



GANN Academy News

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A PUBLICATION OF GANN ACADEMY

SPRING 2010/5770

Gann Academy On the Move

March 1: Four students were named National Merit Scholars based on their superior PSAT scores and academic performance.

March 22-26: During Exploration Week, twelve students developed an ant colony casting in Tallahassee, Florida that will be used at the Smithsonian Museum.

April 11: Ten students met with Czech Prime Minister Jan Fischer in New York City and described their creation of a museum of Czechoslovakian Jewish life in the 20th Century.

April 14: Over 100 grandparents and special friends joined students for Grandparents and Special Friends Day at Gann Academy.

June 6: Gann Academy will host *New England Celebrates Israel* from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

We are continuing our effort to Go Green. Join our email list and help us. Get Gann Academy news and information right in your inbox.

Send your email address to Rachel Books at rbooks@gannacademy.org to sign up.

We look forward to keeping you updated.

Gann Students Give Back:

Exploration Week Transforms Students Through Hands-On Experience

From Waltham to New Orleans to South Dakota, in March students spread out across the country to experience life outside the classroom during Gann's Exploration Week. Exploration Week is an intense immersion in hands-on learning projects that epitomizes Gann's mission to connect midrash (intellectual creativity) and ma'aseh (responsible action).

Head of School Rabbi Marc Baker described the program as, "The transformative experience of learning by doing. Students are giving back, building community and connecting to the larger world."

Students participate in an incredible variety of activities including Habitat for Humanity, literacy programs, Charles River Conservancy, a Civil Rights trip through the South, improvisational comedy, creative writing, game design, Israel advocacy, intensive athletics and more.

This year, for the first time, over half of Gann's 314 students chose one of the twelve Community Service projects. Jonathan Golden, Director of Academic Operations, said, "Our students have clamored to do community service as a community."

Caring for Preschoolers: Waltham Creative Start

At Waltham Creative Start, nine students spent the week working with low-income and minority preschool children, ages three through five. This program provides high quality education and family services to a diverse population of children.

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Rebecca Jackson '13 and Jonah Naghi '12 make friends at Waltham Creative Start.

GIVING TO GANN: Please consider donating to our 2009-2010 annual campaign. Visit us online at www.gannacademy.org/donations or call Rachel Books at (781) 642-6800. Thank you!



Shalom Chaverim,

As our Bar Mitzvah year comes to a close and we prepare to send Gann Academy's 11th

graduating class out into the world, I am struck by the parallels between a Bar Mitzvah and the time period of the Jewish calendar that characterizes our final months of school – the period between Passover and Shavuot.

A Bar or Bat Mitzvah marks a period of transition and maturation in a child's life by bestowing upon him or her new and significant responsibilities and obligations. Post Bar or Bat Mitzvah, a Jewish child is able to perform certain mitzvot on behalf of others, family and the community – the child is now ready to begin giving back.

The weeks between Pesach and Shavuot mark B'nei Yisrael's journey toward Mount Sinai, where they receive the Torah, and with it a responsibility to build an Am Kadosh, a Holy People, and an ethical community. As with a Bar Mitzvah, our freedom is not just a freedom *from* it is a freedom *for* the sake of taking responsibility for ourselves, each other, the Jewish People, and our world.

As our school grows and matures, we are taking greater and greater responsibility for the actualization of our pluralistic educational mission. Every member of our community plays a unique and powerful role in creating challenging, nurturing and inspiring learning experiences for our students.

Throughout this newsletter, you will read stories of students, teachers, and others in the Gann community who are transforming themselves and our world, on Exploration Week trips, through social action and community service, on the ball field and in the theater, from Waltham to South Dakota to England and India and, of course, Israel as well.

Enjoy these inspiring examples of all the ways that the Gann community is, in the words of our Mission Statement, making "lasting contributions to the Jewish community, American society and the world at large."

Shalom,
Rabbi Marc Baker
Head of School

Drama Club is a Laboratory for Leadership



In the famous play *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Cyrano helps a nobleman woo the lovely Roxanne by whispering his words into the ear of his tongue-tied friend.

It's a poignant and challenging role and one of many portrayed by Gann Academy senior Jesse Garlick. Jesse said, "I put a lot of time and effort into *Cyrano* and I had so much fun doing it. It was hard work but we managed to pull it off."

Jesse is one of forty students who belong to Gann's Red Curtain Drama Club. With three productions a year, the Drama Club is much more than a performance group or an extracurricular activity. It is a community with a special

focus that allows students to flourish and attain leadership skills that they will take with them long after they graduate.

Jason Slavick, Arts Department Chair, said, "Drama Club is a venue for developing student leadership and initiative. It is a laboratory where they explore responsibility and organization."

The club is completely student run, from board elections to production



Jesse Garlick '10 as Mr. Biggley and Hannah Hausmen '12 as Hedy in the Drama Club's performance of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

choice, casting, rehearsals, lighting, costumes, sound, set design and production. Students learn how to program an event, make decisions as a group and get their messaging out.

The club is a welcoming and safe environment in which each student's creativity and personality are recognized. For example, Jesse joined the group as a freshman and has acted in ten productions, as the lead in the last two plays and the supporting lead in both musicals. He will be attending Boston University's Conservatory to study Theater in the fall.

Jesse said, "Joining Drama Club was a turning point for me at Gann. More than anything else it helped me find myself and find my identity."

For some students, the Drama Club connection continues after graduation as well. Gann alumni Josh Mocle '05, who now teaches video at Gann, and Rachel Hock '05 have joined The Performance LAB, a new theater company founded by Jason Slavick.

Jesse beautifully summed up the power of Drama and the Arts, and why they are core to Gann's mission, "I learned from Drama Club to let your creativity shine through, to treat each other right, and to bring your true self to the table." ■

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Before starting the project, Jonah Naghi '12 said, "I am anxious to learn how the people at Waltham Head Start learn and how we can help them through our own influences."

Students assisted faculty in their classrooms with everything from reading aloud to the children to helping the staff and observing how a program like Head Start is run. Although they began the week simply enjoying their time with the children, their expectations were challenged by how dramatically different these children's lives are from their own.

Library Director Julie Koven, chaperone of the Waltham Head Start, said, "The students are astounded that there are young children in such need just ten minutes from our school, some of whom live in shelters. Without Head Start, these children would begin kindergarten with no books, no crayons, and not speaking English."

Caring for the Homeless: Pine Street Inn

Homelessness is an abstract idea for many Gann students. But on their Exploration Week project, nine students came face to face with the reality of life at the Pine Street Inn. Pine Street Inn serves more than 1,300 homeless individuals daily and 10,000 annually, providing services to help men and women live independently and with dignity.

Liat Deener-Chodirker '13 said, "I chose to volunteer at Pine Street Inn because I wanted to do something that would be both fun and educational. The issues that we dealt with throughout the week are very serious, and I hoped to be able to make whatever small difference I could."

Rabbi David Jaffe, Instructor of Rabbinics and Ninth Grade Dean, was a chaperone of the Pine Street Inn project. Prior to joining Gann, Rabbi Jaffe was a long-term activist for the homeless and worked at a homeless shelter. Rabbi Jaffe said, "It was great for our students to work side by side with people who have very different lives from them. Being in that environment helps expand their horizons and makes homelessness more tangible."

The team worked with Pine Street Inn staff in the kitchen, preparing thousands of lunches and dinners each day. They helped the cleaning crew, and painted and shellacked one of the Inn's long-term housing sites. The students also shopped, paid for and prepared dinner for twenty-eight in a long term residence, and planned and ran an activity night for their guests.

Caring for Hurricane Victims in New Orleans

Hurricane Katrina was one of the deadliest and costliest natural disasters in U.S. history, with over 1,800 people killed and over \$100 billion in damage. Almost five years later, thousands of displaced residents are still struggling to return to their homes.

Josh Neudel, chair of the Science Department and coordinator of the New Orleans trip, said, "This trip is one of the most life changing experiences these students have. They are exposed to so many new things. They could never imagine not having a house to go back to or losing every possession."



Talia Berkowitz-Regosin '13, Liat Deener-Chodirker '13, David Roberts '12, Josh Goldstein '12, Ezra Porter '12, and Andrea Greenberg '11 prepare a meal for residents of the Pine Street Inn during Exploration Week.



Students traveled to New Orleans to help victims of Hurricane Katrina return to their homes.

Although the students do not see the same level of visible devastation as in 2006, there remains plenty of work to be done. Students work on rebuilding, mold remediation, mudding, painting, installing siding and new floors.

Michael Herman '10 chose to return to New Orleans after spending Exploration Week there in 2009. He said, "My goal is to do as much as I can. Whether it is building part of the house, taking nails out of the wood from an old house foundation, or painting a house. Every little bit that I can do is one less thing someone else needs to do down there."

Yael Nurko '10 chose to go to New Orleans because "I am hoping to connect to people who live such different lives and experience situations that will change who I am for the better." ■

International Educators See Gann as a Model of Excellence

For over 13 years, Gann's success has made it an example of educational excellence for other Jewish Day Schools across the U.S. and internationally.

Recently, a team of educators from Sikkim, India visited Gann to observe our school in action. Laila Goodman, Dean of Students, said, "What attracted them to Gann is



Educators from the Taktse International School in Sikkim, India visited Gann Academy in January.

the mixture of progressive education, best practices, cutting edge technology and an openness to the exchange that you don't see at other places."

Gann's pluralistic model

is very relevant to the Taktse school because of its diversity. The Taktse School was founded by Buddhist monks three years ago and is attended by 250 Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist students.

In November, the founding leaders of the Jewish Community Secondary School, a pluralistic Jewish Day School that will open next fall in London, visited Gann to learn about its culture.

The British educators were interested in how pluralism influences Gann's pedagogy and culture. Dr. Susie Tanchel, Associate Head of School, said, "When you're setting up a school it's great to have a vision you can react to. And it's important for Gann." She added, "It's the same reason we have teachers observe others when they're learning to teach. Other people's questions help us reflect and refine our thinking." ■



Author Anita Diamant Visits Gann

Seniors in Gann's "Women in Literature" class enjoyed an informative and engaging discussion with author Anita Diamant about her New York Times best seller, which they read for class. Deb Carroll, Chair of the English Department, said, "It was a powerful experience for the students. Diamant really brought to life the biblical characters she created."

Facing History Teaches Students to Be Upstanders

Gann strives to inspire students by creating opportunities for them to explore and define their identities. This year students at Gann have a new way to learn about themselves and their place in the world through Gann's partnership with *Facing History and Ourselves*.

Facing History, based in Brookline, is devoted to helping people of all ages make moral and ethical choices by learning from the examples of the past. Gann is participating in a three year program funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation to explore how to include these values into a high school curriculum.

Rabbi Jethro Berkman, Tanach teacher and member of Gann's Facing History team said, "*Facing History* has terrific resources for exploring identity, talking about how we relate with different groups, and giving people the tools and training to stand up and act when the situation calls for it."

Last summer, four educators at Gann were trained with faculty from schools in the Boston area and Los Angeles. The approach was incorporated into a series of successful programs that addressed the moral dilemmas of our time, including "How can you be an upstander when faced with a difficult situation?"

Rabbi Berkman noted, "There are many examples in history where events could have gone differently if people had stood up for what was right. We're teaching students to make the right choices." ■

ADMISSIONS UPDATE:

This year, Gann Academy had a record setting admissions season with:

146 applicants (73 girls, 73 boys)
coming from:

39 different schools and 45 cities

Welcome to Gann - Class of 2014!

BOYS' BASEBALL SWINGS FOR THE FENCES

This year's boys' baseball program is aiming high with a new coach and a demanding schedule. Varsity Head Coach Brian Tanguy assumes the top job after one year as Junior Varsity Head Coach. A pitcher who played four years of college baseball and two at the semi-pro level, Coach Tanguy brings expertise and enthusiasm to the program.

And the new coach has big shoes to fill. Ken Kornreich, who retired last year, launched Gann's baseball program five years ago. Coach Kornreich, parent of Gann alumna Rachel Kornreich, was a pitcher at George Washington University and played in the Saint Louis Cardinals' farm system.

Baseball is about commitment, competitiveness and camaraderie.

He took the team from humble beginnings to the top of the Mass Bay Independent League, winning the 2008 and 2009 championships.

One of the challenges the team faced has been a lack of strong competition in the past couple of years. Because the team has been so dominant, many games have ended with a "mercy ruling," which occurs when a team has a ten or more run lead going into the fifth inning. Athletic Director Sue Johnson said, "For the most part we have been overpowering our competition so much that games do not challenge our students to be excellent."

Last spring, players began asking for more games against stronger teams outside the league, knowing that the team was taking a risk of losing badly. This season Gann has added six of these games, dramatically impacting the strength of the team's schedule and competition.

In Coach Johnson's words, "One of our goals is to provide a competitive experience for our athletes. We're upgrading the schedule to provide athletic integrity. We might only go .500, but we'll be a better team than when we were winning every game."

The spring's line up is loaded, with a third of the boys in the program looking to play baseball at the college level. Coach Tanguy said, "I'm looking forward to working with these more experienced players and to help them improve even more. We'll be playing teams that are just as good as we are and the players will have to fight a bit harder. My number one goal is to make them the best I can before they go on."

He added, "Baseball is about commitment, competitiveness and camaraderie. You can make it fun if you do it the right way. And if you do it right there's nothing better than baseball." ■



(from top)
Catcher Michael Herman '10
Third baseman Jacob Lichtman '11
Center Fielder Kevin Baker '10



Coach Ken Kornreich

HONORING COACH KEN KORNREICH

Beloved Boys' Baseball Program Founder

In recognition of his many enduring contributions to Gann Academy, Coach Kornreich will be honored this spring at the Gann Annual Sports Banquet on Wednesday, June 2 at 6:00 p.m. in Gann's dining hall. As a passionate believer in the power of sports to help students excel, Coach Kornreich founded the Academy's Boys' Baseball Program in 2004 as a volunteer. In a mere five years, he guided the fledgling team to back-to-back championships. His dedication surpassed the role of a coach as he taught his players skills that will last them a lifetime. Thank you, Coach Kornreich. You will be missed!

BEST WISHES TO OUR COLLEGE ATHLETES

Josh Danesh '09
Soccer
Division 1
Northeastern

Shahar Shatzberger '08
Lacrosse
Division 3
Nichols College

Aliza Miller '08
Soccer
Division 3
Connecticut College

David Heifetz '07
Baseball
Division 3
Carleton

Donors Cynthia and Bill Marcus Set Gann Apart

Cynthia and Bill Marcus are long-time supporters of Gann who are committed to providing a pluralistic Jewish education for the next generation. They have generously devoted their time, talents and resources to furthering Gann's mission since before the school opened its doors in 1997.

Cynthia said, "Pluralistic Jewish education teaches students to be tolerant of each other in ways that are unique. It sets Gann apart from a secular private school."

Cynthia has been a member of the Board of Trustees for ten years and served as Board President for one year during the school's transition to its current home. She is currently Co-Chair of the Development Committee.

Cynthia said, "It's a terrific environment, with a committed board, wonderful faculty, and an exciting headmaster doing amazing things." She added, "And it's always fun to be there. I've learned so much being part of this institution."

She and Bill, an executive with a nationally known manufacturer, live in Chestnut Hill. They have three grown children who attended Jewish Day School, and four grandsons.

The couple believes strongly in the importance of a Jewish

education and are invested in connecting students to Israel. Bill said, "It is important to support Gann's mission because the opportunity to give Jewish children an education is a necessity in today's world."

The Marcuses are proud of the school's growth and feel very fortunate that they are able to make this kind of contribution to their community. Cynthia said, "We never anticipated that we would have this kind of success and grow so rapidly. Gann is a gift to the Boston community and we need more people to know about it."



Board of Trustees member Cynthia Marcus and her husband Bill are long-time supporters of Gann Academy.

The couple also is very active in the community and supports a number of important organizations including Solomon Schechter Day School, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces, American Jewish Committee, and The Technion - Israel Institute of Technology.

Bill and Cynthia's long-term hopes for Gann include building an endowment to ensure its future financial stability. Bill said, "Education is our best investment. At Gann, children receive an extraordinary Jewish experience and a terrific education. Donors help make that possible." ■



Gann students Tali Marcus '10 and Ilan Grossmann '10 welcome Ironi Hey visitors during their visit.

Ironi Hey Partnership Strengthens Gann Students' Ties to Haifa and to Israel

Every year, members of Gann's Junior class spend the fall trimester studying and traveling in Israel, learning about Judaism and Jewish history. Part of this experience includes meeting their peers at Ironi Hey, a large public high school in Haifa, Boston's sister city.

With the support of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies and the Boston-Haifa Partnership, Gann educators are working to strengthen this important partnership and to build stronger connections between the two school communities.

Visitors from Ironi Hey met with faculty and school leaders here at Gann in March, Head of School Rabbi Marc Baker traveled to Haifa with Daniel Klein and Gann Senior Tali Marcus to celebrate the partnership and present to lay leaders from both communities.

Tali said, "It's been really great to have friends in Israel and it's enhanced my own relationship with the country. Instead of going to Israel as a tourist, I spend time with my Israeli friends and am able to see and experience the country through their eyes."

The time that Gann and Ironi Hey students spend together at *shabbatonim*, classes, and family visits helps illuminate what Jewish life is like in both countries and highlights the milestones they share.

Alumna Ariela Nurko Sees Life in 3D

Alumna Ariela Nurko '04 is a technical director for Pixar who credits her education at Gann for her work ethic, sense of identity, and many long-term friendships. Ariela said, "I'm so happy that I went to Gann. I got to do many things I wouldn't have been able to do at a public school."

The daughter of Rebeca and Samuel Nurko, Ariela grew up in Newton with her twin brother Uri '04 and her younger sister Yael, now a senior at Gann.

In 2009 she graduated from UPenn with a B.S.E. in computer science with a concentration in computer graphics. When Pixar recruited on campus, she was chosen for an internship that was followed by a full time offer.

At Pixar, Ariela works in the stereo rendering department that transforms movies from 2D to 3D. Using sophisticated compositing software, her job is technical and artistic – making the clouds in the sky look three-dimensional for example. She's currently working on an international trailer for *Toy Story 3*.

Like her work, Ariela's experience at Gann was composed of three parts: academics, sports, and Judaic Studies.

She believes that the challenging academics at Gann prepared her for college and her career by instilling a strong work ethic, time management skills, and the ability to think analytically.

Ariela was a two-sport athlete, playing goalie and sweeper on the soccer team and point guard on the basketball team. She was also a member of the Tikkun Olam Club.

Sports and academics were complemented by a meaningful exposure to Jewish thought and heritage. She said, "Gann helped me form my Jewish identity. I'm very secure about that." She added, "Wherever I go, I feel comfortable being Jewish. I can go to temple and know the prayers. When so many things are changing it's nice to know some things are the same."

For Ariela, the people remain the most treasured part of her high school years. She said, "The friends that I made, I keep in touch with all of them. The teachers were always accessible and so willing to help. I felt part of a community and knew every one in my grade. Gann nurtures you." ■



Ariela Nurko '04

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New Parent Dessert Reception

Incoming Gann parents Stephanie Maroun, Head of School Rabbi Marc Baker, Alfred Maroun, and event hosts, Lauren and Mark Rubin at the New Parent Dessert Reception in March.



Alumni Basketball

Gann alumni and varsity players compete at the Alumni Basketball Tournament.



Tikvah Scholars Explore the Big Questions

Four Gann students have been accepted into the prestigious Tikvah High School Scholars Program, created last year by the Tikvah Fund. This is the first year that this exciting and challenging opportunity is available to high school students.

The Tikvah Fund promotes serious Jewish thought about the enduring questions of human life and the pressing challenges that confront the Jewish people by supporting the education of intellectual, religious, and political leaders around the world.

The Tikvah Scholars program aims to educate future leaders of the Jewish community by giving high school students a chance to study great texts and debate philosophical questions with their peers and some of the most esteemed thinkers of our time.

Tanach Teacher Jacob Pinnolis, Tikvah program leader, said, “For students with an intense interest in philosophy this provides a way to expand their horizons about the fundamental questions of human existence, find a cadre of peers, and connect with scholars in the field.”

This year three Gann seniors and one junior were accepted into the program after a rigorous application process. They

engaged in intensive weekly readings, discussion and debate; cultural experiences; and retreats.

Becky Gould '10 said, “Tikvah has been one of the highlights of my experience at Gann. I have particularly enjoyed grappling with philosophic ideas through the study of classic texts together with Jewish sources.”

In the pilot year, Tikvah has partnered with six leading Jewish day schools. Five of the schools are Modern Orthodox Schools from the New York-New Jersey area, and Gann is the only pluralistic school.

Inbar Yamin '11 said, “I loved being someone who came from a different point of view. I felt like I had so much to share with everyone else about what my Jewish life is like and how my Jewish atmosphere and community are different from theirs.” ■

Tikvah High School Scholars Inbar Yamin '11, Becky Gould '10, and Hillel Lehmann '10 (not pictured: Sam Doernberg '10).



Gann parents Stephen and Carol Cohen, Sarah R. Cohen '11, and event chairs Nancy and Albert Cohen

2010 Gann Academy Grandparents and Special Friends Day

Over one hundred grandparents, family members, and friends attended Grandparents and Special Friends Day on April 14 at Gann Academy. Students and guests enjoyed an incredible day marked by a presentation by Gann parent Martha Minow, Dean of Harvard Law School. Guests also attended classes and were able to experience first-hand the wonderful education students receive at Gann every day.

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333 Forest Street
Waltham, MA 02452

