



# JOSEPH KUSHNER HEBREW ACADEMY

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## RAE KUSHNER YESHIVA HIGH SCHOOL

### A LOOK AT LITERACY AND LITERATURE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Pre-K literacy serves as the first building block that some of our youngest learners will have in preparation for the coming school years. The children are immersed in literacy throughout each day both in formal lessons and in play. From an early age, children use their five senses to explore and make sense of the world around them. We strive to create a multi-sensory experience so each of our unique learners can experience the curriculum in the way young children learn best.

Each week, we focus on a letter of the alphabet, using the Handwriting Without Tears book and strategies as our guide, creating a cross-curricular unit encompassing not only literacy but also science, art, and math as well. Using all of these modalities of learning, the letter is reinforced over and over in new and exciting ways.

For example, this week we are learning letter F. Each child used their arms and hands to create a "Family Tree" with brown paint. They then used sponges dipped in green to make the leaves. Next, each child counted how many people are in their family and used their finger, dipped in red paint, to make apples on the tree corresponding with that number. The children gave a dictation about their family which gave them the opportunity to express themselves in a full idea which they then observed being written down. Finally, we graphed the information to see a visual representation of our whole class' families.

This year, we are excited to complete an author study on Mo Willems and his Piggie and Gerald series.

In Early Childhood, an author study allows children to become "experts" in an author and their writing.

Throughout the study, we will pay attention to the characters, themes that connect the books and themes that we can learn from in a 4-5 year old's every day life.

For example, we read the book "My Friend is Sad" which lead into a lesson about feelings and friendship.

First, each child had a chance to express what it means to be a good friend. Next, we sang the song "Story of my Feelings" by Laurie Berkner and made a "feelings flower" using emojis to discuss what makes us happy, sad, angry, peaceful. Being self aware is a huge goal in Pre-K and using books and songs to teach these important skills is a great way for young children to learn while having fun.

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### A LOOK AT LITERACY AND LITERATURE IN LOWER SCHOOL

In first grade we have just begun our study of fairy tales and the students are so excited about it! This week we read many different versions of The Three Billy Goats Gruff and identified the four main story elements: characters, setting, problem and solution. The students noticed that although there were slight differences in each version, the main story elements remained the same. Students not only heard the story read aloud, but also watched a Scholastic video version and used iPads to listen to and see another version of the story on the epic app. Next, the first graders will be working in groups to illustrate the four fairy tale elements from the book. As a special activity, the students will even have the opportunity to act out various parts of the story! We can't wait to see our first graders "trip-trapping" over the bridge and hope that they get safely past the hungry troll! For the next part of our fairy tale adventure, we will be reading, Rumpelstiltskin followed by Little Red Riding Hood. As with The Three Billy Goats Gruff, our students will continue to explore the four fairy tale elements, look for similarities and differences and write/draw about each story.

Fourth grade students are exploring novel study in their literature focus. They created character maps for the two main characters in their class novel. They are reading *No Talking* by Andrew Clements. It is a novel about a fifth grade class that decides to have a No Talking contest between the boys and the girls. Students are using text evidence to answer comprehension questions. They are making inferences and locating supporting details. Students realized that answers are stronger when there is evidence from the book supporting their answers. This novel is funny and students are enjoying discussing Dave and Lyndsey's antics.