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בס"ד

chinuch unpaused



183 NEW
STUDENTS IN
JEWISH DAY
SCHOOLS

Emotional
Wellbeing
DURING
COVID-19

And More
CHINUCH
SUCCESS STORIES
INSIDE

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CHINUCH UNPAUSED

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»» From the Director

CHINUCH: THE BEST MEDICINE



This year, the Chinuch community and the world at large was shaken to its core by the many changes brought on by the coronavirus pandemic. When the situation around us seemed at its most dire, those on the frontlines stepped up to ensure that our children were cared for spiritually, emotionally, and academically.

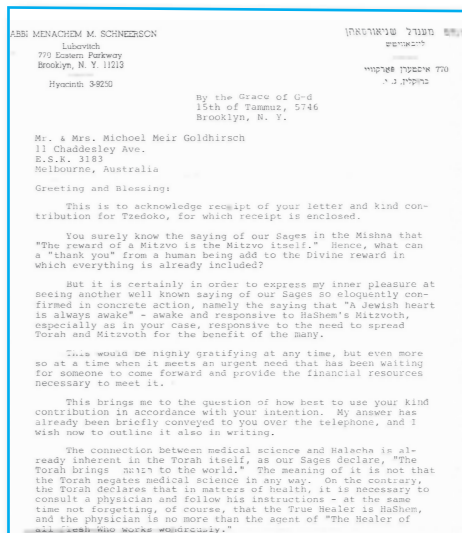
When the rest of the world pressed pause, our Mechanchim and Mechanchos pressed play. **It was go time.**

An army of educators around the world battled every day for Chinuch to continue unabated. Even when ill with Covid, balancing their own children at home, and encountering every technical glitch imaginable, our teachers pushed through. From Zoom meeting rooms to plexiglass barriers, they never took a day off. Our Mechanchim and Mechanchos' unwavering commitment to our children has been a lifeline in the storm.

In the summer of 5779, the Menachem Education Foundation was honored to publicize for the first time a letter from the Rebbe to the Goldhirsch family, which draws a connection between Chinuch and physical health.

In 5746 (1986), Mr. and Mrs. Michael Meir Goldhirsch contacted the Rebbe with an offer of a large donation intended to build a children's hospital in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. In response, the Rebbe replied that a better investment would be to designate the funds to support **Torah-true Chinuch, which will, in turn, "ensure healthy children, physically, mentally, and spiritually"**, negating the need for a hospital.

The Torah instructs us to listen to doctors and take all precautions needed in a responsible way. At the same time, we know the power of Torah study, and especially the Chinuch of young children, to protect and to heal.



Thus, the message is clear that Chinuch is the best preventative medicine for our children! מפי עוללים ויונקים יסדת עוז - while following all recommendations and precautions, we must ensure that the Torah learning of children continues uninterrupted, in whichever way possible.

Over the past year, MEF was privileged to have a front row seat in seeing how our educational heroes ensured that Chinuch remained "UnPaused". In this magazine, we are privileged to share the stories of many of our educators' incredible successes, from welcoming Jewish students to a Jewish school for the first time (p. 20) to engaging with students in exciting new ways (p. 30) to looking after the mental health of those

most vulnerable (p. 12). These stories offer the best antidote to the doom and gloom of the never-ending news cycle: a community rising from difficult times, looking to a future that is brighter than ever before.

There are countless educators who have played a vital role in the stories you are about to read, and I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to every person who has been involved in keeping Chabad chinuch going both in the classroom and behind the scenes. A special thank you to our dear supporters who have enabled us to continue this vital work. In particular, I would like to thank my dear friends and pillars of the Chinuch community, Mr. and Mrs. **Alan and Lori Zekelman** for changing the experience of Torah of thousands for Jewish children. Thank you to Mrs. **Chanah Rose**, Mrs. **Rena Udkoff**, Mrs. **Leah Caras**, Ms. **Liba Rimler**, Mrs. **Chantzy Wolcowitz**, Mrs. **Etty Teleshevsky**, and Mrs. **Sara Krinsky** for their dedication and talent in producing this magazine.

Most of all, I express my gratitude to Hashem for giving us the strength to rise to the occasion, and to the Rebbe's brachos that have powered us through. May Hashem bless all who are involved in Chinuch, and may we truly see the healing that is brought through Torah study with a renewed vitality of the Jewish people, and with the coming of Moshiach, speedily now.

Sincerely,

Zalman Shneur

Rabbi Zalman Shneur

ON THE FRONTLINES

MEF's Rapid Covid Response

The Menachem Education Foundation is designed as a responsive and flexible organization, constantly anticipating and meeting teachers' needs. This was displayed vividly in MEF's rapid response to the school closures that resulted from the Covid pandemic.

On Thursday evening of the initial shutdown, MEF convened an unprecedented emergency meeting of every principal of a Chabad school in Brooklyn to discuss how the schools would coordinate their response to the crisis. By Friday, when NYC schools officially shut down, the participants of the meeting signed and disseminated a joint letter to the entire Crown Heights community stating that they would be approaching the crisis as a cohesive unit. The collaboration between every single Crown Heights school was a historic show of unity, an inspiring alliance to protect and care for the children in the Chabad community. These early partnerships, created just hours after governmental closures were announced, set the tone for the entire Chabad community's prioritization of quality Chinuch during COVID.





TRIAGE: CROWN HEIGHTS YESHIVA

Within hours of the initial principal meeting, the schools agreed to an interim, interschool platform to meet the immediate schooling needs of their thousands of students. Within 48 hours, an expansive learning platform that could accommodate thousands of students was already up and running. That same day, MEF arranged two online teaching tutorial webinars that were viewed by hundreds of Jewish teachers worldwide.

Most schools did not have the infrastructure in place to immediately transfer to a fully online educational program.

At the time, the length of closures was unknown, with many assuming that this was a temporary measure until Pesach. CHYeshiva.com was developed specifically to fill this abrupt gap, mobilizing resources so that children could begin learning immediately. Hour long lessons were developed for each grade level, presented by expert educators from a variety of Crown Heights schools. Each day, an average of 2,000 children logged in for daily lessons, following along as the teacher led davening and taught a wide scope of material for the upcoming Pesach holiday.

This stop gap measure was key to keeping children learning and energized in the sudden turmoil. The temporary learning solution provided teachers with the time to develop their own virtual classrooms and invest in their training – vital preparation for what would turn out to be weeks of in-depth online schooling. For many, CHYeshiva.com was the lifeline they needed for their children during the height of the Covid outbreak in Crown Heights – a daily reminder that the community will do what it takes to take care of one another.

“When it was most needed, MEF was able to serve as a unifying force among schools and educators,” shares Rabbi **Mendy Vail**, associate executive director of Darchai Menachem in Crown Heights. “At a time when schools were all struggling with the same transition to online schooling, having a central organization to turn to was the lifeboat we all needed.”

Who is Behind CHYeshiva.com?

CHYeshiva.com was an enormous effort to provide educational opportunities to thousands of Chabad children. In an unprecedented show of unity and collaboration, dozens of educators from a variety of Crown Heights schools contributed to its success. Rabbi **Yossi Langsam**, executive director of United Lubavitcher Yeshiva (ULY), was the “backbone” behind CHYeshiva.com. Rabbi Langsam took responsibility for the financial burden of the vast effort, as well as the technological arrangements needed to make the site a reality. Rabbi **Moshe Goldstein** of Special Projects at ULY spearheaded the development of the website, with assistance of Rabbi **Levi Sudak** of CursorBlue.com. Rabbi **Chaim Mayzlesh** of ULY also contributed significantly to the project.

Each division was overseen by a principal from a different school. The initiative was led by Rabbi **Yehoshua Lustig** (Oholei Torah), Rabbi **Yossi Langsam** (ULY), Rabbi **Zalman Shneur** (MEF), Mrs. **Dena Brawer** (Bais Rivkah) and Mrs. **Hadassa Werner** (Bnos Menachem).





PPE: PROFESSIONALLY PREPARING EDUCATORS

Despite MEF's track record of running comprehensive, long term programs for educational development, the Chinuch organization had the agility and drive to instantly switch tracks and support the success of educators in their transition to online instruction.

MEF is well experienced in online instruction, with longtime collaboration with online schools, and running a myriad of online programs for our international network. Tapping into that experience, MEF created online teaching training for educators on the same weekend that schools closed. The live Zoom training maxed out at 100 participants, but soon the recorded training went viral, as teachers shared this critical resource with their peers.

MEF continued to facilitate training webinars for male and female teachers, creating custom tips and tools for every grade's educators to teach online. These webinars were free and open to the public, as MEF was committed to ensuring access for any teacher who could benefit. In a collaboration with the Mechanchim/os Exchange as well as making freely available key resources from ZekelmanStandards.org, MEF widely shared educational material that catered to online instruction, sharing quality PowerPoints, games and worksheets that teachers could easily adopt into their lessons.

To connect teachers during the intense time of turmoil, MEF also created various social media groups for teachers to collaborate on adapting to online instruction. Members of MEF's team responded to dozens of teachers' individual queries, phone calls and emails, dipping into our wide network to connect teachers with fellow educators who could help them out. MEF also assumed responsibility for teacher morale, providing inspirational talks and online get-togethers for teachers at a time of emotional and professional overwhelm. These farbrengens and inspirational lectures were attended by hundreds.



"In March, we faced one of the biggest challenges in education we could possibly imagine. With no warning or time on our side, we needed to get our whole school body acquainted with a new way of learning. All of our staff parents and students needed to be trained to learn in a way they never had done before. It is thanks to MEF and all the wonderful support and resources you provided to our administration and staff that this transition was so smooth for us. The workshops you set up to train the staff to teach on Zoom and make it engaging and fun for the children were invaluable. The constant tips helped us deal with some of the glitches that we encountered along the way. Our Cheder continued to flourish in learning in ways I could never have thought possible."

-Mrs. Basya Deitsch, Director, The Cheder, New Haven, CT

STRONGER TOGETHER: GETTING SCHOOLS ON THEIR FEET

Throughout this crisis, MEF has served as the address for educators to turn to for help and connection. As principals began developing their online school approach, MEF was there to support them with professional development, training, and networking opportunities, sharing vital resources to enable schools to deliver the best possible education online.

The multi-pronged approach helped schools as they dealt with a spectrum of unforeseen challenges. MEF also honed in on the social-emotional health of children, teaming up with mental health professionals who could guide educators on how to ensure children were receiving trauma-informed care. Teacher panels were developed so that educators could speak about issues such as what worked and didn't work in the online classroom, and how to balance teaching while simultaneously helping younger children at school. Most of all, MEF ensured that educators knew they were not alone, and connected them with others who could help.

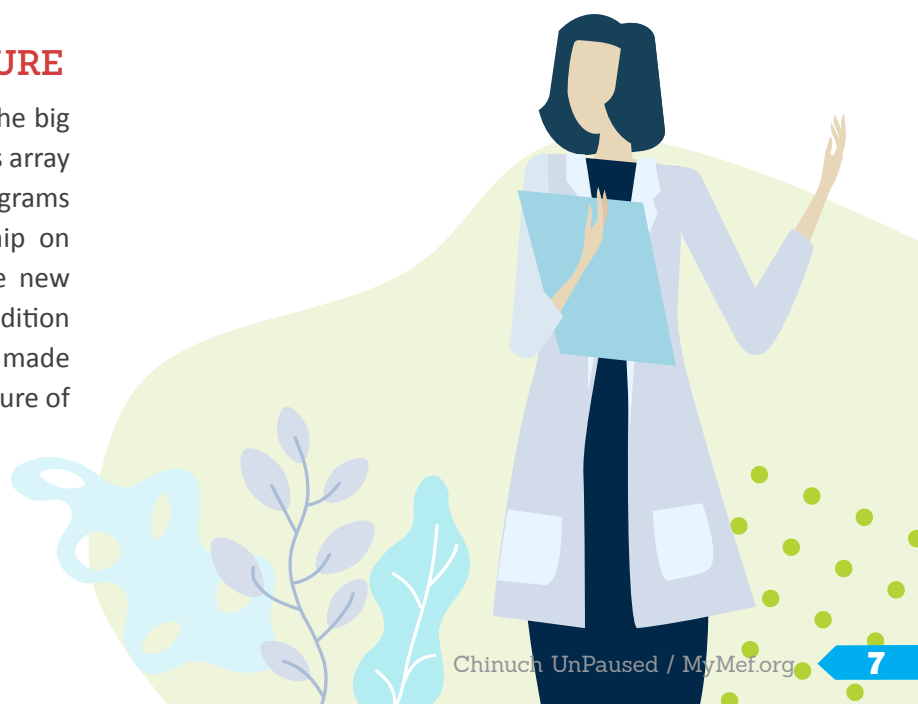
As schools developed their comprehensive online schooling strategies, MEF continued to advise and support. By facilitating conference calls with a wide spectrum of principals, schools were able to consult with one another to strategize on how to cover payroll, approach scheduling, and cater to their special needs constituencies. A webinar led by Rabbi Yossi Rosenblum, CEO of Yeshiva Schools of Pittsburgh, guided principals in best practices for transitioning to online schooling and planning for the reopening of in-person classes in the fall.

ANTIBODIES: AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

Even at a time of flux, MEF continued to focus on the big picture of quality education for every child. MEF's array of 12-18 month, cohort-based training programs are ongoing, building educational leadership on many fronts. These programs address the new and pressing challenges of our times, in addition to existing programs that have already made palpable change in the educational culture of Chabad:

- In MEF's new **Executive Director / Head of School Training Program**, 15 participants are receiving mentoring and training in the skills needed for executive level school leadership. The goal of this program is to train leaders who can create and maintain systems and resources to ensure a thriving Chinuch community.
- The **Chabad School Leadership Program's** 7th cohort continued to train throughout the pandemic. When its scheduled in-person summit was moved online this July, the group grew to 20 principals, expanding the program's reach with best practices for leadership during crisis and beyond.
- The **"Mechaneches" Mentor Training Program** equips educators with the ability to meet students' social, emotional, and spiritual needs. With the emotional and mental impact of this crisis, this program is critically important, and its second cohort is now underway, meeting bi-weekly on Zoom.

Whether pivoting online or adhering to socially distanced guidelines, MEF continues to plan and execute much needed professional development programs in areas from outcomes-based curriculum planning to student mental health. We know that when the dust settles, the world of Chinuch will need strong leadership more than ever, to motivate teachers and students to "hit the ground running" with engaging and successful learning. At MEF, we keep an eye toward the future to make sure that can happen.



PARTNERS

ON THE FRONT LINES



Numerous organizations stepped up to the plate during the Covid-19 crisis to support Chinuch. MEF had the distinct privilege of partnering with these organizations over the past months, joining forces to help teachers and students thrive.

»» Chai Lifeline / Project Chai

When the Covid-19 crisis emerged, many were concerned about the mental health of children. Thankfully, Chai Lifeline's designated crisis center - Project Chai - was there on the front lines, supporting educators with professional guidelines every step of the way. MEF reached out to Project Chai to ask Mrs. **Zahava Farbman** LMSW, a renowned traumatologist, to speak to our Mechaneches Training Program while the crisis unfolded. Mrs. Farbman was able to provide tools that these Mechanchos could immediately act on in their virtual classrooms. At the summer Kinus Mechanchos Chabad, Rabbi Dr. **David Fox**, director of Project Chai's Crisis Intervention, Trauma and Bereavement support services, addressed the hundreds of teachers and school leaders in attendance about how to sensitively support our students' transition back to school.

In addition to the dozens of support webinars that were offered to the greater Jewish community, Project Chai also provided many services that catered to the Chabad community, with a strong representation of its trained interventionists living and working in Crown Heights. **Yisroel Davidson**, a Crown Heights-based team member, was honored to offer his vital services.

Anyone can access Project Chai's Crisis Hotline at crisis@chailifeline.org or (855) 327-4747.



Mrs. Zahava Farbman, LMSW, Associate Director of Project Chai, speaks to Mechanchos about trauma and crisis intervention.



Rabbi Dr. David Fox, Project Chai Director

"It is extremely heartwarming to work with Chinuch organizations, because the teachers are really on the front lines. If you are empowered and trained in how to recognize what is going on and how to deal with it, you can actually save a child's life."

-Yisroel Davidson, Project Chai Interventionist

PROJECT CHAI
CRISIS, TRAUMA, SUPPORT
A Project of Chai Lifeline

»» CHYeshiva



On Friday, March 13, Crown Heights schools jointly made the decision to close their in-person classes. By Monday morning, CHYeshiva, a live program of daily learning for all elementary Chabad students, was up and running. CHYeshiva provided an interim solution to keep children learning while individual schools took the time to train staff and build their online infrastructure. The one-stop-shop for all grades also gave parents the leeway to secure enough devices and connectivity to connect all their children to individual classrooms when those were up and running.

“CHYeshiva was unprecedented, showing unity amongst all schools in Crown Heights, with impact extending well beyond Crown Heights as well. Until all the schools were up and running on Zoom, this is how we were able to keep hundreds of kids productive, happy, and inspired.”

-Rabbi Yehoshua Lustig, Oholei Torah principal & CHYeshiva coordinator

All over the world, students logged on to learn from Crown Heights' star teachers about Pesach, Parsha, and Chassidishe inyonim. The children even enjoyed special features such as live concerts and a virtual Bais Hamikdash tour. With this special tool, the emergency lockdown was anything but a break from Torah and Tefilla for Tinokos shel Bais Raban.



Rabbi Moishy Goldstein of Lubavitcher Yeshiva programs the CHYeshiva platform, which he built together with Rabbi Levi Sudak of Cursor Blue.

»» CECE Network



Devora Krasnianski supports early childhood educators worldwide out of the Shluchim Office in Crown Heights.

The CECE (Chabad Early Childhood Education) Network has long been there to support Chabad early childhood centers with all of their educational needs. When preschools and daycares suddenly faced the Covid-19 crisis, the CECE, under the leadership of **Devora Krasnianski**, rose to the occasion. The CECE helped coach preschool directors through the many complications that arose, and put together high quality learning materials for distance learning, as well as clear guidelines and tips for reopening in person. In addition to its own online leadership summit, the CECE partnered with MEF to plan a comprehensive early childhood track at the well-attended Kinus Mechanchos Chabad. Their support helped Chabad preschool teachers and leaders provide the best education to the youngest in our community, even in these trying times.

CECE resources can be found at TheCECENetwork.org.

“Covid has necessitated us to rethink how and what we do for and with children and their families. I am excited by the new possibilities gained from the expanded and creative thinking in the education space.”

- Devora Krasnianski, CECE director



»» Mechachim / Mechachos Exchange



“The best advice and resources come from fellow teachers. Uniting so many teachers from around the world gives us all the support we need on a daily basis!”

-Rivky Vogel, Mechachos Exchange

As a husband and wife in Chinuch, Rabbi **Yoel** and **Rivky Vogel** have been working behind the scenes with other trailblazing educators to lead a grassroots effort connecting and supporting teachers through the Mechachim/os Exchange. Their vibrant WhatsApp groups provide platforms for over 300 Chabad educators around the world to connect and exchange ideas. The Mechachim/os Exchange resource drive has hundreds of high quality user-submitted files, serving as an invaluable resource to these teachers. When Covid-19 shut down schools, they mobilized further, creating a dedicated drive of online-friendly resources, coming to the aid of teachers when they needed it most.

MEF worked with the Mechachim/os Exchange to share these resources with as many teachers as possible, and collaborated further throughout the crisis. Today, MEF is partnering with the Mechachos Exchange, the women's branch of this network, to create monthly online farbrengens to provide much needed inspiration and a platform for networking for teachers around the world.

Teachers can access resources and sign up for networking at Mechachim.org and Mechachos.org, respectively.

»» Jewish Girls Unite

Nechama Laber has spent decades building a growing community of Jewish girls across the country as an outgrowth of her Capital Region Bat Mitzvah Club. It has since expanded into the Jewish Girls Retreat, online Bat Mitzvah and leadership programs, JGU publications, and more. When Covid-19 hit and the whole world moved online, Nechama saw an opportunity to boost morale during the crisis while connecting more girls than ever before. When she launched a series of “Connect and Create” virtual events in the spring featuring song, dance and inspiration, Nechama collaborated with MEF to be able to share these programs with MEF's network of schools and students. The program was a success, and Nechama followed up with the launch of a full day creative online summer camp for Jewish girls around the world.

Today, JGU has given birth to a virtual community, with daily programming, Creative Online Clubs and even online schooling to bring creative Jewish learning, values, and empowerment to girls everywhere.

Women and girls can find out more at JewishGirlsUnite.com.



Nechama Laber runs an online Connect and Create program for Jewish girls worldwide.

“During these trying times, it is vital to provide a safe space for girls to discover their creativity and inner light. At Jewish Girls Unite we want every girl to know: You are never alone! In unity, we can transform darkness into light.”

-Nechama Laber, Jewish Girls Unite Director

JEWISH GIRLS
unite
SHINE YOUR INNER LIGHT!

»» Shluchim Online School



For a select group of educators, distance learning is nothing new. Since its establishment by the Shluchim Office in 2006, the Nigri International Shluchim Online School has been offering live, interactive, online learning to children around the globe. When brick-and-mortar schools were forced to turn virtual this past spring, Nigri opened its doors, sharing guidance for school leaders, training and tips for teachers, lesson plans, technological support, and more. When MEF launched a webinar series to support teachers in this transition, our first phone call was to Shluchim Online School's director Morah **Devora Leah Notik**, who was able to connect us with her stellar staff of teachers who could share tips, techniques, and best practices with teachers around the world. These webinars were attended in the hundreds, and translated directly into better learning experiences for students in every Chabad school.

Find out more at NigriJewishOnlineSchool.com.

"We feel fortunate that at this difficult time, we've been able to participate in fulfilling the Rebbe's vision of bringing Torah education to children throughout the entire world. It's been a special joy to help, to share our experience and work together with so many schools and teachers."

-Devora Leah Notik, Shluchim Online School Director



»» SoulWords



Rabbi Shais Taub presents a talk on "Uncovering Each Child's Potential" to hundreds of educators at the Kinus Mechanchos Chabad.

"The Mechanchim and Mechanchos have the power to help our kids overcome this challenge, and the keys to be able to do so are in Torah and Chassidus. It's an honor to be able to work with our educators at any time, and especially now."

-Rabbi Shais Taub

Rabbi **Shais Taub's** proliferation of Torah classes and inspirational talks have recently found their home at SoulWords.org. The website was ready just on time to provide the Jewish community with a much-needed boost when coronavirus hit.

When MEF and other Chinuch organizations turned to Rabbi Taub to help infuse the Chinuch community with strength and encouragement, he answered the call. Rabbi Taub showed up on Zoom in whatever format was needed, from an informal farbrengen for teachers to a keynote address at the Kinus Mechanchos Chabad. The opportunity to reach educators online produced a treasure trove of educational content, with weekly shiurim on Der Rebbe Redt Tzu Kinder (the Rebbe's messages to children for the Parsha and holidays) - organized and hosted by Tzivos Hashem for parents and teachers - now available as a resource to anyone.

Rabbi Taub's talks on Chinuch can be viewed at SoulWords.org/Videos/Education.





CARE »» *first*

Prioritizing Mental and
Emotional Wellbeing
During Covid-19

“ועיקר העיקרים שבזה הוא... יחס מיוחד והתקשרות, שזהו הצנור
הכי מתאים להחדרה בהילדים אהבת ה' אהבת התורה ומצותי.”

-אגרות קודש כ"ק אדמו"ר (חי"ג ע' תכד)

“The primary foundation is that... **a special connection and relationship**
[with students]... is the most appropriate means for imbuing children with
love of Hashem, and love of Torah and Mitzvos.”

When Covid-19 turned the world upside down with school closings, stay-at-home orders, and extreme levels of stress and confusion around every corner, parents and educators honed in on a primary concern: how will our children fare emotionally? What are the mental health risk factors that we need to look out for? How can we give our children the inner tools to weather this crisis? Throughout the pandemic, MEF rallied its network of mental health professionals to help educators answer these questions.

The Mechaneches Training Program, MEF's year-long program to provide homeroom teachers and student mentors with tools for supporting students' social-emotional well-being, was already well underway before Covid hit. The participants were offered to put the program on hiatus during the crisis, but they chose to continue with the training, expressing that the tools they were learning were more important than ever. The next scheduled session continued as planned with Dr. **Rona Novick**, who expertly adapted her pre-selected topic - "Mental Health Challenges" - to the unique challenges of our time.

"After 9/11," she shared, "people were saying that we all could be considered to have all of the markers of PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) — except for one, the passage of time. This is a similar situation." Dr. Novick, who maintains a clinical psychology practice while acting as dean of Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education, had also just released a children's book, *"Mommy, Can You Stop the Rain"* (Apples and Honey Press, 2020). The timing was fortuitous, as every caregiver could easily imagine being asked, "Mommy, can you stop the Coronavirus?" Her touching story shows that while the adults in a child's life cannot remove challenges beyond our control, we can and should make it clear to our children that we will do all we can to comfort, reassure, and stay close.

Of Kindness and Compassion

In addition to this cohort-based program, MEF also scheduled a series of webinars for teachers of every grade level, to support them in the pivot to online schooling. Dr. **Oshra Cohen**, a clinical psychologist and guidance counselor in NY and NJ, was one of the panelists addressing high school teachers.

"We all have a number of risk factors for depression and anxiety," she shared, "which include social isolation, loss of meaningful activities, and living in a world replete with uncertainty." Even for a child less at risk, she emphasized, there are still challenges teachers need to consider — whether a family member sick with Covid, a loss in their

**"Err on the side of kindness;
err on the side of compassion."**

-Dr. Oshra Cohen

family or community, being needed to help working parents with juggling younger children at home, or grieving a long awaited milestone like a canceled graduation trip. While holding students accountable on Zoom school, she advised educators at a time like this to "err on the side of kindness; err on the side of compassion."

"When I speak to a child and say: 'Your teacher agrees with me that it's more important for you to go take a walk right now than be in class', they can't believe it. They feel like their teacher really cares."

Rabbi **Yanky Raskin** LMSW, student liaison in Oholei Torah in Crown Heights, shared his observations of students on a panel for Mechanchim. He suggested a practical strategy to start the day with on Zoom: "You can use the polling feature to take a 'temperature check,'" he recommended, "and ask all your students on a scale of 1-5 how they're feeling today." Through this and other means, a teacher can determine the climate of the classroom and gauge how aggressively to dive into the learning, or whether the students need time for something lighter or to talk about what's on their minds. If most of the class is doing well that day and one or two outliers are not, he noted, those are the students a teacher now knows to reach out to personally with a phone call at the end of the day.

Mixed Emotions

As teachers adjusted to the new classroom setting, many shared that they were purposefully making time in their lessons for students to make sense of their thoughts and feelings. Teachers did variations of a round robin, some asking each child to share a word that described their feelings that day. Student responses included some surprises, like "amazing" and "thrilled" at the chance to stay at home.

Dr. Novick confirmed that many adults as well as children are going to experience mixed feelings at a time like this. "You can ask the students to provide two words to describe how they feel, one on each side of a paper. One side can have something negative, and one side can have something positive."

Furthermore, crisis and trauma do not sit neatly in a direct,

Children who hold onto trauma might experience their struggle in different ways. Project Chai uses the acronym “**SCABS**” to help us look out for underlying pain or struggle in our students:

S - SOMATIC: Physical effects of stress and crisis, including psychosomatic conditions such as indigestion, headache, and other bodily manifestations of emotional pain.

C - COGNITIVE: Impaired ability to concentrate or absorb information. This can also be caused by the overload of technology, as opposed to more traditional forms of learning, that we have been dealing with.

A - AFFECTIVE: Emotional distress, especially pertinent for children who have directly experienced loss or illness of loved ones during this crisis. Children may be downcast, fearful, angry, or anxious.

B - BEHAVIORAL: Acting out, nervous mannerisms, outbursts, compulsive tendencies, and crying are all examples of visible, behavioral manifestations of pent up stress or trauma.

S - SPIRITUAL: After a crisis, some children may find themselves grappling with hashkafic questions, or the negative side-effects of the internet and unstructured time. Conversely, others might have developed a sense of inadequacy or a fearful, inappropriately intense relationship with Yiddishkeit.

By keeping these five letters in mind, teachers can better identify when a child - or adult - is struggling with an underlying trauma, whether from Covid-19 or otherwise.

“Ask all your students on a scale of 1-5 how they’re feeling today.”

-Rabbi Yanky Raskin LMSW

causal relationship, as Rabbi Raskin stressed. “It isn’t the circumstance alone that creates trauma. It’s the circumstance coupled with the perception and the individual’s unique experience of the event.” Therapists often refer to the three Es of trauma - the event, the (subjective) experience, and the effect of the trauma. Therefore, we need to be open when assessing our students, to know that some may be struggling now, some may struggle later, and some may not react with trauma or present very differently than we might expect.

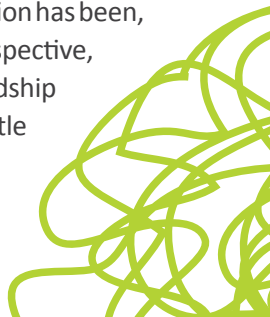
Mrs. **Zahava Farbman**, LMSW, associate director of Project Chai, shared a similar point of view in her webinar concluding the year’s Mechaneches Training Program. Emphasizing the need for educators to validate students’ diverse reactions to the pandemic (or any crisis), she quoted Dr. Viktor Frankl: “An abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is perfectly normal.”

Mrs. Farbman cited the varying reactions of Yaakov and the shevatim to Yosef’s disappearance, as one of many sources in Torah for making space for the full spectrum of human feelings. “Our heart is a muscle that can expand to feel more than one emotion at once,” she explained. But if a person shuts down negative emotion, they may lose the ability to experience real joy as well.

A New Normal

As the situation evolves, educators’ approach to students’ mental health needs to evolve as well. Rabbi Dr. **David Fox**, director of the Crisis Intervention, Bereavement and Support services for Chai Lifeline, addressed this summer’s Kinus Mechanchos Chabad to prepare educators for the choppy transition back to school.

He shared two interpretations of the phrase in Shir Hamaalos, “*hayinu k’cholmim* - we will be like dreamers.” From one perspective, this describes how the Geulah will be like waking up from a bad dream, “and this situation has been, indeed, a nightmare.” From another perspective, one can say that being redeemed from hardship will be like a dream come true. All the little things we used to take for granted - being able to hug a grandparent, socializing at a



birthday party, davening in shul - we will appreciate these as the sweetest and most novel of blessings.

These two perspectives cautioned teachers to prepare for a return to school that might be challenging, as the experience of structure, socializing, and other aspects of school life would feel new to many students. In particular, Rabbi Dr. Fox pointed out the need for students to reprogram their sleep cycle, regain their ability to concentrate off-screen, and other physiological and mental competencies. The transition and recovery period could take weeks, or even months, for many children.

"For the kids who are worried that they will feel socially awkward when they come back to school," shared Mrs. Dena Gorkin, director of the Mechaneches Training Program and principal of Bnos Chomesh High School, "You can tell them that now we are all socially awkward!" Even the most socially confident among us are not quite sure how to interact from behind masks, six feet apart. Knowing that we are in it together can help to put students at ease.

"Our heart is a muscle that can expand to feel more than one emotion at once."

-Mrs. Zahava Farbman, LMSW

"One of the things we expected to see at the high school level was an increase in anxiety," said Mrs. Gorkin about the return to her Crown Heights school, "but we have been pleasantly surprised to note that the overwhelming emotion we are sensing is relief! There is also natural frustration at some of the restrictions, but it is overpowered by the joy of having some normalcy returned to our lives." In communities that have been harder hit by a second wave of Covid-19, on the other hand, students have had a more challenging adjustment. In all cases, teachers should look out for signs that students may be struggling (see SCABS in the sidebar).

Your Own Oxygen Mask First

But what of the teachers? Countless times during the pandemic, teachers have heard the truism "put your own oxygen mask on first." While teachers may struggle to find time for self-care

"If there's something that nourishes you, that you enjoy, do that as a way to connect with your students."

-Dr. Rona Novick

at a time like this,, the consensus amongst mental health professionals is that being there for one's self equals better being able to be there for one's students. "If I have unprocessed trauma inside of myself," shared Rabbi Dr. Fox, "I am less sensitive and sometimes less patient with other people who are having this stress. So if I want to be there empathically and professionally for my students... I [may] need to talk it through with someone."

"A school is only as strong as its teachers," noted Dr. Cohen, focusing on the need to show teachers appreciation, and provide them with tools for "resilience and cognitive flexibility." Flexibility continues to be key, with students and teachers frequently alternating between Zoom school, physical schooling, and, perhaps most challenging, a blend of the two.

Dr. Novick had a suggestion for busy educators to incorporate self-care. "I always tell teachers, you can double dip! If there's something that nourishes you, that you enjoy, do that as a way to connect with your students."

Connecting with their students is just what busy and overextended teachers have been doing over the past months, no matter the challenges. Whether driving across boroughs to deliver a care package to a child in quarantine, raising money to send toys to a young student and siblings whose parents were hospitalized, or simply making time to speak to a student on the phone and really listen, teachers have been on the front line of the social-emotional side of this health crisis.

Their efforts have borne fruit, and continue to do so. Sharon, a parent at Silverstein Hebrew Academy, spoke at the Kinus Mechanchos thanking teachers for their dedication on behalf of fellow parents everywhere. She shared that her son, who had benefited so much from his school's devotion, was now moving on to a Yeshiva setting for the coming year. When they went to visit the near-empty school building before the end of the year to pick up his belongings, she related, he lowered his mask for a moment. With tears in his eyes, he said, "I just want to smell S.H.A. one last time."

Corona's Big Question: **Is Schooling Really Necessary?**

This question is fully explored in Rabbi Dr. Aryeh Solomon's new book, ***Spiritual Education: the Educational Theory and Practice of the Lubavitcher Rebbe***, reviewed by Chanah Rose.

When schools shut down last spring, there were a multitude of reactions. Social media abounded with tips from homeschooling advocates. Public schools provided a variety of synchronous and asynchronous solutions. Educational technology companies had their heyday advertising apps and programs to teach math, English and everything in between. While the majority of Chabad schools moved their full teaching schedule online, many parents wondered if it would be easier to spend the lockdown with their children free to play on their own schedule.

All of these different approaches attempted to answer the big, unstated question of Corona — what role does formal schooling actually play in our lives? It is not babysitting, since we all know how much parental time and energy was taken up by remote learning, and it is not simply the acquisition of facts and figures that edtech can accomplish without a teacher's help. Then what, in fact, is our objective in sending our children to school?

Actions speak louder than words, and the stellar Chinuch provided by so many *moisdos* around the world during this time is its own best advocate for the value of Jewish education. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to step back and reflect on what this added value really is. A recently published book by Rabbi Dr. **Aryeh Solomon**, *Spiritual Education: the Educational Theory and Practice of the Lubavitcher Rebbe*¹, was released just in time to help us answer this question.

An Australian educator who was encouraged by the Rebbe to pursue postgraduate studies in education, Rabbi Solomon wrote this book in order to synthesize the vast corpus of the Rebbe's works on Chinuch. Many view the Rebbe as

a champion of Jewish outreach, while others are inclined to think of the Rebbe as a gaon in Torah, prolific in the teaching of Chassidus. It is often overlooked that the Rebbe's top priority was Chinuch, and even the other two roles can be viewed through an educational lens.

“Chinuch means inculcating Yiras Shamayim and guiding a child b'ruchnius. This is something that no app or technology can replace.”

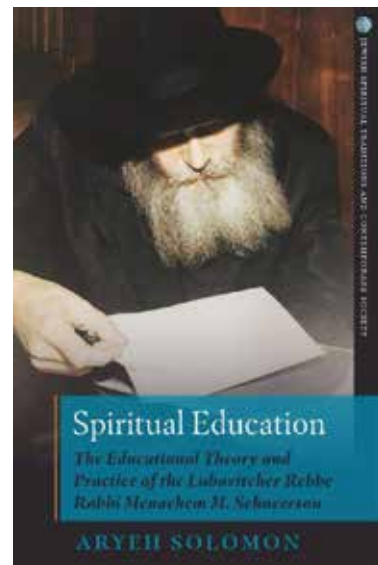
While previous works exist anthologizing the Rebbe's educational teachings, in *Spiritual Education*, Rabbi Solomon aims to do more than compile. He gathers the Rebbe's *horaos* and insights into Chinuch, and demonstrates that

they form a cohesive approach — an educational philosophy — that can be learned, internalized, and acted upon.

It is thus particularly fascinating to read Rabbi Solomon's chapter on “The Nature of Education” according to the Rebbe, at a time when many are grappling with what exactly that is. The answer? Education is everything, and “everything is education.”² This is not an overstatement, but the prism through which the Rebbe viewed so much of the world.

So what, indeed, is Chinuch? Chapter 2 quotes the Frierdiker Rebbe:

Chinuch is a term that encompasses all, from the youngest child to the most senior adult. Education is the foundation of hadracha [self-leadership, which applies equally to adults and to children... Beyond formal schooling, this means] observing every phenomenon with the greatest attention and contemplation in order to attain a personal



1. Herder and Herder, NY, 2020

2. Chapter 9

assessment as to how despicable one's negative character traits are, and how beautiful and pleasant are the positive character traits that one possesses.³

Similarly, the Rebbe writes:

Chinuch in its broader sense... implies an obligation to apply oneself to providing the child's every need. It goes beyond the obligation to facilitate the child's spiritual needs as prescribed by the literal definition of education... Education in the broader sense applies at "all times," meaning constantly, both day and night.⁴

In another source, the Rebbe emphasizes that "an education which imparts only knowledge, and gives no direction as to how that knowledge is to be applied usefully and constructively, is not worthy of the name education."⁵ The book delves into many teachings of a similar vein, which together illuminate what our approach to Chinuch should be at all times, especially when called into question by a pandemic or similar challenge:

1. Chinuch means inculcating *Yiras Shamayim* and guiding a child *b'ruchnius*. This is something that no app or technology can replace.
2. A little bit more broadly, Chinuch needs to concern itself with *middos tovos* and a person's self-development, which also needs constant effort and a personal touch.
3. The sharing of information, although valuable, is not an end in itself. Especially in an age when information is so readily available, education needs to concern itself with placing it into a meaningful context and steering its use in the right direction.
4. Chinuch does not stop in adulthood. It is then that a person takes responsibility for their own Chinuch by being a reflective individual who constantly seeks opportunity to improve. Chinuch is therefore vital in childhood, when the child requires guidance to establish this self-reflective process of life-long learning.
5. The world is your classroom! The Frierdiker Rebbe poetically describes how learning does not only take place inside the four walls of a school. Once the classroom comes home in the form of remote learning, teachers can guide students to take advantage of the learning opportunities around their home and even outdoors, as many teachers have done and continue to do.
6. Chinuch is a constant obligation - it does not have a pause button. As Rabbi Solomon writes, "The educator's responsibility also extends to education that takes place off the school premises and outside school hours,"⁶ —

including a situation of lockdown.

Over the course of the Rebbe's educational teachings, various metaphors for education illustrate just how broad the task of education really is. One of the better known metaphors, which is referred to throughout *Spiritual Education*, is education as the planting of a seed.

"From the horticultural metaphor," Rabbi Solomon writes, "the Rebbe inferred that just as the farmer must be at the right place at the right time, so too educational success is contingent upon the educator's being at the right place at the right time, activated immediately and energetically." This is an apt description of Chabad's own educators in the past months, who perceived the danger of putting education on pause, and rallied to learn new methods and modalities for delivering the best Chinuch possible to their students.

"The educator is Divinely empowered to succeed in attaining educational goals, even in situations that appear exceptionally challenging, both physically and spiritually."

A portion of *Spiritual Education* is devoted to the Rebbe's description of the merit of working in Chinuch, and its immeasurable rewards, including health, *parnassah*, *nachas*, and spiritual reward.

Surely this applies to our educators who overcame great personal challenges in order to continue teaching their students, reaching out to them, connecting with them, and providing them with inspiration with which to weather one of the great challenges of our time. As Rabbi Solomon writes, "The educator is Divinely empowered to succeed in attaining educational goals, even in situations that appear exceptionally challenging, both physically and spiritually."⁷

In rising to the call of the hour, Mechanchim and Mechanchos demonstrated that education is much more than a child-care arrangement. It can't be replaced by Wikipedia or edtech alone, and it amounts to more than the school building, classrooms and desks where it usually takes place. Chinuch is a life-saving endeavor, *b'gashmius* and *b'ruchnius*.

To quote Rabbi Solomon, the Rebbe "repeatedly stated that in education, no moment is too early, no detail inconsequential, no interaction incidental, and no exertion ever unproductive."⁸ With the gradual return of our students to normal schooling, our appreciation for Chinuch will never again be the same, and the efforts of our community's dedicated educators, who never put Chinuch on hold, will bear fruit.

3. Sichah of Chai Elul, 5703

4. Likkutei Sichos, V. 7, p. 151, footnote 24

5. Sichah of 11 Nisan, 5741

6. p. 107

7. p. 94

8. p. 105



A SALUTE TO OUR EDUCATIONAL HEROES





At MEF, we hold a longstanding belief that teachers are the first responders for the children in their care. From the onset of the pandemic, as emergency personnel and essential workers claimed center stage, it was our incredible educators who stood staunchly on the front lines.

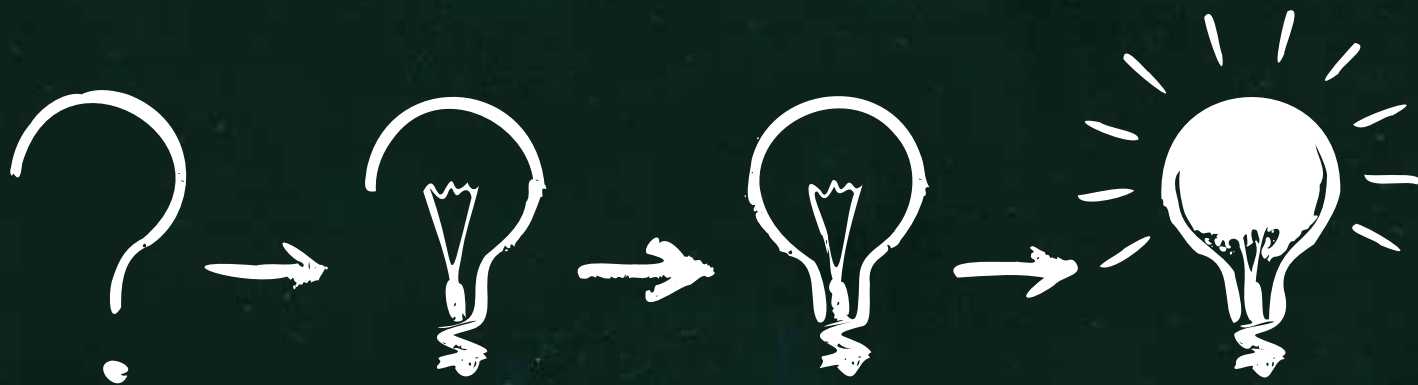
Thanks to our dedicated Mechanchim and Mechanchos on the front lines, Chinuch never paused. From virtual learning to hybrid classrooms, whether behind masks or plexiglass dividers, our teachers kept on teaching and our children continued to learn, grow and thrive.

No matter the challenges, our educators never stopped. Their Mesiras Nefesh for Chinuch was awe-inspiring to witness.

On behalf of parents all over the world; on behalf of Yiddishe Kinderlach; and on behalf of those whose health and recovery are being upheld by the הבל תינוקות של בית רבן,

THANK YOU
to our Chinuch Heroes.





CRISIS *to* OPPORTUNITY:

**183 Public-School Students Have Enrolled In Jewish Day Schools This Year,
And Jewish Day Schools Are Only Getting Started...**

The COVID pandemic has been devastating for our educational system. Or, at least that is the widely accepted narrative as school boards, politicians, teachers and parents lament the “no good options” available to students this school year.

But the Menachem Education Foundation has rejected that narrative outright, insisting that Jewish educators view this crisis as a potential paradigm shift for Jewish education. Running contrary to the doom and gloom news of the day, MEF saw the Covid-19 shutdown as a tremendous opportunity to open the doors of Jewish education to new families.

That was the goal that launched the Our Heritage project, a new grant-matching initiative by MEF that seeks to bring Jewish public-school students into quality Jewish

day schools. Developed in direct response to the COVID crisis, the Our Heritage project is designed to embrace this unique moment in time towards the long-term goal of increasing enrollment in Jewish Day Schools.

“The Rebbe taught us to always look for the silver lining or opportunity in every situation. We have been able to attract many families to our Jewish day school who previously would have sent their children to public school.”

- Rabbi Yossi Mintz

For many families, the COVID-19 crisis has inspired introspection and self-reflection, with people exploring the values that really matter in life. “The school shutdown has called into question the value of schooling in general,” says Rabbi **Zalman Shneur**, director of the Menachem Education Foundation. “Is it simply childcare or is school more meaningful in the form of instilling values and spirituality?”

Jewish day schools have long championed the holistic education of children – academically, emotionally and

spiritually. Throughout the crisis, Jewish day schools have been showcased at their best. In contrast to the public-school system, which faced significant resistance to adapting to the new needs, most Jewish and private schools responded with resourcefulness and agility in a successful transition to online schooling. Building off of that positive momentum, Jewish day schools are now appealing to Jewish families who have never before considered a full-time Jewish education for their children.

A Safer, High-Quality School Option

As parents entered the new school year, many public-school systems remained online for months, with limited in-person opportunities to learn. In contrast, the vast majority of Jewish day schools opened in-person successfully, with comprehensive contingency plans for potential closures. Jewish day schools tend to have smaller student populations and are not subject to the complex bureaucracy of the public-school system. Thus, they are able to implement rigorous protocols for cleanliness and safety on a contained scale and have the ability to monitor a potential outbreak (G-d forbid).

“Covid-19 has been a disaster for our communities,” says Rabbi **Yossi Mintz**, Executive Director of the Academy of the Arts in Redondo Beach, CA. “But the Rebbe taught us to always look for the silver lining or opportunity in every situation. We have been able to attract many families to our Jewish day school who previously would have sent their children to public school.”



Why Switch to a Jewish Day School Now?

1. Jewish Day Schools have been showcased at their best during this crisis, responding **with resourcefulness and agility** with both online schooling and a return to in-person learning.
2. Jewish Day Schools tend to be smaller, with greater ability to monitor any outbreak (G-d forbid) and the ability to institute rigorous protocols for **cleanliness and safety**.
3. This is a **moment of introspection**, with people thinking about what really matters in life. The school shutdown has called into question the value of schooling in general – whether it is simply babysitting and/or conveying facts and figures or is schooling more meaningful in the form of **instilling values and spirituality**.

Mr. **Bob Aronson**, chairman of The Our Heritage project, says that the program was inspired by the Lubavitcher Rebbe's early vision of building Jewish education in North America. Aronson, who is the former Executive Vice President of the Jewish Federation of Detroit, former president of Birthright Israel, and involved with the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life, says that the program will “expand and build on the Rebbe's vision by bringing new children into our institutions. It is an exciting start-up in Jewish education.”

The first stage of the program, which launched this past fall, aimed to recruit 10 schools in a \$25,000 matching grant challenge, contingent on enrolling at least 10 new students per school. The program surpassed its goals with 13 enrolled schools and 183 new students - and counting.

The Shaloh House, a Chabad day school in Brighton, Massachusetts, has enrolled in the program. Rabbi **Dan Rodkin**, the school's executive director, says that enrollment to Shaloh House surged even before the Our Heritage Program began, during the first months of the Covid-19 outbreak.

He explains that in the months of April to June, parents from the surrounding public-school system started to complain on Facebook about how poorly the schools were handling remote learning. After one parent recommended Shaloh House, Rodkin says new enrollees came from as far as Texas to participate in



the online curriculum. "During those three months, we doubled in size," said Rodkin. "I had to hire three more teachers just to accommodate the new students."

Starting in the fall, the school reopened in person. Rodkin says fifteen new students have transferred from local public schools to Shaloh House so far.

"With all of the horrors and tragedies and societal upset that the virus has caused, it also provides an opportunity for us to improve the level of Jewish education, to attract more children to it, and to increase that sense of Jewish identity in our young people."

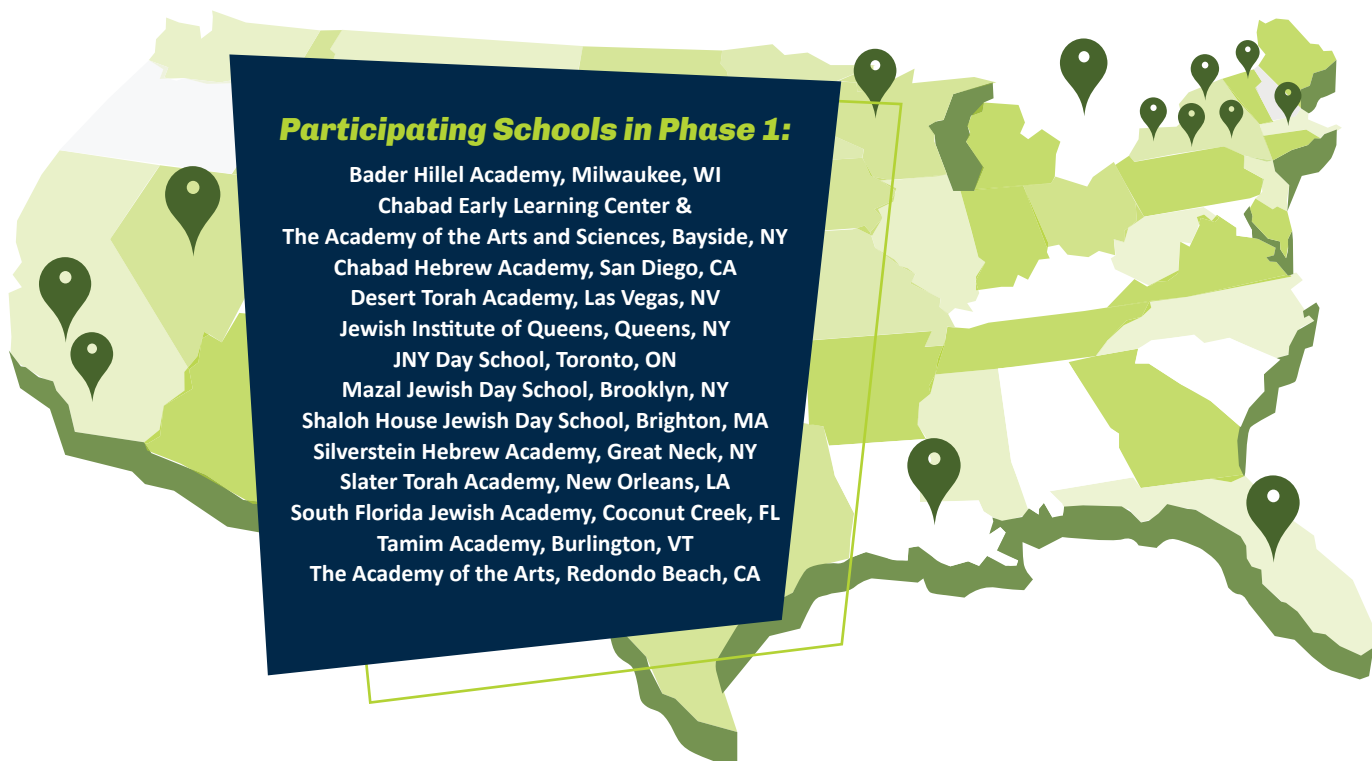
**- Mr. Bob Aronson,
chairman of Our Heritage**

Rodkin says one of the main reasons he believes Chabad day schools and other private institutions have been able to respond better to the pandemic and online learning is due to their small size. "At a big public school, it's impossible to make decisions," he said. "Many smaller schools don't have to get approval from 300 committees, so it can be much easier to adjust and adapt to situations as they arise."

Julia Goldberg of Brookline says that this robust online education is one of the reasons she decided to transfer her 7-year-old daughter, Rebecca, to Shaloh House for the fall semester.

Participating Schools in Phase 1:

Bader Hillel Academy, Milwaukee, WI
Chabad Early Learning Center &
The Academy of the Arts and Sciences, Bayside, NY
Chabad Hebrew Academy, San Diego, CA
Desert Torah Academy, Las Vegas, NV
Jewish Institute of Queens, Queens, NY
JNY Day School, Toronto, ON
Mazal Jewish Day School, Brooklyn, NY
Shaloh House Jewish Day School, Brighton, MA
Silverstein Hebrew Academy, Great Neck, NY
Slater Torah Academy, New Orleans, LA
South Florida Jewish Academy, Coconut Creek, FL
Tamim Academy, Burlington, VT
The Academy of the Arts, Redondo Beach, CA



OUR HERITAGE IN NUMBERS:

MEF Committed to
\$271,249
to Scholarships

\$250,000
Raised to Date

183

NEW public-school
students in Jewish
day schools

13 Participating
Schools

She believes the Chabad school will be able to provide in-person and online educational experiences that her former public school couldn't during the pandemic. "The public school really tried in the spring," said Goldberg. "But it was a very minimal amount of interaction with teachers and kids via Zoom, just one hour total per week. That was definitely not enough."

Through the Our Heritage grant, Goldberg is receiving half off the \$10,000-a-year Shaloh House tuition, fees she wouldn't normally be able to pay as a single mother. Her daughter has already attended Shaloh House's six-week in-person summer camp in July and August and is looking forward to the chance for more in-person opportunities.

"I think at this point it's in the best interest of the child to learn in-person in a safe environment, and that's what Shaloh House is aiming to provide," said Goldberg.

**"It is quite simple:
Judaism is important.
The children are our
future. If we won't
invest in our children,
what do we have?"**

- Mrs. Gloria Kaylie



Building on the Momentum

For some schools, the increase in enrollment has been exponential. Last year, the Academy of the Arts day school in California had 37 students enrolled. This year, they have 79. Rabbi

Mintz says that the Our Heritage grant, which the school utilized towards scholarships, has been critical in attracting new families who were on the fence about making the switch. "The grant has given us the ability to help parents who would not have otherwise been able to take on the financial responsibility of a day school tuition."

"We are thrilled to be able to offer a quality Jewish and secular education to families in our community," says Mintz. "Now that they have joined our community, we have a great responsibility to provide the highest quality program and care that will keep them here in subsequent years."

So far, the one-of-a-kind environment that a Jewish day school provides is proving effective. "Based on the level of enthusiasm, and the feedback from parents who are getting involved in Jewish life for the first time, we believe that many of these new families will stay with us even after public schools reopen," says Mintz.

Mrs. **Gloria Kaylie** is one of the sponsors of the Our Heritage project and believes that the goal of the program is critical. "It is quite simple: Judaism is important. The children are our future. If we won't invest in our children, what do we have?"

After an extremely successful rollout of phase one of the Our Heritage program, Rabbi Shneur is looking to build on the momentum to create "a renaissance of Jewish day school education." The multi-phase program has set out an ambitious goal to reorient Jewish day schools toward new enrollments and ultimately generate interest and success that can lead to a national movement of day school enrollment.

Aronson says that in the long run, the project aims to achieve one of the Jewish community's primary goals: to engage as many students as possible.

"Jewish day school education is fundamental for creating Jewish identity," said Aronson. "With all of the horrors and tragedies and societal upset that the virus has caused, it also provides an opportunity for us to improve the level of Jewish education, to attract more children to it, and to increase that sense of Jewish identity in our young people."

Our Heritage Committee

Mr. Bob Aronson

Mr. John Goodman

Rabbi Noach Kosofsky

Rabbi Zalman Shneur

Mr. Dan Smith

Rabbi Shais Taub

Answering the Cry of a Jewish Child

"Once, when the Alter Rebbe and Mittlerer Rebbe lived in the same home, the Mittlerer Rebbe's baby fell out of his crib and began to cry. The Mittlerer Rebbe was concentrating so deeply on his Torah study that he did not hear, but the Alter Rebbe, who lived on the second floor, heard the crying, stopped his learning, and came downstairs to comfort the child. He explained to the Mittlerer Rebbe that even when we are steeped in Torah and Tefilla, we still need to hear the cry of a child, to stop, and to comfort him.

The lesson for us is: Lately there has been an awakening in the youth, who

are "crying out" and searching for Yiddishkeit. We must know that, even if we are busy with loftier matters, **priority is given to the need to help Yeshivos that educate children in the true way of Torah and Yiddishkeit, so that they can enroll ever more of these "crying" children** - especially those who don't even know that they need to cry - and to give them an education such that they can then "stop crying"...

In a broader sense, in recent times the state of the world at large is like a "child that fell out of his crib," having veered from the straight and proper track. Each one of us can and must do our part to improve the situation... specifically by strengthening education."

משיחת יום ה' פ' נח, ד' מרחשון ה'תשכ"ג, לעסקני ישיבת
תומכי תמימים ליובאוויטש



A KINUS IN Cyberspace

The pandemic didn't stop MEF from bringing together hundreds of teachers for their annual boost of inspiration and connection at the International Kinus Mechanchos Chabad 5780.

After several months of moving their classrooms online, transforming their lesson plans, multi-tasking and dealing with challenges at home and at school, which teachers would want to go *back* on Zoom during their summer break?

The 550 Mechanchos who joined the 5th Annual Kinus Mechanchos Chabad (Chabad Chinuch Convention) this summer.

"I am very grateful and gratified that I get reinforced about the importance of my work as a teacher of Kodesh and what mission I am fulfilling."

- Nechama Dina Goldenberg, Cheder Menachem NJ

Every year, the Menachem Education Foundation hosts an annual Kinus to energize educators, provide tools and resources, and show them the appreciation that they deserve for their vital Shlichus. "We tried every option we could to be able to hold the Kinus in person, as usual," says Educational Director **Mrs. Chanah Rose**. "But once we announced that Zoom was the only way forward, we were surprised to see

the excitement from teachers all around the world who could now join."

In a truly international Kinus, Mechanchos logged in from Australia, South Africa, England, France, Belgium, Hungary, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and 26 states in the U.S.

True to the theme of "*Yisron Haor Min Hachoshech*", many testified that there was something special about this Kinus that they hadn't experienced before.

"The Kinus truly exemplifies that nothing is impossible," reflects Mrs. **Itty Chazan**, a teacher in Yeshiva Shaarei Zion, Queens. Instead of throwing the towel in, "the Kinus team leaned in to the times we are in, and designed a program to maximize our Shlichus."

The Ruchnius tone of the Kinus was set by the Vaad, comprised of esteemed Mechanchos Mrs. **Chani Brod**, Mrs. **Batsheva Deren**, and Mrs. **Shana Teichtel**. A host of presenters, some "Zooming" in from as far away as Israel, spoke on a diverse range of topics including inspiration from the Frierdiker Rebbe,





SoundBytes

As heard in Kinus sessions



MORAH MASHI LIPSKER

Welcoming Remarks

"There are three partners in Chinuch, the teachers, students, and the parents... And the key to the *kinderlach* is through the parents, [now more than ever]."



RABBI SHAIS TAUB

All Our Children Are Beautiful

"There's an opportunity right now to recalibrate our whole way of looking at our role... to get back to our true role as facilitators of their inner beauty - bringing it out from the inside, not imposing something from the outside."



MRS. SARAH CHUZHIN, MsEd

Bridging the Gap in Learning Post Covid-19

"Let's be real - we don't need to catch up, we need to recover. [In early childhood education, this means that] we cannot expect that all lost learning must be caught up on... and social emotional development always comes first."



RABBI M.M. GLUCKOWSKY

Connecting to Our Meshaleach

The Rebbe explained that... when one gives to children true Yiddishe, Chassidishe Chinuch it takes away the reason for the Golus, the *mipnei chata'einu*. It is a preventative medicine.



MRS. GITTY ROSENFELD

Juggling 101: Time Management for the Busy Teacher

There is no *shleimus* in the world, so perfectionism is unattainable, frustrating and unrealistic... But we can substitute the word perfection with excellence, and excellence is *l'fi kocho*.

"The Kinus was a welcome boost of energy that got me excited for the upcoming school year."

- Mrs. Golda Litvin, Louisville Jewish Day School, Louisville, KY

insight into the 12 Pesukim, and other Chinuch lessons from Torah and Chassidus.

"The presentations... gave us the tools for recharging our batteries and returning to our Chinuch Shlichus re-energized with Kochos based on our Torah and Chassidishe values," comments Morah Teichtel.

Kinus sessions also included practical presentations on teaching successfully in a turbulent time, including panels by outstanding teachers called "Ready for Anything: Teachers Share Ideas for Both Online and In Person." Presenters shared student engagement techniques to keep learning active and interactive in any setting, and highlighted project-based learning as a way to bolster student independence and ownership.

In a comprehensive early childhood track, chaired by Mrs. **Devora Krasnianski** of the Chabad Early Childhood Education (CECE) Network, the line-up included a live classroom tour of preschools around the country. Rabbi Dr. **David Fox** of Chai Lifeline's crisis intervention center shared valuable tips and insights regarding transitioning back to school for all age groups, and several sessions focused on the teachers themselves, through

tips for self-care, time management, and more.

The highlight of the Kinus Mechanchos is always the Gala Chinuch Banquet, and this year was no different. Featuring musical tributes to teachers, parent representatives thanking Mechanchos everywhere, and Rabbi **Shais Taub** as keynote speaker, the Banquet uplifted, inspired, and united.

Up to four simultaneous sessions throughout the program left many Mechanchos wondering which to choose, but luckily, all sessions were recorded for easy viewing at a later date.

"The Rebbe's army of teachers is such an amazing, dedicated group of people, who do so much for our children," says Rabbi **Zalman Shneur**, MEF Founder and Executive Director. "To be able to be there to support them in their work is a tremendous *zechus* and honor."

"The professionalism and articulation of young shlucho's and educators [at the Kinus] was remarkable. It is a testimony to the inculcation of the Rebbe's teachings and their impact on applying Chassidus to educating children."

- Chaya Devorah Bergstein, Ganeinu Preschool, MI

THE KINUS IN NUMBERS:

550

participants

200

welcome packages mailed

40

presenters

10

countries

27

sessions

4

Zoom rooms

A few technical glitches

Infinite amount of inspiration



From Passive to Interactive

How to make a virtual event come to life:

>> Mail a Warm Welcome Carefully crafted welcome packages were mailed out in advance with program cards and gifts for early registrants.

>> Keep the Kids Busy Puzzles and crafts were included in the welcome packages to ensure Mommy had undivided time to soak up Kinus sessions.

>> Bingo! By writing down concrete takeaways on a specially designed Bingo board, participants won exciting prizes throughout the two days.

>> Don't Forget Coffee... Whether they enjoyed the flavored samples from the welcome package or sipped on a homemade brew, Mechanchos enjoyed a productive chat in small groups in the "Coffee Shmooze" guided networking sessions.

>> Pick Your Own Session Simultaneous sessions can be accessed even more easily online than in person, with multiple Zoom rooms accessible at the click of a button.

>> BYOBanquet Menu With a shopping list provided in advance, Sara Wolko of Crave Haven guided participants in whipping up their own gourmet dinner and desserts.

>> Give the Rebbe Nachas No Kinus is complete without connecting and reporting to the Rebbe, our Mishaleach. With hundreds of names on a Pan Klali, a representative visited the Ohel with a live stream for all to join in.

*In a post-Corona world, can you think of new ways to blend the advantages of virtual and live events?
We can't wait to see what our innovative educators do next!*

CHINUCH » UNPAUSED DASHBOARD

» Supporting the First Responders

Teacher Training and Resources

550

Mechanchos participated in the international Kinus Mechanchos Chabad online.

8

training webinars MEF hosted for distance learning.

505

teachers participated in MEF's live webinars for distance learning, and another **1,850** viewed recordings.

813

people follow MEF's weekly Chinuch inspiration broadcast on social media.

500

teachers collaborate on MEF's WhatsApp groups for online teaching.

80

Teaching resources were downloaded **80** times from MEF sister website, ZekelmanStandards.org, during the pandemic.

23

teachers shared their experience and expertise on MEF's series of panels on best practices for distance learning.

School Shutdown at a Glance <

19,000 students in **150** Chabad schools learned online for an average of **7 hours** a day for **57 days**, equaling at least

7,581,000

hours of remote learning around the world.

57

days of Zoom school across the U.S. this spring, and counting...

Tech issues faced by the average child on a day of Zoom school: **countless.**

The Torah and Mitzvos inspired and enabled through Zoom school: **immeasurable.**

Spreading a Safety Net <

MEF and Partners

850

students enjoyed MEF's weekly programming for kids between Purim and Pesach, in partnership with CHYeshiva, Jewish Girls Unite and Bas Mitzvah Club International.

150

girls registered for Jewish Girls Unite virtual summer camp, clubs, and online school throughout the pandemic.

13

Jewish day schools participating in the Our Heritage program recruited **183** new students from public schools to date.

\$250K

awarded so far in matching grants to Our Heritage schools, to support new enrollment.

\$327K

raised from **2,853** donors in the "Shape the Future" fundraising campaign to help support 5 small schools through these hard times, in conjunction with MEF.

The Nigri International Jewish Online School enjoyed a

50%

increase in enrollment over the course of the pandemic.

50

teachers volunteered their time to teach on CHYeshiva, with **1,000 - 1,500** children attending each class.

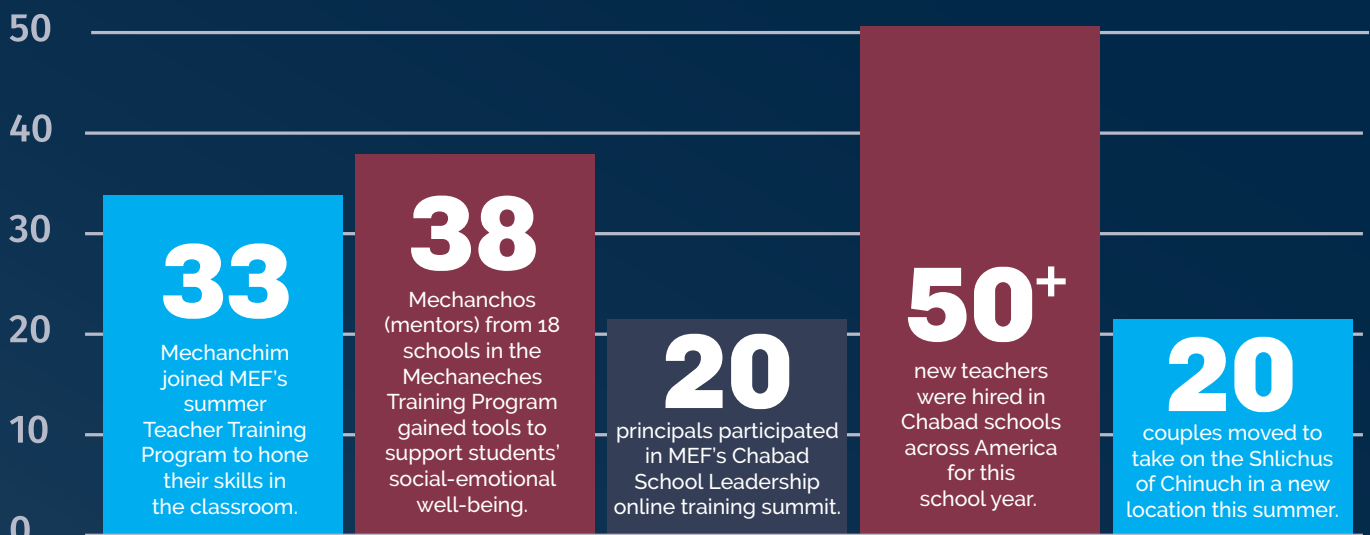
100

kids submitted Geulah themed artistic projects to MEF raffles, winning 6 amazing prizes.

60

hours from when the school shutdown was announced until CHYeshiva was up and running.

> Standing Strong



REINVENTION:

The Changing Face of Student Engagement

For many people—teachers, students, and parents alike—the thought of Zoom brings back a mix of recollections. Hazy memories of glitchy WiFi and hastily created slideshows are part of the fabric of the experience of those frenetic early weeks of the pandemic.

While the challenging (and sometimes unpleasant) moments have been a part of the journey, the face of student engagement has undergone rapid changes. With the abolishment of the status quo, teachers have had the opportunity to embrace a new era and hone in on the skills gained during this time of revolution to carry over into their classrooms going forward.

Building Rapport

Teachers all over the world had to scramble to completely reinvent what schooling looks like. How have they managed to replicate the back-and-forth learning experience of a real classroom, online? With all children, and especially the youngest, the task is difficult.

Morah **Michal Rimler** of Monsey describes how she was able to interact successfully with her young students on Zoom:

“Most teachers are guided by the live feedback of their students,” says Morah Michal. “When you’re on Zoom, the key to having that successful interaction is by skillfully knowing how to read your students’ facial expressions,

and to use the mute/unmute buttons to your advantage. Sometimes, you can see a child is antsy or anxious and wants to be called on. It takes a lot of conscious awareness to tune into each child, but with practice, that is how the virtual relationship is built interactively.”

Sometimes, adapting the size of the group is what it takes to rebuild the rapport that is naturally present in the classroom. Mrs. **Miriam Gerber** of Philadelphia frequently uses small group instruction in her physical



classroom, so she replicated this using Zoom breakout rooms in order to give each student the attention they needed. In MEF’s Kinus Mechanchos in the summer, she had the opportunity to model small-group instruction for other teachers, so they could adapt it on Zoom or in the classroom.



When a person is uprooted from his usual environment, until he becomes acclimated to the new conditions and demands of the situation, certain aspects of his inner self come to light...Often, these reveal hidden virtues, which he may not even have known that he possessed... In such a case, fortunate is the person who does not allow these virtues to become hidden once again, when calm returns.

(אגרות קדש חלק ב', דף י"ד)

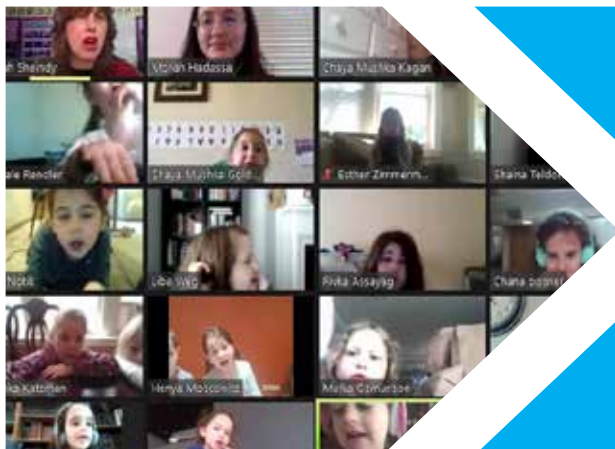
Tools and Takeaways

Many teachers leaned into technology itself to find ways to overcome its inherent challenges. **Rabbi Zalman Raskin** of Pittsburgh discovered Peardeck.com and shared it with many of his fellow teachers as a way to have students interact with the content.

On Peardeck, a teacher prepares a slideshow, and as students progress through it they are prompted to answer questions or complete tasks showing comprehension. The best part of this for many teachers was the ability to see where all of their students were holding and view their answers simultaneously, as opposed to a traditional classroom setting where only a few students can be called on to share their thoughts.

Google Classroom and Google Docs were other favorite tools, enabling teachers to assign work either for homework or during class, as well as to observe students' progress in real-time. Videos and PowerPoints were also frequently employed by teachers, often with ingenuity to sidestep the passive element of distance learning.

A teacher at a Crown Heights girls' high school, for example, made a point to put an interesting picture as a "hook" on her opening slides, to get students wondering how it connects to the learning. She sometimes used a timer (importing a video into a PowerPoint presentation) to add excitement to certain activities, and has provided students with Wikipedia links to research different concepts relevant



"You do not have to be tech savvy to find effective tools to engage your students."

-Mrs. Chanah Rose

A Teacher's Voice

Ms. Liba Rimler, Cheder Chabad of Monsey

It is with nostalgia that I recall those days of online learning. There was something powerful about the laser-focused energy we operated with in those times.

For me, distance learning was an opportunity to connect with the students one on one. Unconfined to the limitations of a physical classroom where dozens of students were vying for my attention at the same time, I was able to view my role in a new light.

Online, I could no longer simply be a fourth grade teacher. With each child now in her own environment, I needed to be the teacher of each and every student in her own individual right.

It took some time, but we fell into a new rhythm. I still used Zoom for daily lessons in other subjects, but for Chumash, a skill-based subject, I recorded videos of myself teaching. I emailed the videos to the parents each night, and required each student to call me for a few minutes each day to review the Pesukim with me on the phone. Some calls lasted less than ninety seconds, but they were some of the most valuable moments of the day.

The girls were able to watch the videos as many times as they needed, with the freedom to pause and write down their own translations and review until they were confident in their abilities. I found that the majority of the class gained tremendously from this independent mode of learning. Through the phone calls, they were accountable for their effort.

Given the space to learn as individuals, quieter children and academically weaker students finally had their time to shine. They no longer had to worry about speaking up in front of peers, and therefore shying away from taking risks in learning, as they might have done in the traditional classroom. Now that we are back in school, I work hard to incorporate aspects of that into my skill-based lessons. Knowing that my students don't have the luxury of pressing a pause button on my frontal instruction, I am conscious of giving them more time for independent practice and review.

Where we teach may not always be our decision, but how we teach is a constant choice. By modeling to our students that we are ready to take on any challenge and turn it into a source of light, we are giving them the biggest gift in the world: a life lesson taught firsthand.

“The pandemic has caused us to rethink and revisit a lot of the practices we are accustomed to.”

-Rabbi Zalman Raskin

to the weekly Parsha. With adaptation, many such ideas can be carried over into the physical classroom as well.

“Technology simply means tools,” shares Mrs. **Chanah Rose**, MEF Educational Director.

“You do not have to be tech savvy to find effective tools to engage your students.” In a tutorial video, she demonstrated how props, response cards, hand motions, costumes, and role playing are all effective ways to engage students online, even for a teacher less comfortable with technology. “You need to view the webcam as a window into your classroom.”

Most importantly, Zoom has pushed teachers to think about student engagement in new ways, because they can’t take for granted that a student is actively learning on the other side of a computer screen. Many of the gains that teachers have made while teaching on Zoom, whether through high- or low-tech engagement tools, can be used in the physical classroom as well. As one teacher put it after returning to the classroom from Zoom: “I’m asking my students to give me thumbs up and thumbs down like you’d never believe!”



Bringing School Home

In a similar vein, Rabbi Raskin shares that “The pandemic has caused us to rethink and revisit a lot of the practices we are accustomed to.”

This has taken creativity and effort on the part of both parents and teachers. For example, Mrs. Gerber prepared a memorable Chumash Siyum for her students to celebrate their completion of the Parsha remotely. She prepared treat bags for the students with different items connected to the Parsha. “Guests” joined the Zoom class, dressed up as characters the students had learned about. The students were allowed to use virtual backgrounds befitting the occasion, and families were involved in the games and preparation.

Similarly, Mrs. **Henny Bartfield** of Coral Springs took her students on another virtual trip each day for davening, “visiting” holy or historic locations through virtual backgrounds, Google Earth, pictures and videos and learning about it before Tefilla. Mrs. Bartfield encourages teachers to craft these kinds of immersive experiences for their students now as well, through a smartboard or another means, making an ordinary classroom extraordinary.



A Principal's Perspective

Mrs. Leah Sollish, Principal
Chaya Mushka Children's
House (CMCH), Atlanta

Chinuch means the instilling of the values of Torah and Chassidus in our children. The greatest influence on young children of preschool and elementary school age has always been their parents. A school acts in partnership with the parents to teach the children Torah and reinforce the values that the parents want for them.

The last eight months, while difficult and challenging for both parents and schools, has brought the reality of the parent-school partnership to the forefront perhaps as never before. The children spending longer amounts of time at home while not in school, coupled with the children watching their parents and schools in lockstep working together as one to provide them with Torah education, is perhaps one of the greatest moments of Chinuch that our generation has experienced. והלואי כן בקדש חזיתיך.

This year at our school, CMCH Atlanta, parents and teachers have had the opportunity to truly experience each other's perspective. For parents, the challenge of facilitating a healthy and conducive learning environment for their children amid Covid restrictions has brought into perspective the regular ongoing effort that teachers put in to engage the children. For teachers, seeing parents' heartfelt desire for their children to be learning in the school environment has helped them to be able to hear parents' genuine concern for their children in their feedback.

CMCH is a school that believes deeply in the partnership between school and the home. We are proud of the Chinuch partnership we have created, and we are excited to see it continue to grow and flourish.

"Parents and teachers have had the opportunity to truly experience each other's perspective."

-Mrs. Leah Sollish



Morah Michal found a way to not only adapt but to celebrate the opportunities in distance learning for her playgroup students. "In the brick-and-mortar classroom, Shabbos parties are teacher-led," she says. "When we went

online, we had to come up with hands-on activities to actively engage the children's interest. So, we created projects that were interactive and sent the supplies home for Erev Shabbos."

She recalls that many of the students who had successful Zoom experiences were the ones whose parents were involved, to facilitate the process and ensure the children had their supplies with them.

With virtual learning, the parents were an active participant in their children's success.

"We have always known that Chinuch is a partnership between teachers and parents," shares Rabbi **Yanky Raskin**, LMSW, Student Liaison at Oholei Torah in Crown Heights. "Although we are very grateful that our kids can go back to school, what we went through can be used as a moment for each of us to reflect on and reclaim their individual roles in this partnership, while finding ways to further collaborate."

Many Shluchim and Shluchos have noted the golden opportunity of bringing Brachos, Parsha and stories of Tzadikim directly into their students' homes, broadcast for the entire family to benefit from. For any kind of school, this diminishing of the boundaries between school and home can be seen as a positive. As Rabbi **Shais Taub** put it in a farbrengen for teachers: "What we have seen during these times is the temporary removal of the institutional aspect of education. Your students are now in your homes, and you're in your students' homes. It's no longer about the institution. It's about the relationship."



Investing in our Future

Thank you to MEF's very generous donors who have stepped up over the course of a difficult year. Your support has helped fund critical programs that ensure that our children keep learning, no matter what. Your contribution has enabled Chabad schools to continue to provide an outstanding chinuch and a vital sense of community, and maintain MEF's commitment to those we serve. We could never have done it without you!

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"And because every student grows up to be an educator, whether as a parent or a teacher, or even simply as a member of society in which he or she lives, Jews have been inspired in their educational efforts by an unshakeable belief that the effects of education are lasting and cumulative, and reproduce from generation to generation."

(Spiritual Education p. 74, letter to participants in the dedication of the new building of Yeshiva College, Sydney, 1 Iyar 5740)

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Rabbi Noach Weinstein & Rabbi Leibi Marsow, in loving memory of
Shneur Zalman ben Gimpel Avrohom Hirsch

A Project That Shneur Hirsch ע"ה Took to Heart

Shneur Hirsch, ע"ה, a longtime friend of MEF, believed deeply in the power of Chinuch. Shneur was an early believer in the potential of the Our Heritage project and it was his direct encouragement and generous support that brought the successful program to fruition. "This is a chance to change the course of a Jewish child's life," he shared with MEF earlier this summer. "Instead of going to a public school they can attend a Yeshiva and receive an authentic Jewish education. These children will grow up and lead Jewish homes based on Torah and Mitzvos. There is no greater investment in our future."

Unfortunately, Shneur did not get to see the full growth and success of the program, with nearly 200 public school students enrolled, as he passed away on כ"ז תשרי after a nearly two-year battle with an illness. With his guiding light as inspiration, Our Heritage will continue to seek out more children to enroll in Jewish education and ensure that Jewish children across the country can access their birthright of Torah. May the Torah learning of these Jewish children be a Zchus for זמן וזמן יבא להם.



menachem

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