

# Parents

## MAZEL DAY SCHOOL

# Page



February—Shevat 2012

ISSUE THREE

## February - Literacy Month



As the "People of the Book", Jewish families have always had a special relationship with literacy. From infancy, we are taught that books are valued and precious. This Jewish value is the theme behind Mazel's annual Literacy Month.

Through parent readings in each class, book fair purchases, visits to the library and special activities, our children cultivate a deeper and richer love for reading.

Especially in today's world, with so much technology pulling our attention away from timeless literature, instilling good literacy skills from a young age becomes even more important.

In this issue of the Parent Page, we bring you weekend activities and craft projects that are literacy related. You will also find recommendations for unique bookstores to visit and shop, along with helpful tips for reading to your children and suggestions for ways to develop better readers at home. We hope that you enjoy the issue and wish you "happy reading"!

Mazel Parents Association  
Mazel Newsletter Editorial Team

### FEBRUARY CALENDAR

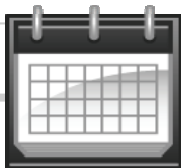
**February is a Literacy Month at Mazel Day School**

For a schedule of events, please see PAGE 7

**President's Weekend: School is Closed**  
2/17/12—2/20/12, resuming on 2/21/12.

**Annual Benefit for F.R.E.E. of Brighton/Mazel Day School @ OPM**

Thursday, Feb 23, 7:30pm—10:30pm



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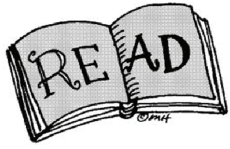
**Centerfold: Parenting Book of the Month** "Raising Roses Among the Thorns: Bringing Up Spiritually Healthy Children in Today's Society"

# FamilyFun

## WEEKEND PICKS

B"H

By Anna Rakhlis



### HERE ARE SOME LITERACY-THEMED WEEKEND ACTIVITIES:

#### **Toddler Time with First RIF (Central Library, Youth Wing)**

Tuesdays, 01-03-2012 to 12-25-2012,  
10:15AM - 10:45AM  
Age: Birth to 5 years

Enjoy stories, rhymes and songs. Ages 18 to 36 months. Call 718.230.2117 for more information. Space is limited. Pick up a ticket at the Children's Reference Desk on the morning of the program.  
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/>

#### **Story Play (East Flatbush Library)**

Fridays, 01-06-2012 to 02-24-2012,  
2:00PM - 3:00PM  
Play with toys and hear stories.  
Ages 0 to 5.

#### **Visit the Scholastic Store**

557 Broadway between Prince and Spring Sts;  
212-343-616  
[scholastic.com/sohostore](http://scholastic.com/sohostore)  
Located in the heart of Soho, the Scholastic Store is stocked with the company's books, plus interactive stations for kids to play at—visiting children can test their Harry Potter knowledge or search for hints to 39 Clues mysteries. The store also hosts free events on certain Saturdays at 3pm—including a Lego Ninjago tournament (Jan 14) and a Super Bowl party (Feb 4)—plus storytimes on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 11am.

### AND SOME OTHER GREAT EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES...

#### **Baby Got Bach: Classical Kids at LPR**

Le Poisson Rouge,  
Feb 26 11am; Apr 22 11am.  
158 Bleecker St (at Thompson St)  
(212) 505-3474 [babygotbach.org](http://babygotbach.org)  
\$20, \$60 for a family of four  
Created by pianist Orli Shaham, this introduction

concert teaches children how to play an array of instruments and create classical music. The concert begins with "Backstage Up Front," where children meet renowned musicians and help play the instruments. To end the concert Orli and co. put on a performance that all kids will love. Reserve a spot now at [lepoissonrouge.com](http://lepoissonrouge.com).  
Ages 3 to 6.

#### **"Beyond Planet Earth: The Future of Space Exploration"**

American Museum of Natural History,  
Feb 01 - Feb 05 10am-5:45pm. Ongoing  
Central Park West (at 79th St)  
(212) 769-5100  
[amnh.org](http://amnh.org)  
Subway: B, C to 81st St—Museum of Natural History; 1 to 79th St  
Suggested donation \$19, seniors and students \$14.50, children ages 2-12 \$10.50, children under 2 free. Admission for special exhibitions varies; see [amnh.org](http://amnh.org) for prices.

Kids intrigued by the great beyond can discover what may lie ahead by walking through a diorama of the Martian surface, examining a full-size re-creation of a lunar habitat and planning a mission to make Mars habitable. Astronauts-in-training see what it might be like to return to the moon or to land on and deflect a potentially deadly asteroid. The exhibit ends with a stunning 64-square-foot, 3-D hologram that puts museum goers in the center of thousands of exoplanets.

#### **Dinosaurs and More**

Staten Island Zoo  
Feb 26 1:30pm-3:30pm.  
614 Broadway (between Clove Rd and Forest Ave)  
(718) 442-3100  
[statenlandzoo.org](http://statenlandzoo.org)  
Free with admission, donation suggested

Dino expert Richie Mirissis shares his fossil collection with kids, then teaches archeologists-in-training how to make their own fossil mold. Ages 5 and up.

# Help!

## MODERN PARENTING

B"H

by Chani Okonov



**HELP!** *How do I get my kids to want to read? I feel like there are always other things competing for their attention—cartoons, electronic games and more!*

I don't know about you, but I love to read! My childhood was filled with books and books. I could often be found cuddled in bed or on the couch with a book in hand. I loved the feeling of entering a new world and getting to know interesting characters and places. As my thirst for books grew, I would get a thrill out of knowing that I had read my way through an entire section of the library. As a mother now myself, I envisioned that my children would fall equally in love with books. Surprise, surprise—it's not quite as simple. It is true that one of my children is a natural reader, as I was. He will find every opportunity to read. If you put a book within his reach, he just can't put it down. He literally devours books. My daughter, on the other hand, doesn't have quite the same passion for reading. She has strong reading skills, but doesn't view reading as a go-to activity. It is hard to find a book that will hold her interest until the end. She will read only a few pages and then put it down. She's just not that in love (yet).

Here are some lessons I've learned along my journey to cultivate life-long readers in my home.

For starters, **don't give up!** Be patient. Try new strategies and keep on chugging along, because eventually something will stick. Sometimes a child is not quite there because their reading fluency needs more improvement and therefore reading is more of a chore than a pleasure. With time, this will improve and they will enjoy reading more. Sometimes a child just hasn't yet found the right book or author or genre that they really enjoy. Once they do, they will finally "get" the fun of reading.

**Turn off the TV and unplug the Wii!** In my home, we don't even own a TV. Though the children do watch DVD's from time to time, there are clearly set limits for the frequency of its use. Also, the actual DVD player is relegated to the basement or the computer, which is in a corner. Books, on the other hand, take up center stage in our living room & in the children's bedroom. However your home is set up, you can incorporate this premise in some way. Too much TV time trains the mind to appreciate fast-pasted, every-changing visual stimuli. In contrast, reading trains the mind to create its own mental pictures while processing auditory stimuli.

**Surround your child and your home with a variety of books.** When books are all around you, you are more inclined to pick one up than if not. Whether this means buying many books, or often borrowing books from the library—you can create a more literary environment. In fact, a book-filled home is as much a characteristic of a

"Jewish Home" as having a Mezuza on the door. The Lubavitcher Rebbe spoke extensively about each child having their own set of Jewish books in their bedroom. This principle applies both to Jewish literacy and general literacy as well. One thing that we do as part of my children's bedtime routine is have each child choose a few books to take to bed with them. After saying good night, they enjoy reading or looking at pictures, depending on their age, relaxing until they fall asleep.



**Always present your child with an image of themselves as a "reader"** even when they don't necessarily display that passion. Although I observed the difference between my son and daughter's love for reading, I never verbally compared them to each other. I wanted my daughter to see herself as a reader at all times. If she did pick up a book, I would tell her: Oh, that's a great book. I hope you enjoy it. I love to see you reading. Did you know that you are a really good reader? And so on. I was careful, of course, to do all this in a non-pressured way, keeping it casual.

**Don't hesitate to read aloud to your children even when they are already older and can read on their own.** I realized that just as small children like to be read to, elementary aged children do too. My goal is not only for my child to know HOW to read, but to WANT to read. Therefore, any way that they will find pleasure in it, is worthwhile. Besides, listening comprehension skills are equally as important as reading comprehension skills. Also, when reading aloud to my children, I have the opportunity to discuss the book's theme, characters, etc. I especially choose books that have a particular message or value that I would like to instill in my children and will use the book as a springboard for conversation. What I eventually noticed is that after I'd read aloud to her, my daughter was more motivated to read on her own afterward. This worked especially if I only read a portion of the book (example, with a chapter book), and she was curious to see what would happen next.

**Encourage older siblings to read to younger ones.** If you have more than one child, encourage the older one to read to their brother or sister. Not only will it foster a close bond between them, it will also give the older one a chance to "show off" and take pride in their reading. For example, my daughter's first steps in embracing reading for pleasure have begun through her having taken on the role as "big sister reader" to her little siblings. It has reinforced that positive "reader" self-image.

In conclusion, with careful thought and lots of patience, one can find ways to create a more reader-friendly home, which will eventually result in better readers!!

# Reading Tips

## READING TO YOUNG CHILDREN

by Chani Okonov

### TIPS FOR CHOOSING BOOKS TO READ

1. Look for books with language that is rich and well-written.
2. Think: What is this book's message? A book that presents a life lesson and explores values in tune with your own is especially meaningful for children.
3. Think about the child(ren)'s age and choose texts that are appropriate in length and content.
4. Children love to read books that describe their everyday experiences and feelings. Finding the right such book can be a springboard for you to discuss important behaviors and choices.
5. Non-fiction books are always interesting. Find out what subjects your children are interested in and would like to learn more about. Help choose books related to his or her interests.
6. Rhyming books and books with repetitive text are great! As children become familiar with the text they will enjoy filling in the words. Older children also enjoy collections of poetry.
7. Humorous or imaginative books make fun reads.
8. Once you've read a good book that you and your children enjoyed, look for more books by the same author.
9. Find books that have engaging illustrations that will capture your children's attention. Even if a child is reading all print books, such as chapter books, they will still enjoy a good story book with interesting illustrations.
10. Children enjoy reading how-to books that will show them how to complete an activity (ex: cook-book, project idea book)
11. Ask friends, family, and teachers what books their children have enjoyed.
12. Use book lists generated by various literacy organizations; they usually have good suggestions. For example: American Library Association, International Reading Association, Children's Book Guild. Look out for books that have received awards.
13. Look for books that you will like reading aloud. Your enjoyment will shine through and become contagious. Have fun! Show your children the joy of reading and how it can open up a brand new world!
14. Try to offer different kinds of books – fiction, non-fiction, etc. – to see what appeals to your children.
15. Involve your child in choosing books. Explain how and why you have chosen a particular book for them. Encourage them to find similar books as well.



### TIPS FOR READING TO CHILDREN

#### PREPARE

- Preview the book before you read it to children. This helps you spot material you may want to shorten, take out completely, or expand on.
- Think about your children (ages, developmental levels, interests) and what you want them to get out of the story. That will help you decide what questions you want to ask (or comments you want to make) and where (before, during, after the story).
- If it is the first time you are reading the book aloud, consider asking just a few questions, especially during the story, so that children get to hear the story with few interruptions.
- If reading a chapter book to an older child, choose the points at which you will stop the story. Look for a section that will keep your child in suspense and looking forward to the following day's reading.

#### BEFORE YOU READ THE STORY

- Make sure everyone is comfortable.
- Show the cover and read the title, author and illustrator of the book.
- Ask the children about the cover.
- Suggest things the children can look or listen for during the story.
- Ask some or all of the following questions:
  - What do you think this book is about? Why?
  - Where do you think the story takes place?
  - Have you ever read anything like this before?
- Flip through the pages and point out the illustrations to the children. Make predictions based on what you both see in the book. (This is called a "Picture Walk")
- Discuss things that the children might have in common with the characters or the setting of the story.
- If reading a chapter book, review what was read the day before and discuss what predictions your child has for what will happen next.

#### DURING THE STORY

- Change your voice to fit the mood or action.
- Move your finger under the words as you read them.
- Show the pictures and talk about the book as you read.
- Encourage your child to notice interesting details in the illustrations.
- Add information or change words to help kids understand more words and explain the meaning of a new word.



# Reading Tips

B"H

## READING TO YOUNG CHILDREN

by Chani Okonov

- Repeat important words or phrases that highlight the main idea of the book.
- Ask children to make predictions about the plot, the characters, and the setting. (What do you think will happen?)
- Help your child relate to the characters' feelings and thoughts as the story is unfolding. (I wonder how he/she felt. I wonder what he/she was thinking. What would you do if it was you?)
- Share your own thoughts about the story. (This is called "Think-aloud")
- Allow children to ask questions or make comments.
- Follow the cues of your child to respond to their age, background and any other individual characteristic or challenges.

### AFTER YOU READ THE STORY

- Ask questions about the story. For example, you might ask some or all of the following:
  - What is the title of the story?
  - Who is the author? Illustrator?
  - Where does the story take place?
  - Who is the most important character? Why?
  - What is the problem or conflict in the story? How is it solved?
  - Does this book remind you of another book? Why?
  - How did the story make you feel?
  - Did the illustrations help tell the story?
  - Has anything that takes place in the story ever happened to you?
  - What is your favorite part of the story and why?
- Ask children to describe one of the characters in the story, or how they might feel or act if they were one of the characters.
- Extend the story with an activity or another book.

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Did you notice that **GOOD READERS USE THESE KEY COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES?** Pay attention to your own reading strategies the next time YOU read a book and you will see!

**Visualizing:** Good readers create mental images as they read. This helps them better comprehend the text.

*When reading to your child, you can help him/her develop this comprehension strategy by saying: As I read, you will imagine pictures in your mind. Think about those pictures and pay attention to the details that you see.*

**Questioning:** Good readers ask and answer questions about the text as they read.

*When reading to your child, you can help him/her develop this comprehension strategy by asking "wh" questions about the text (what, who, where, how) and encouraging your child to ask questions as well by saying: I wonder...*

**Making Predictions:** Good readers think about what could most likely happen next in the text.

*When reading to your child, you can help him/her develop this comprehension strategy by asking: What do you think will happen next?*

**Making Connections:** Good readers associate the text to their prior knowledge & personal experiences.

*When reading to your child, you can help him/her develop this comprehension strategy by saying: This book reminds me about another book that we read.... (or) This book reminds me about the time that we went/did/saw...*

**Summarizing:** Good readers synthesize what was read to create a summary about what the main idea (s) of the text is.

*When reading to your child, you can help him/her develop this comprehension strategy by asking: Can you tell me what this book is mostly about? What is the main idea?*

- Using and understanding text structures and features: By paying attention to the titles, captions, etc., the reader is able to enhance their comprehension of the text.

*When reading to your child, you can help him/her develop this comprehension strategy by pointing out the titles, table of contents, captions, illustrations, etc.*

### Good readers can also...

- Pay attention to and identify details in a story
- Sequence events in order (what happened in the beginning/middle/end?),
- Compare and contrast two characters or stories (how is this like/different than...?),
- Understand what is implied in the text even if it is not written directly (Why? What were they thinking? How did they feel?)
- Identify the cause and effect within a story (What made this happen?)

# Parent Talk

B"H

## PARENT INTERVIEW

By Alla Barsky

### **Interview with Ilona Dektor**

Ilona was born in Lviv, Ukraine and came to the US with her family in 1982, at the age of four. She has a Masters Degree in Speech and Language Pathology from NYU and loves writing and reading. She has two children – Zaylin, who is 5 years old and is in Kindergarten at Mazel Day School, and Madeline, who is 9 months old. Ilona lives in Brooklyn with her husband and children. Ilona is a member of Mazel Parents Association and has been working on organizing this year's book fair.

**What made you choose this profession?** I graduated High School rather early, at 16, and did not immediately have a clear idea what to do next. I started majoring in Pharmacy but soon realized that I wanted to have more variability and creativity in my workday. I took some college classes in Speech Pathology and realized I really like this field. That's how I ended up making my decision.

**What do you like about your job?** I like working with children, I like being able to make a difference in a child's life. Another thing I like about my field of work is that it's ever-changing and that there is always something new to learn. I also like the flexibility that is inherent in my job; this allows me to set my own hours and spend more time with my children.

**Did you ever consider doing anything else?** It's funny you ask that! I have always liked Broadcast Journalism. The high school I went to had a heavy emphasis on performing arts and journalism and I even had a show on a local cable network that featured my fellow HS students. My parents actually dissuaded me from pursuing this as a career because they were worried that I wouldn't be able to make a steady living that way and that I'd have to travel a lot.

**Do you have any favorite books?** I have many; the latest one is "The Glass Castle" by Jeanette Walls.

**Do you have an easy recipe to share with other parents?** Yes. I use a lot of kale in my cooking, as my son is a big vegetable eater. One easy recipe that I like to make is kale chips. You just take some kale leaves, wash them, dry them, tear them into bite-size pieces (without the stems), drizzle on some olive oil and sea-salt, and put into a pre-heated oven (350F) for about 10 minutes. You get

a very crunchy snack that is much healthier than potato chips.

**How do you balance work and family?** I'm lucky in that my profession allows a degree of flexibility. Basically, you need to prioritize. It is important to me for my kids to see my face in the mornings when they wake up and for me to be available to them in the evenings. Right now, I work part-time, which lends itself to spending lots of quality time with my kids – playing, cooking together, and reading.

**Why did you choose Mazel Day School?** I have known Chani and Avremel Okonov since Mazel Day School was opened. I was there when they were opening it and witnessed their passion and dedication to the school. It just seemed like a gem in the Russian-Jewish community; this school remains a truly unique institution in that it combines an excellent secular education, teaching Jewish heritage, and Russian. I also like the fact that it has small classes, which allows for an individual approach to each child. Here, every child can be heard.

**How did you end up involved with the Book Fair and Literacy month projects?** This is the second year that I am organizing the Book Fair in Mazel. Last year, I co-organized Literacy Month with a fellow Mazel parent and friend and it has worked out so well that I am doing it again this year. I have always loved books and have been an avid reader my entire life. For me books are a great escape, they are a way to fuel the imagination and, also, a way to bring a family together. I think it is important to make reading a part of your child's upbringing, read to them, and have them read to you. Watching my son, who is a beginning reader right now, blossom and improve his reading skill has been a very rewarding experience.

**Do you have any words of wisdom for your fellow parents?** A great way to end each day is reading to your children. It can provide a few minutes of quality time for you and your child at the end of a hectic day and it can help foster a life-long love of books and reading in children.



# Hidden Treasures

## NEIGHBORHOOD BOOKSTORES

B"H

By Irene Gabo

I am a book junkie. I devour several books per week, but when I had kids I switched to the eBook format, for convenience purposes. I love the wireless transfer of the book to my Kindle in under a minute and yes, I enjoy the relatively small cost of a book compared to the hardcover version. However, lately, as my kids have become bigger, I found myself wanting to browse the bookstore again, flip the pages of hardcover books, marvel at the illustrations and hear the laughter of my kids as they sit for story time. So for the past year I have been on a discovery journey to find bookstores that will answer my yearning. I am not talking Barnes and Noble, even though it serves a purpose. My gems are smaller, cozier, independent, neighborhood stores, some straight out of "You Got Mail" movie. I hope you get to explore them and enjoy them as much as I do.  
~ Irene

### Greenlight Bookstore

686 Fulton Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217  
[www.greenlightbookstore.com](http://www.greenlightbookstore.com)

I found about this charming bookstore because of their association with the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), which membership will give you 20% at the bookstore. The store maintains a wonderful selection of books at 30% off, both for children and adult and every month the staff issues its list of picks, which are 15% off. Greenlight also has Young Readers Book Group, age 8 and up, which meets once a month to discuss a contemporary or classic book. Every Saturday at 11 they have Story Time for kids ages 3 to 8 and their families. Authors and illustrators of picture books often visit on the Saturdays to read from their new books and neighborhood performers often read as well. Story time is often paired with activities and crafts and the website's Event Calendar has a schedule of author and event visits.

**BookCourt**, 163 Court Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201  
[www.bookcourt.org](http://www.bookcourt.org)

I reviewed this bookstore last year and in my opinion, it remains one of the best independent stores in Brooklyn. The author's readings are second to none. Last year it held readings of Henry Rollins, Michael Moore, Brooklyn Writers Space readings, Michael Ondaatje, Lou Reed - and it continues to be the place to get the best books. The staff is hired based on their knowledge of books, so if you walk in asking for a good book on the tsars of Russia, they'll guide you right. P.S. Catherine the Great, the Portrait of a Woman, was a luxurious read. The back room is very relaxing. You'll feel transported back to the tranquil time when books matter.

**PS Bookshop in Dumbo**, 76 Front Street, (between Corner of Washington & Front )  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
[www.psbny.com](http://www.psbny.com)

This store is well known for its children story time, every Thursday, between 4 and 5 p.m. Its an hour or stories and songs and is so popular you need to RSVP for it. But once you are in the store you'll be pleased to find how spacious and open this place is. No strollers stuck between the aisles. The white couches beckon you to sit down and relax while the kids are mesmerized by a Mo Willems book. Here you will find a lot of 1st edition books and 1st print books, like \$50 on a 1st edition of "In Cold Blood". Plus, while you are shopping or browsing, great remix CDs will softly play in the background. The store also buys used, rare and out of print books & specializes in art, design, architecture and photography.



### Bookmark Shoppe

8415 3rd Ave, (between 84th St & 85th St), Brooklyn, NY 11209  
[www.bookmarkshoppe.com](http://www.bookmarkshoppe.com)

This bookstore is very close to Century 21 and I often end up there to browse their Book Club Picks. It's a friendly place where you book will be held on a phone call and special ordered if needed. They have a fantastic selection of fantasy book for kids, but the

only drawback is the small space, having no reading are. However, the store does organize and hold Book Clubs, which are held monthly and are free for groups of 5 or more. Check out their events calendar and great recommendations.

### Boulevard Books and Café

7518 13th Ave, (between Bay Ridge Pky & 76th St)  
Brooklyn, NY 11228

Last but not least is a relatively new bookstore in Dyker Heights, a contradiction in and of itself, but this place is a gem. It's super cute, and everyone whose been there at least once will get to know the owner, Tatiana, who is a master at organizing events that draw crowds. If you want to visit a book signing, participate in a cooking class, attend a poetry reading or even a psychic reading, this place has it all. Each event is interesting and fun, especially kids events which get great participation. They have a loyalty program, where you get discounts on future purchases, and book clubs. It's a very warm and friendly place where you'll never feel unwelcome or rushed. It's geared to be a children's bookstore, but they carry a wonderful selection of classics and new releases for every taste.

# Book Crafts

B"H

## FUN WITH READING

By Lily Shnyder

There are great bookmarks, crafts, coloring pages and other activities to go along with some of your favorite children's books, fables, fairy tales and nursery rhymes like Very Hungry Caterpillar, Curious George, If You Give a Mouse a Cookie and Alice in Wonderland among others. For ideas, visit <http://www.mdltk-teach.com/books/index.htm>.

### Bookworm Bookmark

Make a reading buddy with the kids to make reading more fun. Make one for every book you read together and/or they read independently and write the book name on the back. Collect worms toward a special prize (you decide on the prize).

**Supplies:** Construction paper, pencil, scissors, wiggle eyes (if available), glue stick, markers or colored pencils and large bottle cap or small plastic lid to trace around.

**Instructions:** Trace six times around a cap onto a piece of construction paper. Cut out the circles. Glue the circles together in a row to make a worm. Glue on wiggle eyes or just draw the eyes. Cut out or write the letters "READ!" on the circles. Write the name of the book on the back.



### Super Reader Bookmark

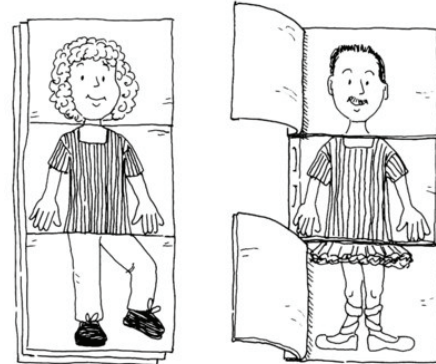
Have the kids make this bookmark to keep track of their favorite books.

**Supplies:** Foam in assorted colors, scissors, white glue, fine-point permanent markers in assorted colors, pom-pom, 2 wiggle eyes and yarn

**Instructions:** Cut 2" x 10" strips of foam for the base of the bookmark. Cut additional shapes, such as face or star. Glue shapes to one end of the strip. Decorate shapes with stickers, markers, wiggle eyes, pom-pom nose, yarn and hair. Write names of the books you have read on the base strip.



### Match-Up Books



This paper craft flip book from <http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/book-crafts4.htm> lets kids create their own collection of kooky characters and stories.

**Supplies:** 2 sheets of white paper (8-1/2x11 inches) scissors, light cardboard, crayons or markers, stapler

**Instructions:**

- Cut each sheet of paper into 3 equal-size rectangles. (Cut across the short side of the paper.) This will give you 6 rectangles.
- Cut a piece of light cardboard the same size as the rectangles. Stack the 6 paper rectangles on top of each other. Fold them down twice, dividing the papers into 3 sections.
- Unfold the rectangles and draw a different person, family member, animal, or monster on each page. Draw the head in the top square, the body in the middle square, and the legs at the bottom. (NOTE: The drawings should all be about the same size, and the heads, bodies, and legs should all line up in the same place. This way the head of one figure will line up with the body on every other drawing.)
- After you finish drawing, put the piece of cardboard on the bottom of the stack. Then staple the left side of your drawings together to make a book.
- Carefully cut across the papers along the folds, stopping before you get to the left side. (Don't cut the cardboard.)
- Your book is done. Flip through your book, turning different flaps at a time, to see what silly characters and stories you can create.



# Family Time

## LITERACY FUN

B"H

### Family Literacy Activity Ideas

By Roza Niyazov

#### Build -A- Poem

Celebrate Literacy Month with a poem-writing activity that's all about saying a lot with just a few words. All you will need is, old magazines and newspapers



#### Instructions:

From an old magazine, cut out a wide selection of large-type words. Remember to gather essential smaller words, such as "the," "of," and "is." After you write your masterpiece, affix your verse with a glue stick to a piece of card stock or keep the words in an envelope to use whenever inspiration strikes.

#### Family Nature Walk

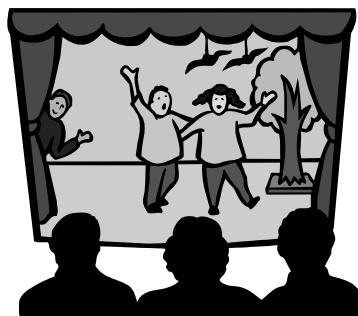
Take your family for a nature walk and create a book with your child/ren. It's simple:

Families use a resource to identify birds, trees, flowers and other elements of nature. You record information in a journal and take photos, and viola you made your own family story book about the nature walk.



#### Reader's Theater

Choose your child's favorite book or any book and create a mini theatre. Choose one of a family member to be a narrator and the rest of the family act out a story while one family member reads the narrative.



### LITERACY MONTH CALENDAR OF EVENTS @ MAZEL

**"PARENT READ ALOUD"** - Parents will be able to sign up and visit their child's class and read his/her favorite book to the class.

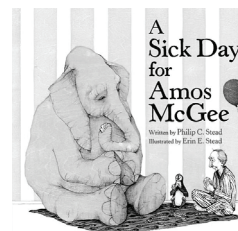
**"TRIP TO THE LIBRARY"** - Each class will be visiting the public library to meet with a Librarian, to explore how the library operates, and use a library card.

**"BOOK FAIR"** - 2/6—2/16; 8am—10am & 4pm—6pm @Shul (2nd floor)

**"LITERACY FUN BASH @ THE BOOK FAIR"**—2/12 @ 4pm—6pm. Fun event for kids of all ages.

**"MEET THE AUTHOR"** - a well known published children's book author will read aloud to children in Mazel.

### BOOK REVIEWS by Ilona Dektor



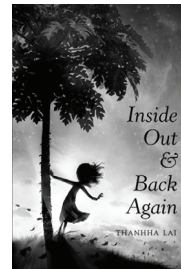
#### A Sick Day for Amos McGee

Author: Philip C. Stead

Illustrator: Erin Stead

Ages: 2-7

This Caldecott winner, full of vivid vocabulary and beautiful illustrations is sure to become one of your child's favorites. Each page is truly a work of art! A touching tale of friendship, *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* emphasizes what it truly means to be a good friend. When Amos, an elderly man that spends a part of his day attending to his zoo animal friends becomes sick, his gang of four-legged buddies decide to visit and take care of him! This gentle and humorous story will have you and your child smiling the entire way through!



#### Inside Out and Back Again

Author: Thanhha Lai

Ages: 8 & up

National Book Award Winner & Newbery Medal Winner

For all of her life, Hà has only known her home in Saigon. She relishes its traditions, enjoys the comfort of her friends, and loves the beauty of her own papaya tree. When the Vietnam War reaches her home, the family is forced to flee to America. Hà struggles to find her place in the foreign land of Alabama. She finds the people cold, the food dull, and the landscape completely strange; but what she discovers most of all is the strength of her own family. *Inside Out and Back Again* is a gripping story of grief, change, dreams, and healing. It is a journey that every reader can relate to in entirely their own way.

# Teacher Talk

B"H

## TEACHER INTERVIEW

By Alla Barsky

### Interview with Inna Izman, Pre-K

**Could you tell us something about yourself?** Hello, dear Mazel Parents! My name is Inna Izman and I am the Pre-Kindergarten teacher in Mazel Day School. I was born and raised in Moldova and came to United States with my family in 1999. I am married and have an 18 year old daughter who is a freshman in college. The year of 1999 was one of the most significant years for my family. In addition to starting to build our life again in a new country, we rediscovered our Jewish roots. This completely changed my way of living and thinking. Even though it is not an easy path, I feel blessed to finally have found what I was looking for all my life. Keeping Jewish traditions has brought my family even closer together than before. I think that in our times, this is the one real thing that is priceless.

**How long have you been teaching?** I have been teaching for sometime already. After graduating from Tiraspol Pedagogical Institute, Moldova as a teacher of Russian Language and Literature, I taught middle school students in Moldova for several years. After coming to US, I decided to pursue my goal to become a teacher in this country. I wanted to be armed with new, up to date teaching methods and American educational philosophy. So after graduating from Brooklyn College with a BA degree in Education, I got my Masters Degree in Early Childhood and Special Education from Touro College. I am a NYS Certified teacher and have received special training in the "Handwriting Without Tears" program.

I joined Mazel in their first years of existence. It was my first teaching job in United States and since then, I am a true fan and supporter.

**What drew you to teaching originally?** As a child, I always play-pretended to be a teacher and even got reprimanded frequently for ruining furniture with chalk. But the most important factor is that I was raised in a family of teachers. My parents were very devoted to their profession and especially to their students. I was always surrounded by my parents'

former or present students who often expressed their gratitude toward them, emphasizing their selflessness and compassion. My parents' love for teaching and students inspired me to continue in their hard but rewarding career path.



**How did you end up teaching in Mazel Day School?** As a newcomer, I was looking for a job. Living in Brighton Beach, my family attended the F.R.E.E. of Brighton Chabad synagogue. There, I met Chani Okonov and learned about Mazel Day Care, as it was called those days. As soon as I started to work in the school, it felt right. The school's approach to education matched my ideal educational philosophy. I felt at home doing what I love to do.

**How does Mazel compare with other schools where you taught?** I don't have much experience teaching in any other U.S. school than Mazel. That is why I could tell you what makes Mazel a unique place. There is the freedom given to its teachers to choose the right tools and methods to meet student different learning styles. The principal of the school, Chani Okonov, provides teachers with all necessary teaching materials and supplies. She encourages Mazel teachers to continue their education to stay up to date with the latest educational approaches.

I also enjoy the friendly working atmosphere in Mazel, the kindness and care of its teachers toward every student and each other, the respectful and sympathetic attitude toward the parent community, the individual approach to each student and their family. and the work to improve the school to make it a desirable place to be.

**What do you see as the goals of early education?** Early childhood education uses a holistic approach toward teaching, focusing on all aspects of a child's development: children's feelings about themselves, the development of responsibility, and their ability to

# Teacher Talk

B"H

## TEACHER INTERVIEW

By Alla Barsky

relate positively to others, children's gross and fine motor skills, cognitive development and etc. But I want to talk about one goal that I think indicates a purpose of the early education is "to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives." The early education helps to open the young minds to perception, comprehension and responding to everything that happens around. As the modern world changes rapidly with changes in technology, economics and our life style, the new generation needs to be flexible, knowledgeable, proactive and adaptive.

**What do you consider to be the attributes of a "perfect" school?** I personally do not like the word "perfect". I do not believe it exists: every classroom and every teacher makes it unique and great in their own way. I think that a great school "produces" sparkles in children's eyes. It makes learning exciting and inspires children to explore and understand the world around them through their senses. A great school instills a positive attitude and caring for each other in its students. On a more serious note, a great school sets the right priorities by emphasizing the importance of moral education along with academic achievement. It values parental involvement and communication, pupil's discipline and respect for teachers, positive reinforcement, and an ambitious curriculum with concentration on the quality of knowledge versus quantity. A great school should be a fun place where the joy of learning is instilled, by developing children's self-esteem, encouraging student empowerment, positive interactions with peers and teachers, implementing individualized instruction and a curriculum that is connected to the experiences and interests of its students. In a great school, teachers learn every day from their students and work to improve the school to make it a desirable place to be. When your child says "I love my school!" you know it is a great school.

**What can parents do to help their children as they prepare to enter elementary school?** I think that one of the most important things that parents can do to

help their children to be prepared to enter elementary school is to be involved in their school life and show support and excitement with their every accomplishment. The rudimentary skills are being built in the early childhood classes and that is why it is important for parents to help their children master the necessary academic and social skills by not only helping them with homework, but by involving their kids in everyday family life. For example, parents can let their children participate in family decision making discussions, creating shopping lists together, letting them count change in a grocery store, modeling kind and thoughtful behavior toward each other and others. It is important to develop a respectful parent-child relationship by setting clear expectations and enforcing loving and logical discipline.

**So now—tell us, what do you like to do in your free time?** Free time is a sweet expression! There are so many things that I like to do in my free time but very often I don't have time for any of them :). I love to read and reread my favorite books many times over. I bake a lot and that gives my house a cozy, sweet scent. I like to draw and sometimes I take drawing lessons; this gives me a sense of comfort and relaxation. I also love taking leisurely walks with my daughter or my mother. And sometimes I like to just turn back time and dance to Disco music.



Morah Inna with her Pre-K class



# Nutrition Tips

## ROAD TO GOOD HEALTH

B"H

By Zoya Davydov



I immigrated to United States in 1993 from Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Now I live in Cobble Hill area of Brooklyn with my husband Eric and my kids, Shlomo & Aron, in college and Emily who is a preK student at Mazel Day School. Before coming to the US, I graduated as a General Nurse with Honors & been half way through

Medical School studying to be a Cardiology Surgeon. I discovered my passion for medicine since my childhood. Here in the US, I graduated Hunter CUNY with a Biology degree & proceeded to do medical research at The Rockefeller University where I had the honor to work alongside Nobel Prize professors & doctors. Academic research continued to pharmaceutical research. While doing research for 12 years in traditional medicine I also discovered a parallel world of alternative medicine. Being a medical researcher, I started to "experiment" on myself & my family the power of nature, mind & body. After experiencing life changing positive results I decided to become a Holistic Health Coach & help as many people as possible establish a deeper understanding of food and lifestyle choices. I received my training from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition®. Based in New York City, Integrative Nutrition® is the largest nutrition school in the world. I feel so blessed that I found a pathway to bring my childhood passion to help people get healthier to my adult life reality.

Stay Healthy.

Zoya Davydova Honore

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### The road to good health is paved through a healthy intestine.

While it's true that our kids inherit some of our booboos, their lifestyle and nutrition play a major role in the strength of their immunity. Did you know that digestive and lymphatic systems carry 80% of that responsibility? Therefore, it is very important to keep their tummy healthy at its ultimate and concentrate our efforts on giving our kids the nutrition their body needs and cleansing and removing their body from toxins.

Our bodies are coded by the Creator to protect us from diseases and cure us while we are sick. It is very important to insure proper nutrition for our kids that will give their bodies the building blocks for strong bodies and fast recoveries from (G-d forbid) sicknesses.

While the intestine absorbs all the nutrients we eat, the lymphatic system works hard to clean up waste products while protecting us from infections such as viruses, bacteria and fungi as well as tumors. It runs along side of the circulatory system and it has no pump: fluid is moved passively during muscle contraction. That is why it's crucially important to keep our kids moving, to keep toxins flushing away from their systems.

Now, let's look at what is wrong with the current Western diet that our kids are watching & getting accustomed to:

- Wrong Foods - excessive fats, sugars, processed
- NOT enough: fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, berries, nuts, plant proteins
- Wrong Amounts - portions are often 3-4x the normal size
- Wrong Time - eating large meals at dinner, just before sleep, skipping breakfasts, rushing lunch, etc.

We as a society have lost contact with nature by consuming half prepared and processed foods that lacks nutrition, fiber and phytonutrients our kids need so much.

Our nature seasonally gives us what we are supposed to eat at that time of the year. Prepare meals from the whole foods that are in season. They cost less and taste much better. Did you know that bell pepper have 10 times more vitamin C than an orange? You might have, if you watched Ellie Krieger's show.

It's very important to limit the amount of sugar your child consumes. Sugar should come in its natural form from fruits and root veggies. Don't offer your kid a juice to drink. Instead make water available on the counter all day long, just like in the class room. While juices are better alternatives to junk sodas, they are still very high in sugar and lower in fiber & nutrients. Even though it is a natural sugar, it lacks the fiber needed to slow down its absorption & prevent blood sugar spikes. Fiber and many nutrients are stripped during juicing & most of the antioxidants get oxidized within minutes of juicing. It's always better to eat a whole fruit. It will provide lasting energy for hours vs. minutes with juices.

Another way to decrease sugar in your child's diet is to buy whole grain unsweetened cereals, plain organic yogurts and mix in a small amount of honey or any fruit jam that your child likes. This way you control how much sugar she/he consumes.

Decrease and ultimately eliminate white flour foods from your child's diet. I suggest the "crowding out" method, which means gradually substituting with whole grains, fresh veggies and fruits.





# Nutrition Tips

## ROAD TO GOOD HEALTH

By Zoya Davydov

**These are some suggestions I have when it comes to getting your child to eat veggies and fruits.**

- Hide veggies inside the foods your child doesn't mind eating or shape them into the forms your child is familiar. Examples: shred them into ground proteins when making burgers, meat balls, pasta sauces or nuggets, put them on the pizza, mix with organic dairy & eggs to make patties. Try using sweet potatoes and grated zucchinis to make Hanukah latkes instead of white potatoes. Make baked fries from beets, carrots and yams & serve with low sugar ketchup. Our kids will eat anything with ketchup. Don't be afraid to be creative.
- Get your child involved in cooking. Your child will be more excited to eat his or her creation.
- Don't make a big deal when your child does take a bite or eats something healthy (like cheering and clapping). It should be a normal thing to do. (Do not bribe your kid with a candy. "If you eat carrot stick, I will give you something sweet". Motivation should be logical: "If you eat carrot, your eyes will see much better." Do acknowledge your child's healthy choices saying "I see you made a healthy choice.")
- Serve new veggies along or next to the ones your child is familiar with & likes eating. It doesn't mean he or she will eat it from the first try, it's just a way to familiarize them & get them used to seeing it on the plate. Studies show that it takes over 28 tries for a child to take a bite of a new food. So the message is, don't give up.
- Eat plenty of fresh fruits & veggies yourself. Be a good example to your kid & reap a reward of better health.
- Go as Organic as you possibly can and decrease consumption of red meat to 1-2 times a week. You see, your child's body is busy getting rid of all the hormones and antibiotics it gets from the industrial meats instead of using that energy on building healthy body and strengthening its immunity for years to come. Fish, organic chicken and lots of different beans and grains would be great substitute.
- Limit consumption of dairy to 1-3 servings a day. Substitute or mix into regular cow milk some nut milk such as unsweetened almond, coconut or brown rice milk.
- To insure optimal levels of vitamin D in your child, make sure she/he gets adequate exposure to sunlight and Vitamin D rich foods like eggs, fish and nuts.

I also suggest supplementing with high quality multivitamins, pro and prebiotics, omega3 fish oils (EPA+DHA), greens and aloe juice.

Your general rule of thumb should be: if it is not whole, green, lean or colorful, DON'T EAT IT and most importantly, DON'T FEED YOUR CHILD WITH IT!

I know it is easier said than done, but any effort will pay off big time and your kids will thank you for it sometime in the near future of their long and healthy life. Stay healthy!

<http://zoya-davidov.healthcoach.integrativenutrition.com/>

**While we're at it, here's a poem by one of our Mazel Parents, IRENE GABO, about the Breakfast routine. Enjoy!**

*Breakfast is always a challenging meal,  
I feel like I'm constantly striking a deal,  
If the meal is at school, kids will eat anything,  
But at home, you must certainly learn how to sing.*

*Saturday morning is always a mess,  
I am constantly facing an Iron Chef test,  
Pancakes with berries or omelets with eyes,  
Salads with fruits or the homemade pies.*

*Their requests never end, I'll elaborate more,  
If there isn't a ketchup, I must run to the store.  
Existence of forks and spoons is forgotten,  
Laundry is near since all clothes will get rotten.*

*If we sit down at nine, we'll get up at eleven,  
And I'll be doing the dishes 'til quarter past seven,  
Half of the food will be left on their plates,  
But if I offer them candy, it's never too late.*

*Chances are high that one will throw up,  
Get a headache mid-meal, and will have to get up,  
So I say to you all "thank you G-d for the Diners"  
They are heaven on earth, when my temperature rises.*

*In the Diner, they'll eat corn flakes that at home they abhor,  
And devour a salad with dressing galore,  
Then the bill comes, and it's usually twenty, no more,  
And I say "what is breakfast at home ever for?"*

---

AND FOR LITERACY MONTH....

*To read a great book is a marvelous treat,  
I have it with me when I go to sleep,  
I wake in the dark, switch on a small light,  
And read in the quiet that's so deep in the night.*

*The stories of warriors fill me with fears,  
And tales of romance then move me to tears,  
I cringe when I read anything about horror,  
And bustle with pride when I read of great valour.*

*A coffee cup rests by the chair, so near  
And I quickly melt in the words that are dear,  
Garcia Marquez is forever inviting,  
While King and LaCarre keep the obvious hiding,*

*I wish that the stories would last, with no end,  
Continuously soaring to happier land,  
When book is completed I pick up another,  
And soon disappear to a world like no other.*



# Recipes

## KIDS' FAVORITES

B"H

By Anna Roberman

Since February is a literacy month in Mazel, a friend of mine, who is an early education teacher, suggested several kid-friendly and fun recipe ideas to promote literacy.  
~ Anna

### **Fruit and Vegetable Salad**

This can be made with a variety of fruits and vegetables, your choice, and what you have available in the refrigerator. However, if you have some time to prepare, it's great to make flash cards to introduce with each fruit/vegetable. Children can copy the letters onto paper while the parent is cutting up the food. When all ingredients are cut up, as the children throw in each item, encourage them to spell the name of each fruit/vegetable. Parents and children can also discuss each fruit/vegetable, the way it looks, the color, taste and texture.

Each salad can be seasoned as desired. After completion of the salad, parents can join their children in an activity of molding letters from play dough, and spelling out each ingredient in the salad. As another activity, children and parents can discuss the similarities and differences between the two salads made.

Some suggestions are:

#### **FRUIT SALAD:**

A for apple  
B for banana  
C for clementines  
G for grapes  
S for strawberry

#### **VEGETABLE SALAD:**

A for avocado  
C for cucumber  
L for tomato  
P for pepper  
R for radish

### **Cracker Messages**

#### **Ingredients:**

Peanut butter, jam, honey, nutella, cream cheese or cheese spread  
Crackers or small rice cakes  
Alphabet cereal

#### **Preparation:**

Spread a filling on the crackers

Children can write their names or short words on the crackers using the Alphabet cereal. Younger children can just have fun by randomly placing cereal letters, as the parents name them.

#### **Variation:**

**Make pancakes or waffles, and spell out words on them in chocolate chips or blueberries.**

### **A kid friendly recipe for Chicken Alphabet Soup**

(Courtesy of PBS Parents Kitchen Explorers)

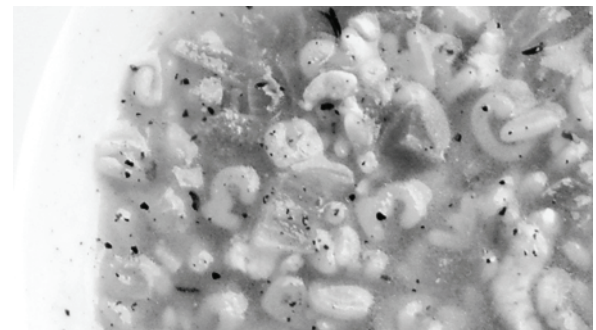
#### **Ingredients**

2 tablespoons oil  
1/2 medium yellow onion, finely chopped  
1 celery stalk, finely chopped  
1 carrot, peeled and finely chopped  
1 large clove garlic, finely minced  
1/2 teaspoon thyme  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt  
1/4 teaspoon ground pepper  
1 small boneless chicken breast filet, cut into tiny cubed pieces  
1-32 ounces box chicken broth  
1 bay leaf  
1/3 cup dried alphabet shaped pasta

#### **Preparation:**

In a large soup pot, heat the oil on medium flame. Add the onion, celery, carrot, garlic, thyme, salt, and pepper. Sauté for 5 minutes until the onions are soft. Add the chicken and cook. Pour the broth and bay leaf into the pot and bring it to boil.

Add the pasta and cook for 7-8 minutes until the pasta is cooked al dente. Season with additional salt and pepper if necessary. Discard the bay leaf.



When the children are eating, have them name the letters on their spoon, try to find target letters in the soup bowl and see if they can spell out simple words. The opportunities are endless!!!!

**FREE BOOKS FREE BOOKS FREE BOOKS**

**Register your kids to receive free books from**

<http://www.nycimaginationlibrary.org/>

<http://pjlibrary.org/>

Dear Parents, You are cordially invited and highly encouraged to attend this spectacular fundraising event for Mazel Day School on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7:30 @ OPM. Funds raised at this event will be used to help bridge the gap in the schools operational budget. We need everyone's support if we are to ensure the growth and continued success of our school. Please come out and bring a friend! Enjoy an evening of fun, entertainment, delicious food, drinks, good people and most importantly bring your spirit and support for the one and only, Mazel Day School. This is such an important cause.

Let's all come together and show how important Mazel is to us!

Please RSVP for this event by going on the Mazel website, clicking on *Support MDS* and then clicking *RSVP Benefit at OPM*. If you are unable to attend, you can make a contribution to this event on the same RSVP page. We look forward to seeing you on February 23<sup>rd</sup> at OPM!

~ Mazel Day School Board

B"H

JOIN US FOR  
A GREAT NIGHT OF  
ENTERTAINMENT TO

**SUPPORT  
FREE AND  
MAZEL DAY  
SCHOOL**

Couvert \$150 per person  
OPM  
3202 Emmons Ave, Brooklyn NY  
*Under strict Kosher supervision  
for the evening*

- Live Auction
- Split the Pot
- Open Bar
- Buffet Dinner & Sushi
- Valet Parking

**FEBRUARY  
23  
7:30 PM**

**THE DEFENDERS  
OF JEWISH VALUES  
AND TRADITIONS**



# Thank You!

## WE APPRECIATE IT...

B"H

### SPECIAL THANKS

A special note of appreciation to those parents who made gift donations to school or to their child's classroom over the past month...

**Shafir** family for donating a great sorting game and play dough number/letter stampers to Nursery class in honor of Sammy's birthday... **Lerner** family for donating a reading game to Kindergarten in honor of Jonathon's birthday... **Permyak** family for setting up a beautiful fish tank in the Second Grade classroom, including buying fish, tank equipment and decor... **Gabo** family for donating books to the Pre-K classroom library... **Khanukayeva** family for contributing new books to the PreNursery 2 classroom in honor of Boris's birthday... **Shapiro** family for giving a fun game to PreK in honor of Jason's birthday... **Gurevich** family for donating new books to the PreNursery 2 classroom in honor of Rebecca and Rachel's birthday... **George** family for donating a great puzzle and game to Kindergarten in honor of Ariella's birthday.

Whether you want to give a gift to your child's class in honor of his/her birthday or just because... check out your class's online wish list of carefully selected items that will be greatly appreciated and used by your child's teachers.

### CARTOON OF THE MONTH



"Okay, one book. But if I catch you skipping pages, we start over."

### MONTH IN PICTURES



TU  
B'SHVAT  
FRUIT  
FEST AT  
SCHOOL



In honor of Tu B'Shvat (the Jewish New Year for Trees), students held a school-wide Fruit Fest! We enjoyed tasting each of the 7 special species of fruits & grains that grow in Israel. From sweet dates to salty olives, juicy pomegranate seeds to gooey figs it was quite a feast for the palate.



### MAZEL DAY SCHOOL

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