

GRADE SIX

Grade 6 CHAI Project

As part of the Grade 6 Storytelling Unit and in connection with the school-wide CHAI celebration, Grade Six students interviewed several pivotal figures in the story of the creation of our school, Paul Penna DJDS. We started with Cynthia Lazar, whose dream it was to establish a progressive, inclusive Jewish day school in downtown Toronto. The interviewees were:

- Adrienne Rosen
- Alon Nashman
- Beverley Conner
- David Bale
- Gilda Iron
- Janet Nish-Lapidus
- Janice Feldman
- Joan Schoenfeld
- Laila Lipetz
- Michael Miloff
- Michaele-Sue Goldblatt
- Sherry Dayton
- Tobie Franklin

Students used their note-taking and summarization skills to turn the interviews into paragraph profiles. They then edited each others' profiles to produce the results you see before you. By placing these profiles in a timeline, the Grade Six students learned how Cynthia's dream to create a Jewish day school downtown was experienced differently by those who were involved, thus illustrating our Storytelling Unit's Big Idea: "The teller spins the tale."

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BARE NECESSITIES → what needs to be in your paragraph

1. What their role at PPDJDS was (job, Board member, parent, etc) and when
2. One (or two) things they loved about the school
3. One (or two) memories/anecdotes about the school
4. What the school still means to them

CHAI Interview Questions:

1. In what capacity/ies were you associated with the school? Was it as a parent? Board member? Staff? Describe your role(s).
2. How did you first hear about the school?
3. What made you want to get involved at the school? What are your first memories of being *at* the school, in the school building?
4. Tell an anecdote or two which typify your experience of the school and its community.
5. What are your favorite memories of the school?
6. What part does your time as a member of the PPDJDS community play in the story of *your* life?

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Students' Final Product

Adrienne Rosen

Adrienne Rosen and Myra White have 2 children, Sally and Alana who attended the school in 1999. Sally was in SK and Alana was in grade 2, which was a split class with grade 3. She found out about the school from Marvin Kurz and Cynthia Lazar, the founders of the school. She was a member of the board for 2 years. She loved the school so much because it was very accessible for them and their children went there for their entire childhood. One of her favourite memories was seeing her kids wearing kippot and singing songs and creating art together, she loved the egalitarian setting and atmosphere. The kids were treated with love and care and the classes were nice and small. To Adrienne the school was like her second home.

Alon Nashman

Alon nashman was a parent, board member and on the comity to select a principal. One of his favourite memories is that one day there was a gym class in the pool and there was one girl who was scared to jump in to the pool so all of the kids cheered her on. another memory he has is the first gala, which he helped to organize, that honored his dad.

He loved the community of the school. His oldest daughter is fluent in Hebrew and all his kids still have friends who went to the school.

Beverley Conner

Beverley Conner was a parent at Paul Penna. Her son went to the school for six years and she was satisfied with the way that he learned. She was a parent volunteer and helped with hot lunch and Chanukah festivities, and made the Curriculum Development workshop for staff.

Beverley first heard about the school through a friend named Carol Baum. The school was offering many things that she was seeking for her son's education like small classes and a Jewish cultural setting.

Beverley's first memories here were good ones. She remembers speaking with our first principal, Joan about religion and spirituality and deciding that the school was a good fit for her family. She remembers the activities the classrooms would do to celebrate the holidays. She also remembers when her son was in grade five and they were asked to rank 10 areas of life (family, education, etc.).

The school was a positive experience for Beverly. She thinks that the best thing about the school was the parent community and the many discussions around how to provide inclusive high quality education.

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Cynthia Lazar

Cynthia Lazar was one of the founders of DJDS (Downtown Jewish Day School), she helped raise a lot of the school's money and helped put it together. A few of the reasons she wanted to make a school were; none of the other Jewish day schools were downtown (the closest one was near Eglington), another reason was to include Jewish education in all subjects, the last reason was to have specialized education for her son. Making the school took a lot of hard work and effort; there was even a time when she had to put her house on the line because of money loss. She also couldn't sleep some nights from stress. When the school first opened there were 10 students, 3 teachers and 3 classes. The teachers switched between classes throughout the day. PPDJDS has been around for 18 years so we would like to thank Cynthia and all of the other contributors for making this school feel like home.

David Bale

David Bale was a board member and a parent in the period before the school was renovated. He loved to take his kids to school either using a car or taking the subway. He loved the anticipation of a new day through his kids eyes. Some of his best memories were simple things like when Principal Janet Nish-Lapidus greeted the parents and their kids in the hall. It made him feel good about who he was leaving his kids with each day. Other memories were bigger things like Chanukah concerts.

David was at the ribbon-cutting when the school finished the renovations. He still has friends from the earlier days of the school and is also still connected with PPDJDS.

Janet Nish-Lapidus PPDJDS Interview

Janet Nish-Lapidus was a grade five teacher, then a vice-principal, and lastly a principal. She was asked to finish the year as a teacher for grade five and continued to be the teacher the next year. After that she was asked to be the vice-principal than by January the principal. Janet worked at Paul Penna for five more years.

Some of Janet's favourite memories were assemblies where the whole school came together to celebrate Shabbat, holidays, and other special events. She also loved watching the baby chicks hatch in her office.

Janet remembers her first visit to the school. She says she remembers being impressed by the energy in the school. Parents were talking and catching up with each other; teachers were greeting their students in the halls. Everyone seemed happy and relaxed.

Being the principal of PPDJDS was Janet's last job before retiring. She still hears from some of the teachers she worked with and they get together every once and a while. Janet can look back at her time at Paul Penna, with a sense of pride for the things she accomplished.

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Janice was interested in a job at the Downtown Jewish Community School and went for an interview. The woman asked her if she wanted to teach at a new school, instead. Janice decided to risk it because her girls were still small and she could only work part of the day. She was on her way to the Canadian National Exhibition when she got a call from the school offering her the job!

At the beginning the school only had ten students in SK, Grade One, and Grade Two. They could all fit in the elevator to go to the roof for recess. Another memory of the early days of the school was when Morah Rena would take all the Aftercare kids by taxi back to the MNJCC at the end of the day every day. She has loved watching the school grow and grow over the years while still keeping its heart.

Joan Schoenfeld

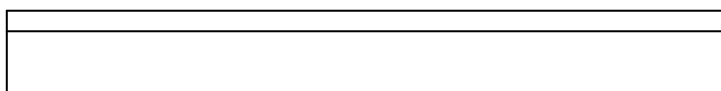
Joan started her involvement in 1997 as a member of the planning committee. She was briefly a member of the founding comity until she was asked to be the founding Director (Part time because she was also committed as the long time principal of the DJCS). In 2001 Joan became the full time director of the DJCS. One of the things that she loves about the school is that there are/were many Wonderful and caring people who are now missed. Joan appreciated that the vision of the DJDS was grounded in the nurturing environment provided by the Bloor JCC's beloved nursery school program, which many of the founding parents sent their kids there. The schools vision, as an inclusive, pluralistic community school that is a reflection of the Downtown Toronto Jewish community that it serves much consistent with my own personal vision of Jewish education is very much consistent with my vision of Jewish education.

Laila was one of the people involved in designing the school's curriculum in its early years. She remembers visiting the school and being so impressed with how warm and friendly the teacher was—that teacher turned out to be Morah Janice. Laila had come back from teaching in Israel and was interested to see whether she could help design a curriculum where everything tied together. After a few years she was ready for a new challenge and left PPDJDS, but came back after a few years at other schools to help again with curriculum. She has many friends who were colleagues at the school and has many happy memories of laughter in the Staff Room.

Michael Miloff

Sent his kids to DJDS. He was on the board of directors, a group of parents from the school who helped hire teachers, set the school budget, change policies and other things like that. His kids went to the school and they loved their teachers and had a great time. MM slowly became more Jewishly connected, and sold his company so he had more time on his hands. The school had no budget and MM helped create the budget, and made many other good changes.

Michael-Sue Goldblatt



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Michael-Sue Goldblatt was the 2nd president of the board and served on the board for 6-7 years. Now she is currently on the Chai Gala committee. Chanukah concerts and graduation ceremonies were some of the things she liked. Some of her best memories were just walking down the halls and seeing kids outside of the school which made her feel like she belonged here. This school made her feel like she was honoring her parents and grandparents by following in their footsteps. She still loves this school and is honored to be in its history and community.

Sherry first heard about the school from Carol Baum, another parent, who was going to attend an Open House. She ended up sending her two sons to PPDJDS, and served many roles including Board Member, VP of the Parents' Association, and Lay leader of the Shinshinim Program. She still remembers how friendly Morah Janice was to her older son on the first day of SK. The more she got to know about the school, the more she wanted to volunteer. Her best memories center around Judaism, such as the Siddur Ceremonies and Purim. She met friends there who she will have forever.

TOBIE FRANKLIN

Tobie was hired as a literacy and learning specialist which made her part of the small administration for Paul Penna. She majored in reading and writing programs in kindergarten to grade eight and supported students with special needs.

She loved the students and being part of their growth.

Before she left to work at a new school in New York City, the teacher and students honored her in an assembly. They presented her with a book, "Thank you, Mr. Falker" and created a personalized bookmark, thanking her for the many ways she supported students during her three years at Paul Penna.

The community showed generosity of spirit which she has not experienced in the same way in her long career.