

JPPS students 'twinned' with children of the Holocaust

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Special to The CJN

Pride in our past, confidence in our future – these are the words that drive Jewish People's and Peretz Schools (JPPS) and Bialik schools to guide their students in their learning while propelling them toward the future.

The two schools that make up the JPPS-Bialik system are the only Jewish day schools in North America that include Yiddish with English, French and Hebrew in their curriculum.

Taking a stroll through the corridors of either school on any given day, you can see a bevy of activity as students complement their classroom learning by taking part in such activities as Radio Bialik.

At the elementary level, students have taken top honours at math competitions, including the Canadian National Mathematics League Competition.

Through their Jewish education at JPPS, the students become the link between the past, present and future. They convey the memories and carry the promise of new opportunities.

Community outreach is integral to the philosophy at



This Memory Album was created by Grade 6 students of JPPS, who participated in a Holocaust twinning project.

JPPS-Bialik and ensures that students understand the need to support the greater community through volunteer work, charity and advocacy. There are many lessons to be learned outside of the classroom.

The commemoration of Yom Hashoah is a unique experience for the Grade 6 students. As part of their studies, they visit the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Museum, and throughout the year, they are encouraged to study and absorb this time in history.

Aiming to provide a cross-curricular experience, Yiddish teachers begin by "twinning" students with children of the Holocaust. Connected by common threads such as birth date, name or age with a child of the Holocaust, a student learns about her/his twin through research as she/he tries to piece together as much as possible about the twin's life. Students grow to understand a bit more about the lives that were lost by connecting with a real person. A twins' memory album is created each year. A copy of the first album was sent to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, in Israel.

Hebrew teachers pick up where the Yiddish teachers leave off. They highlight the heroic acts of bravery by the children in the ghetto and in the camps, familiarizing students with hardships faced daily by the children of the Holocaust. Continuing on in the English curriculum, students explore the themes of freedom, unity, strength, hope and peace, and create a final photo-essay project. This way "Never again" comes closer to becoming a reality of which they are a part.

As tactile, hands-on experiences are often those that are remembered best, this year saw a new project introduced to teach the students about the spiritual and artistic resistance – the Courage to Care quilt. Each student was assigned a Righteous Gentile or family who risked their lives to save Jews. After the students researched their lives and how they had the courage to care for a Jewish life, student work and pictures were placed on coloured pieces of cardboard that were assembled to create the quilt. After the students' work and pictures were attached with paper clips, to honour the Paperclips Project of Whitwell Middle School in Tennessee, the quilt was complete.

French studies dovetail easily from focusing on the events of the Holocaust to teaching the children about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Students do intensive research on heroes of recent history who have stood up in the face of racial and religious persecution, such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Mother Theresa, facilitating lively debates. Delving further, students compare our Canadian democracy to the former apartheid state of South Africa. Children's rights are also explored by focusing on the Children's Charter of Rights and learning about children who are forced to work or become soldiers.

For more information about JPPS-Bialik, visit. www.jpssbialik.ca.



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