



High School Highlights

Imagination Runs Riot at the High School

This academic year, the High School added something truly unique to the traditional senior science elective courses. We offered twelfth graders an experimental course on innovation and patenting. The goal of the course was to take students through the process of developing a novel idea, searching the prior art to ensure that no-one had previously thought of the idea, and applying for a patent to secure the rights to that idea.

The students demonstrated amazing imagination during the initial innovation part of the course. Ideas flew fast and furious, and the students got a taste of just how much innovation has already taken place. We would think of utterly bizarre and strange ideas, only to find that most were already patented. The disappointment of discovering that our idea was not novel was softened somewhat by the thought that, against all odds, there were people out there who actually had a thought process similar to ours.

After the initial phase of identifying novel ideas was complete, we required the help of a patent attorney to proceed. To start, we needed to understand the key aspects of patent law, and also wanted someone experienced to vet our ideas for patentability. Finally, we needed someone to help us write the patents and then to file them with the U.S. patent office.

A colleague put us in touch with two patent attorneys who thought that the idea of working with high school students would be fun. They agreed to help us pro bono. Thus, for this year, we welcomed Charles Macedo, a partner in the patent law firm of Amster, Rothstein & Ebenstein, and his associate, Howard Wizenfeld, into our group at Heschel.

At the start of the collaboration, Charles and Howard visited Heschel and gave us a presentation on patent law, explaining the detailed process whereby an idea is transformed into a patent application. It was a great introduction for the students, who now had a better understanding of the hurdles facing us. Charles and Howard helped us prioritize and formulate detailed descriptions of our ideas, and explained how to carry out a rigorous prior art search.

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The next meetings were held after school at the law offices of Amster, Rothstein & Ebenstein. We met every couple of weeks, during which time Charles and Howard formulated the claims, and reviewed and modified the texts and figures for the patent applications.

After a long, iterative process, three applications were ready for filing. Throughout this process, Charles and Howard were always available and patiently explained all the legal issues that arose. They took crude initial efforts and turned them into virtual masterpieces. We are truly indebted to them and to Amster, Rothstein & Ebenstein for all the help they gave us this year, especially in the long and time-consuming process of putting together the endless paperwork for each filing.

Our inventions? The first is a method from preventing people from leaving a contaminated area, such as in a hospital or a laboratory, while still wearing contaminated gloves. The second is an electric hedge trimmer that is designed so that the blades cannot sever the electric cord of the hedge trimmer. The final invention relates to an air mattress that deflates at a specific time to arouse a sleeper.

The anxious anticipation we all felt at the beginning of the year as to whether we would come up with even one idea, has yielded an eclectic mix of inventions attesting to the wonderful imagination of the Heschel students.

Isaac Secemski
HS Chemistry Teacher



Internships

On April 29th following 8 days of rather exhilarating senior seminars and a restful *Pesach*, the 2008 seniors began their internships around the city. This is our third graduating class and the third class to do internships during the month of May, although the schedule has changed somewhat. In the past, the students have completed 3 weeks in a non-profit organization, whereas this year, they will be working for 4 weeks - Monday through Thursday. For the first time, on Fridays, they will come to school, share their work experiences, rehearse for graduation and enjoy each other's company, as they have done during the last 3 ½ years. In addition, the students will post to a blog so that they can describe their on-site experiences and share notes with their peers and teachers.

Some of the students are working in groups. For example, 6 students are working at the JCC taking care of children in the morning and branching out to their preferred areas in the afternoon—coaching on the basketball court, helping to prepare for summer camp or working in the art room. Another large group is volunteering in a middle school in the Bronx where they have been placed in classrooms of their subject preference—math, science, history and English.

Four students are working in an animal shelter on 110th Street and a number of students are working at Mount Sinai Hospital for different people, and hopefully not performing surgery! Others are involved in organizations that involve Israel, grassroots politics, music, film and theater.

In next month's Heschel News, I will include any jobs that were not mentioned as well as a more detailed account from the students themselves about their personal work experiences. In addition, I hope to visit some of the sites and take photographs of our students hard at work. Good luck to all our seniors!

Jessica Gribetz
HS Assistant Head

