

SUPPORT FOR TEACHER TRAINING

PINCUS IN JERUSALEM RECOGNIZES LOLA STEIN VISION FOR INTEGRATED JEWISH STUDIES



The Eco-Seder is beloved in Grade 6 at Toronto Heschel. It is one part of the school-wide Living Haggadah Program.

The L.A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in the Diaspora is an Israel-based foundation committed to educational excellence in Jewish communities around the world. Since 1977, the Pincus Fund has supported more than 800 projects in over 50 countries, ranging from the establishment and expansion of Jewish day schools to teacher training and adult education.

"The greatest thing I always say about the Pincus Fund is how far a little money can go," says Julie Koschitzky, a leader

in Jewish organizations in Canada and internationally, and former chair of the Pincus Fund. "If you go to communities anywhere in the world and you say Pincus Fund," continues Ms. Koschitzky, "it's held in the highest esteem, because sometimes it saves an educational component, and it does so much with very little."

In 2012, the Pincus Fund recognized The Lola Stein Institute's outstanding curriculum in integrated Jewish studies and its capacity for teacher training. Pincus awarded Lola Stein a grant to pilot a collaborative process that will enable Jewish day schools to adapt and implement Lola Stein methods and curriculum for their own schools. Throughout the 2012–2013 school year, Lola Stein Institute staff, along with several teachers from The Toronto Heschel School, where the methods and curriculum have been used effectively, joined forces on the Pincus project with colleagues from Robbins Hebrew Academy (Toronto) and Kehila Jewish Community Day School (Hamilton).

The first phase of the project saw the Lola Stein and Toronto Heschel cohort introduce the philosophy and methodology of integrated curriculum to their project partners, along with explanatory course materials to ease collaboration. Both Robbins Hebrew Academy and Kehila Jewish Community Day School chose to adapt for their own use discreet segments of a larger school-wide interdisciplinary project called the Living Haggadah. The adapted curriculum was then taught in their respective classrooms in preparation for Passover.

The Living Haggadah is a collection of Passover programs that encompasses several academic disciplines and allows students in a range of grades to interpret the Passover story through a fresh lens

every year. Students in Grades 3 and 4 at Kehila Jewish Community Day School worked on a unit called the Halutzim Haggadah, which connects elements of the Passover Seder to the story of the nineteenth-century pioneers (the Halutzim) who left their homes in Eastern Europe for the land of Israel. The students looked at the prayer chanted every year on Passover, "Next year in the land of Israel," and learned that the Halutzim were people who decided to make that prayer a reality.

With parts of the unit appearing as lessons in their English Language Arts classes, parts in their Social and Environmental Studies classes, and parts in their study of Hebrew Language, the Grades 3 and 4 Kehila students gained a deeper appreciation of important Passover themes, such as the meaning of a journey to a new land and the pursuit of new goals. They also gained insight into a fascinating period in the modern history of the Jewish people.

Rachely Tal of the Kehila Jewish Community School told *think* that "the curriculum is very interesting and very challenging and [that she has] been enjoying it in spite of the fact that [she is] spending lots of time on finding and creating support materials such as songs, videos, photographs, flash cards, games, and lesson plans."

At Robbins Hebrew Academy, Grade 7 students worked on a unit of the Living Haggadah called the Eco-Seder. The Eco-Seder is an interdisciplinary project in which the Passover Seder is examined from an ecological perspective. Each student completes work through a specifically organized process of Judaic text interpretation, biological research, data management, environmental study, and visual arts. Students explore the Seder for ecological themes, such as the use of water, life and death in nature, food distribution, and green spaces. The integrated approach encourages analogical and integrative thinking skills while achieving learning objectives specific to each discipline.

"The way [The Lola Stein Institute] integrates their Judaic Studies into the rest of the curriculum," says Julie Koschitzky, "they do such interesting things and this grant means that people will know about it."



On a visit to Robbins Hebrew Academy, Lola Stein Director Greg Beiles mentors teachers Shoshana Taitz and Lauren Damelin on the math and science components of the Eco-Seder.