

MJDS CHAVERIM

Winter 2021 | 5781



Where academic excellence and Jewish values prepare children for a lifetime of success, leadership and engagement with the world.

It's hard to believe we are nearing the one-year mark since COVID forced us to close the doors of MJDS and log on to Zoom. Since then we have shared victories, setbacks, laughter, tears and lots and lots of hand sanitizer. Thanks to the continued support from everyone in our MJDS community, we are progressing through the final weeks of winter and continue to offer structure for our students, providing a consistent, daily space for their educational, emotional and Jewish growth.

I am proud of the flexibility and commitment of our families, students and staff, this year more than ever. As many schools in the area and across the country struggled to open, or remain open, MJDS has provided a steady option of in-person learning thanks to consistent mitigation strategies; filling out a daily health screener, wearing a mask, hand sanitizing, social distancing, HEPA air filtration and cohorting.

In addition to benefiting our current families, our safe practices are boosting our public image and attracting new Jewish families. MJDS was featured on WTMJ-TV in a story that focused on private schools seeing a bump in enrollment as parents looked for learning options. I am excited that we have welcomed new families in every grade this school year and five new students since the start of the calendar year.

Our students continue to live our core values of wonder, empathy and *tikkun olam*. Every day I am inspired by their resilience, intelligence and kindness. The junior kindergarten student who offers to guide a new student as they learn their way around; the fifth grade class who organizes and promotes virtual fundraisers to benefit local non-profits; the seventh grade students who collaborate with second graders and make them feel important as valued, young members of the MJDS family.

This year would not be possible without your support. Please know everything you do is making a significant impact in the lives of MJDS students and staff.

Bivrachah,
Aaron Lippman
Head of School



Cross Grade Collaboration

Since 2006, students in second and seventh grade have been paired in an internal cross-grade level collaboration where older students write a fictional narrative based on the interests of the younger students. The seventh graders schedule an interview to gather details that form their main character and surround them by all the people, places and things the second graders love. Students work with Gev. Petrova in English class to move through the writing process. Once their draft is finalized, the books are illustrated, printed and bound.

AJ, a seventh grade student who still reads the book written about him when he was in second grade, believes his partner Yael appreciated the interview process. He hopes to create a piece that she will enjoy enough to continue reading five years from now.

Younger students are empowered by the experience. "It's exciting to talk to older students, it made me feel important," said Mia. Her classmate Sadie considered the potential of being featured in a book, "This is going to be published, we could become famous."



reJEWvination

The Jewish Agency for Israel's Partnership2Gether program connects Israeli cities with Jewish communities around the world, creating a network of support, friendship and understanding. MJDS first and second grade students are partnered with students at mul Gilead in the Sovev Kinneret region in Israel. They have exchanged letters and slideshows, sharing what school looks like in the winter and how different it looks in the summer. The Israeli students loved seeing pictures of the snow and Milwaukee students enjoyed pictures of chickens in the classroom!



The students speak different languages, but they all understand Zoom, wearing masks and balancing in-person with virtual learning during COVID. "We're like pencils and they're like pens," explained Caleb (second grade). "We're two different things but we do the same stuff."

MJDS Alums in Action

Twin alumni Daniel and Josh Herz were part of the founding class at MJDS - the first cohort to attend from kindergarten through eighth grade. A "surprise" to parents with three older children in high school and college, giving Daniel and Josh a Jewish education was a new opportunity for their family. While their class may have started in the attic of Temple Emanu-El, both agree that they have carried their MJDS experience with them in countless ways.

Daniel says "More than anything, I remember the combination of caring, love, and the Jewish education that was given to us. It was this magical environment... It felt almost, in a way, like we were in a little kibbutz in early Israel."

"Over time, what became the most valuable piece of my MJDS education, was learning to challenge everything. That was the way we studied, the way we were taught. I cannot think of anything more valuable as I've evolved in my life. I learned the desire to root out what is and not to accept things at face value."

Today, Daniel runs Falcon Minerals in Manhattan, a public energy company that trades on the NASDAQ. More important, though, he says, is his involvement in his local Jewish community, where he serves as a board member of the Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey as well as his synagogue. "I hope students know their time at MJDS is a great time to begin to think about your impact. My success in business has been driven by that constant need to question, prod, and push. MJDS gives you the opportunity to lead."



Both brothers proudly recall their involvement in the creation of the first basketball team at MJDS. Josh explains "there weren't any sports at MJDS. So Gev. Shneidman challenged us to develop a sports program. We learned how to use the computer and took a poll." Josh reflects, "We started the MJDS basketball team. They gave us an opportunity to lead and create something special."

Josh says, "The school kept responding and growing based on what students needed. I fell in love with Jewish values and *tikkun olam*. One of the keys to happiness is being able to help other people."

Josh is the President of Associated Insurance and Risk Management Advisors based out of Chicago, one the largest privately held insurance brokerage firms in the country. Like Daniel, Josh remains active in his local Jewish community, serving on the executive board for the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. In addition, he started the nonprofit, For the Fallen, which benefits families of military members who were killed or severely wounded in Afghanistan.

"All of it started at MJDS," Josh says. "I hope the MJDS parents realize that (sending your child to MJDS) is a gift you are giving them. You are planting the seeds of a Jewish education and values that will hopefully remain with them for life."



Josh is standing in the top row, far right; Daniel is seated in the bottom row, far right.



MILWAUKEE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

6401 N. Santa Monica Blvd.
Milwaukee, WI 53217

414-964-1499
mjds.org
hello@mjds.org

Sarah Schott
President, MJDS Board of Directors

Aaron Lippman
MJDS Head of School



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Our school is better when we are together!
Thank you for helping us safely keep the doors open.

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