

# Gray Academy of Jewish Education

## *Ruach Reflections*

### A Weekly Bulletin

December 1, 2006 • 10 Kislev 5767

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#### **NEW FRENCH PROGRAM LAUNCHED FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**

Last year our Elementary French Department was among the first in the province to introduce a revolutionary new approach to second language instruction to students in the elementary grades.

Bev Rosenstock, French Teacher for JK-3, brought in the ***Histoires en Action*** program that encompasses the Accelerative Integrated Method (AIM). This gesture approach to learning French has a kinesthetic style with distinct hand and arm gestures for each word of French vocabulary taught.

For example, the word “Je”, meaning “I”, has students pointing to themselves in the context of a complete sentence. For the word “to listen”, students will cup their hand behind their ear to demonstrate the meaning of the word.

“In a few years we will see a higher level of fluency in French among the older students”, Scott Hartnell enthusiastically articulates, French teacher for grades 4-6. “Someone who followed the program from K-6 will be more fluent, and there will be significant gains for students reaching an increased level of vocabulary.”

Last year for grades 2-6, both Madame Rosenstock and Monsieur Hartnell's students performed the play "**Les trois petits cochons**", known as "*The Three Little Pigs*" using the AIM approach. Students had an opportunity to create little puppets of the play's characters in class, and then take them home so they could practice their lines with their parents as the audience.

This year, students in grades 4, 5, 6 will be performing the new play "*Comment y aller?*", and for grades 2 and 3, they will be performing the play "*Le chat et la lune*" – both with the visual support of handmade puppets they create themselves.

"I'm really proud of the children and they are always making an effort to speak French both in class and outside of class," says Bev Rosenstock. At the end of each of her classes, students are encouraged to place "une carte" (a ticket) in a box that says en français: "I only spoke French today."

The students are so excited about learning a new language they even stop Madame in the hallway so they can receive a "billet rouge" (red ticket) every time they speak French out of the classroom.

For further information on the elementary French program, please contact:

Bev Rosenstock  
French Teacher (JK-3)  
Gray Academy of Jewish Education  
(204) 477-7501 x830

Scott Hartnell  
French Teacher (4-6)  
Gray Academy of Jewish Education  
(204) 477-7501 x801

## **ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM**

Recently, the Province of Manitoba changed the term ESL to a more contemporary sounding name to reflect the fact that most new arrivals to Canada already possess more than one language before getting here. The reference to a "second language" might now be seen as inaccurate or misleading. The program is now referred to as EAL (English as an Additional Language).

With a post Baccalaureate degree in ESL, Alison Mendres has been teaching at Gray Academy for nine years. Together with Education Assistant Patti Morris, they both have been working with new immigrants who are eager, excited and even nervous, about beginning their new life in Winnipeg.

This year the ESL/EAL program at Gray Academy is supporting about 35 students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. About 14 of these children fall into the Pre-Beginner classification which means they possess very limited English language skills.

People often ask Mrs. Mendres, "Where do you start with students who have no English?" The answer is that students do not begin formal language instruction right away. Children who come to a foreign country are usually a bit overwhelmed and are not always in a relaxed frame of mind to learn. They are in strange surroundings as have left their childhood homes, their extended families, friends, pets, and the only way of life they have ever known.

Mrs. Mendres says that at the beginning she tries to make their transition to a Canadian classroom as easy as possible. She will first help them to find their way around the school and engage them in art activities to decorate the classroom to help make it inviting. At this early stage, EAL students are beginning to learn English quite effortlessly.

Once the students feel more comfortable, the teaching staff begins language development through games, hands-on activities, visuals, videos, music, and practices in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The students learn vocabulary for the school and home environments, the human body, clothing, animals, colours and shapes, foods, meals, seasons, and, of course, so much more.

Once some basic vocabulary is in place they can branch out a bit into reading and writing. For children in the Beginner and Intermediate categories of ESL/EAL development, programs based on the needs of individual students are developed. These students get instruction in basic science, short stories, novels, grammar, spelling, and an introduction to the provinces and capital cities of Canada.

In addition they work on two or three thematic units per school year. These topics are presented at three different levels so that all students participate according to their ability. The subject matter has included a variety of topics such as fish, wolves, water, elephants, the rain forest, endangered animals, and butterflies and so on.

"It is interesting that so many people believe that the younger you are, the easier you 'pick up' a language. This, too, is erroneous. A child in kindergarten has a narrow language base of about 1,000 words. Compare this to a student entering Grade 10. He or she has about 11,000 words to 'catch up' on. Thus the rate of acquisition is about the same. Research also shows that a child entering Kindergarten with no English will not be on par with his or her Canadian counterparts until the age of 11. The same is true for a child born in Canada to immigrant parents. We never think of these students as second language learners and yet they are," states Alison Mendres.

"I am constantly amazed at the bravery of families who come to a new country. They must contend with a new language, new customs, and different weather patterns, establishing new

careers, and suffering from homesickness. But they do it! After all these years in ESL, I can still say that I love my job,” Alison Mendres says proudly.

For further information on ESL/EAL program, please contact:

Alison Mendres  
ESL/EAL Teacher  
Gray Academy of Jewish Education  
(204) 477-7501 x872

## **REACH FOR THE TOP**

Last year’s Intermediate Team won the Provincial Championship for ***Reach for the Top*** and are back again this year to claim another title at the senior level.

Under the direction of Head Librarian and Coach Janet Gould, along with teachers Scott Hartnell and Judy Doctoroff, Gray Academy students meet twice a week at lunch time to test their proficiency in categories from Canadian History to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Wars to Sports with the use of the popular game *Trivial Pursuit* to assist with enlarging their information base.

In competition, for example, there is an assigned question to each team of four students in which each member of a team is assigned points for every question answered accurately. If you miss your question, then the counterpart on the opposing team will have a chance at obtaining the points.

A sample question on Canadian History could be “Who was Prime Minister when the following events occurred?”

- Canadian Embassy smuggles U.S. embassy staff out of Iran
- The War Measures Act is imposed in 1970
- Completion of the C.P.R. in 1885
- Opening of Expo 67 in Montreal

This year’s Senior Team is composed of grade 11 students: Binyamin Cohen, Aaron Micflikier, Adam Kaplan, Michael Schwartz, Sam Shuster and David Coodin.

The Intermediate Team includes the following grade 9 and 10 students: Sam Fineblit, Josh Fineblit, Josh Morry, Jonathan Ripstein, Joey Frohlinger, Mitchell Billinkoff, Yitzchak Cohen and Aden Benarroch.

Both teams will have their first tournament next week on December 5 (Senior) and December 7 (Intermediate) with most players on the intermediate team new to *Reach for the Top*.

"We're excited to have two Reach for the Top Teams this year. We expect our new Intermediate team will defend the title of our last year's provincial champions, and we are looking forward to a great showing in the Senior League from our 'masters of trivia.' The great support our teams receive at tournaments from parents, families and friends encourages our players to 'Reach for the Top!'" says Coach Janet Gould proudly.

For further information on Reach for the Top, please contact:

Janet Gould  
Head Librarian  
Gray Academy of Jewish Education  
(204) 477-7499

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The Kaufman Silverberg Library has tribute cards that can be purchased starting at \$10. All monies received through the purchase of tribute cards support the school in the acquisition of books and resources for the library.

The library serves not only Gray Academy students and teachers but the larger community and is open to the public on the following days:

- Monday-Thursday: 8:15 am - 8:00 pm
- Friday: 8:15am – 2:30 pm
- Sunday: 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Please call Linda Goodbrandson at 477-7476 in the library to send your tribute cards today to family and friends for any occasion. We thank you for your support of Gray Academy!

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS!**

Mazel Tov to grade 8 student Yavniel Field who won the JW Jugglefest Competition yesterday.

Congratulations to ESL/EAL teacher Alison Mendres on the birth of her grandson George Emerson weighing 8lbs and 5ozs. This is the third grandchild for Mrs. Mendres. Mazel Tov!

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