



# **The Talent Center Handbook & Extra Challenge Project Kit**



**Develop Talented Young Jewish Leaders  
With an 18 Word Curriculum  
in 30 Minutes a Week**

**Rae Shagalov**  
**[info@holysparks.com](mailto:info@holysparks.com)**  
**Phone: 323-447-4937**

**Jewish Day School students have packed and highly structured days.**

- a long school day with a dual curriculum
- hours of homework
- after school sports or family chores
- extra religious responsibilities

**When do our students in Jewish Day Schools have the time and guidance to explore their own rich, inner worlds, talents and special interests?**

**Emek's game-changing Extra Challenge Projects connect holistic Torah learning, technology, and Jewish design thinking through child-centered passion projects in our Talent Center Innovation Lab. Extra Challenge Projects develop talented, dedicated, young Jewish leaders who love Torah and mitzvahs with an 18 word curriculum through innovative, collaborative community service projects.**

Extra Challenge Projects provide students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge, interests and talents to the real-world problems that are most meaningful to them. This might be a global problem, a community need, a solution for a family or school problem, or a desire to improve personal character traits, knowledge or skills.

Extra Challenge Projects are examples of the ultimate differentiated instruction for a diverse student body in a traditional school environment. They are appropriate for all grade levels and can be adapted to any subject area, but the very finest result comes from individual Passion Projects.

Based on the Jewish Design Thinking process, students design their own projects from beginning to end using the interests, skills and talents they like the best. Through these projects, they increase their empathy and learn authentic business and marketing skills as they serve a genuine audience with their creative problem-solving products and services.

This kit will give you the tools you need and show you step-by-step how to:

- Implement Extra Challenge projects
- Create the Talent Center environment to foster creative innovation
- Develop young leaders with integrated Judaic values in just 30 minutes a week
- Nurture creative innovation within a traditional Jewish framework
- Build confidence, empathy and self-esteem through authentic real-world projects
- Train students to become social entrepreneurs and change agents who are risk-takers and team players

Most importantly, this kit will help you create a program that Jewish children love. They will be pounding on the door to get in and get to work and will complain loudly when it is time to stop learning. As their ideas and efforts are validated, they will feel that they are important, valued and integral members of the Jewish community..



## About Emek's Talent Center



Second grade girls composing music for Tehillim (psalms) in the Talent Center

Emek Hebrew Academy Teichman Family Torah Center (Los Angeles) is in its 13th year of developing the innovative Talent Center Model in our library. The goal of a Talent Center is to develop the capacity of all children for endless creativity and innovation by providing a stimulating, friendly and creative environment that serves as an incubator to foster their interests, talents and leadership abilities.

Our role as parents and Jewish educators is to transmit our Torah knowledge and values, and develop a culture in which the unique talents of our children are sought out and valued *within the Jewish community* and beyond. We are “talent scouts,” committed to getting to know what each child is interested in, what talents and strengths they have, and how they learn best.

Our Talent Center is hopping with student interest and excitement and it's the hub of our school. We don't have to teach our students self-discipline; we don't have to grade, bribe or punish our students to motivate them; we don't even have to teach our students. They teach themselves and each other as their passion drives them to acquire the skills and information they need to solve their problems and accomplish their goals easily and naturally. They do truly amazing things, almost completely on their own, and they do it for the pure pleasure of accomplishment. We run our program in 30 minutes a week, during class, library time, recess, and after school, without any additional personnel or funding.

My name is Rae Shagalov, Project-Based Learning and Jewish Design Thinking specialist at Emek. I have been an educator for over 30 years, working first in preschool and early child development, and for more than 20 years as a school librarian, artist, and director of gifted and talented services. I have taught and coached more than 4,000 children to help them discover their interests, talents and leadership potential. I created the Talent Center model as an innovation lab and Makers Space for passion project-based learning. This is a unique and effective program for developing the special interests, strengths and talents of any child, combining project-based learning and Jewish Design Thinking with traditional Jewish values.

In this Talent Center Handbook, I am going to share with you a complete kit for the heart of my program, the special service learning program that I developed to bring out the potential of children called the **Extra Challenge Project**. I hope your students will have as much fun and success with their Extra Challenge Projects as our students at Emek do.



© 2016 Rae Shagalov All rights reserved.

Contact: [info@holysparks.com](mailto:info@holysparks.com) Phone: 323-447-4937

# The Problem

When we studied the 2013 Pew Study of U.S. Jews, we noticed a very odd discrepancy. While 94% of Jews, nearly ALL felt proud to be Jewish, less than half of U.S. Jews (46%) say being Jewish is a very important part of their lives, 20% of Jews say that being Jewish is not too or not at all important to them, and only 28% of American Jews, ages 18-49 feel that being part of a Jewish community is important. Why do American Jews feel so disconnected? Could it be that they had no Jewish education as children? According to the study, 67% of Jews either attended a Jewish day school or participated in some other kind of formal Jewish education. So what happened? What turned them off?

Manette Mayberg, a philanthropist whose focus is on innovative change in Jewish education, wrote the following in an article in the Washington Jewish Week called, "The Problem with Jewish Education."

"We fail when we allow any Judaic class to be "boring" and then wonder why kids are turned off. Students instinctively recognize the discord between the inherent sweetness of Jewish learning and the bitter flavor that the system delivers because the system rewards achievement, not effort. Those students are at risk of being bored and frustrated and their great potential is left untapped."

In a report from the Jim Joseph Foundation, "Re-Designing Jewish Education for the 21st Century," the author writes: "The new environment for Jewish education in the twenty-first century demands a new vision of what Jewish education should be -- how it should be designed and how it should be delivered. Teens continue to "drop out" of Jewish education in large numbers before they graduate from high school and many do not find their way back (if they ever do) until they are raising families themselves -- which a majority will do with non-Jewish partners. We need to experiment with new models and approaches, and to re-design the system as a whole so that it can more successfully achieve its ultimate objective: inspiring large numbers of Jews to live Jewish lives of meaning and purpose."

What if we told you that we have a program that develops talented, dedicated, innovative, young Jewish leaders with an 18 word curriculum, in as little as 30 minutes a week? Our Extra Challenge Projects connect Torah learning, core academics, technology, design thinking & passionate service learning, through collaborative, creative project-based learning.

Although, many schools are beginning to implement project-based learning in their secular studies departments, Judaic studies classrooms are far behind, still very much teacher directed, frontal learning with children sitting at desks most of the day and an emphasis on standardized worksheets and testing. In a community scan through social media surveys, we found the following concerns:



## Parent Concerns

- Students complain about having to sit and be quiet.
- They need to be engaged or they will hate Torah.
- They're in 1st grade and are just being lectured to.
- Learning is for tests only; there's a lack of spirituality.
- Too much homework leaves too little time for children to explore their own interests.
- They feel bored, not valued and underchallenged.
- Very boring lecture/worksheet/ tests. More interactive and creative would be better!
- Always busy preparing for tests; no time for reflection.
- No opportunity to satisfy their curiosity about why to be Jewish what does it mean.
- Not enough hands-on, interactive learning activities and positive encouragement.
- Needs to be a deeper connections learned, including the meaning and richness of the texts so there is actual kavana and a holier connection.
- The students aren't challenged to ask questions; they are only given answers.
- Students sit in chairs facing the front, thus there is very little relational education.
- Information is delivered instead of learning being facilitated - less just lecturing in front of the room.
- Wish they would teach Judaic studies without tests or pressure.
- They need more physical activity-something that gets them out of those chairs and desks.
- They need more personalized attention and differentiated learning.
- Leadership opportunities are needed for teenage girls.
- Teach students basic skills for independent learning not just rote memorization.
- Thank G-d. someone is addressing this problem...I tried for so many years to figure out "best" answers...am now home schooling my 8th grader.

As you can see from these community responses, parents feel somewhat helpless and hopeless that Jewish education will ever change and truly meet the learning needs of their children so that they will love learning Torah at school.

**Our Extra Challenge Projects put the child  
at the center of the learning experience  
through their interests, talents and what they love to do.**

**So, what is talent and how do you get them interested?**





# Developing Talent

## What is Talent?

Are talented kids born with talent or do their talents develop? Talent is the innate desire to fully express the potential of our souls with our unique interests and abilities. When we discover and use our particular talents with clear and meaningful purpose, we feel connected to each other and important in the world. The successful expression of talent sparks a profound sense of happiness and inspires a spirit of generosity and hope in all of those who are touched by that talent.



## How Does Talent Develop?

Talent as a natural, innate ability always emerges through interest, opportunity and experience. Once a budding talent emerges, however, it may or may not develop further depending on the circumstances and support of the talent. Although talent is part of a person's nature, it must be nurtured to achieve its full potential, or it may remain a hidden or underdeveloped talent, which is a great loss.

At some point, children who are developing talent become fully engaged in an intensive pursuit of the skills necessary to be successful in their talent area. They develop a longer attention span that enables concentration on, and perseverance in solving problems related to their talent or interest. Talented kids enjoy doing challenging projects with a real purpose and authentic audience and they are willing to challenge themselves. Intense work in their talent area becomes a source of great pleasure, especially when it is accompanied by public recognition and identity as a high achiever. Sometimes a budding talent seems to dead-end. The child loses interest or motivation to continue. But in later years, even into adulthood, that talent may re-emerge as an important piece of a different or more complex talent area.

## Children of All Abilities & Behaviors Have Talents

A child may exhibit an overall high level of intellectual or creative talent or may exhibit a single narrowly focused area of talent. Even a child who has generally low academic ability may fully express a particular talent. We have seen time and time again that a child who has many behavioral and focusing problems in a traditional classroom setting, often transforms into a focused, self-confident thinker and problem-solver in the Talent Center model of learning.



# **The Talent Center Model**

## **How Can We Encourage Talent in Our Children? The Three Phases of Talent Development**

The Talent Center Model is based on the three-phase School Enrichment Model developed by Joseph Renzulli of the ***National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented*** at the University of Connecticut.

### **Phase 1: Exploratory Activities**

All children need to be exposed to a wide variety of potential interest and talent areas. Informal and formal methods are used to create or identify students' interests and talents and to encourage them to further develop and pursue their interests and talents in various ways. Exploratory Activities include: demonstrations and brief lectures from guest experts with authentic tools, videos, field trips, and hands-on activities and kits that can be used by individual or small teams of students. The facilitating adult observes which children respond with the greatest enthusiasm and follows up with expanded resources and opportunities for those students.

### **Phase 2: Skill Building**

Individual or group training sessions provide specific knowledge, creative-thinking, problem-solving, research, and technical skills to help prepare children to pursue their interest areas in greater depth. Traditional classes and workshops are generally Phase 2 type activities.

### **Phase 3: Individual and Team Investigations of Real-World Problems**

This Talent Center & Extra Challenge Project Kit focuses primarily on Phase 3 talent development. When children begin to show signs of advanced interests, creativity, or task commitment, we need to be sure they have the opportunity to pursue their interests through higher level work serving an authentic audience. These projects can be done at home, in the library, classroom, or in specially arranged placements in school, or all of the above. The authentic audience might take the form of a service learning project anywhere in the child's community. The Extra Challenge Project Kit that follows is especially useful for guiding children through the crucial Phase 3 Mastery level of talent development. Very often, student Phase 3 or Extra Challenge Projects (which are described below) become Phase 1 activities for other children when students enthusiastically share their talents, skills, and ideas with others.

All three phases of talent development can easily and effectively be implemented in just a few minutes a day or 30 minutes/week by setting up a Talent Center in your school or classroom. It requires very little money, not much space, and just one creative adult to begin a Talent Center.



# How Do You Start a Talent Center?

Starting a Talent Development Center is easy. It can be done very gradually in an existing library, classroom, after-school center, or in a corner of your home.

## **STEP ONE: Show Your Interest in Their Interests**

### **Ask the kids in your care what interests them.**

Pay attention to what your kids like to do, such as writing stories, drawing, experimenting, observing nature, building, making music or working with numbers. Help them look beyond the standard commercialized movies, sports, TV shows, popular music, and computer and video games that are such a strong influence on everyone and encourage them to look inside themselves for what truly interests them. If they find it difficult to figure it out, have them fill out an Interest Survey (included in this Extra Challenge Project Kit) or try asking the following:

Imagine the power is off in your city, it's raining every day, and no batteries or electricity will be available for two weeks. What would you do?

Or...

Imagine school could be exactly the way you wanted it to be. What would it be like? What would you learn? Who would be your teachers? What would it look like? How would your whole school day go?

Or...

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Name ten different things.

## **STEP TWO: Set Up a Makers Space**

### **Set up a Maker's Space that inspires creativity and ignites a passion to learn more.**

Create an irresistably inviting environment for inventive productivity. Set up one center or many on tables, desks or designated shelves. Your first center could be contained in a shoe box.

#### **Create a Makers Space for product development. Stock it with:**

- a variety of paper stocks (lined, unlined, various colors, textures and weights - especially card stock and recycled cardboard boxes and tubes.
- writing and drawing tools (pencils with good erasers, black ink pens, colored markers, watercolors, colored pencils, etc.)
- scissors, glue sticks, glue, tape, stapler, hole punch, lots of colored duct tape

The Makers Space is an all purpose center that helps kids create products and services that help them integrate what they are learning about any topic. Vary the themes according to the interests of the kids involved or the topics you are teaching. Books, pictures, magazine articles and suggested websites set up the theme and background research for the Makers Space. Our goal is to introduce kids to a wide variety of potential interest and talent areas through themed centers, books, websites, demonstrations, brief lectures from guest experts, videos, field trips, and hands-on activities in the Makers Space.





## STEP THREE

### **Provide a Deadline and a Target Audience**

For many children, Step One and Step Two, which are process oriented explorations will be enough. But kids whose talent area is being touched by the exploratory activities, will want to pursue more information and a greater challenge in that area. Their interest will be ignited and they should be encouraged to move into a Phase Three project (see The Three Phases of Talent Development), creating a product or service for a specific audience in their area of passionate interest. The Extra Challenge Project Contract guides them through this process.

Follow up on your kids with your interest in their interests. In a traditional classroom, teachers show their interest (the curriculum) and provide an audience for student work by giving grades. In the Talent Center Model, kids learn to assess their own efforts, but they still need a deadline to motivate them to complete the work and an authentic audience to give them purpose, feedback, and appreciation for their efforts. The target audience also increases the children's capacity for empathy as they seek to understand the needs of the people they are trying to help. This empathy practice has wide-ranging affects on the child's behavior and social relationships.

Providing a target audience dramatically raises the level of quality and commitment to the work. An audience is broadly defined as the person, group or community for whom the product or service was designed. Hopefully, the audience will be supportive and encouraging and provide helpful feedback for improving future performance and innovation.

## **Extra Challenge Projects: Unique Service Learning**

The heart and soul of the Talent Center Model is the **Extra Challenge Project**. This is an independent study project that puts the children completely in charge of their own learning by discovering and using their interests and talents to serve a higher purpose. Extra Challenge Projects can be used to provide expanded learning opportunities for gifted students who are underchallenged by the curriculum. Extra Challenge Projects also provide a unique and valuable talent development and leadership experience for all children to explore and practice real life skills and to make valuable contributions to their communities.

Typical service learning projects are planned by adults who provide valuable structured experiential learning opportunities for students. Our dynamic service learning program, the Extra Challenge Project, is an empowering service learning program that puts the children's unique interests, talents and learning styles at the center of the experience, and challenges them to plan it out from beginning to end. They get to make all of the decisions and take their projects in whatever direction they want to go at their own pace and in their own style.



# **Your Extra Challenge Project Kit**

## **What is an Extra Challenge Project?**



Children (adults, too) learn best and retain what they learn, when we teach them the skills they need, as they need them, so that they can practice them immediately in a context that is important and highly relevant to them. This action based learning and immediate relevance completely integrates the knowledge and skills the children learn so that they retain them for a lifetime.

### **The Best Experiential and Collaborative Learning Activity**

An Extra Challenge Project is an experiential learning activity that teaches kids to look inside themselves for the motivation and creativity they need to find answers and solutions to their own problems, and the problems they see in the world. Extra Challenge Projects help kids identify and explore their interests, and produce intellectual, artistic and practical products related to their talents and interests. They are real life interactive learning activities that teach children how to set goals, realize dreams and achieve ambitions. They encourage children to enjoy taking on new challenges beyond their regular work, challenges that help them stretch their minds and capabilities by forcing them to figure things out on their own in a fun and engaging way

### **The Goal**

The goal of problem-based Extra Challenge Projects is to prepare our kids to be lifelong independent researchers, learners and leaders who integrate their Jewish values in everything they do. Extra Challenge Projects encourage children to empathize with and serve others, to behave responsibly, and to be self-motivated learners who can initiate and complete original ideas. They become well-prepared to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce which is continually evolving into new jobs and businesses that we cannot even imagine. How? Because they are getting lots of practice figuring things out on their own.



## Extra Challenge Projects Put Kids in Charge of Their Own Learning



Extra Challenge Projects are designed to put kids in charge of their own behavior and learning so that they can become self-directed achievers. They enable children to identify and utilize their strengths and the learning styles that are best for them by creating and implementing a service learning activity.

### Cooperative Learning Strategies

An Extra Challenge Project is a cooperative learning activity that challenges children to work individually or together to accomplish a goal that helps someone. Extra Challenge Projects can be simplified for early childhood education and accommodate the most advanced or gifted learner. This kind of experiential learning activity is especially useful for “difficult” kids, who often need to feel more in control of their lives, and may express that need through misbehavior. Extra Challenge Projects teach kids how to be effective leaders and to work collaboratively, using the individual talents and strengths of each child to succeed as a team

### What is an Extra Challenge Project?

So, what are these experiential learning games called, "Extra Challenge Projects?" An Extra Challenge Project has a very simple and amazingly adaptable 18 word curriculum.

***"Create something that's needed for someone who needs it that helps solve a problem or teaches something."***

This basic formula is the basis for all entrepreneurial and altruistic endeavors. Every company and non-profit organization in the world has to consider this simple formula in its mission or marketing strategy. When we give our children lots of experience practicing this formula, we give them the foundation for success, whatever they might choose to do later in life.



# How Do You Do an Extra Challenge Project?



An Extra Challenge Project has two main components:

1. **Create something that's needed** (a product or service)
  - A. A product is a thing you make.
  - B. A service is something that you do for someone.
2. **For someone who needs it** (a specific audience).
  - A. It can't be for "anyone" or "everyone."
  - B. It has to be for a certain group, or a particular age or grade, or for an individual that the child knows and wants to serve.
  - C. The child who is doing the project can also be the "audience."  
The child can do the project for his or her own benefit and growth.

**"Create something that's needed for someone who needs it, that helps solve a problem or teaches something important."**

The simple goal of Extra Challenge Projects is to complete a well-planned product or service, but the quality of the product or service is not as important as the process of creating it. The more opportunities we give our children to experiment with this formula for success in life, the more confident and successful they will be as adults. We need to give them this authentic leadership experience and these experiential learning games for genuine problem-solving, over and over again, in many different ways, so that they can take risks, try and fail, and learn from their mistakes in a supportive, encouraging environment.

## **Hands off! It's Student-Led Learning.**

The adult's role in Extra Challenge independent and cooperative learning activities is very minimal:

***The less you do, the better it is for the child.***



© 2016 Rae Shagalov All rights reserved.

Contact: [info@holysparks.com](mailto:info@holysparks.com) Phone: 323-447-4937



## Extra Challenge Project Forms

The following 3 tools will help you guide your children start an Extra Challenge Project.

1. Use the **Interest Survey** to help your students research their areas of interest and problems they're solving. It will help them choose content for their Extra Challenge Projects if they don't have a clear idea of what they want it to be about. You might think that kids would know right away what they're interested in, but unfortunately, they often don't know how to access their internal interests. The intensive marketing influence of the media, television, movies, video games, commercial sports, and popular music make children believe that these are their only interests. You will be doing your kids an enormous service if you exclude these influences from their choice of content for their Extra Challenge Projects. Make those topics off limits and this will force the children to look deeper inside themselves for their truly unique interests which will often lead them to their true talents. Just say, "There's nothing wrong with it. We just want you to think deeper about yourself."

2. The **Extra Challenge Project Survey** lists a wide variety of types of projects including many differentiated learning styles. This will give your kids some ideas to choose from, or spark new ideas of their own. The **Extra Challenge Project Survey** lists many kinds of generic projects but does not suggest what the content of the projects might be. The kids will choose what the content will be based on their unique talents and interests. Use the Interest Survey if they need help choosing their content.

The kids should follow the instructions exactly as stated. Don't let them just skip to step three. After they circle the dots of all of the ideas that interest them, you will have a good idea of the range of their learning styles, and what kinds of resources will help them develop their current interests and talents.

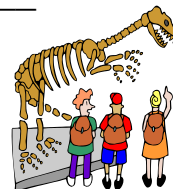
For kids below third grade, you can read aloud the choices on the **Extra Challenge Project Survey**. Ask them to raise one hand for the things that interest them a little (circle the dot), raise two hands for things that interest them a lot (one star), and jump up for the things they are really, really excited to try (two stars). Then help them choose the project they would like to do first.

The kids will then be ready to come to you to negotiate and fine tune their project ideas. You may not have the equipment or facilities for some of the projects on the list, so having three choices will help you guide the children in choosing the most feasible choice if the project they have chosen is not available. In some cases you may want to try to find a mentor to help guide the children in their chosen projects if you do not have the skills, interest or knowledge to support them. After the children choose their projects, it's time to fill out the **Extra Challenge Project Contract**.

3. The **Extra Challenge Project Contract** will help the children plan out their projects in greater detail and teach them how to set goals, create action steps, plan what they will need to be successful with their projects, and evaluate how they did. The Extra Challenge Project Contract also helps them feel committed to the project and provides documentation of their interests, talents, and accomplishments for their talent portfolio.







# Interest Survey - What do you like?

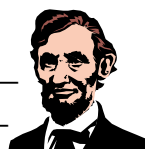
Use this Interest Survey to choose books & Extra Challenge Project to

- |                                       |                                      |   |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Torah        | <input type="checkbox"/> Space       | <input type="checkbox"/> Trucks             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mitzvahs     | <input type="checkbox"/> Stars       | <input type="checkbox"/> Castles            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holidays     | <input type="checkbox"/> Rocketships | <input type="checkbox"/> Pets               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Israel       | <input type="checkbox"/> Airplanes   | <input type="checkbox"/> Dogs, Cats         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money        | <input type="checkbox"/> Holidays    | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spies        | <input type="checkbox"/> Science     | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calligraphy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Origami     | <input type="checkbox"/> Electricity        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volcanoes    | <input type="checkbox"/> Machines    | <input type="checkbox"/> Art                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soldiers     | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning  | <input type="checkbox"/> Plays              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairy Tales  | <input type="checkbox"/> Moon        | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Earthquakes  | <input type="checkbox"/> Sun         | <input type="checkbox"/> Jokes              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Solar System | <input type="checkbox"/> Poems       | <input type="checkbox"/> Shells             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air          | <input type="checkbox"/> Horses      | <input type="checkbox"/> History            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weather      | <input type="checkbox"/> Trees       | <input type="checkbox"/> Countries          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Butterflies  | <input type="checkbox"/> Earth       | <input type="checkbox"/> Famous People      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bugs         | <input type="checkbox"/> Ocean       | <input type="checkbox"/> Math               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magnets      | <input type="checkbox"/> Electronics | <input type="checkbox"/> Baking             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light        | <input type="checkbox"/> Fossils     | <input type="checkbox"/> Robots             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying     | <input type="checkbox"/> Food        | <input type="checkbox"/> Planting things    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rocks        | <input type="checkbox"/> Farms       | <input type="checkbox"/> Wild Animals       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewels       | <input type="checkbox"/> Birds       | <input type="checkbox"/> Help Hungry People |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reptiles     | <input type="checkbox"/> Animals     | <input type="checkbox"/> Making Things      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frogs        | <input type="checkbox"/> Lions       | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharks             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Body   | <input type="checkbox"/> Detectives  | <input type="checkbox"/> Secret Codes       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inventions   | <input type="checkbox"/> Terrorism   | <input type="checkbox"/> Optical Illusions  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cars         | <input type="checkbox"/> Flowers     | <input type="checkbox"/> Magic tricks       |

What else? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



© 2016 Rae Shagalov All rights reserved.

Contact: [info@holyspark.com](mailto:info@holyspark.com) Phone: 323-447-4937

## Extra Challenge Project Survey

**“Create something that’s needed for someone who needs it.”**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade or Class: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Circle the dot in front of all of the ideas that interest you, even if you only like them a little bit, and don’t really want to do them yet. This helps us understand more about your interests and talents.
2. Put a star by your top 3 choices. These three things should be ideas that you really want to try out and are excited about.
3. Put two stars by the project that is your first choice. This is the idea that you want to try first. You may combine ideas or write down an idea that you have that is not even on the list.
4. When you are done, discuss your choices with the adult who is helping you before you make your final decision.

The following five projects are larger team Extra Challenge Projects you might start:

1. **Create an commercial for your school.** Tell new families and the rest of the world how great your school is so that they will want to enroll their kids.
2. **Start a Podcast or Video Channel.** You can report the news or science tidbits, record a story with sound effects or a funny or dramatic skit, perform music, or anything else you can dream up. It will be a show you can listen to by phone or on a website.
3. **Read Stories for Blind Children.** Dramatically read and record stories for children who are blind or for schools for blind children.
4. **Create a Kosher Comic.** Use the apps ToonCamera and Comic Life to write, illustrate, and act out a comic book.
5. **Start a School or Family Newspaper or Magazine**

**Do you prefer to work:** ☐ Alone ☐ With a partner ☐ With a team

**If you don’t see what you want to do on this list. write your own idea here:**

.....

### **Jewish Products**

- Do a Torah studies project of your choice
- Teach a class
- Invent a Jewish toy or other product
- Compose a Jewish song or music for tehilim or tefilah
- Plan a chesed project or fundraising project for a charity organization of your choice

### **Service Products**

- Work to help others who are sick or poor
- Help in your neighborhood, synagogue, school or city
- Help the world in some way
- Help other students

### **Computer Products**

- Invent an interactive choose your-own-adventure computer game.
- Learn how to program a computer.
- Make a power point show
- Design a website or web page
- Make a cartoon show

### **Creative Writing Products**

- Write a book on a topic of your choice. It might be a Torah sefer, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, story, poem, Play or .....?
- Make a school newspaper or magazine
- Write a journal or a blog (on a website)



**Acting & Performance Products:**

- Act out a story or event
- Perform a mime (no words)
- Create a comedy show
- Put on a show
- Record a story with sound effects and music for the blind children
- Film & edit a movie
- Put on a Puppet Show

**Artistic Products**

- Paint a picture or mural
- Illustrate a book
- Make a sculpture
- Draw a comic strip or comic book
- Take & display photographs
- Learn how to draw by yourself from a book
- Make things with clay

**Craft Products**

- Sew, knit, crochet, weave, spin wool into yarn, embroidery
- Make jewelry
- Do calligraphy or improve your handwriting

**Musical Products**

- Play a musical instrument
- Perform a concert or write music
- Record your original songs or music

**Business Products**

- Market an idea or a product
- Operate a business or create a company or a non-profit organization
- Learn about investing money in the stock market

**Science, Math & Technology Products**

- Construct a working model or assemble a kit
- Build a tower or other construction project
- Repair or take apart a machine to see how it works
- Invent something
- Do an experiment
- Explore robotics
- Do a math project; learn or teach math
- Build a city
- Build something out of straws or sticks

**Information Products**

- Design a bulletin board display
- Give a speech or talk to an audience
- Have a debate and argue one side of a topic
- Discuss a book or start a Book Club
- Write a short essay telling your ideas and opinions about anything: What? \_\_\_\_\_
- Write a research report, fact sheet or encyclopedia
- Make a training video
- Make a slide show

**Teaching**

- Teach a class
- Tutor one or two students
- Lead a club
- Help kids with homework in the library at lunch recess or after school



## EXTRA CHALLENGE PROJECT CONTRACT:

What is an Extra Challenge Project? It's an independent project that you are in charge of that helps you develop your interests and talents and helps in some way.

**Create something that's needed for someone who needs it, that helps solve a problem, or teaches something important.**

You can create a product (which is a thing) or a service (which is something that you do for someone). You can also choose to do something to improve yourself in some way.

**PROJECT LEADER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TITLE OF PROJECT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TEAM MEMBERS:**

NAME	GRADE	JOB TITLE
------	-------	-----------

**1. WHOM ARE YOU HELPING? This is your audience.**

(Be specific - It can't be everyone or anyone.)

**2. WHAT DO THEY NEED? (If you don't know, you can ask them.)**

**3. WHY DO THEY NEED IT?**

**4. WHAT IS YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE? (What are you making or doing?)**

**5. WHAT IS YOUR GOAL? (What do you hope to accomplish? Try to use numbers to describe how much, how many, or by when you want to achieve your goal.)**

**6. WHO BESIDES YOUR TEAM COULD HELP YOU?**



## **7. WHAT ARE YOUR ACTION STEPS?**

(What are you going to do first? What are you going to do second? And after that?)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## **8. WHAT EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES WILL YOU NEED?**

## **9. DESCRIBE YOUR PROJECT IN MORE DETAIL ON ANOTHER PIECE OF PAPER AND STAPLE IT TO THIS.**

## **10. WRITE 5 QUESTIONS TO RESEARCH ABOUT YOUR PROJECT ON ANOTHER PIECE OF PAPER AND STAPLE IT TO THIS.**

## **WHEN YOU FINISH YOUR PROJECT (OR IF YOU DECIDE TO CHANGE OR QUIT YOUR PROJECT), EVALUATE WHAT YOU DID.**

Evaluate means to decide how well you did your project. You can do this by answering the following questions:

1. Did you accomplish your goal? (If you didn't finish your project, why not?)

2. How do you feel about what you accomplished?

3. What could you have done better or different?

4. What do other people say about your project? (If you don't know, ask them!)





## Here are a few examples of Extra Challenge Projects

- A 5th grader researched the dangers of smoking to persuade his father to quit.
- Five 6th grade girls prepared a sing along visit to in a convalescent home and brought food baskets that included cards and a CD of the songs they sang.
- Four 5th grade girls planned a party for orphans.
- A 4th grader sewed skirts for the poor.
- 2nd and 3rd graders started recycling and litter clean up projects.
- A 4th grade boy made himself a chart to increase the number of times he shared his things with his brother.
- Other students researched how to volunteer in animal shelters, cure cancer, and how to reduce crime, violence on television, and fights on the playground.
- Two 3rd grades boys decided to improve their handwriting
- A 5th grade boy studied a book and website on how to be a movie director.  
Then he wrote a script, put out a casting call, and auditioned 18 classmates for the movie. He began a storyboard for the movie and designed a poster, then studied the manual for our video camera and trained his crew how to use it.
- Two 5th grade boys wrote a book called, "The Survival Guide for Getting Along in School."
- A 6th Grade boy wrote a book called, "Helpful Tips for a Person Coming from Another Country to America," which reflected all that he had to learn the hard way from his own difficult experience of adjusting to a new country, a new language, and a new school.
- A 5th grader taught a Sunday school class, planned his lessons, wrote homework assignments and tests for his students, created multi-media presentations, wrote letters to the parents of his students and developed a reward system for good behavior.
- Another 5th grade boy decided to research how to design a remote control door opener for his room. It was difficult to find any plans, parts or guidance until we found a manufacturer near San Francisco who was happy to be his mentor by phone for this project, as he had also begun tinkering electronically in 6th grade.
- Several 6th graders developed their own graphic novels and created a portfolio of unique fantasy characters and settings.
- Students in 1st through 6th grade plan lessons, teach classes and lead clubs.
- A 6th grade girl invented a glow-in-the-dark book for kids to read after bedtime.
- Two first graders drew a blueprint and built a skyscraper with straws as the girders and paper walls.
- One boy made projects with the snap circuits electronics kit in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. In fourth grade, he graduated from the kit and invented his own machines from basic components and began teaching 1st graders about how electricity works.
- 100 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls raised over \$30,000 for an organization that has a special summer camp for children with life threatening illnesses - YES-\$30,000!  
-- And they've been doing this for more than 10 years!



## Top 25 Projects for Developing Talent for Under \$30



1. Publish a book
2. Start a school or family magazine
3. Design your ideal \_\_\_\_\_ (school, house, bedroom, business, world, city, playground, park, clothing, party, game, furniture, etc.
4. Make a radio show and podcast it or record it on voicemail or an answering machine.
5. Make a website on a theme.
6. Compose a song or a ringtone.
7. Help someone.
8. Start a small business.
9. Learn a craft.
10. Invent something new.
11. Make a sculpture from found materials.
12. Put on a play or a puppet show with handmade puppets.
13. Design a line of greeting cards and send or sell them.
14. Start a journal.
15. Teach something you know.
16. Make a contest.
17. Have a Talent Fair & Show
18. Make charity boxes and put them all around your school or town.
19. Choose a charitable organization to help and figure out five ways to raise money or collect needed things for them.
20. Build or take apart something to see how it works.
21. Make a training video, book of tips, website, power point presentation or comic book that explains how to do something (or how to refrain from doing something).
22. Make an alphabet book or mini-encyclopedia about a single topic that you research.
23. Design a game and all of its rules.
24. Make an indoor or outdoor garden.
25. Choose a topic to research and make a display about it in your community.



## Here are 10 Tips to Help You Guide Children in Their Extra Challenge Projects:



**1. Plant a Talent Seed** and encourage your children to try an Extra Challenge Project.

Talent Seeds are little phrases, ideas, projects and challenges that you scatter to the kids in your sphere of influence. They are suggestions you make without any demands or expectations.

They begin with opening phrases like:

“Would you be interested in...?”

“You know, I think you might have a talent for... “

“Would you like to try...?”

“Would you like to be in charge of...?”

“Would you help me...?”

Of course, these need to be authentic.

**2. Honestly praise and encourage every effort** the child makes, even if the end result is not complete or completely successful. Name and describe what the successful effort is. Studies on how to build self esteem show that children who are told that they are smart, become less successful than children who are told that they can become smart with effort.

### The Magic Question

**3. Help kids adjust their expectations** so that they are not over-reaching or overwhelmed. You can do this very simply by asking the following magic question:

***“What small step can you do next week  
at the age you are now  
to help make this happen?”***

**4. Celebrate the small successful steps along the way.** Even taking one small action step is a huge success. Celebrate it! Help kids recognize and acknowledge all of the smaller successes along the way to the desired goal. That way, even if the end result is not successful, your kids will still feel self confident and successful and ready to try again.

**5. Be available** to help as needed, but don't take over! Let the kids be in charge of every aspect of the project. Help them brainstorm a little and say, “I'm sure you'll figure it out. Try it and if you need more help, get back to me.”



**6. Encourage the children to trust their inner wisdom.** If they ask for your advice, or if they ask you, "Is this good?" always ask them first, "What do you think?" Then help them to assess their idea or project for its pros and cons and give them your opinion. Often kids have exactly the right solution but lack the self confidence to trust their inner wisdom. This practice is essential for leadership and character development. The best model is to trust your inner wisdom AND check it with people whose opinions you respect.

**7. Give the kids a due date.** This step is very important because it creates enough pressure to bring the project to a conclusion before interest wanes. If the due date creates too much pressure, it could cause the child to want to quit the project, so be willing to re-negotiate the due date. The Extra Challenge Project Contract helps break the project down into action steps and makes it easier to estimate how long the project might take. Help them create a timeline with milestones clearly marked with dates, but be flexible!

**8. Check on the child's progress.**

**Do:** Ask at regular but not too frequent intervals (maybe once every other day):

"I am so excited about your project. How is it going?"

"Is there anything you need or anything I can do to help?"

**Don't:**

- Nag or pester too often
- Force children to do a project that they aren't interested in.
- Do it for them or try to make it perfect.



**9. Don't hyper-focus on results!**

Our real goal is to teach children and young people how to independently plan, direct and evaluate an original idea and to give them lots of experience taking risks, making choices and mistakes and learning from them. The results of the project are much less important than the effort and experience that the children gain in trying to make their dreams real.

**10. Encourage your kids to do their personal best.**

Remember: The end result is not as important as the effort & experience gained in the process! Don't be judgmental or disappointed if their work does not meet your expectations. How you feel about their work is less important than how *they* feel about it.





## Three steps to take when kids want to quit or avoid the project:



### 1. Encourage them to continue.

Say, "How's your project going? Is there anything you need or anything I can do to help?"

If they want to stop, ask:

***"Is there anything that we could change so that you could continue?"***

Then try to accommodate the requested change. They may just need to switch to working on a different part of the project.

***"Do you want to take a break and continue later?"***

If they decide to take a break, set a date to look at the project again and re-evaluate it.

They may just need a break and will continue with renewed energy at a later date, or after the break they may decide to continue the project in a new way.

If certain children have a clear pattern of quitting every project, create a reward system to help motivate them to create a new habit of completing things. Help them plan several small or simple projects that can be completed in less than half an hour to create a new pattern of success.

### 2. Help them put closure on the project.

It's perfectly okay to change the project along the way or to abandon it completely and start a new one. Every flower has its season. Some bloom and some don't. Some seeds sprout and grow toward the light. Others seeds lay dormant in the ground and become fertilizer for other plants. It's the nature of creativity to have many trials, some successful, some not; some completed, some not. If after gentle encouragement they still want to discontinue the project, help them evaluate whatever they did and why they don't want to continue. This turns the end of an unfinished project into a successful completion and gives important information for the next project.

Ask: ***"How would you do it differently if you were going to do it again or if somebody asked you how they should do it?"*** There is also an evaluation section on the Extra Challenge Project Contract.

### 3. Plant new Talent Seeds. Keep encouraging your children to try new things.



© 2016 Rae Shagalov All rights reserved.

Contact: [info@holysparks.com](mailto:info@holysparks.com) Phone: 323-447-4937



## Could This Person Be You?



The Talent Center Model fits into all current educational models without making any major institutional changes at all. It can begin as a program run completely during recess without making any schedule adjustments in a school. It can begin with the tools and materials found in any classroom or library. A Talent Center requires only one thing to get it going – a creative person who would like to encourage children to discover their amazingness.

In every Talent Center there is a person who appreciates the uniqueness of every young person who enters. He or she takes the time to listen carefully to the kids' ideas, wishes, dreams, opinions and interests. Then this person encourages, guides and helps them find whatever they need to be as successful as possible, while still allowing them to be fully in charge of their projects. He or she often says, "That's a great idea! How can I help you?" and "Don't worry, I'm sure you'll figure it out." A Talent Center requires very few resources to get started, yet the results are immediate and amazing.

We know our program brings out the best in our children and helps them feel valued and valuable as leaders in our school and their Jewish communities. We invite you to use this handbook to start a Talent Center and the Extra Challenge Program in your school.

We would be happy to help you start your Talent Center, and we offer a free consultation to help you get started. We would also love to hear from you about the Extra Challenge Projects your children are doing. Let's network together for larger, collaborative adventures and for grant funding possibilities.

**For a free consultation**  
**Call Rae Shagalov: 323-447-4937**  
**[info@holysparks.com](mailto:info@holysparks.com)**

**P.S. We are now taking Extra Challenge Projects to the next level and integrating them with Jewish Design Thinking in the core Torah Studies and Social Studies curriculum. Are you experimenting with project-based learning or design thinking in your school? Please contact me. I'd love to hear about it!**



© 2016 Rae Shagalov All rights reserved.

Contact: [info@holysparks.com](mailto:info@holysparks.com) Phone: 323-447-4937