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RTA Matters

RUDLIN TORAH ACADEMY RICHMOND HEBREW DAY SCHOOL

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RTA 2015: The Year of the Chromebook

Sarah Gold Pritzker

RTA is proud to announce a new dynamic project for 2015, the Chromebook Initiative. As part of RTA's more global Technology Plan, the goal of the Chromebook Initiative is to provide 1:1 computer access for all students in grades 5-8 and shared access for all lower grades.

After two years of extensive research, site visits, and meetings with faculty members and lay leadership, RTA's students and teachers will be able to reach new heights with educational apps and engaging software at their fingertips. The days of a single computer lab with long lines will come to a close as Chromebooks are made readily available to our students. Now, each classroom has the capacity to instantly transform into a hub of digital education.

"It's amazing what our students are doing with these devices, and we're just in the initial stages," notes RTA



*2nd grade students
Amalya Weinberger &
Katie Holi explore units in
mathematics and language
arts with their Chromebooks*

Principal Rabbi Yosef Bart. "Our second graders are working on keyboarding skills and mathematics apps. RTA middle school students are incredibly proficient in the mechanics of the stock market and modern economics. Students are perfecting their Modern Hebrew with interactive online programs.

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*Stellar Education
for Every Jewish Child*

RTA Students Change the World!

Introducing the launch of a new program that puts the power of change in the hands of RTA middle school students.

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**2014-2015
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Our Vision

Stellar Education for Every Jewish Child

Our Mission

The Rudlin Torah Academy (RTA) provides the highest quality Jewish and General Education to children in grades K-8. Open to Jewish youth of all backgrounds, RTA prepares its students to meet the challenges of modern society by promoting educational excellence, instilling an appreciation and love of Judaism and Torah, and imbuing respect for all humanity. Our graduates are responsible community members, role models, future leaders, and lifelong learners. RTA is an integral and integrated part of the Richmond Jewish Community.

In providing excellent Jewish and General Education, RTA:

- Creates an environment where all of our students and families feel welcome, engaged, and respected;
- Inspires our students ethically, morally, and spiritually;
- Promotes a love of and sense of responsibility for the people and State of Israel;
- Provides instruction and learning opportunities that challenge our students to reach their maximum level of language proficiency in modern Hebrew;
- Implements state-of-the-art technology and environmentally responsible practices;
- Develops enriching extracurricular, after school, and arts programming;
- Emphasizes community service to foster a strong sense of social and civic responsibility; and
- Strengthens relationships with local Jewish organizations through creative and innovative programs and activities.

RTA's mission is best achieved by an active partnership involving students, parents, administrators, teachers, staff, and the community. Open lines of communication, straightforward assessments of challenges and opportunities, and thoughtful, transparent decision-making and planning are vital for the continued success of our program, our students, and the Richmond Jewish community.

Thank You! **Sarah Gold Pritzker**

(RTA '95 / STOR '99) is a writer living in Israel. She runs her own writing and editing company, *Pritzker Editorial*, and is married with two children.

RTA Students Change the World!

Introducing the launch of a new program that puts the power of change in the hands of RTA middle school students.

There are no prizes; in fact, there are no incentives at all. Yet RTA fifth through eighth grade students are flocking to volunteer activities nonetheless, as part of the inspiring new Change the World (CTW) community service program. The idea behind the program is to motivate students to perform acts of kindness (chesed) simply for the sake of kindness itself. In this way, the power to make a difference, both individually and collectively, becomes the reward, further motivating students to continue their service in the community.

According to Rabbi Bart, "We are constantly teaching our children about the importance of chesed. Now we're encouraging them to go out there and ACT. This isn't about counting hours or fulfilling a quota. CTW is about generating the inspiration and excitement that comes from making a difference to others, and

indeed to the world. As the prophet Isaiah says about the Jewish people - we are meant to be 'a Light unto the Nations.' Our aim is to bring that mission to reality."

Students are excited to venture into the world around them and help, lead, inspire, and change the community for the better, setting a prime example of the Torah values that they learn on a daily basis in their homes and at school.

When we moved to our new building over the summer, we did a huge overhaul of our library inventory. After sorting and organizing, we ended up with loads of books that we no longer used. Eighth grade student Faith Minor took the initiative to find these books a new home. She learned about the desperate need for books in Sierra Leone, and arranged for our overflow stock to be donated to the local organization, Old Dominion in Sierra Leone.



RTA siblings Faith and William Minor with the Kallon family - The Kallons are responsible for organizing the initiative to send books and supplies to their native Sierra Leone

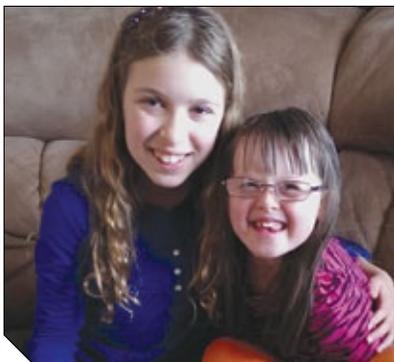
Faith and her brother William (an RTA sixth grader) personally delivered the books to the folks at ODSL who will be including the books in their next shipping container to the West African country.

The books, in addition to other supplies that have been collected, will go directly to schools and health clinics in Sierra Leone.

Other volunteer initiatives include working with the Friendship Circle of VA; participating in WJCC's TOSS (Tikkun Olam Super Stars) program; mentoring/tutoring younger RTA students; visiting senior residents at Beth Sholom/Parkside; and volunteering with other community and charitable organizations.

"The RTA students have incredible dedication, sensitivity, and commitment to their Friendship Circle buddies" says Sarah Kranz-Ciment, director of Richmond's Friendship Circle chapter and RTA alumna. "They embody a true sense of friendship that will last well after their community service program is over."

While CTW hours will be marked on a student's transcript, it's important to note that this program is 100% voluntary. Thank you to Rabbi Bart, Rabbi Sherman, and Mrs. Klosenberg, for spearheading the program, and to all the outstanding student ambassadors who participate.



8th grade student Samantha Greene and Ava Hecht - partners in the inspiring Friendship Circle of Virginia

RTA Alumni in the IDF

If you spend half your waking life as a child in the hallways of RTA, then you'd find it pretty difficult not to develop a strong love for the people and land of Israel. The following three RTA alumni developed their passion for Israel early on, and went on to make aliya and serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Thank you Mickey, David, and Ben for protecting our people and our homeland!



Spotlight on...Mickey Polevoy

In 2005, Mickey Polevoy moved with his family to Israel when he was in the middle of eighth grade at RTA. After completing high school in Israel, he joined

a mechina program, which prepares religious soldiers for the army, and then served for three years in the IDF. He trained as both a combat intelligence gatherer and a medic, following in the footsteps of his parents who had been long time volunteers for the West End Rescue Squad. Mickey spent one year of his service working on Gaza intelligence surveillance, and another year as an infirmary sergeant.

Looking back at his time in the army, Mickey reflects

on a regular Friday night occurrence: Each week the soldiers in his unit would gather together to sing Kabbalat Shabbat; rain or shine, religious or secular, and even when they were in camouflaged tents on the Gaza border in full battle gear, the guys would huddle together and sing songs that united them as a unit, a group of friends, and as part of the Jewish community.

Mickey currently works as a medic at the infirmary of Israel's new 2.5 billion shekel

Police Academy campus. He plans on starting university next October, where he'll either stay in the medical field and study nursing or medicine, or switch to an entirely different field, like international relations or politics.

Mickey's RTA memories include singing songs with Rabbi Sherman during Shabbos party, the Kindergarten flight to Israel with Morah Perel, and the annual Lag Ba'omer sports days.



Spotlight on...David Samora

David attended RTA from fourth grade (soon after his family moved to the U.S. from Israel) through eighth grade, graduating in 1999. He then attended Douglas Freeman High School (Class of 2003), followed by two years at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and two years at VCU, graduating

with a business degree in 2008. During the summer of 2007, David traveled to Israel on a 10-day Birthright Trip - he explains how this experience really opened his eyes, planted the seed, and helped him decide to make aliya, which he then did one year later after receiving his degree.

His first stop was to Michve Alon (an introductory army base for olim chadashim) and then transferred to Netzach Yehuda Battalion in the Kfir Brigade where he served for a total of 22 months in and around the Jordan Valley and Jenin.

Joining the IDF had been a dream for David for a long

time, to be part of something bigger and contribute to a nation that he'd always called home. David was born in Israel and had an intense, innate connection to the land - that, plus his childhood memories of soldiers, and the fact that his father served in the first Lebanon War, all helped contribute to David's decision to join the ranks of the first Jewish army in over 2000 years.

He says that his service helped him assimilate into Israeli culture by forcing him to absorb the Israeli mindset, improve his Hebrew, and connect with his fellow soldiers.

He explains how RTA helped

him build and maintain a core Jewish connection within himself and with the Jewish people that never diminished. The Jewish studies and environment within RTA were crucial to help him build the base of knowledge and beliefs needed to prepare him to step into the direction that he took. It is quite possible, he says, that he would have never joined the IDF if it weren't for the critical Jewish foundation that RTA helped him solidify.

Some of David's favorite RTA memories include Field Day, Mr. Lewis' history projects, Mrs. Klosenberg's science projects, and Rabbi



Sherman's Shabbos parties.

David currently works in Jerusalem in the high-tech sector. David lives with his wife and daughter in Hashmonaim.



Spotlight On...Ben Gold

Ben graduated from RTA in 1992. He went to Talmudical Academy in Baltimore for high school, and then Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv for college. In between, he

spent two years studying at Yeshivat HaKotel and served in the army, in the Tanks Corp. He explains that he joined the IDF because he thought it was the best way to serve Israel and the Jewish people, not to mention the best way to improve his Hebrew.

Ben looks back at his years at RTA very fondly, with the following memories standing out: playing four-square on the blacktop during recess, having Adon Robinson as a teacher, being introduced to Talmud by Rabbi Sherman,

and learning how to map a sentence from Mrs. Hart.

When asked how RTA influenced his decision to join the army and make aliya, Ben explained that these decisions were difficult ones to make, and that Rabbi Klestzick had taught him how to think critically about Jewish topics.

Ben married Bethami (Shaarei Torah, Class of 2000) in 2003. They currently live in Modiin and have two daughters, Eden, age 9, and Yemima, age 5.

RTA 2105: The Year of the Chromebook *continued*

Cloud computing, Google Apps, virtual labs and field trips, real-time access to the latest news and information - you name it, it's all here at RTA."

Julia Dinkin, an eighth grader at RTA, weighs in on how the Chromebooks have affected their lives as junior market analysts: "Our economics class and stock market research move so much faster with everyone having their own computer. The Chromebooks are perfect for opening multiple tabs of analysts' reports which are then easy to compare and contrast, and then all of us can efficiently write our individual market reports on Google Docs."

Included in RTA's Technology Plan are the purchase and use of additional interactive whiteboards. These cutting-edge devices offer unique multimedia opportunities

for collaborative teamwork, active learning, and project management, with the latest educational software in both Judaic and general studies.

RTA's plan is made possible in part from a very generous grant from Jack (of blessed memory) and Bea Fine.

"RTA's curriculum is keeping pace with today's ever-evolving technology," said Brian Greene, RTA President. "It is RTA's mission to prepare every one of our students for success in the digital world with 21st century skills, creativity, and thinking. Implementation of our Technology Plan, along with other enhanced educational offerings, firmly establishes RTA as the preeminent K-8 educational program in the greater Richmond area."



Clockwise from bottom left: 3rd grade students Alex Mosheyev & Sheindy Paley utilize internet research for an assignment in Mrs. Jenny Williams' social studies class.

7th & 8th grade students analyze real-time market data in their Honors Economics class with Mr. Dabney Lewis.

Middle school students Jaymie Cohen and Ahava Shull perfect their Hebrew language skills with the SmartBoard and latest interactive software under the direction of Morah Devorah Aronowitz.

Hebrew Innovation in the Second & Third Grades

Let's take a peek into the elementary school Judaic Studies classrooms to see what our phenomenal teachers and students are up to this year...

Lehavin U'lehaskil

Lehavin U'lehaskil is an amazing chumash (Bible) program created by the Consortium of Jewish Day Schools (CoJDS) that emphasizes language development in addition to comprehension of the Torah text. Utilizing a multi-sensory and multimedia approach, the program breaks down complicated grammar rules and focuses on root words, transforming basic Torah study into distinct lessons for language development.

The third graders, with the instruction of Morah Sheina David, have been using the Lehavin U'lehaskil program since the beginning of the year. And according to Morah David, the class has progressed beyond her expectations - not just in their understanding of the textual stories and concepts, but in their learning of the Hebrew language.

Morah David explains the learning



Morah Sheina David's 3rd grade class shines in their advanced Hebrew and Jewish studies skills.

process: "We make flash cards of the words and roots that repeat themselves in the chumash. Each new word or word set is presented with a catchy song that we all sing together (with fun hand motions included). Then we

practice those new skills by working on correlating worksheets, projects, and computer programs. The students' comprehension is astounding."

To further advance their Hebrew language skills, Morah David encourages the translation of the biblical Hebrew text into English, as well as into spoken, modern Hebrew.

Dah Bear

In the second grade, Morah Devorah Aronowitz heads up a rigorous (yet fun!) Hebrew language program called Dah Bear as part of the Hebrew curriculum. The online program involves weekly vocabulary words that are featured on multipurpose flashcards. These virtual cards are used while playing memory and other games that allow the students to practice using the words in a fun way.

Students receive their own username and password so they can use the program at home and at school.

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5th grade student Emory Bender utilizing the Dah Bear Hebrew language software.

Interactive, Dynamic Learning in our New Science Lab

When the RTA community moved this past fall, we didn't just get a new building; we acquired a beautiful new science lab.

The lab is loaded with amenities to inspire and motivate our students to explore the scientific world. Fully stocked with microscopes, computers, scales, and other equipment (including safety gear), the lab provides an opportunity for students to explore new concepts in an exciting, hands-on, experiential environment.

There's an entire wall lined with glass-fronted cabinets which hold all our laboratory equipment and supplies.

Lab materials are thereby visible and accessible to any teachers who wish to use them in their classrooms, not to mention available to curious students who wish to further their scientific explorations.

The spacious room allows students to spread out their projects and laboratory activities so they can work freely and comfortably without being confined to their desks. They can collaborate easily on projects, or work individually.

The ample counter space provides access to gas outlets with Bunsen burner hookups, as well as electrical outlets and AC/DC ports. There is a huge whiteboard available - great for teaching lessons, taking notes, assigning work, and highlighting concept maps.

The lab also includes a large central island that we use for teacher-led demonstrations and computer activities.



Middle school students make the most of the hands-on learning opportunities available in RTA's new science lab.

So what have we been doing in the lab so far this year? The fifth and sixth graders have constructed a number of projects in their astronomy unit. They've built prisms, calculated time zones, and modeled eclipses.

In the seventh and eighth grades we are currently studying physical science. Each week we participate in labs that illustrate Newton's Laws of Motion, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, and topics ranging from the density of a pencil, the mass of whale vertebrae,

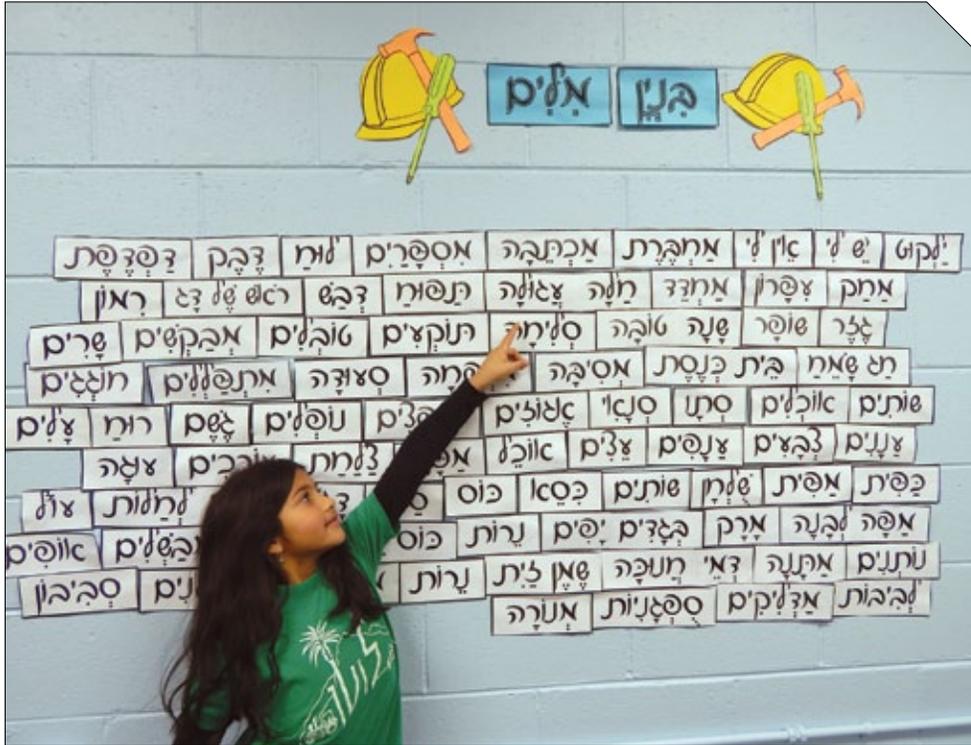
and the specific heat of the ingredients in a slice of pizza.

"It was exciting to see the students' faces when they entered the science lab for the first time," says Mrs. Susan Schaefer, RTA's fifth through eighth grade science teacher. "Many had never been in a 'real lab' before, but they immediately knew the possibilities that awaited them. It's been so much fun watching their joy and enthusiasm for science grow!"



Mrs. Schaefer's 7th & 8th grade science class demonstrates a lab in electric circuitry for the 2nd grade students.

Hebrew Innovation in the Second and Third Grade *continued*



According to Morah Aronowitz, "I have seen that students who use the program at home have improved on their overall quiz grades. At the beginning of every week I enter the vocabulary words that they are responsible for that week, and on Fridays they take a quiz on those words. Since I use this program with older grades as well, I have it programmed to supply the correct grade-level words for each student at the time of logging in."

Other elements of the second grade Hebrew curriculum include reading stories, learning Hebrew grammar through classroom lessons and worksheets, and writing. Often the class splits into three smaller groups, each working on a different activity while Morah Aronowitz goes around monitoring and assisting their progress. The class also uses *Lehavin U'Ihaskil* for chumash and for further reinforcing Hebrew vocabulary and grammar.

Mira Weglein proudly displays the 3rd grade Ivrit wordwall.