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INTERGENERATIONAL
LEARNING AT EHS

FACULTY PROFILE:
BARBARA SIDMAN**



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LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



Dear Epstein Hillel School Community,

It is my privilege to lead our school and guide our faculty in providing an outstanding education grounded in Jewish values. Our school is named in honor of Arthur J. Epstein for his unwavering and longstanding commitment to and support of the Jewish community north of Boston. When you walk through our doors, you enter a school with a vibrant, dynamic, and warm environment focused on helping students to achieve their potential, pique their curiosity and love of learning, and develop a strong Jewish identity.

We embrace experiential education where collaboration and problem-solving are at the heart of our curriculum. Students work with partners and in small groups to stretch their thinking and grow their interpersonal skills. They have opportunities to program robots and build prototypes with 3-D printers, while also using iPads to create, document and explore. Flexibility, resilience, and empathy are on the curriculum map too, along with algebra, Hebrew, Shakespeare, and debate. We make Jewish values come to life through an integrated curriculum in the classroom and opportunities for *gemilut chasidim* (acts of loving

kindness) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) in our community. Our whole school comes together for holiday celebrations and a weekly *kabbalat shabbat* experience in which we joyfully celebrate these moments with *ruach* (spirit) led by our charismatic song leader.

The Gemara teaches, “a person can only learn from where his/her heart desires.” At Epstein Hillel, everyone in our community teaches with heart, and from the heart, so that our students are curious and inspired to engage with the curriculum, with each other, and with the world around them.

This year, I’ve asked members of our community to tell us why their heart belongs to Epstein Hillel. I hope you will enjoy reading their stories as much as I did. I am also excited to share with you *Epstein Hillel School Magazine*. This inaugural edition features a faculty profile on our beloved Barbara Sidman, along with stories that I believe beautifully illustrate the gift of an Epstein Hillel education.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy".

Amy Gold



INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING BENEFITS ALL

Just before 2 pm on any Thursday afternoon, one will find the lobby of EHS abuzz with 12 folks — all in their 60s, 70s and 80s — warmly greeting one another as they await the arrival of their young chaperones. Each of these septa-, septua- and octogenarians has come, as they do most Thursday afternoons, to share a very special hour with a 1st grader who, at the start of the program, was a complete stranger.

They are *Grandfriends*; a program now in its second year in which parents/grandparents of alumnae, former EHS teachers, and grandparents of students in other grades — one caveat of being a grandfriend is that you are not related to anyone in the class — are paired with a 1st grader with whom they will teach, learn and grow throughout the school year. They hail from Marblehead, Swampscott, Revere, Gloucester, Lynn and Salem and, as one grandfriend said when asked what the program meant to her:

"THURSDAYS ARE A GIFT."

Prior to joining EHS as a first grade teacher, Emily Glore taught at an innovative primary school in Denver. Among the creative programs there was a bi-weekly field trip to a local retirement community. Emily would watch the children, some toting their own booster seats, enthusiastically line up for the ride across town where they would have the unique opportunity to interact with people old enough to be their grandparents. Excited by how effective it was in teaching the kids to see themselves as part of a community and to learn, firsthand, how they could have an impact on someone else's life, Emily knew that she wanted to recreate the program at EHS. And so was born *Grandfriends*.

Last year, on the Thursday before Thanksgiving, as the grandfriends entered the classroom they were enthusiastically greeted by the kids with smiles, waves and, yes, a little bit of bouncing in their seats. On a round table in the center of the room sat a pile of paper leaves alongside a vase filled with sand and bare twigs. With an impressive degree of focus and attention, each person, grandfriends first, shared what they are thankful for and then, as a twosome, they hung their leaf on a makeshift tree.

"Grateful for Thursdays"

— a grandfriend

"Thankful for a good life"

— a grandfriend

"Grateful for my family or I'd be living outside, have no food and wouldn't be able to go to Epstein Hillel."

— First Grader

By the end of the exercise, both the tree and the hearts in the room were full.

A few weeks later, on the cusp of Hanukkah, the group was presented with a math problem: "Why do we need 44 candles to celebrate the eight nights of Hanukkah?" As they paired off, each grandfriend and their apprentice worked together to determine the various ways that they could not only figure out the answer, but demonstrate it to the rest of the class. The result: a lesson in math, teamwork, respect, and confidence.

It is unclear who gets more from *Grandfriends*, the adults or the kids. More clear is the undeniable fact that everyone fortunate enough to be a part of the program finds it a meaningful, uplifting, and special way to spend a Thursday afternoon.



MERYL RICH
EHS BOARD MEMBER,
FORMER CHA FACULTY/STAFF,
GRANDFRIEND

My Heart Belongs to Hillel because:

As a lifelong educator, motivating children to learn has been my passion. I believe that real learning is about making connections, asking questions and thinking critically. It is a teacher's responsibility and challenge to understand each child's unique learning style and to foster an atmosphere that suits every student. Hillel's mission and my philosophy of education were a perfect match.

In addition, during my thirty year tenure, EHS (formerly CHA) offered me so many opportunities to grow as a mother (both my sons attended CHA), a Jew, a member of a community, a mentor, and a teacher. Warmth, support, compassion, and empathy envelop all aspects of the school. Thus, it has become my home away from home and an extended family that still exists to this day, three years after my retirement.

An anecdote:

When my younger son, now an adult, was in kindergarten at CHA it was necessary for us to relocate to another state. When we told our children that we were moving, he began to cry. Through his tears he managed to express his biggest concern, "But, but will we still be Jewish?" Clearly, CHA had already laid the foundation for his strong Jewish identity.

MY HEART BELONGS TO EPSTEIN



SHARON RICH
EHS BOARD MEMBER

Our children will get courage from knowledge.
And my heart is where my children are.



LINDA GREENSEID
EHS TRUSTEE, FORMER CHA BOARD PRESIDENT,
ALUMNI PARENT

We were blessed to know the Principal, Bennett Solomon z"l, who made me proud to be a Jew. Our children gained a love of Judaism and a strong Jewish identity that has impacted their lives. Today we see our children practicing what they learned and passing on the value of a strong commitment to Judaism to their children. We learned the importance of giving back to the Jewish community, the importance of Jewish education and how to help others understand that giving their children a Jewish education is transformative. And, in the close to 40 years that I've been involved with the school my husband and I, as well as our children, have forged lifelong friendships.



DYLANN COOPER
ALUMNI CLASS OF 2010

My heart belongs to Hillel for many reasons including that my class (of 23 including me) was not just a group of friends, but a small family in itself. We looked out for each other and many still remain some of my closest friends to this day. We went through all our awkward phases, family struggles, and impressionable years together, learning what it meant to not just be good Jews and students, but good people and members of the larger community, Jewish and non-Jewish.

I love staying involved in Hillel's mission and initiatives. This is because of the countless faculty, staff, students, and even parents I met throughout my nine years in our quaint little school. A Jewish education was very important to my parents but I myself quickly came to realize how invaluable it was to me, as well. I have been able to factually back up stories and other important data regarding Israel and what it means to be Jewish in today's world. I would never have learned these lessons if not for Hillel, and for that I am forever grateful.



ELAINE HARRIS
CURRENT & ALUMNI GRANDPARENT

Hillel molded the foundations of Jewish character of my two adult granddaughters. It has also laid the foundation for the love of Judaism for my older grandson and continues to mold the hopes and dreams of my youngest grandson.

And for all that, my heart belongs to Hillel.

HILLEL BECAUSE...



TALI MAROTZ
EHS FACULTY

This is my family, my place. For the past ten years, my personal goals as a Jewish educator have been a perfect match with the mission of this small (but mighty) Jewish day school. I have been fortunate to be able to practice my passions of Jewish education and to play a role in the development of the next generation of strong and knowledgeable Jewish leaders. While developing a love and commitment to my native Israel, students understand and appreciate the Jewish culture and Hebrew language, giving them the foundation to be proud Jewish individuals, with a strong Jewish identity.



ROBERT SALTER
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
CO-CHAIR, ALUMNI PARENT

EHS enriches our community by educating and preparing our youth for a Jewish future and developing love and support for Israel.



TAMAR SKOWRONKSI
EHS BOARD MEMBER, YAD B'YAD CO-PRESIDENT,
CURRENT PARENT, ALUMNI CLASS OF 1991

When I think of my childhood at Hillel, I have a sense of joy. It was my community and felt like home. It was a foundation for building relationships, living a socially responsible life, and having confidence. It connected me to my family's history. My parents (who are still active in the Hillel community today) expressed that they felt the same way about what my brothers and I experienced. I can still conjure up to the feelings of being in a special place. So, when talking about Hillel as an option for our child, I couldn't ignore that visceral connection to the school. And it was exciting to think that we could offer our children a similar experience.

Academically, I remember that my classmates and I were really prepared for high school; we were set up for success with the basis of our education — at Hillel, we learned how to learn. I continued to see Hillel graduates have high achievements in academics and careers and generally make good choices in life. It just doesn't seem like a coincidence. Our children have thanked us for choosing Hillel, because even at ages 6 and 10, they recognize that it is something special. They are so happy at school. And ultimately, happiness is what we want for our kids.



MARK FARBER
BOARD PRESIDENT, ALUMNI PARENT

My heart belongs to Epstein Hillel because it is the place that has instilled in hundreds of children, including my own, the pride and knowledge of their heritage as part of the Jewish people spanning an unbroken history of nearly 5000 years. While featuring one of the most talented and motivated teaching staffs anywhere, an administrative staff who would be the envy of any private school, led by world class Head of School Amy Gold, and supported by a strategic, devoted, and inspired board of directors, where else could our hearts belong but at Epstein Hillel School?





FACULTY PROFILE: BARBARA SIDMAN HER HEART HAS BELONGED TO HILLEL FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS

Growing up in Lynn, kindergarten teacher Barbara Sidman always loved kids. It was five year olds, however, who took up a special place in her heart; "The look of wonder in their eyes, the light bulb moment when they learn something new, their innocence... not to mention how funny they are" all played a role in her decision to become a teacher. And what a great decision that was!

When she began teaching kindergarten in 1990, George H.W. Bush was president, the iPhone was seven years in the future and Barbara's three children — Ila, Jason and Michael, now adults — were all students at Epstein Hillel School (then Cohen Hillel Academy). While a lot has changed in these past 28 years, one thing has remained the same: kindergartners and their families are still benefiting from Mrs. Sidman's unwavering commitment to teaching not only the three R's, but also the invaluable life lessons of how to navigate the world, take responsibility for one's own actions, and practicing *tikkun olam* not because they are told to, but because it is part of who they are.

Over the course of her career, Barbara has witnessed many exciting and positive advancements in technology and learning opportunities both on the school and student level. One notable negative change, however, is the marked increase in time that young children are using video games and other hand-held electronics. In her experience, this new technology has resulted in students becoming frustrated at the lack of instant gratification not to mention a stifled ability to figure things out on their own.

"WHEN KIDS DON'T HAVE DOWNTIME TO THINK, THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO," SHE EXPLAINS.

As such, with her signature firm-but-kind style she takes her responsibility to the children very seriously, sincerely believing that everything you need to know you learn in kindergarten. So each day in her classroom, whether they are working on a math problem or discussing homelessness, she approaches every single thing as a teaching moment.

At the annual Kindergarten breakfast at the end of the school year, the fruits of her labor are on full display as the rising 1st graders, with poise and maturity, perform a medley of songs for their families but, perhaps more importantly, demonstrate what has become a part of their core: being kind, giving, and caring.

Throughout her tenure at Epstein Hillel, Mrs. Sidman has left an indelible mark on not only hundreds of students, but their families as well. Ask any current or former kindergarten parent and they will likely share a story of a lesson or two they learned from her. For her part, however, Barbara is quick to point out that she is not unique. "Between the solid vision and constant support of Head of School, Amy Gold, and the extraordinarily dedicated faculty and staff, EHS is not your average school. It is definitely my home away from home."



INTERFAITH FAMILIES THRIVE AT JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

It used to be that families with children enrolled in Jewish day school were a pretty homogenous crowd; two Jewish parents raising Jewish children. At Epstein Hillel there are still plenty of families who fit that bill, but so too are there more than a few who do not. Of all the families currently enrolled, thirty percent are interfaith. Their experiences have been overwhelmingly positive.

Aimee and David are one such family. Aimee grew up with a Jewish father and Greek Orthodox mother and David, now an agnostic, grew up Catholic. When expecting their first child, they spoke often about the role spirituality would play in their family's life. They both wanted their children — two boys, born eighteen months apart — to be part of a true community. They agreed that Jewish values and traditions were what they wanted for their family.

Both of their sons attended preschool at the JCC. Kindergarten afforded them three options: EHS, public school, or a secular private school. After visiting each, they put down a deposit for a spot at the

secular private school. Something about it did not feel right, though. It was David, with no Jewish background, who suggested that they go back to visit EHS. Within moments of walking into the building, they both knew it was the right place for them. "There was an instant sense of community the moment we walked through the door," Aimee recalls. Now that they are in their fourth year, she reports:

"THE SUPPORT AND ATTENTION ARE BEYOND ANYTHING I EVER COULD HAVE IMAGINED."

We heard a similar story from Diane whose husband, Brian, grew up in a Jewish household. Having grown up with no religious affiliation, Diane craved a sense of belonging. As a young adult, she chose Judaism as her religion, but did not convert until years later. Their son, an only child, is currently a 3rd grader at EHS. He, Diane and her husband, Brian, consider his classmates to be his siblings. While

describing EHS as being "a terrific support system," Diane goes on to say:

"EHS CREATED AN INSTANT FAMILY...I FEEL MORE CONNECTED AND PART OF A COMMUNITY THAN EVER BEFORE."

Neither of these families had planned on enrolling their children in day school. Each acknowledged trepidation in their decision-making — Would it be too Jewish? Would the fact that they are interfaith make them uncomfortable? Would they feel as though they belonged? Their fears were unrealized. Both cherish the community — for themselves and their children. All are impressed with the academics, including so many opportunities for project based learning, the outstanding teachers, and the morals and values-based education. With a twinkle in their eye, they speak of their kids' love of learning. They marvel at hearing their children speak Hebrew, perform on stage in social studies curriculum plays, and program 3-D printers in science for their animal research projects.

These families know what a special place EHS is and are grateful for the community and education their children are getting. But perhaps most important is that both feel that enrolling their children was the best decision they ever made.



EMILY GLORE
FIRST GRADE TEACHER

My heart belongs to Hillel because it's a place where everyone—students, teachers, faculty and families—are able to explore and develop the fullest expression of who they are.



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

BY SUPPORTING EPSTEIN HILLEL SCHOOL, YOU ARE ENSURING THE SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUED GROWTH OF THE SCHOOL AS WELL AS THE VITALITY AND HEALTH OF A JEWISH COMMUNITY.

Jewish day schools are essential to a strong and vibrant Jewish future. Day schools build a community of active committed families who help to build bridges to synagogues, Jewish community centers, and other Jewish organizations and programming. Research shows that attending a Jewish day school has a longterm positive effect on adult Jewish identity. It also strongly correlates with a high degree of engagement as Jewish professionals and lay leaders.

Led by Head of School, Amy Gold, and an exceptional leadership team,

Epstein Hillel School is growing and thriving. Through steady enrollment growth, alumni engagement efforts, and the re-establishment of its reputation for academic excellence, EHS is distinguishing itself among local private and public schools by offering the finest innovative K-8 education north of Boston. Students, parents, and community leaders eagerly engage and rave about the welcoming and vibrant community at EHS. There has never been a more exciting time to be a part of the EHS community.

Together, we can build on our success and ensure that the next generation of Jewish children on the North Shore have an outstanding educational experience grounded in Jewish values.

To learn more about admissions or academic excellence, email Jen Stam Goldberg, Director of Admissions and Marketing (jgoldberg@epsteinhillel.org).

To learn more about volunteering or ways to give, email Deryn Pressman-Mashin, Director of Community Engagement (dpmashin@epsteinhillel.org).



ARTHUR J. EPSTEIN
EHS TRUSTEE

It's simple. Every Jewish child should have the opportunity to have a Jewish education and that's why I invested in Amy Gold who was, I will say, a great investment.



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