

Moving the Needle: Galvanizing Change in our Day Schools

The RAVSAK/PARDES Jewish Day School Leadership Conference
Los Angeles, CA • January 19-21, 2014

Special Needs and the Diverse Classroom

In partnership with Rosh Pina



Goal:

To help day school educators and administrators explore effective educational practices for serving students with a variety of special learning needs and identify approaches to making their schools welcoming and inclusive of a range of students and families.

Description:

Day schools have often struggled to meet the educational needs of students who have a variety of learning disabilities and other social, emotional, behavioral or health challenges. Gain a deeper understanding of the range of students characterized as special needs; learn new approaches to special needs inclusion from both within the Jewish day school system and from other school systems; grapple with the administrative and financial obstacles that might seem daunting and begin to develop plans and strategies to become truly welcoming and inclusive institutions.

Pre-Work:

We would like to suggest a number of videos that you might want to watch, as well as some articles that we recommend you read before arriving.

1) Videos prepared by:

[Carmel Academy, Greenwich, CT on their PALS program](#)

[The Shefa School, New York, NY, on their new school opening this coming Fall.](#)

2) This TEDX video by Todd Rose: [The Myth of Average](#)

3) Videos by Rick Lavoie:

[F.A.T. City Workshop](#)

["Last one picked, first one picked on."](#)

Teacher's Guide: <http://www.ricklavoie.com/dos.pdf>

4) Community Vision for Serving Students with Special Needs in Greater-Boston's Jewish Day Schools

In addition, as an ongoing resource we wanted to share a number of website that our experts have found useful:

- <http://www.reggioalliance.org/downloads/littlesister:thompson.pdf>
- <http://www.ricklavoie.com/>
- <http://www.allkindsofminds.org/>
- <http://www.socialthinking.com/>
- <http://projectvariability.org/>

We are also starting a Reshet so that the learning that begins in this deep dive can continue after the conference. Reshets are RAVSAK's peer-facilitated networked learning communities, which allow colleagues to post queries, share information, and collaborate. Please subscribe today by sending an email to: <mailto:ReshetSpecialNeeds+subscribe@ravsak.org>

By subscribing to ReshetSpecialNeeds you have subscribed to an email list-serv, but we hope and anticipate that this group will expand beyond email to webinars, video-chats and offline collaboration.

Agenda:

10:30am: Wrestling with Angels: Special Needs and This Moment in Jewish Education

Rabbi Shawn Fields-Meyer, Milken Community Schools

Torah is the starting place of all Jewish education. As we dive into the complexities of serving students with special needs, we will see that we are part of a long line of teachers, rabbis and community builders to wrestle with these issues. We will begin today's journey by looking at parallels of our own challenges in the experiences of our ancient texts.

11:00am: Mapping the Journey: Where Are You Now and Where Do You Want to Be?

Elana Naftalin-Kelman, Rosh Pina

Come experience best practices in inclusive education while keeping focused on your own schools inclusive practices. Through self-reflection, program evaluation and sharing resources we will review where each school is on its journey towards inclusion.

12:30pm: Lunch Break

1:30-2:15pm: Understanding the Realm of Special Needs

Karen Lerner, The Prentice School

Participants will review a self-assessment checklist of multi-sensory teaching practices, designed for teacher use. After a brief overview of key special education terms, we will delve into what students with that designation might "look like/sound like" in a classroom. Teachers will participate in a self-assessment checklist of their multi-sensory teaching practices. Assistive technology tools and other supports designed to enhance the learning environment will be offered.

We will then enter into a discussion of what are the cognitive, behavioral and psychological student limitations a neuro-typical classroom can support and what to do if your school does not have these resources.

Finally, we will conclude with a brief mention of the importance that active memory plays in learning, but is compromised by students with such common issues as ADHD and relay some findings from our Brain Train research with CSUSB.

2:30-4:00pm: Breakout Sessions (Participants will choose one to attend).

- **Creating Inclusive Schools: Financial Considerations and Challenges**

Alan Oliff, Initiative for Day School Excellence, Combined Jewish Philanthropies

Successfully implementing the vision of inclusive Jewish day schools requires serious thinking about a number of issues including financial considerations and challenges. This interactive session will focus on

several key questions: What impact will an increased number of students with special learning needs have on the faculty and school support systems? To what extent will there be the additional budgetary expenses? Who should pay for these? Should parents of students with special needs be responsible for paying for all, some, or none of the costs above the regular tuition? Are there resources (public, private, philanthropic) that could offset additional expenses? How can the community support schools to meet the vision? Explore these and other questions as the workshop leaders share their experience and encourage participant engagement.

- **Of Lions and Lionesses: Working with parents of children with special needs**

Amy Bryman, LCSW, MAJCS

This workshop will focus on identifying the unique needs of parents and children with special needs. Participants will gain an understanding of the experience of parents when a child has been diagnosed with a disability. The workshop will cover strategies for partnering with parents in order to maximize the day school environment for the child with special needs. Learning will be experiential, using research outcomes and qualitative examples, allowing participants to actively engage in this dynamic workshop.

- **What Administrators Need in Their Toolbox for Needy Students**

Karen Lerner, The Prentice School

Beginning with a review of the admissions procedures needed to identify students with learning differences, we will explore the emotional climate of each school by having administrators complete a checklist. These findings will aid in determining if certain student deficits would be a good fit for a specific school.

Next, we will explore what teacher skills would be required to work with students who have learning issues, a spectrum diagnosis, ADHD and/or anxiety issues. We will also look at the topic of scheduling and how this can make or break a student's achievement. We will end with a brief overview of Common Core Standards and their potential problems for students with specific learning issues.

4:00pm: Break

4:15-5:00pm: Reflection and Next Steps: Individually and in small groups we will consider the next stops and potential destinations for your school's journey and begin to map strategies for reaching them. (Facilitators to be confirmed)

Elana Naftalin-Kelman, Rosh Pina

Debbie Niderberg, Hidden Sparks

Alan Oliff, Initiative for Day School Excellence, Combined Jewish Philanthropies

Ilana Ruskay-Kidd, The Shefa School