



## Teachers' Appreciation | Susie Wexler, Early Childhood Education Director

I value the way Judaism emphasizes gratitude. Acknowledging the harvest defines the calendar. Opportunities for celebration arise weekly. Blessings abound, reminding us to pause and acknowledge the good we are experiencing. Especially during the current COVID crisis, when it is possible to get caught in a spiral of negative thoughts, we have our tradition to guide us toward the path of appreciation.

As we flip the calendar page to usher in a new month, May kicks off Teacher Appreciation Week. Born from discussions amongst political and educational leaders, In 1953, Eleanor Roosevelt persuaded Congress to proclaim a National Teachers' Day. The one-day observance has stretched into a weeklong acknowledgement. Allow me a moment to share my reflection on the Chava Center staff as I shared it with our community in my weekly email on Friday...

Being an early childhood educator is a challenging profession. The work is intense, requiring physical, emotional, academic, and spiritual labor. Educators are responsible for being adept communicators, with children as individuals and in a group, with co-workers, and with every family system. Information is shared orally and in writing, requiring a diverse array of skills, including the ability to make the evidence of learning visually pleasing when bound in individual portfolios or walking through the halls. Teachers are expected to balance providing an emergent environment, reacting to the interests of the individual learner, while preparing their classroom with the resources that create inviting experiences that engage and inspire growth for each student. Early childhood educators work with small people who have very big feelings, to which they provide emotional support, compassion, and context. Advocates for the best interests of the child, early childhood educators are required to challenge the social forces that pressure children to engage in experiences that are beyond the scientific understanding of developmentally appropriate practice. The pay for the field as a whole is abysmal because the social compact for education does not acknowledge most children under the age of five. And yet, our staff show up, day after day. Serving our community with professionalism. Approaching their work with passion. Making the school a joyous and safe space for children to grow into their best versions of themselves.

This school year has not gone the way any of us would have predicted. It has been a challenge that has tested us all. So many of our expectations have had to be recalibrated. But one thing has remained consistent, the staff of BJBE Early Childhood Program at the Chava Center have risen to the challenge. Without a handbook, and building the plane while flying, the staff stepped out to ensure that they would be there for their students and families. Sure, we have had to make adaptations, but these resilient staff members sought feedback and made revisions. I have to pause my writing as tears come to my eyes – for words are insufficient to express the gratitude I feel. Thus, I invite you to set aside the losses that have come with the Coronavirus Crisis to join me in celebrating our staff during Teacher Appreciation Week.

If you have an educator in your life, take a moment and thank them. Teachers are an integral factor in developing the next generation of adults. Literally, our future is in their hands.