

THE LION'S ROAR

The Leffell School ▪ November 2023



Connected by Curriculum:
A textbook-based alumni spotlight pages 6-7

Letter from the Editors

We are so excited to continue being the Editors-in-Chief of The Lion's Roar for a third year and look forward to publishing many articles both online and in print. We are proud to have a staff composed of all four grades in the high school. We are thrilled to present the first issue of The Lion's Roar for the 2023-2024 school year.

This edition is dedicated to those serving in the IDF, and features an article written by junior Ari Mayblum about what TLS has done in response to the war in Israel. We are incredibly proud of our community and the strength they have shown over the past month. Even through this difficult time, we want to continue showcasing the amazing work of our writers and graphic team both on the subject of Israel and other occurrences in our school.

The double truck article was written by senior Lily Lebwohl and spotlights current alumni chosen based on the same physics textbook they all used. Other article topics in this issue include the many new faculty members in the building, how Dr. Kay writes his speeches, and an examination on why TLS rabbis became rabbis. We hope you enjoy reading throughout our issue and playing the connections! 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!

Sincerely,

Robin Bosworth and Lily Lebwohl

Editorial Policy

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.

Note on Current Events

The staff of The Lions Roar would like to note our ongoing support for Israel, we are thinking of those struggling during this time, and fighting for peace in Israel.

Connections Answers:

Things to do with the term 'vine': pumpkin, grape, TikTok, tree
 Wizard of Oz terms: scarecrow, lion, basket, munchkin
 Things to do with the term 'dunk': donut, basketball, milk, water
 Common costumes: witch, superhero, cheerleader, clown

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Beyond Busy Work

What should we do about homework?

by Jakey Lebwohl

We all have limited time to do the things that we enjoy. Many students spend a large portion of the little time they have on homework. Being forced to spend precious time on work that students don't connect with can be extremely frustrating. If students only do the homework begrudgingly, the educational effect that it's meant to have is greatly diminished. So why does homework often turn into a point of conflict between the student and the teacher, and what can TLS do to fix it?

Homework has its benefits: it propels the course forward, it provides students ways to reinforce their learning by themselves, and it allows scarce class time to be used valuably. However, in some circumstances, the interests of the teacher and the student are misaligned. The teacher's goal is to educate the student, help them understand the material and prepare them for future assessments and courses. In contrast, the student's goal may simply be to finish the present homework assignment. If this happens, the student might move through the homework as quickly as possible and forfeit many of the opportunities to understand the material that the assignment possesses.

More than any other type of assignment, I know that I personally dislike busywork. Time is scarce, and it can be frustrating to devote it to work without a clear purpose. Ultimately, every homework assignment is delegated with specific intention, but when the student and teacher are misaligned, it's hard to see the goal. Some-

one with eyes set on a good grade on the assignment will have so much more difficulty understanding why they're doing the assignment in the first place. Someone who doesn't understand why they're doing the assignment in the first place will inevitably be unable to glean all of the mastery, appreciation, or proficiency that the assignment is meant to impart.

How should this problem be approached? Homework needs to be constructed in such a way that for students to finish an assignment, they must fulfill the educational goal that the teacher had in assigning it. There are many types of homework assignments with different goals. For an assignment that aims to help students achieve a high level of proficiency in a certain skill, such as a list of similar math problems or a Hebrew grammar worksheet, a simple, drill-based sheet might suffice. If the students honestly and thoroughly complete the homework, they will improve their proficiency. On the other hand, if a teacher wants the students to read certain passages or sources, internalize the themes and messages, and relate it to material learned in class, a different type of assignment might be necessary. In that situation, the teacher could give students an essential question(s) or idea(s) to think about, have them write down notes and thoughts, and instruct them to be prepared to discuss or be tested on the material in the next class.

Another possible avenue to explore is for some class-

To Ban or Not to Ban; ChatGPT is here to stay

by Kate Glick

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, the integration of technology has undoubtedly brought about significant changes, many of them positive. However, one technological innovation that warrants a closer look in the context of high school education is ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer), a sophisticated AI language model developed by OpenAI.

The paragraph above is what is generated when I enter, "Write an opinion article about why ChatGPT is bad for high school students" into A.I.

When school began this year, I wasn't expecting to hear any new rules about using open AI. Since the development of ChatGPT, most students at TLS, including myself, assumed that using Chat GPT to

write essays or complete homework was not permitted. The first mention of ChatGPT usage was in my English class last year. My teacher warned the class against using it, but in my mind, it was an obvious breach of our academic principles. While last year it was a casual or passing remark by a teacher or two, this year, ChatGPT and open AI are clearly on teachers' minds. During the first few days of school, as we reviewed our class syllabuses and code of conduct, there were new regulations about using OpenAI. Leffell seems to be among the several school districts that are banning OpenAI. Should it be banned? Honestly, I'm not so sure.

In this world filled with rapidly advancing technology, I believe it is crucial that we don't let AI stop us from developing critical thinking skills and the ability to think creatively. While it is easy to simply enter your essay prompt into ChatGPT and let the computer do the work, it robs us of thinking independently and producing something unique. As students, it is necessary to work hard to feel proud of ourselves. Self-reliance is a key quality that teenagers need to develop.

Another important aspect of doing one's own work is forming relationships with teachers and peers. If a student is struggling with an assignment and reaches out to a teacher, or attends the writing help center, they give themselves the opportunity to build meaningful

connections and potentially improve their skills. Studies have shown that positive student-teacher relationships can increase motivation and engagement in classrooms. However, ChatGPT isn't going to magically disappear. While it still has many faults and errors, it's only going to improve, ultimately becoming a fixture in our society. So is there truly any use in banning it?

Perhaps both teachers and students should come together to figure out ways to adjust to these tools and use them productively for our own growth. In fact, not using ChatGPT could result in graduating into a world full of generative A.I. programs without any comfort using them. I believe in some classes, getting some hands-on experience with the guidance of our teachers in using ChatGPT correctly, can be beneficial for our future. This rationale has already been introduced in our school's Engineering and Entrepreneurship class (E2), where ChatGPT is allowed for coding assignments, as long as it is cited as a resource. I think this a great use of Open AI. For example, I could use ChatGPT to fact-check my code and also to learn new methods.

We should be cautious against substituting A.I. for our own work because it can have long-term effects on our creativity and self-esteem. However, I believe that there is a proper method to integrate A.I. to better our education. We should use A.I. with caution, supervision, and our own intelligence.

Is homework an inherently bad thing? Not at all, but it takes a lot of thought and creativity to use it in a way that maximizes its value and minimizes its downsides. There is great benefit in open-ended homework, which makes students focus less on the goal of finishing it and more on the content itself. Ultimately, it is the student's choice to treat it as an obligation or an opportunity, but the same could be said about all of high school. It's up to us, students and teachers alike, to make the most of it.



Our Grades are too High Critiquing and comparing the American grading system

by Anonymous
Imagine studying as hard as you possibly could for a big exam. You get a good night’s sleep, eat a full breakfast, and come to the test more prepared than you ever have been before. Everything goes well, and you come away from the exam energized and confident. And yet, a week later, you get your grade back, and it’s a 72. How would you feel?

If you go to TLS, or most other schools in America, you would probably feel dejected. That’s because our grading system limits top results to scores only in the 90s.

This isn’t the way it works in the rest of the world, though. In many colleges in the United Kingdom, a student can achieve a first-class honors degree with grades as low as a 70. Even in the United States, sometimes scoring a 67 on an AP test can be enough for a “5”, the highest . In other words, the 72 you got on your big exam would be a proud accomplishment in these other systems.

What accounts for this enormous discrepancy in scales? It’s not that these other tests are simply easier: AP exams are notoriously difficult, despite the seemingly low requirements for an impressive score. The real difference is the purpose that these assessments are supposed to serve. Comparing the British grading system to the norms in place at TLS reveals opportunities for learning to be more motivating, more creative, and more expansive.

In the British educational system, tests are administered as a way to estimate the percent of the material that a student has mastered, to allow students to gauge their own understanding, and to identify exceptional students. Education is seen as a privilege, and it is up to the most diligent, talented students to differentiate themselves from the rest, but at the same time, it is possible to demonstrate sufficient mastery without a perfect or near-perfect score.

By contrast, the goal of the American grading system is to ensure that every passing student knows an essential amount of material. The system instead searches for the weaker areas within each student, complete mastery is the expectation. For example, if you don’t get a perfect score on a test at TLS, the chances are that you will immediately look through your test to see what you got wrong.

In particular, TLS is heavily focused on the emotional and academic well-being of each student. It is imperative that every student through the material and has high grades to show for their effort. Grades simply serve as motivation for each student to learn what is required.

However, there are problems with this way of assessment. At our school, high grades are almost expected, and because of this, there is pressure on teachers to structure their assignments in ways that allow students to earn the 93s and 97s required for the highest grades. With this pressure, grades completely lose their meaning. Having a 95 in a class does not mean that you understand 95% of the material, or that your work in the class is 95% perfect. In fact, there is no meaning to this number beyond our school because it is more of a reflection of the way we grade than it is of you as a student.

Another problem with the system at TLS is that it is difficult for conscientious students to go above and beyond in a way that is reflected on their transcript. If a large percentage of students are getting the highest scores possible, there is no way to stand out. A broader grading system would solve all of those problems. Comprehensive tests like AP tests are designed to give an actual estimate of the percentage of covered material that the student knows - a score on that test actually means something tangible. Systems that give breathing room and allow students to get 10 or 20 points off help students avoid the word “perfection.”

Right now, we operate in a system where the extent of our learning is predetermined. Students ask teachers, “Do we need to know ___?” because there is a set amount of material which is required and nothing else is expected. Our setup incentivizes students to avoid learning anything that isn’t part of the test. Think about how that makes a student feel about learning: they see it as a to-do list, a catalog of content which must be learned for a test and nothing more.

Now imagine a grading system which allows students to learn without demanding perfection from them. The strategy changes from learning only what is necessary to learning as much on a topic as possible. Even though you can achieve impressive letter grades with 60s or 70s, the sky’s the limit, and dedicated students can continue to learn beyond the bare minimum and be rewarded for it.

Doesn’t this new system sound more in-line with the values of our school? At TLS, we want to foster a love of learning and a constant curiosity, not a love of 100s and a constant wondering whether this is going to be on the test. It’s time to abandon our outdated expectations and adopt a system which focuses more on the understanding of the individual and the ability to improve.

Leaving behind lateness: Evaluating the tardiness policy at TLS

by Ary Hammerman
You wake up on time, get in your car as usual, and go on your way to school. Even though you left at the same time as usual, you somehow arrive at school 10 minutes late. This is due to extremely unpredictable traffic. TLS policy states that you receive an unexcused late on your record. After 5 lates, you get detention. Then, you leave at the same time the next day, and get to school ten minutes early. This policy, due to the unpredictability of traffic and other factors, must be revoked. This will make the school environment less harsh, show empathy to students’ individual circumstances, and consider external factors of lateness.

First, by voiding this policy, TLS will lessen a hostile environment associated with this policy. While it’s essential to encourage punctuality, such a punitive to lateness approach can lead to anxiety and resentment among students. The fear of detention might discourage students from attending school altogether, causing them to miss valuable instructional time, which is counterproductive to the school’s primary mission: education.

Another concern with this policy is its one-size-fits-all approach. It fails to consider the individual circumstances that might lead to tardiness. Students face a variety of challenges in their lives, from transportation issues to family emergencies. Punishing students without taking these factors into account is unjust and does not foster a compassionate and understanding school culture.

Lastly, this policy fails to consider the unpredictability of the traffic patterns outside TLS. No matter how early you leave, it can still sometimes be impossible to get to school on time. Of course students should not be late every day, but a more compassionate approach should be taken when students are late as a result of traffic. In those instances, teachers are often late as well, so students should not be punished for the same actions.

One might argue that strict policies are necessary to maintain discipline and punctuality among students. However, this argument overlooks the fact that excessive punishment can often be counterproductive. In fact, positive reinforcement rather than harsh punishment creates a more positive school environment. Punishment may deter some students temporarily, but it does not address the underlying issues and can create a negative school environment.

In conclusion, TLS’s policy of assigning after-school detention for accumulating five tardies in a quarter, while well-intentioned, is flawed. It can lead to unintended consequences, fails to consider individual circumstances, and does not effectively address the external causes of tardiness. To foster a more equitable and supportive school environment, TLS should reconsider this policy and explore alternative methods that encourage punctuality while also taking into account the diverse needs and challenges of its students. This could include open discussion about the reasons for lateness, incentives to arrive at school on time, and measures to mitigate traffic. It’s time to shift the focus from punitive measures to policies which benefit the overall student body.

The number of dimples on a golf ball, the year the brainless jellyfish was discovered, the distance from St. Louis, Missouri to Nendaz, Switzerland: How does Dr. Kay write his speeches?

by Kyra Esrig
A universal Leffell student experience is listening to Dr. Kay’s speeches on the first day of school, special events throughout the year, and then eventually one day on graduation. Have you ever wondered how he comes up with his speeches? How are they so creative and engaging every time? Senior Kyra Esrig sat down with the man himself to find out.

Q: First of all, the hallmark of your speeches is that you start off with a number. Then, you talk about all of these things that are associated with the number, and then you connect it back to something that’s relevant. How did you come up with the idea to include that sort of process in your speeches? And were you inspired by anyone?

MK: I think that there is certainly a format for the first day of school speeches. I think graduation speeches are different. To be honest, I don’t remember why. I don’t remember being inspired by any specific person. I wish I had a great story about it. I should invent one, but it would be fictitious, so I don’t have such a thing.

Q: How do you choose a number? What’s your process for coming up with a number to focus on?

MK: I think it’s typically through reverse engineering. Start with something that’s interesting and that’s going to grab people’s attention. But I actually don’t write the speeches down, so sadly I don’t have a record of them, and I don’t remember all the details. So one year, I remember we talked about the fact that there are 304,805 letters in the Torah. That’s an interesting fact. So, let’s start with that. And then you try to relate that to 304,805, so I think it’s like, hairs per square inch on a river otter, for example. And then you can try to relate that to something that’s relevant to people’s lives in school, whether it be minutes, hours, or days, or whatever. So usually, when you want to get to something meaningful, you don’t just want to give a speech about random stuff. But I find that most interesting facts can one way or another somehow relate to something that is meaningful to people. But it starts with the hook. Usually, it doesn’t start with the deep substance.

Q: Do you plan out the speech that you’re going to say ahead of time? Do you practice before giving the speech?

MK: It depends a little bit on what type of speech we’re talking about. A graduation speech, for example, is about 12 minutes, so I have notes for that, because I also have slides, and you have an audience of hundreds of people. I won’t have the full text written out, but I’ll work from notes. However, on the first day of school, I don’t have notes for that. Or when I speak at back-to-school night I don’t typically have notes for that. I think different people have different skills, and I think if someone is able to speak in a sort of smooth and engaging way without notes, I think it often helps them to connect better with the audience. But sadly, I think the outcome of that is that people sometimes ask me for a copy of my graduation speech, and I would have to write it after the fact. But speeches are not meant to be read, they are meant to be heard. And so I don’t typically have a record. If you asked me what I said on the first day of school two years ago, I would probably have no idea. If somebody remembered and reminded me I’d be like, oh, yeah, that rings a bell.

Q: Can you expand upon your different processes for writing speech for different events?

MK: They are different lengths, different audiences, and for different purposes. In a gym on the first day of school, you cannot keep people’s attention for more

than 90 seconds. It’s impossible because the acoustics aren’t good. Whereas at a lower school assembly, I’ll give the d’var Torah, but nobody’s there to see me, they are there to see their kids. So you give a d’var Torah, it’s a minute or two minutes or something like that, that’s easier to remember. But I mean, at an eighth-grade Siyum, or a fifth-grade Moving-Up Ceremony, it’s a little bit different. There, it’s one of the bigger addresses, so you want to prepare more carefully.

Q: Do you use a website to find things associated with the number? How do you find the things that are associated with the number?

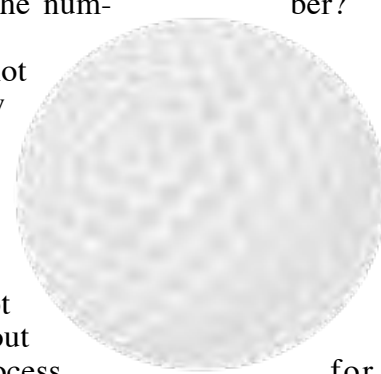
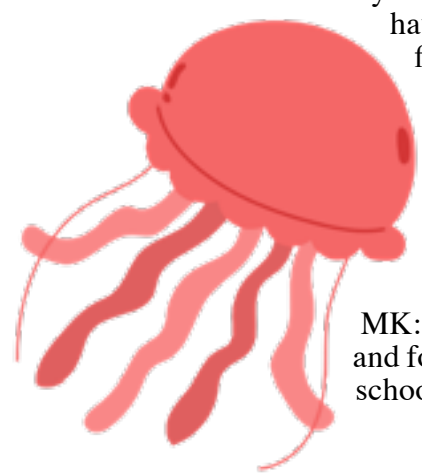
MK: I definitely use the Internet. There is not one specific website. You have to know how to know what you’re looking for. For example, if you ever use a five-digit number, and you Google that, you’re only going to get zip codes, so that’s not going to work. You have to sort of know what types of websites to look at and what kind of search terms. But there’s not one single thing that I do. This year, it was about that town in Switzerland. What was the process for that? I started out by thinking about what’s interesting t h i s year. It’s interesting that we have a double Torah portion: Nitzavim Vayelech . That only happens when Rosh Hashanah falls on a Thursday or Saturday. So that’s an interesting fact, we can give a whole speech about that. Then I was like, you know, it’s interesting, because it’s a double portion, but they’re very short. I’m wondering how short they are, how many words are in this? So you get a number of words. And you’re like, this is an interesting number, what can you do with this number? That led me to this number that happens to be the exact distance from this place to this other place, but I had never heard of this other place, so I started doing research on the other place. I’m reading the census data, and there’s only one Jewish person who lives there. We can work with that. It’s like, step by step by step trying to link together things. I didn’t have to know anything about that town to begin with. I knew about the Torah portion. That’s where it started, and then it sort of led me down a path of other facts that I thought might be interesting. So what do we learn from that? Listen to our curiosity, that’s relevant to school. Here, it was sort of unsatisfied curiosity. Even now, I don’t know anything about that one Jewish person who lived in whatever that town was called, which I don’t remember. That’s kind of the process. So, yes, I used the internet to get me from the length of the Torah portion to this town in Switzerland, but it was many different sites.

Q: How long does that normally take for you to do? How long does it normally take for you to come up with a concept, and then until the final draft?

MK: Typically, less than 15 minutes. I think that different people have different things in life that they can do quickly. Coming up with ideas of things to say, that comes to me more easily than other things.

Q: What advice would you give to someone who wants to be a better public speaker?

MK: Two things. Substance and Style. Don’t force yourself to memorize something and sound like a robot where you’re really like you’re closing your eyes, and you’re focusing on remembering. If you need notes, do what’s comfortable for you. If you have the ability to make eye contact with people, look at them, and speak like you’re having a conversation rather than like you’re reading a prepared text. If it requires practice, then practice.



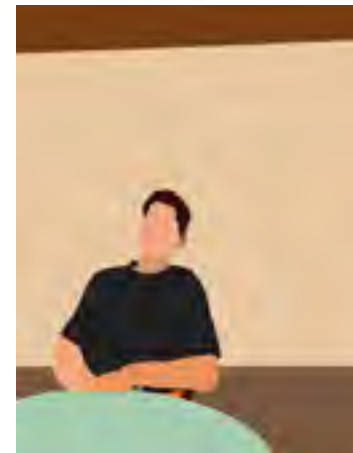
Connected by Curriculum: Spotlighting alumni who all shared the same physics textbook

by Lily Lebwhol



Noah Holtzer '16

Life after Schechter Westchester: I studied business at the University of Maryland and then worked in New York at a real estate company for two years. I have been traveling around the world for about a year and a half including Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Morocco. Currently I live in Melbourne, Australia.



Fondest memory from high school: Shabbatonim, especially the one with the soccer team to upstate New York when there was a game on Shabbat.

Funniest memory of high school: Dr. Kay's dress up outfits and Dr. Aviv's bow ties with stories attached to them.

Memories from physics?: Our physics teacher Sarah Wigodsky would let us come in with absurd questions about the most obscure topics ranging from theories about time and relativity to black holes." She explained all of them so simply and clearly that it was such a breath of fresh air because physics can be a daunting subject.

Zab Shavrck '18



Life after Schechter Westchester: I went to Parsons School of Design in Manhattan and I studied communication design, printmaking, and illustration. I started an art and clothing exchange project called Give and Take for my senior thesis, and after I graduated I continued it as I was freelancing in graphic design and illustration. I did a lot of work for a Japanese restaurant based in Brooklyn called Okonomi. I helped them open a coffee shop as an employee, and also did a lot of their branding, window design, and menu. I also worked at a print shop in DUMBO called Lucky Risograph that uses ink made out of the shells of rice and soy. Recently, I moved to Beaverton, Oregon and I am helping my partner open up a bed and breakfast called Sosta House, by building up the brand, designing the website, and renovating the house.

Fondest memory from high school: For my project in senior year, I made a huge mural that was hung up in one of the staircases and watching that being put up was very meaningful.

Also just going around school to hangout with teachers and Mr. Davidson, my dean.

Funniest memory of high school: I did a skit for Scuttlebutt once where I went around and scared people with cymbals that were from a band who performed for us from Australia. I even went into Mr. Bassin's office and crashed the cymbals in his face which got him mad at me. The tall blonde teacher who taught psych, Mr. Shontz, had us do a project about sensory experiences where I fed people grapefruit while they smelled vinegar and they would spit up in the middle of the lounge.

Memories from physics?: My physics teacher Sarah Wigodsky gave an assignment to take a photo of anything and explain it. I decided I wanted to set my hand on fire and so we safely figured out how to do it by coating my hand in soap and butane and I set my hand on fire.

Emma Fine '20

Life after Leffell (Switch from Schechter to Leffell): I am currently a senior at the University of Maryland studying psychology. I run a psychology research lab and work at a mental health hotline.



Fondest memory from high school: Experiencing Poland with my class really brought us together. By the end of Israel, even though we were kicked out because of COVID, we were very tight knit and it was an amazing experience.

Funniest memory of high school: There were so many days where we didn't have classes and we called it Camp Schechter. One time for Purim I dressed up as Dwight Schrute from The Office.

Kevin Nyman '17

Life after Schechter Westchester: I was a business major at the University of Wisconsin focusing in real estate and management/ entrepreneurship. Before 2020, I got an internship with Ford Motor Company in their corporate development and marketing sales department. I then got a full time offer from them, and I've been working there ever since.

Fondest memory from high school: Lifelong friends that live in a million different places. The student-faculty connection is also really great which is why Rabbi Pell is officiating my brother's wedding in a couple of months.

Funniest memory of high school: Getting super sick in Israel on Lev v'Nefesh was very funny because of the number of places they had me go.

Memories from physics?: I had Ms Wigodsky who was the physics teacher at the time. I was not a science student at all, but I had a really good relationship with her and she wrote a college recommendation for me.



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Kevin Nyman	15-16		
Elizabeth Shavrck	16-17		
Jesse Gabor	17-18		
Emma Fine	18-19		
Emma Steinhouse	19-20		
Robbie Stein	20-21		
Aidan Gurvitch	21-22		



Jesse Gabor '19

Life after Schechter Westchester: I attended Syracuse University in the fall of 2019. During COVID I took a year off, and then went back to school in the fall of 2021. I studied abroad in Madrid, Spain this past spring. I study sports management and minor in data analytics, and am currently a senior at Syracuse.

Fondest memory from high school: Being with my friends in the classroom, on the basketball court, and on the baseball field.

Funniest memory of high school: Any class with Mr. Simon: Tanakh, Jewish History, Tefillah. He had a penalty box in the classroom where he put people who were misbehaving and it happened to some of my friends.

Memories from physics?: We did a project on the arc of a 3-point shot in basketball and what the perfect degree you should shoot from, and Ms Wigodsky was an amazing teacher.

Emma Steinhouse '21

Life after Leffell: I took a gap year in Israel on a program called Ohrsom. It was mostly South Africans and Australians, and I spent the year in Israel doing volunteer work and interning. I am currently a sophomore at the University of Maryland where I'm studying business.

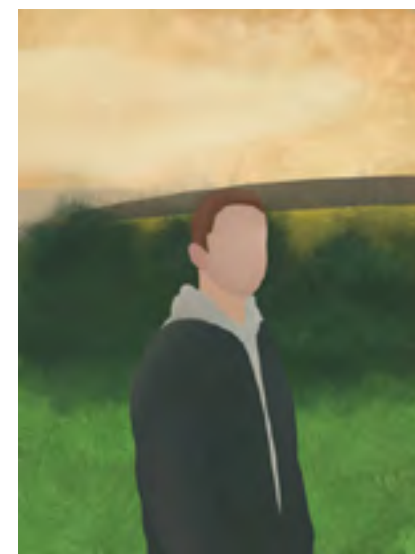
Fondest memory from high school: One of the last nights of Lev v'Nefesh, our tour group leader took us into the desert to watch the sunset and we reflected on our high school experience and how our relationships with each other changed.

Funniest memory of high school: My freshman year, I had Mr. Shontz for history and we would hide his water bottle around the classroom every class. We hid it in the scuffing of the TV and even in the ceiling one time.



Robbie Stein '22

Robbie Stein chooses not to comment.



Aidan Gurvitch '23

Life after Leffell: This past summer I was a counselor for eleven-year-olds at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. It was very tiring but a very rewarding experience. I just started at Syracuse University majoring in sports analytics. I'm doing a lot of statistics, economics, and obviously sports.

Fondest memory from high school: On the last night of Lev v'Nefesh, literally all of my friends went to this burger place and we had a really fun time there.

Funniest memory of high school: For our elective week on Lev v'Nefesh I did the archeological dig. One time on the bus ride to our dig site, our bus driver, who had never spoken once, randomly stopped the van in the middle of the road and got off. We were really confused and then he got back on and handed one of us a turtle. We were having a good time, passing around the turtle and taking photos with it, and when it was my turn, the turtle began to pee on me. I immediately dove into the bus aisle as my friend took the turtle out of my hand, but he continued to hold the turtle over me because he didn't want the turtle to pee on himself.

Memories from physics?: I had Dr. U and we all called him Master U because we thought he was a Jedi master.

A New Minyan! 10 new teachers join the TLS community

by Ary Hammerman

Each year, multiple new teachers join the TLS community. This year, there are 10 new faculty members at the TLS high school, including two new grade-level deans. Additionally, there is one new science teacher, two new history teachers, three new math teachers – one of whom is also serving as a learning specialist – one new member of the E2 department, and one new English teacher joining the TLS staff.

Arianna Gagnon, a new high school Science teacher, grew up in South Florida and graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a bachelor’s degree in Chemistry at only 19 years old. She then earned a master’s in Chemistry and Chemical Biology from Cornell University. Gagnon taught organic chemistry at Cornell, which ultimately helped introduce her to a love of teaching.

“I was working on my PhD in Chemistry at Cornell, and I realized the best part of my job was teaching the students organic chemistry,” Gagnon said. “I realized many students felt intimidated by science, and I cultivated a space where any person was welcomed and encouraged in their science learning.”

New high school English teacher Rebecca Samel also loved teaching from a young age. Her first official teaching job took place in Paris, but she had been a teacher at heart long before that.

“I have always been interested in teaching and had participated in peer tutoring programs in middle school and high school,” Samel said. “I also volunteered in a New Haven public school while at college. I loved working with students and wanted to learn a bit more about how to be an effective teacher, so I enrolled in a graduate program at New York University.”

The E2 department welcomed Javier Rosenzwaig, who was born and raised in Argentina and received his master’s in Electrical Engineering from Universidad Tecnologica Nacional. With experience as head of woodworking at Ramah Day Camp in Nyack, Rosenzwaig has the skills to teach as well as the technical skills involved in Engineering.

“I look forward to sharing my enthusiasm for engineering and design with my students,” Rosenzwaig said.

The history department gained two new teachers, Ilana Moskowitz and Martin Gilbert, both of whom grew up in the tri-state area and have many years of teaching experience.

Gilbert has traveled all over the world, including on a Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar in Israel. “The coolest place I have been is Hokkaido, the northernmost island in Japan,” Gilbert said. “I’ve

also stepped foot into North Korea and slept in a yurt in Inner Mongolia.”

The math department will be expanding the most this year, with three new math teachers joining the department. One of these is department chair Ellen Mager, who comes to TLS after 31 years teaching experience in public schools.

“I was a Math Coordinator and teacher at Briarcliff high school for 15 years,” Mager said. “I was also the Assistant Principal at Croton Harmon high school for 1 year, and a Math Coordinator and teacher at Yorktown high school for 15 years.”

Also joining the math department is Justin Jacobowitz, who recently graduated from the University of Delaware with a master’s in Applied Mathematics.

“I’m looking forward to incorporating myself into the Leffell community and getting to know everyone in it,” Jacobowitz said.

Teaching in both the math and CAS departments at TLS is Tessa Kugler, who was teaching at Fort Hamilton High School in Brooklyn for the past two years. While teaching there, she obtained her master’s degree in Special Education from Hunter College.

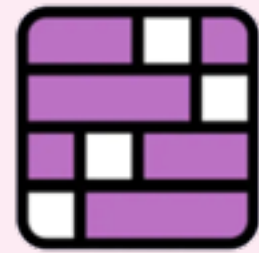
“I am looking forward to the small community of Leffell and connecting with my students,” Kugler said.

Overall, the new TLS faculty are very excited to join the community and bring a variety of unique traits and perspectives to the classroom. They have been and will continue to be welcomed kindly by the TLS faculty and student body.

“I love the joy that everyone expresses at Leffell and I can’t wait to be part of this energetic, knowledgeable, and kind faculty,” Moskowitz said. “I know those qualities will extend to the student body as well.”



The Lions Roar Games



Connections



Holy Land Highlights; TLS summer programs to Israel

by Robin Bosworth

Over the summer, many TLS students embarked on trips to Israel. Whether with family, friends, or a program filled with new faces, every Israel experience provided TLS students with great stories, meaningful experiences and an amazing summer to look back on.

Two of the programs that TLS students embarked on were the Ramah Seminar and The Bronfman Fellowship. Though both were for students entering their senior year of high school, the experiences were completely different.

The Bronfman Fellowship is a four-week long program focused on learning and study that aims to engage 24 Jewish teens of diverse backgrounds. Senior Hannah Mani-Abraham spent her summer participating in this fellowship.

“It’s a trip that you apply for and it’s a Jewish study program for people who might be grappling with their Jewish identity,” Mani-Abraham said. “For me, I’m a converted Jew and also a Jew of color. There are not many Indian Jews or many Indians at our Jewish day school so that was definitely a big reason why I wanted to do this program.”

Throughout the program, the fellows engaged both in studying Israeli history as well as current events like the Judicial Reforms protests.

“We got to walk through the protests because there’s a lot going on with their Judicial Reforms,” Mani-Abraham said. “We got to talk to Palestinians about their beliefs on Israel and Palestine, and we had a lot of discussions surrounding and talking about our Jewish identities.” Mani-Abraham thought it was a once in a lifetime experience and would



encourage any junior interested to apply.

While The Bronfman Fellowship focused on an educational approach to a summer Israel trip, Ramah Seminar was more geared towards touring the country, spending time meeting new people, and embracing the sleepaway camp culture. As a six week Israel trip, Ramah Seminar joins teenagers from nine different camps across the United States and Canada.

“Seminar was different from many other Israel programs for its purpose of meeting new people,” Senior Lucy Abner said. “We do similar activities to other programs and classic Israel tourism, but you enter the trip knowing a maximum of 50 people, often a lot fewer, and leave with over 200 best friends your own age from all over the country.”

One of the primary focuses of Seminar is meeting new people and making new friends, so the program makes that a priority.

“Seminar is designed so that you have opportunities to bond with the people that you do not know,” Abner said. “For instance, on my own first night of seminar, I was put into a room with three other girls that I had never met from a different camp, and with no one from my own camp. I was nervous, but everyone on Seminar is so open to making new friends, that we quickly became close. The fact that I had just met them a few days ago meant nothing to our friendship.”

However, the trip was not only dedicated to bonding with new friends and touring the country. There were various speakers that provided an educational aspect to the trip.

Leffell Stands With Israel: How TLS is responding to the Israel-Hamas War

by Ari Mayblum

On October 7th, during the weekend of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, Israeli citizens were massacred by Hamas. It has been a very challenging last couple of weeks for our entire school community, and these events have placed Israel in the national spotlight. In this difficult time, TLS has been extremely supportive of its students.

There have been multiple tekes’ for the entire high school. Rabbi Pell delivered a detailed explanation of the events in order to educate students and faculty, and the school facilitated a send-off ceremony for Yaniv Cohen. Cohen is a beloved Hebrew teacher in the high school and following the onset of the war, he was called back to the IDF to serve as a medic. Although we were all sad to see Cohen leave, this ceremony was filled with joyous celebration and gratitude for Cohen, including several students who recounted their favorite memories from his class.

On Friday, October 13th, TLS pivoted from its original special program in wake of the attacks on Israel. Students had the opportunity to listen to Rabbi Pell’s Israel update, recite Tehillim, write letters to alumni drafting into the IDF, and other meaningful activities. A few of my friends attended Rabbi Pell’s lecture and spoke with me afterwards, and said that they learned about the history of the Israel–Palestine conflict and Hamas in a meaningful way. Others attended a Safety and Security program with two FBI agents who work in Westchester. They spoke about how they have dealt with terrorism in the past and were able to reassure students.

Our high school fall sports teams also showed their support at games over

the past few weeks. Boys and Girls Varsity Soccer walked out carrying the Israeli flag and players’ cleats were customized with the flag. My BVS teammates and I also put white tape on our wrists and colored the flag onto it. These last games were really meaningful to all of us because we felt that we were playing for something bigger than ourselves which in turn gave us extra motivation. At our Girls Varsity Volleyball games, the Hatikvah was sung. I am extremely proud of our athletes and entire school community for their courage and pride during this tragedy.

During tefillah on Friday, November 12th, the entire High School gathered in the courtyard around a large shabbat table with place settings and empty seats representing approximately 240 hostages who were kidnapped by Hamas. Instead of spending shabbat with their families, these innocent Israelis are being held in captivity. We honored them through this ceremony and pray for their strength and safe return home.

On Tuesday November 14th, students from grades 8-12 as well as many other members of the Leffell community joined hundreds of thousands of Jews to “March for Israel” in Washington DC. In order to accommodate the 460 people who registered to represent our school community at this rally, TLS offered bussing pick up points in New Jersey, the Bronx, and Westchester at the Upper School campus. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to march in our nation’s capitol and I can’t thank TLS enough for all they have done to support Israel and the school community during these difficult times.

The Marvelous Ms. Mazo

TLS returns to find the same face with a new position

by Rafi Josselson
Rafi Josselson sat down with Dean of Students Sami Mazo to discuss her new role and her perspective on TLS. Read this important Q&A to find out more!

Q: For those who don't know you well, could you share a little bit about you? Your interests, your background at TLS, and what do you find important about being a dean/counselor?

A: I went here as a high school student. Fast forward, I went to Brandeis [University], where I studied education and sociology, and social justice. When I graduated, I moved back to the city and I started working at a charter school with small kids. I was doing a lot of work with families and family engagement and planning trips and things outside of the classroom. I met some amazing people and I had some fantastic experiences. After my first year there, I heard there might be an opening for a dean position [at Schechter Westchester/Leffell]. I love counseling and I knew it was something I wanted to do. This position felt very special and unique to start my counseling career in a place that I knew and was part of my identity and where I grew up. So I started working here eleven years ago and I got my degree in school counseling while I was working. I am still here and I am still passionate about helping people feel their most authentic selves.

Q: Could you share how your experience as a grade-level dean was? What did you learn and what did you take away from that experience?

A: One of the things I still appreciate about the role is how many people you get to know on a really deep level. Each person is so different and so unique. Helping them find their voice in high school is something I feel very passionate about. And High School is really complicated. It is not easy. And to have people to think through challenges with you is very important and I feel very lucky to have been able to work with so many students to overcome some of their challenges. There is also grade-level coordination and programmatic elements and the logistics behind this school.

Q: You recently became a mother with the birth of your son, Adi. Could you share how that experience has been for you?

A: It's been great! He's really energizing, he is such a gift and I feel so lucky to be this little boy's mom. There are for sure challenges but so much joy. We feel so lucky to get to know him and watch him grow.

Q: To take care of your son, you left TLS for about half a year, transitioning the deanship of the class of 2025 to Ms. Hezi. Could you share how you felt about how that transition went?

A: I feel so lucky that Erica found her way to us. She has so much experience and is very knowledgeable. And I think she really gets it. Working with her was amazing. I thought we were going to have more time together to try to transition, but Adi came a month early. I give Erica a lot of credit for the way she jumped in and she took things on. We stayed in touch quite regularly during the six months that I was home and we are still obviously in touch now and we got to grow closer.

Q: You returned this year in a new role as Dean of Students. Could you share the responsibilities of this role?

A: There are a few buckets of the role. There is the piece of student support and I am still working directly with students and families when challenges arise and thinking through some of the complicated issues at school. There is the logistical and programming part. [I am] working really closely with Cara and the deans [on] things that will make school feel positive and make sure that we build a positive school culture. I work really closely with Mr. Bassin on things like scheduling and modified schedules – some of the behind-the-scenes things that people don't really realize take coordination to make happen. Lastly, being a go-to person for teachers also to think through some of the complicated issues that arise and create thoughtful plans that will make things better.

Q: This is a part-time position. Have there been any benefits or challenges with this? Why or why not?

Scan here to read more:



by Sophie Zuckerman
New cultures, new people, new places, and so much more. These are just a few of the things that our TLS students experience who decide to take semesters abroad. More commonly, students study in Israel, as junior Shaina Staffenberg did, but in the 2022-2023 school year, junior Jack Wolk studied abroad in Italy.

Aside from the beautiful scenery, Wolk had other reasons why he chose to study abroad in Italy.

“I studied abroad this past year in Viterbo, Italy with SYA,” Wolk said. “Originally I was looking at the France and Spain programs, but they both had language requirements that I did not meet. The Italian program did not have any prerequisite for language, so I chose it! It was definitely the right move.”

On the other hand, Staffenberg chose to study in Israel for the semester to be in the country with which she has a meaningful relationship.

“I studied abroad in Hod Hasharon, Israel, at Alexander Muss High School in Israel,” Staffenberg said. “I chose this program because I felt like it was important for me to be in Israel rather than other places. I have a deep connection and a reason to be in Israel.”

While studying in Viterbo, Italy, Wolk was introduced to a whole new way of Italian living. On some programs, students live in dorms, but Wolk had a far different experience.

“I lived with a host family, and I don't think it gets much more real than that,” Wolk said. “I got to see how an Italian family lives their day to day lives. From waking up, and not eating breakfast [because Italians do not eat breakfast], to eating dinner at ten o'clock every night, I really felt like I was one of them. We watched movies that were in Italian, like Harry Potter, with no English subtitles.”

From Inspiration to Dedication: What drove TLS's Rabbis to become Rabbis?

by Ari Mayblum
Rabbis are often thought of as spiritual leaders, religious teachers, and preachers. But have you wondered what influenced and inspired these people to become rabbis? After all, one who wishes to become a rabbi must be determined and motivated to go through a process which requires years of studying. Across both TLS campuses, we are lucky enough to have 12 rabbis.

Rabbi Harry Pell teaches both a freshman Beit Midrash Talmud course and a Modern Israeli History senior elective in addition to being the Associate Head of School. Pell graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary and served as a Rabbi in the US Navy Chaplain Corps before joining the school that was then called Solomon Schechter School of Westchester.

“I was graduating from JTS and received a fellowship that I could take with me to teach at any Schechter school at the time,” Pell said. “It seemed to me that I could be most successful and feel most fulfilled teaching at what is now the Leffell School.”

From teaching Kindergarten P.E. to working as a Dean of Students for 10 years, Rabbi Joan Forchheimer has done it all here at TLS. Although Forchheimer was not necessarily set on becoming a Rabbi, she enjoyed Judaic studies from a young age and knew she wanted to become some type of teacher as an adult.

“I did want to be a teacher and I always loved my Judaic classes at school,” Forchheimer said. “I was so happy I could apply both passions to my work. Fortunately, teaching allows one to teach formally in the classroom and informally outside of the classroom. I have been so lucky to work at camps where I can teach outside in the open air and live and experience Judaism with campers and staff of all ages.”

Rabbi Sandy Zisser has worked at TLS for 29 years. Zisser attended the State University of New York at Albany where he received his undergraduate degree in Judaic studies and American history. His story of how he ended up teaching at TLS is both interesting and unexpected.

“I had sent a blind résumé, which means a résumé to a place that was not advertising, and I was called by the Director of student services at the time, Eileen Davidson, to arrange an interview,” Zisser said. “When I showed up at

In contrast to Wolk's immersive experience with Italian living, Staffenberg lived in a dorm. Nonetheless, Staffenberg still got a fair taste of the culture and life around her.

“I lived in a real town in Israel,” Staffenberg said. “Every night we would go out for two hours and walk around town. We would order food in Hebrew, go shopping at Israeli malls, go to the Shuk, and experience holidays in a way that is special to Israel.”

A year abroad is not worth it if you come back without knowing more about yourself. Wolk definitely learned and grew during his time away.

“Before my program I definitely would have considered myself an independent person,” Wolk said. “But actually being in Italy and living there, with a host family, and being able to decide what to do all the time, showed me that I had to learn how to do a lot of things by myself.”

Although studying abroad can be a once in a lifetime experience, it can also be difficult to leave the community you belong to and go to a completely foreign and new place.

“On this program I was sort of thrown into a group of 44 people, and I had to find my crowd and decide who I wanted to be friends with,” Wolk said.

In contrast, finding your people in a different country and making deep connections can make it just as difficult to return home as it was to leave.

“I was leaving a community and meeting all these people for the first time,” Staffenberg said. “Once I got used to everything though, it was so amazing, and that made it hard to come back.”



the Lower School she said to me, ‘your name sounded familiar, but now your face does too. Where do I know you from?’ As we walked back to her office, we realized that I had gone to high school with her son,” Zisser said. “She went on to tell me that they did not have a specific opening at the school at that moment, but she told me what was on her wish list. She was looking for a person who was trained in teaching children with special needs and American history, and I had both of those skills. Although they did not have a job opening when I arrived that day, when I left, I left with a new teaching job for the next school year.”

A commonality between these rabbis is that none of them have recent family members who were rabbis, so they were not necessarily planning on pursuing this profession from a young age.

“I loved to play with Legos (I still do!),” Pell said. “When I was twelve or thirteen, I was a contestant on ‘Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?’, and when they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I said I wanted to be an architect!”

Reflecting on her 33 years as an educator here at TLS, Forchheimer is extremely grateful for the opportunity she was given to teach at this school. As she looks back on multiple momentous life cycle events that have taken place in the building's walls, Forchheimer feels school has truly become her second home.

“It was my first job out of college,” Forchheimer said. “I felt like Dr. Spiegel (former Head of School) took a big risk with me and I was so appreciative that he hired me to teach Judaic Studies. Thirty-three years later, I still have so much gratitude to be able to teach in this beautiful school with curious students and supportive families and colleagues. It is certainly my home away from home.

“I have had almost every life cycle event in our very own Beit Knesset at Schechter/Leffell. Elliot (my husband) and I had our aufruf here as well as my daughter's baby naming, my son's Bar Mitzvah and most recently, my daughter's aufruf.”



by Raya Creditor

Every year high school students ponder the question of how to prepare for college and it can be a high source of anxiety and stress. Additionally, they need to think about what they are passionate about and what they like to do outside of school.

TLS College Counselors Rose Weinstein and Kellen Howell have their own advice to share.

“I'd say that our general advice is that in 9th and 10th grade you're going to be focused on your involvement in school and are really exploring your interests both inside and outside the classroom. That, in turn, will help your college process,” Weinstein said. “You're starting to create your story which eventually you will tell to your colleagues. You really want to hit the ground running in 11th grade, when before that you should be taking advantage of your high school experience, because the more you do that, the easier it will be to create your college application.”

Although students will not be committing until later in high school, looking around for fun can never hurt. According to Howell, starting to get a feel for what you want in a college as early as freshman or sophomore year is a good idea.

“It's never too early to visit a college, just to get a sense of seeing it,” Howell said. “There is no such thing as a bad college visit. Even if you're in 9th or 10th grade, it's a good idea. If you have the time, walk around the campus because it could

inspire you to start to think about what you may eventually want in college.”

However, when students begin to place expectations on themselves and are setting the bar too high, it is inevitable that stress will follow. To deal with this probable stress, there are methods high schoolers can implement.

“There used to be this myth that you have to do a little bit of everything, and have a certain number of activities, but I would say that's not really true anymore,” Howell said. “Quality is better than quantity. So if you're worried that you're not involved in enough things, and you feel overwhelmed, relook at what you've committed yourself to and continue doing the things that are important to you.”

When it comes to finally applying to colleges, finding personal interests and diving into their passions can help students show who they are: a sport, the arts, or a niche interest. A student who is being true to themselves can be the defining factor for a college's opinion and decision for their application.

“Be your genuine self,” Weinstein said. “Don't be swayed from what you hear by friends and family members about the process. Just be genuine to what interests you. Be you, and don't be anyone you think they want you to be. The more you explore your interests, the better your application will read.”

Leffell Alumni Serving in the IDF



נתן בן הרב אברהם ויוכבד



אורן דניאל משה בן ציון הלוי בן ורד



הרב דניאל טל בן יצחק והניה



ליעם אברהם בן גיא חנוך וברכה



עקיבא משה בן רחל



עידן בן אידלמיס



דניאל שרה בת ליאור וזיוה



אביעזר בן רונית



גיל בועז בן מנחם ותמר



אריאל בן זיני



שרה אלישבע בת עקיבא



רחמים בן אסתר



ציפורה דניאלה בת מרים



מתן יקיר בן אביבה ושמעון



חיים צבי בן דוד ועדינה