bornstein, Emerson Blum, Isla Crane, Roni Doron, Shanee Ganon, Zach Gilbert, Joey Goodman, Lielle Greenberg, Lily Feldman, Dani Kaplan, Noa Pearl, Asher Salzman, Julia Schneiderman, Ari Smith, Lior Shtraichler, Elizabeth Sumagin, Nurit Tuby, Ari Vachman, Tamar Vachman, and Noah Zaff

## New Girl Scout troops established at Schechter

Sager School students can now participate in the Girl Scouts youth organization with the creation of a K-1st grade troop, led by Schechter parents Debi Rubin, Rachel Stites, and Eva Steingold. A combined troop for 2nd-3rd graders is also in the works.



The 12 K-1st graders hit the ground running, earning their first badge by creating bracelets to represent the ideals of kindness and respect within the Girl Scout Law. The group meets 1-2 Sundays per month and has already taken field trips to Emily Oaks Nature Center and Palatine Stables, an equestrian facility.

“Girl Scouts values are rooted in community, self-confidence, and *tikkun olam*, just like Schechter. Many people don’t realize that the first troop included Jewish girls and Jewish leaders! There is a National Organization for Jewish Scouting, which offers Jewish-specific resources and badges to earn. Be on the lookout for cookie season—all products are

## ECC students build wide-ranging skills through dance

To supplement the vibrant curriculum led by the ECC classroom teachers, our *yeladim* at the Ginsburg ECC are treated to weekly visits from our skilled Schechter specialists that also serve as Sager School faculty. **Rena Rozen, Dance & Movement Specialist**, meets with ECC students on Thursday mornings to teach lifelong skills that will carry the children throughout their academic and personal journeys.

"By learning basic dance steps, yoga poses, and locomotor movements, children build physical skills—including body awareness, balance, and flexibility—in addition to improving cognition through counting, rhythm, sequencing, and spatial awareness.

There are also tremendous, unexpected opportunities: children cultivate speech and language abilities while processing verbal directions, build social-emotional skills during mindfulness activities, and absorb cultural lessons through Israeli dancing. I promote FUN while we dance and learn to music—it's a pleasure to see the children's smiling faces each week."

—**Rena Rozen, Dance & Movement Specialist**



## Alumni reconnect on and off the court!

We loved welcoming over 80 alumni of all ages, parents of alumni, and friends on erev Thanksgiving for our 2nd annual 3-on-3 Alumni Basketball Tournament. Thank you to the 12 participating alumni teams, the enthusiastic spectators, and Athletic Director Alicia Honan for coordinating the tournament. Go Lions!

**Congratulations to the winning team: Joseph Finfer (SSDS '16), Ari Rosen (SSDS '16), and Jacob Silvers (SSDS '16).**





[View More Photos](#)

## Inquire & Inspire with Principal Nanci Caplan

**Q&A**  
**INQUIRE & INSPIRE**

**Nanci Caplan**  
7th-8th Grade  
Sager School  
Principal



*Before beginning her nine year stint at Schechter—first as Director of Student Services and now as 7th-8th Grade Sager School Principal—Nanci Caplan worked as a school counselor and case manager at Chicago Public Schools and New York City Public Schools. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in Jewish Education at Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS).*

**Q:** You were a featured presenter at the recent ISACS Conference in Columbus, Ohio on the Sager School's innovative "Big Idea" program. How is this interdisciplinary project reshaping the standards for exemplary middle school curricula?

**A:** Now in its third year, the Big Idea provides our 7th and 8th graders with an opportunity to work with peers, teachers, and consultants to design month-long courses based on their personal interests, culminating in interactive capstone projects. The Big Idea is BIG because it is not being done anywhere else in the country, and meets the standards for exemplary education by the Association for Middle Level Education.

This program recognizes the power that student voice brings to the education conversation, puts students in the driver's seat of their own learning, and allows students and teachers to collaborate in unique ways that prioritize idea-sharing, creative vision, and co-learning. Our goal is to help our children wake up each day EXCITED to come to school—that is a BIG ask from an adolescent. It's our responsibility to help these young adults find passion in their education, in their Judaism, and in their community.

[The story continues! Click below to keep reading about the Big Idea:](#)

[Full Q&A Feature](#)

## SCHECHTER ALUMNI *Spotlights*

“If you want your kid to be as prepared for college and the workforce as possible, there is no better school to send your child to than Schechter.”



**Eli Krule (SSDS '11)** traces his passion for politics to middle school, when he witnessed the impact of public policy during the height of the Obamacare debates. He recalls, “when the stroke of a pen gave tens of millions of Americans access to affordable healthcare, I realized: I can take part in something to better society and further justice in America.” After receiving a philosophy, politics, and law degree from Binghamton University, he held several esteemed positions, including campaign work for Amy Klobuchar’s presidential bid, the 2020 Georgia senate runoff elections, and consulting work for US Senate campaigns.



Eli is particularly proud of his current position as Finance Director for Congressman Brad Schneider. “The most exciting part of my job,” Eli shares, “is meeting all the amazing office holders, activists, and volunteers who fight the good fight and help keep our democracy going.” He is also applying to Masters programs in public policy and hopes to deepen his impact through “institutional change in further democratizing our society and increasing access to the ballot box.”

Full Alumni  
Spotlight

## Mazal tov to the newly engaged alumna

Mazal Tov to **Alana Spellman (SSDS '10)** on her engagement to Sydney Kay.

Alana and Sydney live in New York City, where Alana works for BCW, a global communications agency. Sydney is a Senior Change Management Consultant at Ernst & Young.

## Mazal Tov

to Alana's parents, Melissa (SSDS '79) and Marc Spellman; to her brothers, Zach (SSDS '07) (Sarah) Spellman and Ari (SSDS '10) (fiance Dani Lewittes, SSDS '11); and to her niece, Goldie Spellman. Mazal Tov to Syndey's parents, Meredith Rodnan and Larry Kay; and to her brothers, Aaron and Matthew.



## Lend your voice to grow our community!

On Giving Tuesday earlier this week, many of you joined us in supporting our school community at no cost—**thank you for sharing your positive Schechter reviews!**

**There is still time to make a difference.** Following the launch of our new website, we're boosting our presence on *Niche*, an online platform helping families discover and choose the best schools. **Your enthusiastic testimonials can be the key to helping prospective parents find the perfect educational fit for their families at Schechter.**



## Thank you for sharing the SCHECHTER love!

"...The Schechter adage that it's 'a community for life' is so true. My children's lifelong friends are all from their Schechter years and many of my dearest friends I met as a Schechter mom. Schechter's shared Jewish values and community are something that a public school cannot create. Importantly, all three of my kids received an excellent education not just Jewishly but also in secular studies...Their ability to so successfully navigate the world as young adults is in no small part due to Schechter. All three of my children have their own well-considered Jewish identities that can only come from a place of knowledge and identity that Schechter so successfully imparts."

**Post a review on Niche:**

**CLICK HERE** 

**Make an impact with just a few minutes of your time:**

- [Click here](#) to visit the reviews section of our Niche profile
- Click the blue button: "Review Solomon Schechter Day School"
- Share as much or as little information as is comfortable (names not permitted)

Have you already shared a review on Niche or another platform? **Reviews you've already written can be reposted elsewhere to reach a different audience! Visit:**

[Google](#), [Facebook](#), [Yelp](#), [GreatSchools](#)

## Two Schechter moms driven to help Israeli businesses

Want to learn about Israeli businesses that need our support? Current Schechter parents Smadar White and Adi Marom launched a Facebook page, [Israel's Back to Business](#), to serve as a resource.



[Visit Facebook Page](#)

"Our goal is to connect Americans with Israeli businesses that are struggling following the October 7th massacre (locations near the Gaza and Northern borders, owners who have lost family members, etc.). Every week we'll share links to 2 businesses. You can choose to have your purchases delivered to your own Israeli family and friends, to Israeli families we recommend that have been significantly impacted, or to yourself (some will provide shipping to the U.S.). We're grateful for the community's support."

—Smadar White and Adi Marom

If you need help placing an order or assistance with Hebrew translation, contact: [info@israelsbacktobusiness.com](mailto:info@israelsbacktobusiness.com)

## The Holiday Pop-up Spirit Wear sale is on now!

### Open for a limited time only!

Stock up on cozy swag created in collaboration with Schechter parent Lesley Wynes: [dyeGirl Chicago](#).

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Schechter PO and to Magen David Adom.

Place orders by Sunday, December 10 and select "local pick up." All orders will be delivered to Schechter in early January.

**SCHECHTER** **Pop-Up Spirit Store** **dyeGirl**

A portion of the proceeds from the collection will be donated to both the Schechter PO and to Magen David Adom.

**BUY NOW**

All orders must be placed by Sunday, December 10

## Your guide for a meaningful Schechter Shabbat

**Schechter Shabbat is back by popular demand!** This evening, 30 current Schechter families will be gathering at various homes across Chicagoland to establish and deepen community connections.

**No matter where you are**

# SCHECHTER SHABBAT

December 1, 2023

Bringing Schechter families together around the Shabbat table to share traditions and build new friendships!



welcoming Shabbat this week, use our updated Shabbat Guide to enhance your family's experience:

[View Shabbat Guide](#)

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A partner with the Jewish United Fund in serving our community.

Solomon Schechter Day School | 3210 Dundee Road, Northbrook, IL 60062

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