

# education

## Today



### THE READING LEAGUE

page 12

### THE BOOK CORNER

A look at what makes a good  
children's book

page 5



### SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

When cold and tired means much more

page 9

THE EDUCATIONAL  
MAGAZINE FOR  
PARENTS



Brought to you thanks to funding provided by the East Ramapo Central School District



21 Remsen Avenue  
Suite 201  
Monsey NY 10952  
845.356.9600  
info@coconline.org  
www.coconline.org  
© CEC

## MESSAGE FROM RABBI HERSH HOROWITZ

Executive Director, CEC



Winter is officially here and I hope all of you are warm and safe; your children settled into the 2020 school year. As the Chanukah candles fade into memory, I'd like to utilize this forum to talk about illumination; specifically staying lit and visible while walking the streets after dark.

The simple, honest reason I chose this topic is because I am still haunted by an almost tragedy. Just after the clock change, I was driving and didn't see a child walking until it was seconds away from being too late to avoid him. I do not know who the child was, but it could have been yours.

Education in all its capacities is the mandate here at the CEC and understanding safety is a vital component of that education. We are lucky enough to live in a beautiful community with winding streets and lots of trees and shrubs. Along with the beauty comes the reality that many of our streets are dark, narrow and not always well lit.

It is imperative that parents know for themselves as well as for their children, the extreme importance of being noticeable when walking outside at night. Many of our children, especially the boys, are getting off their buses after dark. Even a short walk from the bus to your house can spell disaster if your child is not wearing a reflector or boots, coat and/or briefcase with reflective strips.

Thanks to the Town of Ramapo, the CEC has free reflectors for anyone who wishes to stop by our beautiful new office on Remsen Avenue. Please take the time to ensure your child's safety. It's a lesson for life every child deserves to learn.

As we go to print, it is just days after the Chanukah attack in Monsey. We would like to reassure parents that the CEC and numerous other local organizations are doing everything possible to increase security for all our schools. We urge parents to reach out and communicate with your schools and encourage increased protocols.

Wishing you all a safe winter.

**Even a short walk from the bus to your house can spell disaster if your child is not wearing a reflector or boots, coat and/or briefcase with reflective strips.**

## From The Desk of

**DR. DANIEL SHANAHAN**

Assistant Superintendent,  
East Ramapo Central School District



The 2019-2020 year was off to a great start with the district's new streamlined textbook distribution process for nonpublic students. Textbooks were delivered directly to the private schools to help ensure sessions started with as many textbooks in place as possible. We plan on building on this success and expanding the new system over the next years.

It is my pleasure to showcase a new grant-funded opportunity that many of the nonpublic schools are participating in. Title IV – Student Support and Academic Enrichment – provides schools with funds to help enhance curriculum and instruction for all students. While funds from Title I are designed to improve the academic performance of students who otherwise would be at risk of falling behind in core academic subjects, Title IV funds are meant for use by the whole school – public and nonpublic – to foster well-rounded, safe, and healthy students. With the addition of Title IV funds, schools can enhance and expand their programs in the arts, music, high level academics, healthy living, student safety, and technology.

Last year, a large number of nonpublic schools took advantage of the new Title IV funding. This year, even more schools are submitting detailed plans based on their students' needs. Some schools will use the funds to enhance safety. Others are focused on expanding arts and music programs. Some schools are promoting healthy eating, while others are enhancing their academic programs with instructional technology.

I can point to many examples to show the value of Title IV, but one is especially inspiring: the vegetable garden project at UTA. Under the guidance of Principal Rabbi Yoel Stern, Title IV funds were used to create a vegetable garden on school grounds. This four-month project provided an abundance of hands-on learning opportunities in many areas including biology, math, problem solving, farming, and team work. Students were deeply motivated from start to finish and were highly satisfied with the fruits of their labor – a wide array of vegetables that they themselves planted, tended to and harvested. What a joy it was to receive pictures of the project. The school even shared some of the vegetables for me to eat! No doubt the students will never forget this exemplary project – a project that exemplifies what Title IV's mission is all about.

Wishing you a safe and healthy winter.

### 4 | WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

*How does it work?  
Title IIA in real life*

### 5 | THE BOOK CORNER

*A peek under the cover with  
Hachai Publishing*

### 6 | THE VALUE OF MUSIC AND ART

*Education beyond the textbook*

### 9 | SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

*When cold and tired means  
much more*

### 11 | HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD GET THROUGH SAD?

*with Mrs. Devorah Beller, LCSW-R,  
Clinical Supervisor for CEC*

### 12 | THE READING LEAGUE

*Bridging the gap between  
research and practice to improve  
literacy outcomes*

### 15 | SCHOOLS SPEAK

*Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch and  
Mosdos Klausenberg*

### 16 | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CEC WORKSHOPS

*Better Teacher Skills for  
Better Student Learning*

### 18 | FOCUS ON...

*Ms. Merritte Mellion*

# WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

## UNDERSTANDING TITLE IIA

Title IIA provides federal funds that are allocated for professional development. The intent is to increase the professional capacity of educators (teachers, principals, and administrators) to allow for long-term growth in every area of education. The long-range goal is to provide skill-based knowledge that will positively impact students and create the best-case educational scenario.

Teachers	Principals and Administrators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to best teach a specific area of education</li> <li>• New curriculum ideas for reading and math</li> <li>• Effective classroom management skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to maximize their time</li> <li>• Ways to be most effective in their role</li> <li>• New curriculum ideas for reading and math</li> </ul>

## TITLE IIA *in Real Life*

**School A** wants to improve student behavior. They include this as a goal in their professional development plan, which the District approves. When the school hears about a professional learning workshop or presenter, they make arrangements for their school staff to attend the workshop or to bring the presenter to their school. If necessary, long-term training and follow up is set up to ensure the utmost effectiveness of the new behavior modification skills and strategies.

**School B** wants to implement the Orton Gillingham reading system. They submit their plan with a needs-based assessment and once approved by the District, make the necessary arrangements to have the teachers attend the workshops. They then hire a consultant who specializes in the method to come to the school and guide the teachers in the implementation of the system.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

- #1 Every school designs a professional development plan with an outline of the professional goals for the year. The school can have one plan for K-8, another one for high school, and yet another for principals.
- #2 The school prepares an assessment of need showing why they feel their students will benefit from the professional development they are proposing.
- #3 The plan is submitted to the CEC who shares it with the Office of Funded Programs at the East Ramapo Central School District for review and approval.
- #4 Once approved, the school is given the go-ahead to submit proposals for workshops, in-house presenters and/or consultants that align with their plans and help them meet their professional goals.

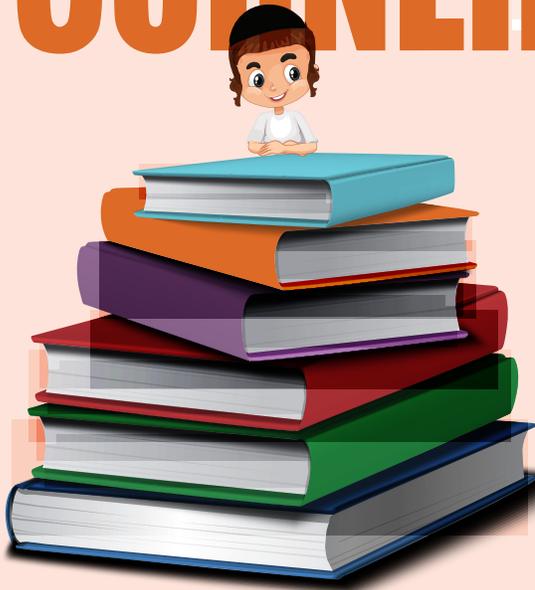
## DID YOU KNOW?

- Allocation of Title IIA federal funding for nonpublic schools requires a full-time, year-round staff at the CEC.
- The CEC and the District often create a consortium of schools that allow several schools looking for the same professional learning experiences to join together.
- At the end of every workshop or presentation, participants are asked to evaluate the event and answer how the workshop will help them meet their professional goals. In monitoring this way, the CEC ensures that the workshop was indeed an effective use of the funds.

# THE BOOK CORNER

## WELCOME TO THE BOOK CORNER!

WITH THE HELP OF WELL-KNOWN PUBLISHERS, WE'LL GIVE PARENTS AND TEACHERS A LOOK UNDER THE COVER AT WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHILDREN'S BOOK.



In this issue, Mrs. Devorah L. Rosenfeld,

Editor in Chief at Hachai Publishing,

shares her criteria for read aloud books at the preschool level.

**THE SUBJECT MATTER:** Hachai looks at every topic a preschooler will encounter in playgroup and/or school and builds books around those topics; incorporating common moral values and ideals. For example, a lesson on nature can become a book about Creation (*The Creation Book*) and a lesson about the parts of our body lends itself to a book about positive actions we can accomplish with each part of our body (*All About Us*). A book about numbers becomes a charity lesson as he subtracts each penny from his pile to go into the box (*Ten Tzedaka Pennies*).

### A GOOD READ ALOUD BOOK SHOULD INCLUDE:

- An appealing main character that children will like
- Age appropriate content
- The right rhythm (even if the words do not rhyme)
- Lessons compatible with your value set
- Illustrations that are both appealing and appropriate to the topic

### A GREAT EXAMPLE OF APPEALING MAIN CHARACTERS:

The Yossi and Laibel series follows two brothers who grapple with sharing, making friends, trying their best and going out of their way to do favors for others. The combination of the excellent skillful illustrations, the clever rhyming text and the recognizable personalities make children feel like they can identify with the characters.

*Labels for Laibel*

*Hot on the Trail*

*Peanut Butter and Jelly for Shabbos*

*On the Ball*

### A GREAT WAY TO CHOOSE A GOOD BOOK:

Read the book out loud! Whether you're in the library or the book store, take a couple of minutes to actually hear how the words sound. Listen for the cadence or rhythm and rhyme. When the words sound lyrical, the story flows.

*The development of literacy and love of reading begins with the read aloud book. An adult reading to a child is a very influential and meaningful experience and creates lasting memories.*

*Devorah L. Rosenfeld, Editor in Chief, Hachai Publishing*

## THE VALUE OF

music  
AND art

**Dr. Jessica Hoffman Davis holds a Doctorate in Human Development and Psychology and a Master's in Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum Environments from Harvard University. She has served as an advisor to the President's Council on the Arts and Humanities' At-Risk Youth Project and to the Arts Education Partnership's Committee on Higher Education Collaborations.**

**Suffice it to say, she is an expert on how the arts impact children and young adults. In her book *Why Our Schools Need the Arts*, Davis outlines the many benefits of teaching art and music, including the focus they provide on the quality of empathy. "We need the arts because they remind children that their emotions are equally worthy of respect and expression," she said in an interview. "The arts introduce children to connectivity, engagement, and allow a sense of identification with, and responsibility for, others."**

As a young researcher, Davis once asked adults, children of varying ages, and professional artists to draw emotions such as happiness, sadness, and anger. She found that even very young children could communicate those emotions through drawing. "The arts, like no other subject, give children the media and the opportunity to shape and communicate their feelings." Our children live in a world inundated with intensity. Teachers are called upon more and more not only to teach but to reach each child emotionally. With large classes and high curriculum standards, this can be a challenging task, for teachers and parents alike. It is safe to say that as adults, most of us can wax nostalgic about the art projects we did in school and the choirs, drama or concert experiences we enjoyed. Math homework and essays, not so much. Just how valuable is art and music in our children's education? The following experts fill us in.

### **Mrs. Sarah Salvay, Elementary School Principal, Ateres Bais Yaakov**

At Ateres we teach both art and music. Research indicates that there is a strong correlation between music instruction and math and language skills. In grades 1-2 we teach music appreciation, movement and music, tempo, notes and more. In grades 3-6 we actually teach the entire class how to play the recorder. The girls learn how to read notes, practice playing and by the end of the year, every student knows how to play a few songs. The learning culminates in a trip to the Fountainview where they perform for the residents. Everyone, young and old, have the most wonderful time! In high school, music and art are electives - classes that the girls can choose out of a variety of options.

Learning how to play an instrument is such a great way for children to push through frustration and achieve mastery, especially when that reality may not be the case in other subjects. The self-esteem boost is almost tangible. There's great teamwork involved, and lots of pro-social behavior such as the need to follow directions, coordinate with one another and the incredible feeling of knowing you play an integral role in something bigger than yourself. We've had young students reach out to newcomers and help them learn the notes and older high school students who are very musically talented take out younger students for private music lessons. When you keep in mind that some of these girls may well be struggling in other areas, the sense of achievement is amazing. And the feedback from parents is highly positive.

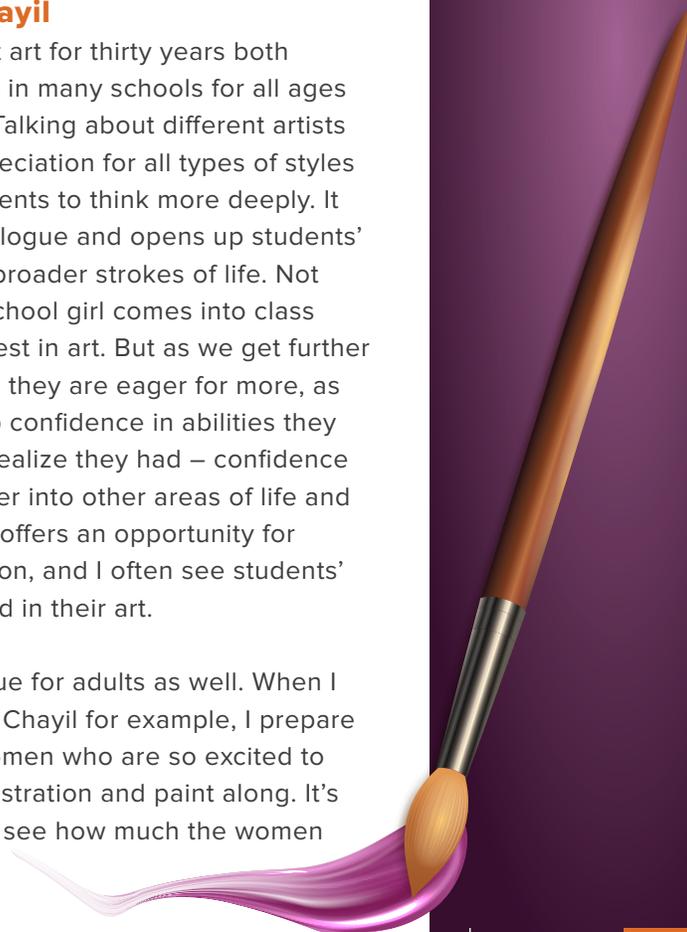
Our focus with art class is on the actual creative process rather than the results, which provides a lot of opportunity for students to explore their individuality and

their innate creativity. We teach different styles of drawing and painting such as cubism, pointillism and impressionism. Art class is very relaxing with soft music playing in the background and a low hum of voices. Students get to tap into their emotions with classes like 'paint your mood' and find the styles and mediums that inspire and resonate with them. The girls love the self-expression and the fact that there are no mistakes; a student who tends to be a perfectionist can learn how to work past that and see a bigger picture, literally. And there's a huge sense of pride when they take their projects home or see them on display in the school.

### **Mrs. Helen Spitz, Veteran Art Teacher, Bais Yaakov of Ramapo, Bais Yaakov High School, SHARE Chesed 24/7, Be'er Yeshaya, Aishes Chayil**

I have taught art for thirty years both privately and in many schools for all ages and stages. Talking about different artists and the appreciation for all types of styles inspires students to think more deeply. It creates a dialogue and opens up students' eyes to see broader strokes of life. Not every high school girl comes into class with an interest in art. But as we get further into the year, they are eager for more, as they develop confidence in abilities they didn't even realize they had – confidence that spills over into other areas of life and learning. Art offers an opportunity for self-expression, and I often see students' lives reflected in their art.

This holds true for adults as well. When I go to Aishes Chayil for example, I prepare for ninety women who are so excited to join a demonstration and paint along. It's incredible to see how much the women



enjoy this evening. They are doing something for themselves, nurturing their inner soul.

The positive impacts of art are especially apparent when working with students with special needs. Techniques and brushes and tricks of the trade provide the guidance they need to produce something really nice, which is tremendously rewarding, especially in the older student population. We may talk angle and blending but I keep it simple and the direction allows everyone to produce something that looks good. Most importantly they feel comfortable and capable of doing it and that is an incredibly powerful and positive feeling.

In one of the programs, every time the staff would ask a certain young man to join, he would refuse. His sensory issues made it too difficult for him to touch the paint. I worked with him one-on-one and we started with clean materials such as colored pencils. He demanded perfection of himself having been taught self-discipline his entire life. Going from that to drawing clouds haphazardly across the page was beyond him. Slowly we moved from pencils to water colors to acrylics to pastels – from neat to messy. After months and months, he became a new person, happy to be engrossed in all forms of art.

Another standout scenario was with a woman who started class along with her caregiver. She simply would not do anything without her caregiver being there. After many classes, she became comfortable enough to trust the process without her caregiver. Now, even the way she signs her name has a flourish to it. She depends on her caregiver less and less and her social worker is amazed how much more independent she has become.

### **Rabbi Zev Freundlich, Dean, Shaarei Arazim**

Our music program has been in existence since the Yeshiva opened in September of 2000. Music is every bochur's outlet and it is a way to develop the whole child, incorporating more than just standard learning. Shaarei Arazim has electives three nights a week and each year about a third of the boys choose the music program as their elective. Our classes are generally divided into keyboard, guitar, and wind instruments such as clarinet and saxophone. We also have our famous marching band with special instructors for movements and formations. This year it is a twelve-piece drum line. In past years we have had a Mariachi band for Purim with violins and guitars and a Colonial Revolutionary band with drums and fifes. We even have a regular simcha band with at least six boys who actually play at events. The value is simple: success breeds success. When the boys have an opportunity to feel successful in music the positivity affects every aspect of their lives.

Regardless of whether or not your children's schools offer art and music, you can encourage their exploration of these beneficial outlets at home. In addition to numerous art and music lesson options, parents can bring the arts home without spending a lot of money. Consider stocking up on art supplies such as crayons, markers, pastels, finger-paints etc. as well as different types of paper, sponges and brushes. Throw down a plastic tablecloth and let the kids tap into their inner artist. Music opportunities can include anything from singing together to listening to music to buying an inexpensive harmonica for kids to experiment on. And for the youngest age group, different size pots and a large spoon can bring out the natural tempo in your child.



# SEASONAL AFFECTIVE *Disorder*

WHEN COLD AND TIRED MEANS MUCH MORE

**Raise your hand if the cold weather and shorter days have you shivering, begging for bed and ready for spring. If your hand is up, you are not alone. Every year, daylight savings time seems to put so many of us out of synch. After a couple of weeks, we eventually adjust. However, some adults and children may continue to struggle, so much so that their ability to function is affected.**

**Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that is related to changes in seasons.**

Unlike regular ongoing depression, SAD begins and ends at about the same time every year. If you're like most people with SAD, your symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody. Some people describe it as running out of batteries. (Less often, SAD causes depression in the spring or early summer.)

SAD is more than just the 'winter blues.' I know, as I struggle with it every year. And SAD can affect children too. If your child seems to be showing signs of SAD, you should take it seriously and seek help.



## What causes SAD?

Scientists are not exactly sure. But the following factors definitely contribute:

**Our biological clock (circadian rhythm).** The reduced level of sunlight in fall and winter may cause winter-onset SAD. This decrease in sunlight may disrupt a body's internal clock and lead to feelings of depression.

**Serotonin levels.** Reduced sunlight can cause a drop in serotonin (a brain chemical that affects mood) and trigger depression.

**Melatonin levels.** The change in season can disrupt the balance of the body's level of melatonin, which plays a role in sleep patterns and mood.

While every hungry, tired child certainly does not have SAD, you should take lingering, unrelenting symptoms of seasonal affective disorder seriously. It is important to be under a doctor's care to rule out physical illnesses that can cause symptoms similar to SAD. As with other types of depression, SAD can get worse and lead to problems if it's not treated. Treatment can help prevent complications, especially if SAD is diagnosed and treated before symptoms get bad. Complications of SAD include:

- ▶ Social withdrawal
- ▶ School or work problems
- ▶ Substance abuse
- ▶ Other mental health disorders such as anxiety or eating disorders
- ▶ Suicidal thoughts or behavior

*See page 11 for treatment options.*



### A CHILD SUFFERING WITH SAD MAY EXPERIENCE THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

- A change in appetite, especially a craving for sweet or starchy foods
- Anxiety
- A drop in energy levels
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- A tendency to oversleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Avoidance of social situations
- Negative attitude
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities

"I should have been a bear, wake me up in April!" is a wish expressed by many people, young and old, suffering with SAD. However, we are not designed to sleep until Pesach! With the proper recognition, intervention and doctor's care, seasonal affective disorder can be effectively managed. Wishing everyone a safe and healthy winter!

# HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD GET THROUGH SAD?

**Mrs. Devorah Beller, LCSW-R,** *Clinical Supervisor for CEC*

## TIP 1 LIGHT IT UP

One of the main contributing factors to SAD is a lack of daylight hours. The following substitutions can help the body compensate for those lost sunlight ours:

- **Phototherapy** – sitting next to a light box which simulates sun and or using a dawn simulator which slowly fills your room with light in the morning
- **Walking** in beautiful areas in daylight
- **Plan a vacation** in a warm, sunny location (winter SAD)
- **Before bed, open the shades** so the light will wake you up gradually
- **Before dark, turn on lights** in the house and close the shades so that your brain does not see the transition from light to dark
- **Adequate levels of vitamin D**



## TIP 2 SELF CARE

Self-care helps anyone, young or old, feel better. We all should practice it more often, but an adult or child suffering from SAD needs to make self-care a priority. The ‘blues’ associated with SAD are very real and if not addressed can take a tremendous toll. Some recommended self-care tips include:

- **Exercise**, which relieves stress and symptoms of depression
- **Listen to music.**
- **Do activities you enjoy.**
- **Plan social outings**/play dates with family and friends and start during the daylight.
- **Eat and drink properly.** Try to avoid sugar-rich foods. People tend to gain weight with SAD and sugary foods can cause fatigue. Lack of hydration also contributes to fatigue.
- **Laugh, smile, tell jokes.**
- **Volunteer** with an emphasis on seeing other people.

## TIP 3 MEDICAL INTERVENTION

When other options have not worked your doctor may suggest:

- **CBT**- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- **Medication** to help mitigate the depression
- **Melatonin** – taken at night it can help regulate and restore the body’s inner clock.

## TIP 4 TEND TO YOUR EMOTIONS

While you may not need medication for your SAD, the depressive feelings can really bring you down. Keep your emotions positive by:

- **Maintaining your daily schedule/routine.**
- **Journaling** - to externalize all of the negative feelings and notice positives in one’s day. For a child with SAD this can mean drawing a picture or playing out loud to express how they feel.
- **Focus on upcoming events** such as a simcha, holiday, school vacation etc. Create a calendar and refer to it often.

## TIP 5 PARENT WITH CARE

As with all illnesses that cannot be seen, it is often hard to support someone with SAD. The child with SAD can’t ‘just snap out of it.’ The struggle is real. Here’s what you, as a parent, can do to help:

- **Be empathetic** and validate their feelings. Explain that other children and adults are on a similar journey to Spring.
- **Pay close attention** to the child’s mood to be sure he/she is safe.
- **Reassure the child** that this will pass soon.
- **Spend extra quality time** with your child, preferably outside.
- **Shovel snow together**, go tubing and sledding during daylight hours.
- **Advocate for your child!** A fatigued child may not be able to complete all their work and will need understanding from parents and teachers vis-à-vis homework, projects and tests.



# The **READING** League

How do our brains learn to read? What are the underlying causes when students have difficulty? How do we prevent those difficulties? How do we remediate those difficulties?

Thanks to scientific evidence we currently have better answers for all those questions than ever before. By leveraging the existing research in ways that inspire educators to refine their literacy instruction, The Reading League bridges the gap between research and classroom practice, thus improving literacy outcomes for students.

Founded in 2015 by Dr. Maria Murray, The Reading League is now considered one of the fastest growing literacy organization and non-profit in the United States with over 11,000 members. Education Today spoke with the very busy and very passionate Dr. Murray to discover the motivation behind the astounding success of what is proving to be a reading revolution.

## Where did the motivation to form the Reading League come from?

My background is in academics and for years I was a professor of literacy specializing in reading science. I delved into how the brain learns to read and why it encounters difficulty, looking to find ways to address the issues.

Over the years I felt a deep and growing frustration with the fact that there was all this science to teaching reading that really made a huge impact when teachers used it, but it was as if we had invented a cure and few people knew. Parents were spending thousands of dollars to try and help their children read. Nothing I was doing as a professor, whether it was teaching classes, talking at conferences or writing papers, was enough to get people to wake up and say: 'I'm going to use the science-driven data to change the way I teach.'

I was so despondent I considered leaving academics behind. My husband and I actually flew to Louisville,

Kentucky to look into purchasing a farm and raising alpacas! I was ready to give up my PhD and a job with great benefits. I was teaching several kids a year to read through private tutoring but it was a drop in a vast ocean.

## Was there a specific catalyst that changed everything?

It's actually an amazing story. I got home from that trip to Kentucky and in my mailbox was David Kilpatrick's book *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* which provides an overview of the best assessment and intervention techniques, backed by the most current research findings. I read chapter one and was blown away; here was everything I knew, laid out so succinctly. He had summarized all the reasons why teachers are so completely sidelined from the science of reading. It was an epiphany.

I picked up the phone and reached out to David and we literally spoke for hours. I was so overcome by sheer

exuberance - here was someone who really understood my deep frustration and passion for science-driven reading instruction. We eventually both had to hang up to go teach our classes, but I was on a high. Our conversation ended with us agreeing that we had to do more. We live ten minutes from each other and decided to get together to finish our conversation.

### **What was the very first Reading League event like?**

After speaking to David, I realized that there were many other people I knew who were feeling the same frustration. If we could band together our collective time, talents and sheer will, maybe we could get forty or so teachers together and start to make a real difference. I worked on reaching out to anyone interested in starting a reading league and within days, one hundred people had responded. This was October of 2015. We connected and planned and pooled our resources, chipping in \$20 to rent a community center. The event was scheduled for January 14th, 2016 and we were so grassroots that my 90-year-old mother and my aunt volunteered to bake cookies! There was a terrible snow storm that night and we were terrified no one would show. One hundred and thirty educators came and stayed for three hours!

As we speak, just three years later, we've completed our 21<sup>st</sup>

## **Reading is not, nor should it be, a visual memorization task.**

live event, with each event limited to 250 attendees. Sometimes schools just have their teachers attend live, others want more and we do in-depth professional development or even provide in-house coaching. To date, over 4,000 people in Central New York have attended. Registration fills up within a couple of hours of posting the details. The popularity and success are the fulfillment of our wildest dreams.

While we're based in Syracuse, there are currently chapters in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, and over sixty people from thirty states have reached out to express interest in starting a chapter in their home state.

### **How did you grow from that first meeting into such a major organization?**

For the first three years all of us had full-time jobs and we were dedicating many hours to this endeavor on a purely volunteer level. That changed when we learned that Pleasant Rowland, the founder of American Girl Collection, was interested in our mission. A former teacher herself, she has been committed to the science of reading for many years and was hoping to find an organization that would bring science to classrooms. In the Spring of 2018, we provided her with a three-year business plan

demonstrating how we would scale up our efforts nationally.

That led to a \$9.125 million investment which allowed me and others to leave our jobs and focus on building a headquarters here in Syracuse and growing The Reading League. Our goal is to build an effective pipeline between research and practice, bringing the knowledge of reading science and effective teaching methods to as many educators as possible, eventually across the country. A knowledgeable educator can teach ALL students to read!

### **What are some of the learning ideas you can share with our readers?**

Reading is not, nor should it be, a visual memorization task. The science proves that memorization is not an efficient strategy; more so, memorizing does not help build the neural circuitry in the brain that will allow all words to be read accurately. Yet for years and years, one of the practices we commonly see is having children memorize 'sight' words.

We are educating the educators as well as parents – anyone, really, who works with people who are learning to read - about the need to understand the science of reading. We get them to ask themselves: Does this approach, this activity, this program, benefit learning as much as possible? Is it something that builds off the science of reading, how the brain works?



Using a science-driven approach results in more focused and efficient instruction that is effective for all students across all abilities, backgrounds and languages.

**Can parents help this process at home?**

Yes. When parents read aloud to their children, they allow the child to imagine something while hearing words they may never have heard before but in the context of words that they understand. Reading aloud is a rich opportunity to build a rich vocabulary.

For example, take the word saunter. If it is in a book about a baby bear who likes to do everything slowly, focus on the words of the story such as “the bear sauntered towards the tree, in no hurry to get there” and allow your child to make connections between “saunter” and “slow.” Later in the day you can build on that understanding by saying “let’s saunter downstairs together” and slowly go down the stairs.

When children begin to read and come to a word they don’t know, help them sound it out and decipher the word based on sounds. When you’re in the car, taking a walk or shopping, rhyme and sing and talk with your child about word sounds, playing with sounds and syllables. All these seemingly small exercises create neural pathways in the language center of the brain.

**Where do you see The Reading League headed?**

We envision a day when parents, teachers and administrators alike can go on our website at any given time and find something then can attend or listen to. Our website already has a knowledge base page with resource lists and there are numerous free videos available online. One day we would like reading instruction in America to have revolutionized into something that is accessible to every single educator. The more educators we reach, the more children they teach.

**Numbers**  
*you need to know*

**85%**  
of children CAN learn to read with these evidenced-based approaches in the classroom.

Currently only about **45%** of children are reading at proficiency levels (as measured by 3rd grade reading assessments).

Up to **55%** of children will need additional help to read.

For more information and resources visit [www.thereadingleague.org](http://www.thereadingleague.org)

**THE READING LEAGUE IS COMING TO MONSEY!**

**TUESDAY  
FEB 25  
2020  
7:30pm-10pm**

**FEATURING**

**Dr. Maria Murray,**  
*Founder of The Reading League*

**Mr. John Corcoran,**  
*"The Teacher Who Couldn't Read"*

*Chestnut Ridge  
Middle School  
892 Chestnut Ridge Rd  
Chestnut Ridge, NY 10977*

**Seating is limited!  
Register now:**

*tinyurl.com/thereadingleague  
or call 845-661-4194*

# SCHOOLS *Speak*

The CEC currently services more than 60 schools; diverse and dynamic, they are all unique, yet unified in one mission: to provide the best for our students. This issue, we are proud to highlight the following schools:

## YESHIVA BAIS HACHINUCH

Rabbi Yaakov Oppen, Principal of Yeshiva Bais Hachinuch, together with Mrs. Baila Malka Shuchatowitz, Title IIA Consultant, have instituted a unique system for ongoing professional development within the teaching staff. In place of the more traditional multi-hour teacher workshops that are given sporadically at the beginning, middle or end of a school year, Bais Hachinuch has crafted a system of ongoing workshops that are tailored to achieve year-long change in bite-size increments. “The biggest challenge is taking information and tools from concept to reality,” says Rabbi Oppen. This is why their system of coaching, observation, consultation, and implementation is so successful. Workshops are given every 4-6 weeks for a maximum of one hour. This makes the material easier to digest and assimilate. The workshops are then followed by classroom observation and individual consultation with Mrs. Shuchatowitz so that teachers get the direction and guidance they need to implement the strategies in their classrooms.

Rabbi Oppen and Mrs. Shuchatowitz choose the year’s strategic development goal with an eye to where they have seen the most need expressed by teachers. They then build a systemized plan to teach it in increments with guided consultation tailored to each individual classroom. The training and integration move from grade to grade with scope and sequence.

This year’s overall strategic focus is improving students’ writing, and the most recent workshop focused on developing the skill of expressing thoughts, an essential building block for successful writing. Mrs. Shuchatowitz draws from the many programs available today including the Collins Writing Program, Writing is Thinking, 6+1 Traits of Writing, Writer’s Workshop, and others. She shares that teachers have expressed that the ongoing training and follow-up responds more to their immediate needs and gives them real-time support which drives their teaching to higher levels.

## MOSDOS KLAUSENBERG

Mrs. Baila Adler, General Studies Principal of Mosdos Klausenberg, has created an exceptional academic enrichment program under Title IV for the upper elementary grades. “Play it the Scientific Way” is the theme for this year’s program (which has been preceded by “Play it the U.S. Way” and before that “Play it the World Way”).

As its name implies, this year’s program brings the wonder of the scientific world into students’ lives with a new question each week that piques their curiosity. Why does bread rise? What kind of bridge design is strongest? From earth’s magnetic pull to the effect of oil on plants, fascinating topics of interest are explored in

a hands on way. The question of the week is introduced in each classroom with worksheets and experiments, and students tackle hypotheses and results. They delve into the science behind the fun and gain lots of interesting information. By repeating the experiment at home, they can earn extra points on the weekly tests. (Double points if they take on the “Change It Up” challenge and share what happens to the results when they change the experiment!) Girls earn science beaker bracelet charms by earning top scores on the weekly tests, and classes are competing to earn a special trip by filling up their beaker posters proudly displayed in the hallway. “This program took off in a powerful way,” Mrs. Adler shares, “Mothers feel like this is opening up a whole new world to their kids, and the take-home aspect really involves the whole family. Their sons wait eagerly to hear the question each week!”

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CEC WORKSHOPS

**Better Teacher Skills for Better Student Learning**



THE RECENT WORKSHOP, WORKING WITH AUDITORY CHALLENGES, WAS GIVEN BY **Lois Kam Heymann, M.A. CCC-SLP, a Speech and Language Pathologist with over 30 years of experience working with children who have listening, hearing and learning challenges.**

**“I have learned simple strategies to increase auditory listening, whole body listening and vocabulary building.”**

*Mrs. Malka Rubinstein, Title I Director, Bas Mikroh Girls School*

**“I learned many fascinating insights on how to reach children with auditory processing difficulties.”**

*Mrs. Chaya Pessy Mayer, Remedial Teacher, Bais Shifra Miriam*

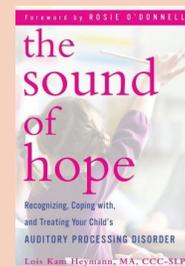
## WORKING WITH

# Auditory Challenges

There are many children who deal with auditory issues due to hearing loss and ear infections: problems with auditory attention, auditory discrimination, auditory memory, phonological awareness and auditory comprehension, or diagnosed auditory processing disorder. All of these auditory issues can impact a child’s ability to comprehend and ultimately be successful in the classroom.

The recent workshop, Working with Auditory Challenges, was given by Lois Kam Heymann, M.A. CCC-SLP, a Speech and Language Pathologist with over 30 years of experience working with children who have listening, hearing and learning challenges. This workshop focused on how educators can understand and approach children with auditory issues, as well as on evidence-based skills and strategies for reaching and teaching these children. Classroom teachers, remedial educators, and one-on-one tutors walked away with hands-on tools for improving a child’s ability to listen to instructions, process information, and follow directions.

Lois Kam Heymann has presented hundreds of in-service workshops, seminars and conferences, and is the author of The Sound of Hope: Recognizing, Coping with and Treating Your Child’s Auditory Processing Disorder (Random House Publishing, 2010), a practical guide to help parents dramatically improve the listening and language skills of their children. Ms. Heymann’s recent workshop for educators was met with much success and enthusiasm. Teachers left the workshop with increased knowledge and techniques to help them with their students.



As always, the CEC takes every opportunity to help teachers grow in their skills. The past few months saw numerous successful workshops, including learning how to handle intense emotions in children with social communication problems as well as special training for veteran and new teacher coaches.

**“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”** Benjamin Franklin

## Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment Program

A workshop on the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment Program was given by Mrs. Deena Beard, a representative of the Feuerstein Institute in Israel. The primary goal of the Feuerstein program is to help develop thinking and problem-solving skills and to build cognitive strategies that will be applied to all types of learning. The program focuses on **process** over **end goal** and it empowers growth in executive function, organization of information (*including backpacks!*), and processing skills.

Using a mediated learning approach, teachers provoke students' interest and curiosity by asking questions such as “How did you come up with that answer?” or “What steps did you take to tackle that problem?” They explicitly focus on the required thinking skill in a task and bring awareness to the specific skill being utilized such as logic, comparisons, planning, control of impulsivity, or summation, to name a few.

Feuerstein's paper-based “instruments” (worksheets and other tools) are used to challenge the child's mind and develop learning skills. A 12-piece puzzle flipped over on its back may present a daunting challenge, but with a Feuerstein approach, a child's eyes will be opened to the information present. One may look for corner pieces to begin, another may sort the edge pieces from the center pieces, and others will start trying to fit pieces together in a random way. The focus will be on the process – what skills and thought processes are being engaged.

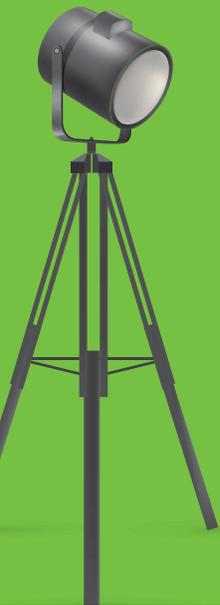
When teachers follow this program, there is a systematic buildup of critical thinking, development of student responsibility, and student understanding and meaning by empowering the students to own their learning.



THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THE FEUERSTEIN PROGRAM IS TO **help develop thinking and problem-solving skills and to build cognitive strategies that will be applied to all types of learning.**

**“Our Title I mentors have implemented the Feuerstein techniques and we're already seeing carryover in their regular classroom learning. We keep hearing from the classroom teachers that their students are saying, “I'm using this strategy that I learned...” The girls are reporting back to their mentor-tutors that they're using the tools all over, even in social settings, by asking themselves “If I do this, what will the end result be?”**

*Mrs. Faigy Kohn, Remedial Director,  
Ateres Bonois*



# FOCUS ON...

## Ms. Merritte Mellion

*Even after more than a decade coordinating the Office of Funded Programs for East Ramapo Central School District, Ms. Mellion's passion and vibrancy make it clear that not only does she love her job, she's very good at what she does. Right off the bat, Ms. Mellion provides the ultimate quote, sharing, "When you impact hundreds of educators you impact thousands and thousands of children. The learning and skills reverberate for years!"*

Born and bred in Monsey, Ms. Mellion grew up with both parents as educators. She is thrilled to be working in her community where she has the "wonderful opportunity to see the

growth and development." Her job includes very diverse tasks and many days she can be found working past hours to connect with all the private schools that operate past four p.m. The Office of Funded Programs enhances educational support for students in public and nonpublic schools. Ms. Mellion focuses on development, implementation and monitoring of an array of

**“When you impact hundreds of educators you impact thousands and thousands of children. The learning and skills reverberate for years!”**

education programs especially for teachers and administrators of the private school sector. With more than ninety private schools currently operating in the District, that translates into a lot of work. “We meet with principals and administrators of numerous private schools several times throughout the year in order to get a sense of the type of needs their schools face in reference to professional development,” Ms. Mellion says. Once the needs are understood, she coordinates workshop subjects, presenters and schedules, making sure they are culturally sensitive and logistically possible for the teachers and schools. What does that entail? “Sometimes we’ll adjust a workshop to cover three half days rather than four. Other times we’ll break the workshop into two parts separated by several weeks to allow the teachers to get into

the classroom, try out the new skills and then come back to fine tune them.”

Forty to fifty private schools participate in professional development (PD) throughout the year. By coordinating with the District and CEC, Ms. Mellion facilitates a plethora of workshops accessible to numerous schools at one time. This structure allows smaller schools the opportunities to participate. Workshops continue throughout the summer months, where Ms. Mellion will coordinate days and times around day camp schedules in order to best accommodate the teachers’ needs. Ms. Mellion extolls the

## By coordinating with the District and CEC, Ms. Mellion facilitates a plethora of workshops accessible to numerous schools at one time.

collaborative effort and atmosphere with the CEC and the District. “We have a great working relationship, one that has actually been recognized by the state. We share a positive attitude and a mindset of being there to help children and educators grow.”

One of the most satisfying aspects of Ms. Mellion’s job is seeing first-hand how the workshops impact the teachers and, in turn, the students. “I absolutely love the opportunity to visit the schools and watch the new skills happening in the classroom, with the students.” Whether it is in the classroom, where a teacher has a new way to effectively teach a skill or in private mentor-tutor work, where the mentor has another tool in his or her toolbox to utilize in reaching a struggling student, the impact of professional development is clear. “It is very heartwarming to see the results of our efforts.”

## ASK THE EXPERT

**Dr. Susan Heinz, Ph.D.**  
(**Education Today, Issue 5**)  
answers a literacy question

**Question:** *I’ve heard a lot about the ‘Big Five’ needed for success in reading: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension. Now I’m hearing about the importance of ‘Knowledge’ and I wonder, as a teacher and a parent, how to incorporate this skill for reading success.*

**Answer:** Building ‘knowledge’ is often neglected. A word can be decoded and ‘read’ but without knowledge there is no meaning attached to that word. You can help your children and students build the knowledge they will need to unlock textual understanding by:

1. **Talking.** From the earliest ages, give names to things, explore their world, and talk about how things work and how they are alike and different.
2. **Reading** aloud. To toddlers and to older children, even when they can read for information by

themselves. Read texts that may be above their reading level but not above their thinking and interest levels and talk with them about what you are reading.

3. **Playing.** Vocabulary games, riddles, jokes, etc. all encourage their curiosity about words—and the world.

*Reference: Perspectives on Language and Literacy, Fall 2019, “The Importance of Knowledge”*

[bookstore@DyslexiaIDA.org](mailto:bookstore@DyslexiaIDA.org)

NON PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT 70  
MONSEY NY



## ASK THE EXPERT

**We want to hear from YOU!**

Education Today is all about informing  
and guiding parents.

## DO YOU HAVE A LITERACY QUESTION REGARDING YOUR CHILD?

Submit your question and Dr. Maria Murray will respond to it in our next issue of Education Today.

**SUBMIT HERE**



**845.356.9612** Please title Att: Parent Portal



**Parentportal@coconline.org**

**SB** SHOSHANA BERNSTEIN  
WRITING &  
COMMUNICATIONS  
914.707.0057

Designed by  **OLORUSH**