

Shorashim Hebrew School in Highland Park Instills 'Knowledge Through Joy'

By Harry Glazer

Though the term “Hebrew school” may signal for some readers a synagogue-based and very part-time substitute for full-time Jewish education, the Shorashim Hebrew School in Highland Park is proving that a Sunday-morning experience can be so much more.



Student working on an art project.

The nondenominational school opened in September 2024 and is based in the Highland Park Conservative Temple-Congregation Anshe Emeth. It quickly found a following and in its first year served 29 students, from 17 families, ranging from Orthodox, Conservative and Reform to unaffiliated, encompassing Israeli and American families. Most of these families are continuing into the next school year.

The school offers a variety of classes on Sunday mornings, for infants/toddlers to students age 9. The day starts with a 20-25 minute whole school tefillah session with an emphasis on singing, music, holiday songs and Hebrew. This is followed by “Snack & Story Time” sessions, divided into classes by ages 0-5 and 6-9. Afterwards, the younger children are dismissed and the older children have two 30-minute sessions—a conversational Hebrew class that builds vocabulary, grammar and reading/writing skills, and a Jewish studies class focused on the weekly *parsha* (Torah portion), holidays and *middot* (values), which uses art projects and theater exercises.

The school's two co-directors bring considerable backgrounds and experi-

ences to their work. Morah Shiranne Eissenstein has been an educator and musician for over 10 years and is pursuing a master's degree in education at Rutgers. She previously taught at the Derech Haya'el school in Hafar Hayarok, Israel, at the Keshet Newton school in Newton, Massachusetts, and at the Yeshivat Netivot Montessori school in East Brunswick. Morah Stacy Greenblatt has a master's in educational theater and has been a theater educator at the Hatikvah Charter School in East Brunswick for over 11 years. She is also *rosh hofa'a* (director of performing arts) at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires, supervising theater, music, dance and radio.



Students working on a Hebrew language assignment.

tion Ahavas Achim in Highland Park, said that they chose to send their children to Shorashim because “we wanted to expose them and enrich their learning experiences with Judaics beyond what they traditionally get at day care or even at home. When Morot Stacy and Shiranne, who we know through the community, told us they were starting an immersive Hebrew school for children in town, we jumped at the opportunity to get our children involved. They are both incredible educators and our children have really loved attending each week to sing songs, learn and play.

"I decided to get involved with the parents' advisory group for Shorashim because we really believe in the program, its mission to educate and pass on tradition m'dor l'dor from a young age, and I want to support its growth in any way that we can."

For more information on the Shorashim Hebrew School, please visit their website at www.shorashimhebrewschool.com

Harry Glazer is the Middlesex County editor of The Jewish Link. He can be reached at harryglazer615@gmail.com and, trust me, he'd really like to hear from you.



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Art project display at Shorashim.

In a conversation with The Jewish Link, Eisenstein and Greenblatt stressed that the Shorashim Hebrew School follows the Montessori philosophy, with no desks, an emphasis on engaging and joyful activity, and a drive to inculcate Jewish pride through a “knowledge through joy” approach.

Samara Rosner Moritz, a member with her husband, Daniel, and their family of Congrega-

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