

## Building on Lessons Learned

Elsewhere in this issue of Temple Topics, you will find Education Committee chair Lauren Einhorn's article that outlines the changes to religious school for the 2021-2022 school year. We have taken some of the new "best practices" we have learned and put them to work for the coming year.

First of all, on the logistics front:

- Our students and teachers are going to see each other in person, albeit masked and appropriately distanced.
- Our 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grade families will have an **added option** to attend remote school on a different day if needed because to scheduling, safety, or transportation concerns.
- School sessions will be shorter in recognition of our students' still-stressful schedules and the likelihood that some pandemic restrictions continue to affect them and their families.

We've also learned that by carefully examining our goals, we can teach more creatively using beautiful slide presentations for both remote and in-person classes, as our teachers continue to stretch themselves to find and learn new ways to help our students learn. Perhaps most significantly, we have learned that private Hebrew instruction is **so much more effective** than group instruction, that we will make it our primary method for Hebrew education in the coming year.

The move to private learning for Hebrew offers us a rare opportunity to attain the goals of the school's stated mission:

"...to graduate young adults who have the tools they need to form their own Jewish identity. Our aim is to enable families to pass their own traditions 'from generation to generation' and help them build strong bonds within their community and with the world, both Jewish and secular. We hope our students will feel comfortable in their Judaism wherever they go in their lives – and above all, to be '*mensches*,' good people. In addition, they will have the experience of belonging to a Jewish community that will support them as they grow into their Jewish adulthood."

You may notice the intentional absence of Hebrew in the mission statement—or preparation for bar and bat mitzvah. Of course, we prepare students for bar and bat mitzvah, but it is only a piece of what we do as a religious school. When we work to achieve our mission, Judaic competence, whatever that looks like for each child, is a natural consequence. We hope that our students' comfort in Judaism will include their participation in a synagogue service, and not just on the Saturday morning of their bar or bat mitzvah.

By taking what we've learned and using more in-class time in the coming year to facilitate students' growing knowledge of Judaism and its traditions and practices, to help them see

connections between what they learn in our classrooms and what happens in their own lives, and to foster a sense of community, we are committing ourselves anew to our mission.

Rebecca