

TEACHERS' AND AIDES' INTERVIEWS

9 teachers and 6 aides

What our staff likes about KB

Our staff likes to be part of the KB community and feel they belong to it. "People who join KB are special ." "Choosing KB is a thoughtful and committed decision." " People at KB are passionate, don't try to be fancy.

Our teachers and aides like to be working at KB because it connects them to their own Jewish identity. They enjoy the interaction with the kids. The ones who went through the school themselves are proud to be role models for their students and are thankful to KB for giving them the possibility of helping, co-teaching and teaching.

Training

Teachers and aides in lower grades expressed interest in learning more about Humanistic Judaism either attending the grown up sessions once in a while or community programs. All teachers would like to be informed about the community events, programs, announcements and activities.

Students

Teachers and aides appreciate KB students. They are aware that these are special kids.

Teaching difficulties

Some teachers expressed difficulties by having different learning styles in their classroom. How much information is age appropriate? How can we make the class more interactive? Some aids observed that kids are bored "I would love to do something more interactive with the kids"

Others expressed difficulties in making interesting lesson plans for small classes. How to make classes different from regular school? How to engage kids in conversations? "It's hard when the kids don't have a reference point and parents don't do much at home." "it's hard to follow a lesson plan when half of the class is absent and we were not notified." "It's hard to find ways to do different activities and teach the concepts."

When homework is given some students do it and some don't. The teacher then gets into a "no win situation" since whatever s/he does some kids will be bored.

Teachers asked for access to more educational materials and resources, for example; videos, music and games.

Curriculum

Teachers like the freedom but also needed structure and guidance. Two years ago teachers had too much structure and even though things were well organized and had clear goals teachers felt pressure to teach content sacrificing building community time or improvising as group dynamics arises. Last year teachers report to have had too much freedom and no much guidance.

Some grades faced very difficult or too advanced curricula. That was the case for 4th grade this year and third grade when the Rabbis and Sages curriculum was taught.

The curriculum for 2nd grade this year was challenging since it lacked much content.

The curriculum is often change every year. Some expressed frustration by having to create a lesson plan each year and not having the opportunity to use what has been already developed and gaining from experience. Teachers felt they didn't have resources and supporting materials when planning lessons.

Teachers want to know what their students learned in previous years and what they will be learning in subsequent years so they can have a general idea of the content matter.

Lesson plans

Teachers and aides mostly worked in collaboration each person would think of an activity and will conduct it with the support of the other person. They learned subjects as they developed them.

Communication within teachers and community

Teachers would like to be informed about the community news and happenings. They would like to have a broader communication between themselves and develop inter-grade activities.

Communication between parents and teachers

Most of the teachers reported not having a great deal of communication with their students' parents. Many, in the lower grades, said they wished to increase communication with parents next year by inviting parents to the classrooms, getting parents e-mail addresses and write to them before or after each session (a few teachers did that).

Music

Teachers and aides are very enthusiastic about having a professional music teacher! The music program in the past was weak since it wasn't done professionally.

Aides vs. teachers or "middle ground between teachers and students" (this is how one the aides defined herself)

What's the role of the aides? Is KB training them as teachers or exposing them to a classroom environment? Aides feel the pressure to do a good job when become teachers since they have much more responsibility.

Things to work on

- "do something interesting during snack"
- "have staff meetings"
- "have an overview of the school curriculum"
- "older kids hate the community gathering before class, they come straight to class"
- "having clean classrooms"
- "I wished kids will know each other better"
- "have inter-grade activities"
- "have freedom to do more Hebrew"
- "share file cabinets"
- "hear parents' concerns and be informed"
- "Keep record of lessons"

Things that our teachers bring to their classrooms:

Enthusiasm, knowledge, good communication with kids, passion, working for something they believe in, creativity, empathy with kids, interest in teaching and learning, role modeling.

An overwhelming majority of aides and teachers commented that they've learned A LOT from Steven Brion-Meisels.