

# THE LION'S ROAR

The Leffell School • May 2023



Beyond the Scoreboard;  
The Yeshiva League, Fantasy Football,  
and Antisemitism in Sports pages 6-7

Letter from the Editors

We are thrilled to be the Editors-in-Chief of The Lion’s Roar for another year, and have been publishing many articles both online and in print. We are also proud to have leadership on our paper composed of freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. We are excited to present the first issue of The Lion’s Roar under the 2023 editorial staff, and the second issue of the 2022-23 school year!

This edition, the double truck is composed of three articles all about sports at our school. Out of Their League, written by junior Robin Bosworth, is about why TLS does not participate in the Yeshiva League. Fantasy Football Forming Real Connections, written by sophomore Zack Sklar, explores how fantasy football creates and strengthens relationships that extend even beyond student’s time at TLS. Lastly, Scoring against Bigotry, written by sophomore Rafi Josselson, covers TLS sports teams discussing the issue of anti-semitism.

Other topics in this issue include an editorial on unhealthy grade checking, an opinion piece on why our school should have a library, a feature on faculty who have served in the military, and TLS’s own playlist on the back cover. We hope you enjoy reading throughout our issue which includes articles by many new staff writers! Please continue to regularly check our Facebook and Instagram (@tlroar) for new articles published on our website. We are so proud of all the hard work that the writers, editors, and design team have put into this issue. Enjoy!

Robin Bosworth and Lily Lebwohl

The Lion’s Roar is a student-run newspaper, published periodically throughout the year, as well as continuously online. Student editors make content decisions, and the newspaper is considered a forum written by and for the students. It is, however, reviewed by the administration prior to printing, and the administration reserves the right to withhold from publication any articles it deems inappropriate.

Suggestions and comments are accepted and encouraged, and they can be made anonymously. Signed Letters for the Editor are also encouraged. The Lion’s Roar reserves the right to edit letters for space or content in order to maintain our standards, and letters will not be considered for publication if deemed inappropriate or if unsigned.

Mission Statement

- We aim for transparency.
- We aim for objectivity.
- We aim for accuracy.
- We aim for timeliness.
- And most importantly, we aim for truth, while maintaining the utmost respect for our school.
- We promise to voice public opinion.
- We promise not to skew information to our own interests, and we promise to uphold the same high standards for every article we publish.
- We hope to establish our publication’s role as the voice for the student body, and we look forward to continuing the legacy TLR has left through the years.

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Afraid of BAD GRADES?

Should students have full access to their grades?

by The Lions Roar editorial staff

Most students at TLS have spent at least some of their time on the school website looking at their grades. While having full access to grades on the website can sometimes be helpful, it can also cause problems within our school community. Constantly checking grades on the website can become incredibly unhealthy and harmful to students.

A student’s constant checking of their grades can open the door to a competitive learning environment. When grades are available for students to freely view and are posted at the same time for everyone in the class, it becomes extremely tempting to compare those grades.

Students having full access to the gradebook can lower their self esteem. This can be harmful to students’ mental health and cause them to feel like everyone else is doing better in school than them.

Checking grades on the website can also cause students to feel anxious and stressed about when their teachers will upload new grades to the websites and how it will affect their current grade. Students may obsessively check the website to see their grades even if they know that none of their teachers have uploaded any new grades since they last checked.

On the other hand, having access to grades on the website can help students understand how they are doing in a class. This can also motivate students to try their best on assignments and tests, as they can see how it will affect their grade. If students have any missing assignments that are showing up as a zero in the gradebook, they can find that easily and can talk to their teacher and make up the assignment as soon as possible.

Something TLS can do to solve this issue is to show students their grades on the website, but for only a few hours every couple of weeks. This way, students are able to see how their recent assignments and tests have affected their grades, but are not constantly checking and comparing their grades to their friends. This will stop students from obsessively checking their grades on the website, while still allowing them to see what grades they have and how they can improve their work on future assignments and tests.



The Future is Now;

Should phone usage be allowed during the school day?

by The Lions Roar editorial staff

As the school day begins and students flood into the classroom, the sound of chatter is present, but so is the buzzing and ringing of phones. Over the past decade, phones have become a ubiquitous presence in all schools, but many schools have instituted “phone free policies.” In TLS’s own middle school, students are not permitted to take out their phones during the day.

However, across the building over in the high school, this rule is not in place for a good reason. Phones are an integral part of the modern person’s life, and therefore they should in fact be allowed to be used throughout the school day.

Phones can be utilized as an asset to the classroom in many educational aspects. For example, some teachers like to put QR codes on the smartboard so that students can easily access websites, and it is only possible to do this by taking a picture on one’s phone. Additionally, lessons become more interactive with polls and trivia games which can be accessed on phones. Students are

also able to take pictures of notes on the board, which they wouldn’t be able to with their phones away.

Not only can phones be beneficial during classes, but the breaks in between classes are when they are most needed. With many different lounging options present around the school during free periods such as lunch, it can be difficult to find one’s friends without sending them a text message or calling them. Even more so, with a schedule that is not the same for any given day of the week, phones offer an easy way to check what class is next without having to stop in the hallway to open up a computer.

Lastly, a phone-free policy in the high school would be difficult to control because many students may have personal situations going on where they want to be in touch with their families during the day. Policing this rule for some while not for others can be seen as very unfair which is why it is easiest to allow all students to have

their phones during the day.

However, some may argue that when students do not have access to their phones, it makes for a more focused school environment. On the other hand, worrying about not being able to tell a parent something, or not being able to find friends during breaks can create nervousness, stress and lead to unwanted distraction from academics.

As technology continues to evolve, our understanding of how best to utilize it in the classroom is constantly changing. The question is not whether phones belong in schools, but how we can use the to enhance the learning experience. The administration should continue to allow students to use their phones during the day.

With this privilege comes responsibility on the student’s part. Students have to be mindful and respectful of their classes and teachers, and only use their phones during the times designated to them.

Hitting the Books

The importance of having a school library

by Sophie Zuckerman

The Media Center; a place where many students spend time doing work, socializing with friends, and listening to presentations. About ten years ago the library at TLS was turned into what it is today; the Media Center. Today there is a corner of disorganized books that are rarely touched by students. I believe that a library is a vital part of a school, and our school is missing out by not having one.

Having a library at our school could encourage students to learn more. A library can provide a wide range of books, from different genres, and educational topics. Libraries provide a space for students to explore and discover different topics. If we had a library at our school, with these resources, students would be more motivated to read and learn.

Not only is reading educational, but it can also be for pleasure and unwinding. In our busy days at school, reading can be an amazing way to sit down and relax. Sitting in a library and reading allows you to forget about the stress of school, and just think about the interesting characters and stories of different books. Reading is something that can make our days slow down just a little bit, and having a library with different options to pick up and read would be such a great and useful amenity for students to have.

Most importantly, the students at our very own school feel that we

should have a library. In a recent survey, 94% of students that responded, said that they wished we had a library in addition to the current Media Center.

Some may say that a library is outdated in this day and age. Today, everything comes in online versions, and a library may not be of great use to many students. I believe that reading and looking at books through screens is not nearly the same as looking at a book. In addition, it could be argued that school is not the place to sit down to relax and read, but I believe that it is actually very important for there to be a space where students read, and have options available to read, whether it be after school during Kehilah, or during a free period during the day.

Obviously our school does not have unlimited space, so a full library may not be the most realistic idea. Nonetheless, we could improve and expand what is already available in the Media Center. The books that are at hand can be sorted, made sure that they are in good condition, and new books can be added that students are interested in.

I believe that our school should have a library, because reading is healthy, relaxing, educational, and the students of TLS have the desire for one. We could have TLS ask the community for books to be donated for both educational and leisure purposes.

opinions





# Principle for the Day

What would you do if you were principle for the day?

I would start school at 10:00 am because high schoolers need sleep.

I would implement focus breaks/ fun activities to relieve the stress of students.

I would cut off a few minutes from each class so that there would be a minimum of 5 minutes between classes.

I would just mess around and call people to my office and accuse them of things they didn't do just to see their reactions.

I would take the school on a trip to a baseball game.

I think I would add a sleep period to the schedule.

I would take the school on a trip to a program in the City where students can learn about different cultures.

A Pokémon day where students dress as the Pokemon that represents them.

## ChatGPT

The new AI on the block



by Spencer Kolodny

Write an essay about Thomas Jefferson in Spanish; code a card game on a web server in Java; make a virus in an isolated runtime environment. These are some of the wild requests that people are submitting to ChatGPT. Believe it or not, they are receiving coherent, if not extraordinary, answers back. So what is ChatGPT, and how can we use it properly to revolutionize our lives?

ChatGPT is an autoregressive language model: it uses the questions it receives from people to generate responses using algorithms and a vast amount of data. With this technology being so new and powerful, TLS has erred on the side of caution in regulating it, banning it on the WiFi soon after its release.

While TLS has banned ChatGPT on its WiFi network, that doesn't mean students are unable to use it in their free time or at home. Director of Technology Rachel Lebowhl, who implemented the school's decision to block ChatGPT, elaborated on how she uses the novel tool.

"ChatGPT was helpful when I was trying to remember something I read a long time ago, and I couldn't quite

place the exact words or source," Lebowhl said. "While ChatGPT has access to so many texts, it is so, so important to validate any source that ChatGPT provides, and never to assume that the source truly exists. Also, if I'm staring at a blank page, I can ask ChatGPT to get me started."

Though ChatGPT has extraordinary potential to be a helpful tool, as with any new technology, there is an equal possibility for it to have adverse effects or be used dishonestly. Lebowhl understands the ambiguousness of the situations in which ChatGPT can be honestly used, clear situations when it should not and the cautions that a user must take.

"When assessing what an individual knows, it certainly doesn't make any sense to use ChatGPT," Lebowhl said. "Also, remember that it doesn't necessarily reflect reality, so people might come away with a misperception that it is stating the truth. It's not."

Despite its alluring features and revolutionary capabilities, students should always be careful when using this software.

"Your written voice is very different from what you can articulate in class," high school History teacher Har-

ry Shontz said. "If there is certain vocabulary or syntax in your writing on a take home assessment that doesn't sound like you, it will send red flags. In addition, there are also websites being developed that will tell you the likelihood that a piece of writing is written by an algorithm."

Even though Shontz is against the idea of ChatGPT being used in the classroom, he is unsure whether ChatGPT will always remain off-limits.

"When I was in high school, almost 20 years ago, Wikipedia was considered an extremely unreliable source," Shontz said. "I don't think that ChatGPT will ever become acceptable for handing in written work, but I'm sure my teachers thought the same about Wikipedia."

Uncertainty about ChatGPT will always remain, and only time will uncover its place in the classroom. However, while ChatGPT remains out of the classroom for the time being, it is still being utilized by students outside of school, including freshman Caleb Zelman.

To read more, visit [throar.com](http://throar.com) or scan here:



## Pursuing Passion

Inspired alumni take on the world of engineering

by Naomi Kellman

Have you ever had the thought while sitting in class, "When am I ever going to need to know this information in my life?" For alumni of the Engineering and Entrepreneurship program, that statement could not be more accurate.

Aviva Hurvitz was a part of the initial E2 program as it was developing into what it is today. Hurvitz's first impression of the program was amazement at what she could create with simple engineering.

"I thought it was the coolest thing, getting to learn how to code LEDs, build circuits, and use Arduino," Hurvitz said. "After our first lab learning how to code simple blink sequences with the LEDs, I thought 'wow, I'm an engineer now.' That was my first exposure to anything specifically engineering."

However, for some, Engineering and Entrepreneurship was also very memorable for other reasons. For Amber Zedeck, Class of 2017, Engineering and Entrepreneurship was a unique experience because of the way it is taught.

"One of the first things we did in the Inc was use a manual to build Lego robots in teams, but we couldn't talk to each other," Zedeck said. "We were just thrown these pieces and none of us knew what we were doing. We had to just figure it out."

For some, it is only later into their adult years that they find what it is that sparks passion in them. With the guidance of the Engineering and Entrepreneurship program, Alex Gitnik, Class of 2022, discovered his interests quickly.

"Engineering and Entrepreneurship introduced me to my passion for 3D printing," Gitnik said. "I remember the first time I had heard about it in middle school. I was very confused because I didn't really understand how a printer could make 3D objects. The teachers in the program helped me discover what I liked about engineering, which for me was being able to take an idea, go to your computer, and then be able to physically hold it after having been just a thought in your head. That sort of engineering is what Engineering and Entrepreneurship really inspired in me."

Alumni also expressed the applicability of the material taught in Engineering and Entrepreneurship. Zedeck was surprised by how much of what she learned in high school resurfaced in college.

"They are putting all the steps of design thinking on the board, and I think 'I know this, next question,'" Zedeck said. "Engineering isn't all about facts and figures. It's also about creativity and design."

However, the applicability of Engineering and Entrepreneurship did not stop with the engineering and design. The program also taught alumni lifelong skills.

"For my senior thesis, I was on a team with four of the smartest engineers in my class, and none of them knew how to present," Hurvitz said. "It shocked me. Putting together a presentation, making it look nice, knowing how to present, was just not in their wheelhouse. They are seniors in college, and I learned this as a freshman in high school, it was crazy to me."

Even as alumni enter the workforce, they recognize the usefulness of the techniques they learned in Engineering and Entrepreneurship. As a product development engineer, Hurvitz now understands that the program taught real world skills, not just classroom skills.

"The one skill that I learned in Engineering and Entrepreneurship that I see in my current job is iteration, constantly doing things over and over again," Hurvitz said. "In high school, I thought 'why are we doing this? I like the idea how it is now. We don't need to do it again.' In the real world, there's so much iteration to get to the point of actually manufacturing something."

However, playing around with engineering tools in high school is a lot different than deciding to take an engineering major in college. Gitnik explains that for him, it was all about finding solutions to problems.

"The world has so many problems, little problems and big problems, and engineers help solve those problems," Gitnik said. "In my way of thinking, creating the future through innovation and problem-solving is really what engineering is all about, and that is what the Engineering and Entrepreneurship program has excelled over the years at inspiring in its students, including me." Zedeck made a career out of engineering because it was her way of giving back to the world.

"The reason I joined Engineering and Entrepreneurship was because I wanted to be an engineer," Zedeck said. "Making things is cool. But the more time I spent in Engineering and Entrepreneurship, and then in college, it was how can the things that I make, design, and build, help others, make someone else's life easier? Engineering to me is creating things that help the community and help everybody in different ways. I try to weave in things from high school, like Tikkun Olam. How can we use our education and our resources to help those around us?"



SCORING AGAINST BIGOTRY

TLS Sports Teams discuss the issue of anti-semitism after incidents

By Rafi Josselson  
Loud. Fun. Exciting. Competitive. These are just some of the words used to describe team sports at TLS. However, sometimes the prejudice of the outside world creeps into the court. While the reception of TLS sports teams tends to be positive, a recent antisemitic incident has led to conversations unrelated to the game.

According to Associate Head of School Harry Pell, the league that TLS plays in, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association, has been accommodating to TLS.

“Overall, we have had a terrific reception,” Pell said. “We should remember that every team that we are playing is making some level of accommodation for us. We go pretty late in the day, and most public schools are out by then. So schools are often waiting until later in the day to play us.”

Despite the great experience teams have had, antisemitic incidents still occasionally occur. One recent incident involved the TLS boys’ varsity basketball team and their counterparts at Bronxville High School.

“We had an incident against another team, Bronxville,” Director of Athletics Scott D’Ottavio said. “Someone on the Bronxville Boys Varsity team posted a game day picture of their team and played

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a song by Kanye West, who is known to be antisemitic.”

These types of incidents are difficult and upsetting for the athletes involved. Sophomore Russell Wechsler is on the basketball team and had a variety of thoughts on the incident.

“I was upset for multiple reasons,” Wechsler said. “I was upset because it was the first game of the season, so I was really excited. I was upset because obviously this type of behavior should not be tolerated and it is just frustrating to see. This is the first act of antisemitism in sports at Leffell that I have encountered.”

While antisemitic incidents are extremely rare, D’Ottavio still prepares athletes and coaches for what to do in this difficult situation.

“Whoever sees something or hears something is supposed to tell the coach right away,” D’Ottavio said. “At that point, the coach is to stop the game and talk to the officials and the other coach from the other team. It does not wait until the end of the game when the memory has faded and no one remembered what was said. You really want to stop it right away.”

Afterwards, TLS administrators and their counter-

parts at the other school get in touch. Pell explained how TLS tries to open a serious conversation between TLS players and their opponents.

“Usually, whenever there is an antisemitic incident we set up some sort of dialogue sometimes over a meal where we can meet with the students from the other school,” Pell said. “We teach them about who we are as Jews and who we are as human beings and how hurtful antisemitic language can be. We have had some really good outcomes where the opposing team has walked away having learned something and having greater respect for us as Jews and as human beings.”

After an incident, the TLS community reflects and discusses the incidents and the reconciliation process that occurred. It can be difficult to analyze what type of antisemitism occurred and why.

“There is no such thing as good antisemitism, but the people who know all about the Holocaust and think that it was a good thing are a totally different category of antisemites than high school kids who just don’t have a lot of exposure to Jews,” Pell said. “They do not have enough education yet...

man clearly remembers all of the conversations and debates he had with his friends about the league, and mentions that he misses being able to sit down next to his friends and have these talks.

“I remember it was a heavy topic of conversation almost every single lunch period,” Berman said. “There was always someone complaining about an unfair trade, a discussion about a rule that should be changed the following year, or even just a talk about the games last Sunday. It was honestly just a constant topic of discussion for my friends and me.” (Continued on Page 7)

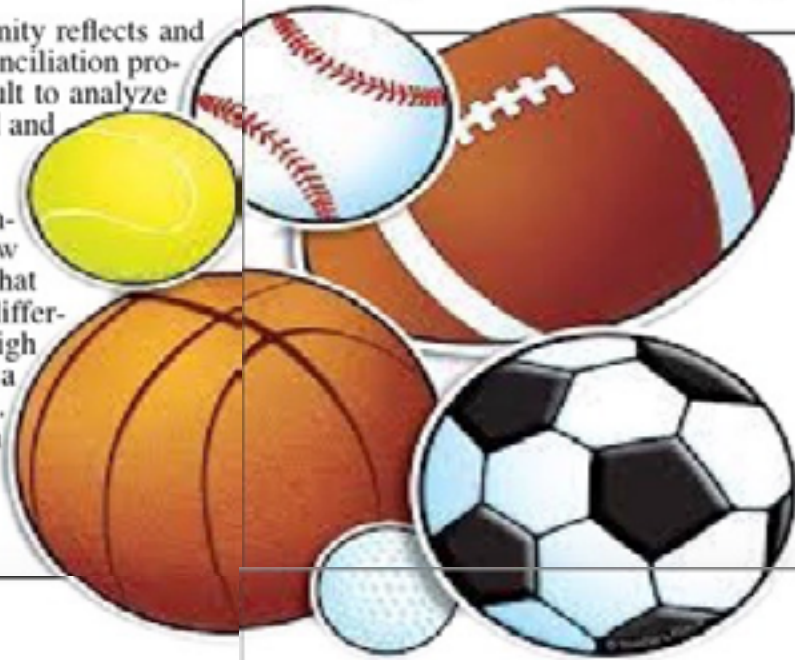


Berman also explains that even after leaving TLS, fantasy football has been one of the biggest connecting factors between him and his friends back in Hartsdale.

“Moving away has definitely been a struggle, but without fantasy football, I think that I would have lost a lot of the connections that I have made over my years at TLS,” Berman said. “To a certain extent, I still feel really connected to my friends back home and I think that it is mainly due to the fantasy league.”

Similarly, 2019 alumnus Jacob Zuckerman, explained that even though he is in Israel, and all of his high school friends are in different places, their fantasy league is still keeping them connected.

“It [fantasy football] definitely helps people keep



By Robin Bosworth  
At TLS, a significant number of students play sports throughout the different seasons. But what teams are they playing against?

When TLS’s high school was founded, an issue the administration took into consideration was what sports league to participate in. The two main options for TLS were the Yeshiva League, a group of Jewish Day Schools that play each other throughout all of New York and New Jersey, or the Public School League, a group of schools of similar sizes relatively close to one another. Both leagues offered a sports program in which TLS could participate, but were very different in terms of the teams and schools that played in them.

“We wanted a sports program to really show that this was a school of great quality and then if students came to the school, they would be able, even in its infancy, to experience the wonderful things that all high schools have to offer,” former Head of School Dr. Elliot Spiegel said. “I began to research what the Yeshiva League was like and what I found was that the coaching was not very good. Generally speaking, the coaches who were hired were not professionally trained, which called into question the quality of instruction and the quality of the kind of experience students would have.”

in touch with each other,” Zuckerman said. “We started our league in middle school, and we still have a fantasy football group chat that we still text in. Even as we get further and further away from each other, I think that it is one of the main things that keep us together. If I were to run into a high school friend in a few years, this would definitely be one of the things we would talk about.”

Not only does Zuckerman believe that fantasy football is one of the things that keeps him and his friends connected, he even thinks that the people he keeps in touch with most are the people from the league.

“Out of the people I still talk to from high school, most of them are from the fantasy league,” Zuckerman said. “It really helped that it was a league we started with our friend group, so this was an-

Out of their league

Why doesn’t TLS participate in the Yeshiva League?

When TLS was founded, the Yeshiva League did not include junior varsity teams, which was something the administration focused on when deciding what league to participate in. Additionally, when a team that plays in the public school league does particularly well, they have the opportunity to advance to sectional or even state games.

“There’s a sense of pride when something like that happens in a public school league, that we’ve beaten other schools similar in size to us,” High School Principal Eric Bassin said. “Also, sometimes, those post-season games might occur on Shabbat and being able to uphold the values of Shabbat while still competing in that play. And that does a lot to shape and impact an identity in addition to your athletic ability.”

Students at TLS have a variety of opinions regarding whether TLS should be a part of the Yeshiva or Public School league. Junior Tamar Lefkowitz believes TLS should play in the Yeshiva League.

“As much as I understand the convenience of being in a sports league with schools nearby, I do believe that Leffell should be in the Yeshiva League for sports,” Lefkowitz said. “I believe that it would give us a chance to get to know students from other Jewish day schools and assure that we wouldn’t receive any antisemitic comments from other teams.”

Boaz Siegel is a junior at SAR High School in Riverdale, NY, a school heavily involved in the Yeshiva League. Although the Yeshiva League has both positives and negatives, he believes it is overall beneficial for SAR to participate.

“I think it’s a good way to connect Modern Orthodox and Conservative schools together,” Siegel said. “If they live in very different areas and they might not cross paths otherwise, they get to meet each other through the sports games.”

Many students recognize both the benefits and det-

other thing we had in common that we could talk about.”

Inevitably, after high school, everyone goes in different directions, between gap years, college, or even the army. Gorenstein stated that he would love for the league to continue after high school, even when everyone is separated. To him, the distance is not an issue because he believes that fantasy football is able to keep these connections alive.

“I would love to keep my connections with my friends after high school, and I think fantasy football is probably the most effective way to do that,” Gorenstein said. “It creates such strong friendships, and I think leaving high school and going our separate ways, I think that it is a perfect way to stabilize the relationships I have made in high school.”

riments of playing in the Yeshiva League. While they may want to play against friends or peers from other Jewish Day Schools, the long commute required to get to many of the schools would pose a hardship for many.

“I think it’s cool to play against public schools because it makes us different,” junior Gabrielle Weingard said. “But I also kind of feel like we’re missing out because playing other Jewish schools would be a lot of fun and it would make us feel more included in the larger Jewish Day School community.”

According to Spiegel, one of the biggest hesitations the administration faced when deciding what league to be a part of was the threat of antisemitism. Over the years of participating in the Public School league, there have been a few instances of antisemitism from other schools, but TLS has always responded immediately to these situations.

“It was very important for the school from the very beginning to make a determination that we would not roll over to antisemitic comments,” Spiegel said. “We would not be quiet about it. We would stop the game, confront the situation and make sure that all of the students from both schools learned the lessons that were needed to be learned from that kind of situation.”

There are essentially two ways to go about dealing with antisemitism in general. One can either avoid the potential conflict all together, or try to use the negative experiences as learning opportunities for all parties. TLS chooses to deal with antisemitism with the latter approach, opting to participate in the Public School league despite the potential threat of antisemitic comments.

“When we go to a Jewish school like this we’re in a bit of a bubble,” Bassin said. “And we should think about opportunities to interact with the world outside that bubble. Athletics is a great opportunity and place to do that.”



by Ava Leibowitz

After working at Leffell for 19 years, Chair of High School Social Sciences Department Joseph Modica has decided to retire. Many students have enjoyed having Modica both as a teacher and as a role model in the school.

“I think he is a very pro-student kind of teacher, and consistently advocates on behalf of the students,” senior Ilan Brusso said. “It’s nice having someone who just cares about the students and will always speak their mind regarding that.”

Brusso participated in Mock Trial, for which Modica is the faculty advisor. Brusso discussed Modica’s presence after trial meetings had finished.

“I just thought he always knew what to say,” Brusso said. “He was so helpful at giving good and helpful feedback for being better.”

Along with Brusso, junior Zoe Alsfine has also enjoyed learning from Modica and his devotion to the school along with teaching students.

“He has inspired me to really look at myself with a confidence that I didn’t always have,” Alsfine said. “And so he’s really been such an amazing mentor to me.”

Alsfine discusses how Modica teaches in his classes. She mentions many things she has learned from Modica and the impact he has had on her.

“He teaches each person about what they need to know,” Alsfine said. “But he also teaches how it’s going to be relevant later in life.”

## COMBAT TO CLASSROOMS A GLIMPSE INTO TLS FACULTY WHO HAVE SERVED IN THE MILITARY

Teachers. Soldiers. We don’t always think about these two concepts together. Yet, they do have something in common: the desire to serve others.

There are teachers at TLS who have previously served in either the IDF or the US Military. Some for three years, while others for thirteen. No matter how long, their experiences have impacted them in one way or another.

HS Hebrew Teacher Yaniv Cohen was a medic in the IDF for three years and continued as an instructor for medics after he finished the army.

“Each week I met a new group of medics and did a week-long exercise with them,” Cohen said. “I was just 19 years old and each week being put with a different group made me very lonely. On top of that, everyone else was a lot older than me. They could be 23 years old all the way to 40 years old.”

However, HS Hebrew/Judaic Studies Teacher Ariel Menashe found the army strenuous for a different reason. Menashe served in special forces for four years and still serves as a reserve.

“During my regular service I found it really difficult being away from home and not being able to see my family and my friends as often as I wanted,” Menashe said. “Now, being a reserve, I find it difficult to think about leaving my wife and children,”

Although demanding at times, the challenges provided by serving in the army play an important factor in learning life skills.

“I learned how to connect with people quickly after being with a different group every week,” Cohen said. “I was so young and inexperienced compared to everyone else that I also had to learn how to get people to do what I needed them to.”

While Cohen learned how to interact with other people, Menashe learned how to prioritize his friends.

“Something I still use today is that when someone needs me, I’m there for them,” Menashe said. “And when someone’s asking for help, you help them. You put everything else aside, and you help them.”

The army isn’t just about hardships and learning moments. It is full of adventures that you can only experience there.

“One week, I arrived at the base and they told us our exercise was in the field, not inside the base,” Cohen said. “Not only that, but we didn’t have any

Modica has also enjoyed working at TLS, due to the supportive community and the other great factors of the school.

“Leffell has allowed me to do this kind of work in the way that I wanted to do it,” Modica said. “They’ve been enormously supportive of me for a very long time. I’m not Jewish, but I feel like I’m a part of the community. So they’ve embraced me, which is a great thing.”

Modica admires all of his students as well as the school and all the amazing supportive staff working in the school.

“I don’t have one proudest moment. My proudest moment though, in general, is seeing students go off to do wonderful things after they graduate,” Modica said.

Modica used to work in marketing but changed his career after falling out of love with it. He decided to switch to teaching and stayed in that career for 22 years, and spent 19 of them at Leffell.

“I thought I would have more impact on people than in the former job that I was in,” Modica said. “I wanted to do something good.”

Modica shares a word of advice for his students to keep in mind.

“Number one: get off your phones,” Modica said. “And two is to embrace what the school has to offer and don’t take it for granted. I think there’s too many days where people just seem to show up here. And there’s so much you can accomplish if you are motivated and want to get it done.”

equipment. Three days in, they told me that I was with the wrong group. So for three days I slept in a field with a team I wasn’t supposed to be with, and was miserable the whole time.”

Despite the serious atmosphere the army creates, it still produces many funny memories.

“One time, I was sitting in the jeep guarding my soldiers while they were navigating during their training when I got a call on the radio,” Menashe said. “You don’t use the radio unless there is a real problem, so I immediately knew something was up. My soldier told me that there was an elephant right in front of him. I told him it was impossible since we were in the middle of the Negev, but I still sent someone in. Turns out, the elephant was really just a big tree and my soldier was so exhausted after five days of not sleeping, he had started hallucinating. This story has become one of the inside jokes of my team and we even have shirts with elephants on it.”

While Cohen and Menashe served in the Israeli army, Associate Head of School Harry Pell served in the US Navy Reserve as a chaplain for thirteen years. When he was in rabbinical school at JTS, recruiters came from the military asking for chaplains so Jews could have access to a Rabbi while they were serving.

“In life in general I look for win-wins, things that are beneficial to multiple parties at the same time,” Pell said. “I already knew in rabbinical school that I was not going to be a pulpit rabbi. I wanted to work in a school. So I figured that while other rabbis were going to be getting ready to work extra hard on all the holidays, I was going to be getting ready to take a break. I realized that if I took this opportunity I would really be providing a service to both the Jews in the military and to my country.”

During his time serving, Pell had many realizations about how easy it is to take our freedom in America for granted.

“Every night that we go to bed as American citizens, we don’t worry about our house being attacked, and that is due in part to hundreds of thousands of US servicemen and women who are on aircraft carriers, other ships, and our bases around the world, keeping us safe,” Pell said. “It’s very easy to take for granted and forget that the freedoms we enjoy every day as Americans are essentially guaranteed for us by 18, 19, and 20 year olds, as well as older service members. These enlisted folks and officers can be away from their families for up to a year at a time, all to make sure that we are safe.”

Continues on page 9.

## An AP Mystery: Exploring the advanced placement system at TLS

by Ary Hammerman

On Wednesday, during eighth period, most TLS students attend an activity. They work on the yearbook, film for Scuttlebutt or play basketball in the gym. However, a select number of students don’t go to an activity. Instead, they attend AT calculus AB. Why do they need to meet during activities? And does TLS offer any other AP classes?

Sophomore Rafi Wall is a part of the AT calculus AB class. He thought it was the best choice for him to take the course, and he is okay with missing activities block.

“I wanted to be able to place out of certain math classes in college and possibly even get credits,” Wall said. “Also, I don’t mind that I miss activities block because I enjoy doing math.”

TLS offers an AT calculus AB class and an AT calculus BC class. Students can also take AP classes online through Virtual High School (VHS). High school math teacher Emily Sayles teaches the AP Calculus classes. She understands the struggle that students face when deciding to miss activities block, but she respects the dedication of her students to take her class.

“Having that extra day is really critical to get through the curriculum,” Sayles said.

One reason why TLS has decided not to offer AP courses is the strict adherence required to the prescribed curriculum. High School Principal Eric Bassin understands the philosophy behind the AP classes, but he wishes there was more flexibility within the curriculum.

“AP courses tend to be very broad as opposed to very deep,” Bassin said. “They tend to cover a ton of content and focus on a lot of memorization. Teachers are unable to use their own creativity or delve into particular topics. We are teaching someone else’s course when teaching an AP.”

Sayles agrees that the AP curriculum is much more regimented, but adds that it does help prepare students for college level courses.

“Based on my experience teaching at the college level, the AP curriculum leaves students, if they do well on the AP exam, more prepared for the subsequent college-level course,” Sayles said. “If a student does well on the AP exam, I would feel confident saying students could take calculus two when they go to college.”

Wall prefers this standardized curriculum because it helps him know that his education is more consistent with national standards.

## COMBAT TO CLASSROOMS CONT.

Pell not only learned about freedom of peace, but about freedom of religion. In America we are so lucky to be able to have easy access to kosher food, but in other places of the world where the military is based, does not have the same accessibility.

“I learned to not take things for granted,” said Pell. “In the civilian world, if I want to keep kosher, I can keep kosher. If I want to go to shul, I can go to shul. It’s not that easy for Jews in the military. There are a lot of things we take for granted, and then you travel to another place in the world where it’s not so easy to be Jewish and be observant, and you realize.”

There isn’t just limited access to Jewish items, it applies to Jewish people too.

“I prefer the national curriculums because I know that I am learning the exact same thing as people all over the country, and eventually we will take the same test,” Wall said. “With individualized education, I don’t know if we’re learning extra things that we don’t need to know, and I don’t know if there are things we’re not learning that we should be.”

Another issue that students and teachers of AP classes may face is the added workload in the courses. In order to meet the requirements and test deadline, AP teachers are often required to give more work than they would prefer. However, Sayles focuses on the content rather than the deadlines.

“Because I respect my colleagues and the importance of their classes, I wouldn’t give more coursework in an AP class than I would give students in another course,” Sayles said. “This year I joined a facebook group for AP calculus teachers and some educators are panicked at where they are in the curriculum because they are so concerned about getting an excessive amount of review time at the end of the year.”

“I pass through those posts because I’m way behind, but I’m more interested in helping my students to understand the material at a reasonable pace. I focus less on teaching to the test, but on thinking about a concept that they may not consider.”

Bassin agrees, and does not want to overload TLS students with an excessive amount of homework.

“Students take a significant course load - they must take a minimum of seven courses and some students take up to 10,” Bassin said. “An AP course is a very cumbersome load and it creates a lot of stress in a school that already has a significant load.”

The way that TLS has aimed to solve this problem is by taking away the requirement of students to take the AP exam at the end of the year, allowing students to focus more on the content they are being taught.

“We actually don’t offer any AP courses, we offer AT courses, advanced topics,” Bassin said. “These prepare students well to take the AP exam, but they aren’t obligated to do so.”

Overall, the AP system at TLS aims to give students the best education while reducing the stress of the courses as much as possible.

“We use the course structure we have to prepare students for college, which is part of the AP notion, but a lot of TLS classes are college level anyway,” Bassin said. “So we don’t need an AP course to ensure our students are well prepared for college.”

“Most people in the military aren’t chaplains, and most chaplains aren’t rabbis,” said Pell. “There were many times when I was serving in the Navy and I would encounter someone who had never met a rabbi before, and maybe had never even met a Jew before, but they were so incredibly respectful.”

In conclusion, TLS teachers who have been in the military have had their own unique experiences which can be learned from.

“Now I’ve been to Japan, Guantanamo Bay, I’ve been all over the world. It’s pretty amazing and I’m paid to do it,” Pell said.



# A Dual School

How TLS incorporates modernity and heritage in its curriculum

by Jakey Lebwohl

TLS teaches both secular subjects and Jewish ideals at the same time. Students learn world history along with Jewish history. They read English literature along with the Tanakh. The school has robust departments for each category, and as students move throughout the school day, it can be easy to focus on one subject at a time. But what happens when students get seemingly conflicting information or perspective during their secular and religious studies? How is it possible to think about them at the same time? Is it plausible that looking at these subjects from multiple lenses actually enhances our overall understanding?

A preliminary concern of the school is time. If students are learning more subjects, they’ll have less time in the school day to spend on each one. Science teacher Chris Cleaver has previously taught in non-Jewish schools, and he offers some insight into the way that the dual curriculum influences the school day and the workload.

“The challenge here is really how to do justice to the curriculum with the time constraints and just given the nature of the curriculum,” Cleaver said. “Given the number of subjects students have here, I’m trying not to kill them with homework.”

Another worry is that certain subjects will teach students certain perspectives which will make it more difficult for them to learn in other classes. Does it make it harder to teach about the origins of life in biology if the school also teaches about the genesis of the universe in Tanakh? Do science teachers modify their curricula in the view of the school’s Jewish identity? Fortunately, Cleaver believes that TLS does a great job of allowing the core secular curricula to be taught similarly and convincingly, and if anything, the added perspectives actually supplement the courses and make them richer.

“For the most part, I’m teaching it the same way,” Cleaver said. “For me, if evolution and teaching the subject to what the current scientific understanding is would have been an issue, I would not have accepted the job. I also think there’s an interesting opportunity here to talk about evolution. There’s an opportunity here to model discourse around potentially contentious issues, which I think could be helpful for our young people to see.”

Tanakh teacher Lori Abecassis believes that an advantage of TLS is that in its wide array of subjects to draw from, teachers have plenty of opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. Abecassis discusses her use of novel teaching methods in her classroom to give students the opportunity to personally connect with the scripture.

“Relevance and rigor: that’s what I’m looking for in my own teaching,” Abecassis said. “You guys are teenagers, so relevance includes music, philosophy, art, history, politics, and other literature. We always want to make text-to-text connections and text-to-world connections. I always love when kids say, ‘here’s something we learned in English class’ ... I think it’s so essential for students to see that none of our classes are standalone, so Tanakh can connect to history, it’ll connect to English [literature], I even remember bringing up math.”

One of the ideals that TLS tries to emphasize through its teaching is the notion that there are always multiple ways to look at things. Students learn through many different perspectives over the course of the day in order to come into their own and become better, more well-rounded individuals.

“In high school, I like to provide options of answers,” Abecassis said. “Because I think that’s true Torah study, right? There are multiple truths; the mepharshim teach us that with their different interpretations.”

Abecassis highlights that the fact that students study so many subjects from afar and very little is certain. This allows them a wider range of possibilities and opinions, and they’re able to understand many points of view without being completely devoted to a single one.

High school principal Eric Bassin has given considerable thought to the mission statement of TLS, as well as the way that the school handles a diversity of opinions and religious views.

“We’re not trying to tell people how to think or what to think,” Bassin said. “But we are raising questions to think about: How do we fit in society? That is, how do we, as Jewish teenagers, find our grounding, both in tradition and yet also in modernity? Those are questions to be thinking about instead of saying, ‘here’s the right way’ or ‘here’s the only way’.”

Bassin believes that the purpose of TLS is to guide students instead of forcing them; to introduce students to perspectives while giving them room to develop their own. In this way, TLS becomes a place where students can grow into functioning Jewish adults and become productive members of modern society.

“That’s the beauty of this school,” Bassin said. “It’s grounded in religious tradition, and yet adaptable to the modern world.”

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# Seeking Out Shabbos;

## Members of the TLS community discover a variety of ways to celebrate the traditional day of rest

by Rafi Josselson

At TLS, Friday afternoon not only begins the weekend but also the weekly celebration of Shabbat. Because TLS is a diverse Jewish school, every family celebrates and observes the occasion differently. Some families do not consider themselves observant, but still use the time for family activities. Others go to shul and find religious meaning in the day. Others may use the time to disconnect and reflect on the past week.

Junior Nathaniel Yellin, who considers himself Shomer Shabbat, spends time catching up with friends and family.

“Shabbat to me means spending time with my family and friends,” Yellin said. “I have memories of things like playing board games on Shabbat like Catan and chess. Also, [it is] a chance to eat dinner together with family to just talk about the week. I have four other siblings so it is a little hectic in my house and it is a time to talk together and be together.”

Senior Ella Ben-Yishai does not consider herself fully observant nor non-observant, and she claims to be in between.

“When I was little, it [Shabbat observance] was more religiously enforced but as I grew up I felt more distant,” Ben-Yishai said. “However, in the last couple of years I have felt more connected. Nowadays, I have dinner with my family, I try to spend time off my phone, and I read. I also draw even though some people don’t do that on Shabbat. I am more accustomed to doing my hobbies that stray away from technology.”

Meanwhile, Talmud teacher Seth Pertain views the day as an opportunity to fulfill the mitzvot of Shabbat and to catch up on certain hobbies he does not have time for during the week.

“I do things on Shabbat that I don’t have time to do during the rest of the week,” Pertain said. “I catch up on reading and things like that. During the week, I don’t have the time to sit down with a book or to read articles because I am running from place to place or grading. Shabbat gives me the opportunity to do all of these things.”

Yellin also noted how rest and relaxation are beneficial to his and his classmates’ social-emotional health.

“I think the chance to relax for a day is important for me and my classmates,” Yellin said. I think that for us teenagers, especially high school juniors with the work we have, it is nice to have a day to catch up or take time to relax. I think regrouping and rejuvenating is important. Some weeks are just really long. So sometimes it can be fun, just sleeping in or going to shul or getting to see kids you don’t get to see on a daily basis.”

Pertain agrees and also notes the important social opportunities that Shabbat provides.

“For those of the kids in our community who celebrate Shabbat, you often hear them talk about how they spend time in different people’s houses on Shabbat,” Pertain said. “Whether that is playing basketball with this friend or hanging out at that person’s house. That unplugged time with other human

beings as opposed to only communicating through a screen is invaluable; you learn skills that you wouldn’t otherwise get.”

TLS also provides opportunities for students to learn and discover more about Shabbat and their observance of it. Ben-Yishai notes how open and accepting it was.

“I really like how it’s not really forced,” Ben-Yishai said. “I remember the Shabbaton for the freshmen; I went to it once when I was a freshman and once for peer leadership. I remember how everyone got to choose what aspect was most important to them about Shabbat and I thought that was nice. There is no one specific idea of what Shabbat is.”

Pertain, like Ben-Yishai, thinks that the Shabbatonim are important for the communal values of TLS.

“I think that being together on Shabbat and experiencing it together is an important aspect,” Pertain said. “And even for kids who come from families who don’t observe, having the opportunity to see what it’s like works very well.”

However, there are some disagreements and issues with how the Shabbatonim function. Due to the diversity of observances within the school some students may feel awkward, left out or bored.

“I guess one of the challenges that you have with a school like Leffell where you have kids who come from more traditional backgrounds and from less traditional backgrounds is that they struggle sometimes to be in the same space and same time when it comes to the religious aspect of Judaism,” Pertain said. “Having kids who are unfamiliar with the traditions of Shabbat going on a Shabbaton for them feels daunting and there has to be some type of way to mitigate that. On the flip side, if you come from a family that celebrates Shabbat in a traditional way, being surrounded by people who are counting down the minutes until Shabbat is over is not particularly an enjoyable way of spending Shabbat.”

Ben-Yishai also mentioned the various opinions that people hold about Shabbatonim.

“I think some people enjoyed them and some people didn’t necessarily,” Ben-Yishai said. “I really like how we are not allowed to use our phones because then we get to spend more time with everyone else instead of having to worry about social media or whatever. I just don’t like how it is praying 90% of the time and the other 10% of the time is activities.”

Shabbat can be a difficult and complicated subject with various personal ways to practice observance. It is undoubtedly clear that Shabbat is chiefly a communal holiday, not just for members of the TLS community but also for individual synagogue communities and families.

“Shabbat can be in solitude,” Pertain said. “Shabbat can be in a community. But for Shabbat that is practiced in a community, it can be transformative.”

אבגדהוזחטיכלמנסעפצקשרשת



# Leffell's Playlist

by Jess Hochberg

## Shavruach

Sweet Victory - Spongebob  
"It's ours for the fight  
Sweet, sweet, sweet victory, yeah  
And the one who's last to fall  
The winner takes all"

The annual school-wide activity, Shavruach, is a competition between four randomly selected student teams. The most recent Shavruach showcased the theme "Spongebob" featuring mascots Spongebob, Squidward, Sandy, and Mr. Krabs. The teams compete in different challenges throughout the week, varying from a scavenger hunt to a relay race. This friendly rivalry is a chance for cross grade interaction, and an enjoyable break from the regular school day. At the end of Shavruach week, the points are totaled up and the winning team gets rewarded.

## Field Trips & Shabbatons

A Whole New World - Aladdin  
"A whole new world, a new fantastic point of view"

The school days at Leffell are long and full of learning, and sometimes faculty feels it may be nice for a break. Some students' classes also may be limited to a certain selection of classmates, lacking the chance to interact with everyone. A solution proposed to these issues are field trips and the annual Shabbatons.

Field trips give a chance for students to have a learning experience outside of school. A common choice is an informational museum. Aside from that, there is also a chance to have some fun. This year different grades went ice skating, bowling, and to a trampoline park!

The Shabbatons are a yearly occurrence for the freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. They are weekend-long events that allow for classmates to expand their social group and get closer. It is a different way to interact with your classmates other than in school!

## Ending Senior Year

Rivers and Roads - The Head And The Heart  
"A year from now, we'll all be gone, all our friends will move away. And they're goin' to better places"

As the high school experience comes to an end, the seniors' journey after graduation is just beginning. Many go to college, join the Israeli Defense Force, or take gap years. No matter what they do, life after high school is an opportunity for a fresh start. Relating to the lyrics, a year from now everyone will be in a different position than now, and it may not be together. Although it's upsetting, the seniors know they will remain close and that it's time for a new chapter.