

Akiba Academy of Dallas  
JECEI Accreditation Program Portfolio  
2010

**Principle 3: Indicator # 10**

Lay Leadership Partners with Professional Leadership to champion the JECEI change process to create schools of excellence and engage families in Jewish living and learning

## 10A – JECEI Leadership Team Members

- Jordana Bernstein, Early Childhood Director
- Beverly Millican, Host Institution Leadership Team
- Gail Mabel, Chaverim Teacher and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tier Leadership Team
- Marni Denn, K'Ton Ton Teacher
- Sarah Lipinsky, Teenoki Teacher
- Sheryl Wernick, Chair of Education Task Force, Middle and Lower school parent, Executive Board Member
- Lisa Strobel – Preschool and Lower School Parent
- Hilary Stern – Preschool Parent

**Indicator 10 - Lay Leadership partners with Professional Leadership to champion the JECEI change process to create schools of excellence and engage families in Jewish living and learning.**

**10.1 Lay and Professional Leadership take responsibility for supporting and implementing the JECEI change process.**

10.2 A JECEI Leadership team consisting of professional and lay leadership (director and/or 2nd tier leader, teacher, parent, lay leaders, and host institution professional and lay leader) meets regularly to guide the JECEI change process.

10.3 The JECEI Leadership Team maintains ongoing connections to and communication with the host institution and other Jewish ECE school structures that are involved in decision making and/or programming (e.g. board, committees, PTO, elementary school day or religious school).

**10.4 Lay Leadership seeks resources to support the work of the JECEI change process.**

10.5 Lay Leadership partners with Professional Leadership to build a school community.

**10.6 Lay leadership participates in policy and decision making based on research and/or the school vision.**

**10.7 Lay Leadership is committed to sustaining the JECEI approach to Jewish early childhood education.**

10.8 Lay Leadership participates in recognizing and celebrating moments of school growth, transition, and/or accomplishment.

**10.9 Lay Leadership strengthens linkages between the school and other Jewish institutions.**

**10.10 Lay leadership advocates for early childhood education in the school, host institution, and community.**

**10.11 Lay and professional leadership put in place a system that provides ways for families to learn about both current and future ways of engaging in Jewish living and learning.**

10.12 Educators are prepared for their role to discuss with parents Jewish living and learning questions and opportunities

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### **Lay and Professional Leadership in the First Three Years of JECEI (2005-2008)**

Both the professional and lay leaders of Akiba have always welcomed being on the cutting edge of the field of education both in the Early Childhood Program and in the Lower and Middle Schools. JECEI was first brought to the educational professionals by the lay leadership, and all welcomed the opportunity to work with JECEI, without necessarily realizing the amount of change that would take place. In addition, the ramifications of the change were truly not understood, as well as the need for a formal infrastructure. In retrospect we see that collaborative work with lay leadership and school administration is paramount to the foundation of this change process.

In the three years that JECEI was here with consultative support, the main item that engaged professional and lay leaders revolved around compensation for dedicated and “sacred” time for the teachers to meet, reflect, plan, and work towards our JECEI goals. Although the board responded by allotting some compensated time for the teachers, this single item did not bring together the lay and professional leaders in a way that would support and facilitate the process of making joint decisions regarding the early childhood program and JECEI in the future.

### **A Challenge to JECEI’s Presence at Akiba (Fall 2009)**

In August 2009, a crisis emerged and concerns were expressed that the children coming from the Akiba early childhood program were not academically, socially, and emotionally prepared for kindergarten. This occurred at the same time that there was a change in the professional leadership of the host institution. At this point a relationship between professional leadership and lay leadership emerged that enabled them to work together to develop a better understanding about what JECEI is and why JECEI is important to the children, families, educators, and the future of the school as a whole.

### **Connecting JECEI to Best Practices in Early Childhood Education (2009)**

In order to re-establish its approach as worthwhile to the overall host institution, JECEI supported bringing in Ann Lewin-Benham, author and expert Reggio-inspired educator to work with the teachers, the director, the parents, as well as the lay leadership. To begin her work with the school, Ann assessed the program in order to develop a work plan that would best meet the school's needs to merge constructivist practice with academic standards. Ann then consulted in a series of 4 workshops that included teacher training, director support, and parent teacher workshops.

### **Lay and Professional Leadership Moving Forward Together with the JECEI Approach (2009-2010)**

Ann's presentations were all based on highly regarded theorists and philosophers, and current research, such as that on the brain and young children and their families. Ann showed how the Reggio-inspired approach promotes literacy and she successfully convinced lay leaders, parents, and educators of this fact. Now decisions are being made by lay and professional leaders to fund further work and consultation with Ann for 2010-2011.

The combination of the JECEI team and Ann's consultations built lay and professional support among board members, heads of school, lower and middle school educators, parents, and early childhood educators. We are now on a path towards working cohesively to implement the JECEI change process, as exemplified by: the host institution professional leadership articulating the importance of JECEI to lay leadership; the board of directors voting to pursue and support the JECEI accreditation process; and the educators and early childhood director enthusiastically committing to the JECEI accreditation process.

(See publicity about Ann Lewin-Benham's parent teacher workshops in 2.2.2 )

#### **10.4 Lay Leadership seeks resources to support the work of the JECEI change process.**

- Several grants were written to the Executive Board of Directors for resources that would support the consultation visits and recommendations made by Ann Lewin-Benham (see 10.1 for details). The board voted to support these grant proposals.
- The teachers were granted compensated planning/meeting time to work on the JECEI change process (see 10.1. for details)

#### **10.9 Lay leadership strengthens linkages between the school and other Jewish institutions.**

#### **10.10 Lay leadership advocates for early childhood education in the school, host institution, and community.**

- Parent committees were formed to support and help plan the National Jewish Early Childhood Network Conference school tour as part of the NAEYC annual conference that was held in Dallas in 2008
  - The Akiba Board of Directors designated funds in the budget to host this event that included early childhood educators and professionals from all over the country
  - Akiba educators shared their JECEI journey with guest educators at this event
- Akiba partnered with the Center for Jewish Education to offer Teacher training/incentive credits to attend workshops given by Ann Lewin-Benham at Akiba (see publicity that follows)

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**Jordana Bernstein**

**From:** Melissa Bernstein [mbernstein@jfgd.org]  
**Sent:** Friday, January 08, 2010 12:18 PM  
**To:** beckyudman@tdsd.org; Bonnie Rubinstein; Esther Cohen; Faith Retsky; Jordana Bernstein; RGoldschmidt; Shelly Sender; Sheryl Feinberg; TOhayon  
**Subject:** Ann Lewin Benham January 19 2010  
**Attachments:** Debbie Niederman January 11 2010.doc; Debbie Niederman January 20 2010.doc; Ann Lewin Benham January 19 2010.doc

Directors,

Attached you will find a flyer for an upcoming workshop with Ann Lewin-Benham on **Tuesday, January 19 at Akiba**. Teachers will receive 2 Incentive Points for attending this session.

**Teachers can RSVP for January 19 to me or Jordana.**

I am also resending the flyers for the workshops with Debbie Niederman. Please remind your teachers that there is a session on Monday night, January 11 at Levine.

See you Monday at the council meeting at 2:00pm in the CJE.

Melissa Bernstein  
Assistant Director, Center for Jewish Education  
Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas  
7800 Northaven Road  
Dallas, Texas 75230

214-239-7134

*OUR MISSION:* To serve on behalf of the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas as the resource to facilitate and convene the Jewish community on issues pertaining to Jewish education, to enrich existing programs, and serve as a catalyst for new initiatives. To support Jewish education as the critical link in ensuring Jewish continuity and the increased engagement of all members of the Greater Dallas Jewish community.

This is an e-mail (January 2010) sent to all directors of Jewish Early Childhood Programs by the Assistant Director for the Center for Jewish Education (CJE) publicizing the training opportunity with Reggio-inspired expert Ann Lewin-Benham. This event was hosted by Akiba in collaboration with the CJE for all Jewish early childhood educators in the community. Incentive training points were offered by the CJE.

**The Early Childhood Education Department of Akiba Academy**

Invites you to attend this special workshop

**Reading and Writing**

Essentials of Early Childhood Literacy Experiences



**Guest Speaker**  
Ann Lewin-Benham  
Educator/Author

**Tuesday, January 19, 2010**  
7 to 8:30 p.m., Pollman Hall at Akiba Academy

*Wine and Desserts Served - Free Admission*

Educator Ann Lewin-Benham returns to Akiba to address an entirely new subject: early childhood **literacy**. Amongst the subjects discussed will be how preschool environments can create experiences that **support emerging literacy**, the benefits of encouraging **playing with sounds** at home, and how to best **nurture early signs of writing**.

Ann Lewin-Benham has written two books: *Possible Schools: The Reggio Approach to Urban Education* (2006), and *Powerful Children: Understanding How to Teach and Learn Using the Reggio Approach* (2008). Her strong credentials have made her an expert in the Reggio educational approach, a method that is a strong element in the philosophy of early childhood education at Akiba.

Currently a consultant to Johns Hopkins University's School of Education, Ms. Lewin-Benham has been conducting a four-part workshop this year at Akiba, for the benefit of educators and parents of Akiba, as well as educators and members of the Dallas community.

**This event is promoted by**



**Reservations are encouraged - Childcare available with reservations only!**

(214) 295-3400 [info@akibaacademy.org](mailto:info@akibaacademy.org)

**Questions? Contact Jordana Bernstein, Director of Early Childhood education at Akiba**  
[jbernstein@akibaacademy.org](mailto:jbernstein@akibaacademy.org)

**10.9 Lay Leadership strengthens linkages between the school and other Jewish institutions.**

**10.10 Lay leadership advocates for early childhood education in the school, host institution, and community.**

This is a flyer that circulated throughout the community advertising the Ann Lewin-Benham training event which was hosted by Akiba in collaboration with the CJE on January 19, 2010.



## **10.11 Lay and Professional Leadership put in place a system that provides ways for families to learn about current and future ways of engaging in Jewish living and learning.**

- Community Kollel of Dallas is on campus and offers adult Jewish education classes for families
- Kindergarten 101 – This is an evening for early childhood parents to come and learn about the benefits of sending their children to Akiba for Kindergarten – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (see publicity)
- Chaverim (PreK) teachers and Kindergarten teachers plan for Chaverim children to visit Kindergarten throughout the year and have meaningful experiences. These experiences are then communicated to the families via the teacher’s Daily Reflections/ Weekly Newsletters so parents can get a good sense of what the future holds for their child in our Kindergarten program (see sample reflection)
- The Akiba Ambassadors are a group of dedicated parents that have been identified from early childhood – middle school that serve as cheerleaders for the school. This committee meets together throughout the year along with the educational administrators and the Director of Recruitment and Retention. At meetings various aspects of the school are highlighted and the ambassadors share their own stories with one another about how Akiba’s Jewish education has positively impacted their lives. Ambassadors can be assigned to incoming families or other families that the school is working to retain, as well as attend various school events to build school spirit.

**Jordana Bernstein**

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**From:** Karen Hazan-Cohen  
**Sent:** Monday, October 20, 2008 8:44 AM  
**To:** Dorit Schonbrunn; Terri Rohan; Christie Morris; Gail Mabel; Kochava Malka  
**Cc:** Jordana Bernstein  
**Subject:** Kindergarten 101 meeting ~ please remind your parents!

**Chaverim and Nitzanim Parents:**  
**Kindergarten 101 - Sneak Peek at Next Year!**

**Tuesday, October 28, 7:30 p.m.**

On the heels of a great start to this academic year, allow us to introduce you to our exciting **Kindergarten program!** On Tuesday, October 28, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. you are cordially invited to attend Akiba's Kindergarten 101 - a sneak peek into next year's classroom experience.

**Objective?** Share with you information regarding our secular and Judaic curricula and our skills development plan, discuss readiness for kindergarten, and share the schedule of a typical kindergarten school day with you.

**Ask Questions!** Our directors of general studies and early childhood education, Dr. Beverly Millican and Jordana Bernstein, as well as our terrific Kindergarten Faculty will be available to answer your questions, and to lead tours of the classrooms. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to learn what our kindergarten and elementary programs have to offer! We look forward to seeing you there!

Karen Hazan-Cohen, Director, Recruitment and Retention  
Hanna Lambert, Director, Admissions

*Note: If you are unable to attend this evening's event but are interested in learning more about our kindergarten program, please contact Hanna Lambert in our admissions office and she will coordinate a private appointment to observe the classroom.*

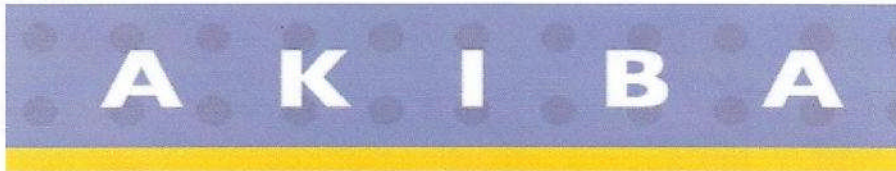
Karen Hazan-Cohen  
Director of Recruitment and Retention  
Akiba Academy of Dallas  
12324 Merit Drive  
Dallas, TX 75251  
214-295-3400

**10.11 Lay and Professional Leadership put in place a system that provides ways for families to learn about current and future ways of engaging in Jewish living and learning.**

This e-mail went to all Nitzanim and Chaverim families (3 years–PreK) inviting them to Kindergarten 101 (a retention event). The e-mail outlines the program's highlights, which include learning about: the secular and Judaic curricula in Kindergarten, the schedule, and the overall program.

## Gail Mabel

**From:** Gail Mabel  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 24, 2010 3:59 PM  
**To:** AKam; BFinkelstein; DGaswirth; EStone; GAbouzaglo; GKam; JKSevers; KKaliser; LRaphael; MCohen; MKaliser; NWolfe; RStone; SAbouzaglo; SRaphael; SRosen  
**Cc:** Jordana Bernstein; Beverly Millican; Liz Morris; Jennifer Squires  
**Subject:** Daily Reflection 3-24-10



March 24, 2010

Dear Parents,

We received a special invitation this morning from Miss Jennifer and some of her kindergarten students:



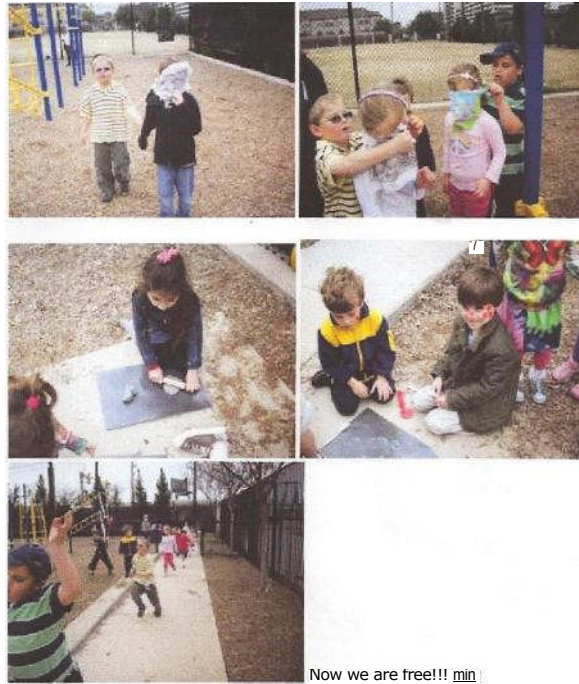
The kindergarten classes have been working very hard planning, preparing and successfully putting together a Pesach obstacle course and they invited all of the Chaverim children to join them! You could see how fully invested the kindergarten children were in this joint project and they did a beautiful job of hosting and leading the Chaverim children through all the well prepared stations. The stations were Pesach related – either telling part of the story of Pesach or having the children relive some of the Pesach experiences.



## 10.11 Lay and Professional Leadership put in place a system that provides ways for families to learn about current and future ways of engaging in Jewish living and learning.

The next three slides include a sample of a Daily Reflection sent to the Chaverim (Prek) parents highlighting the experience their children had with the Kindergarteners learning about Pesach. The Prek and Kindergarten teachers plan multiple learning/sharing opportunities throughout the year so that the PreK children and families can make a connection with the Kindergarten program.





Now we are free!!! min!

We reflected with the children afterwards and they had a lot to say:

Zolomon - "First in the obstacle, Baby Moshe; you had to move Baby Moshe to the palace. I had to build a palace."

Yasmine - "We were running with holding Baby Moshe and then we built a pyramid."

Hannah - "We went jumping like frogs and we made pretend Matzah."

Katie - "I liked the part where the darkness was and I didn't know where I was going; I thought I was going out of the gate, then in the gate and then to the boils!"

Eli - "I liked the wild animals and the hail. I liked when we went across the balance beam."

Lexie - "I liked when we had boils on us."

Ari - 1 liked the part when I climbed up the slide."

Brian - 1 liked the darkness sign - it was pretty spooky!"

Clearly the children loved this Pesach obstacle challenge. Brian summed up the course, "You had to run down the bloody to get freedom!"

We invited the children to draw pictures of their favorite part of the obstacle course so we could send it with our thanks to the kindergartners and their wonderfully creative teachers! What a great learning experience for all and a fun way to let the Chaverim kids get a glimpse into the wonderful world of kindergarten!

10 C) Provide a list of ways the school encourages and facilitates families exploring current and future ways of engaging in Jewish living and learning