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### Threads in a Tapestry: An Ethnographic Evaluation of Milken Community High School's Tiferet Fellowship Program

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**Threads in a Tapestry:**  
An Ethnographic Evaluation of  
Milken Community High School's  
Tiferet Fellowship Program



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# Home

Welcome to the web site/blog dissertation related to an ethnographic evaluation of the Milken Tiferet Fellows program located at Milken Community High School, Los Angeles, California, and at the Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education in Hod HaSharon, Israel. Please be sure to read this page in its entirety as it contains important background information and navigation suggestions.

**Threads in a Tapestry:**

**An Ethnographic Evaluation of Milken Community High School's  
Tiferet Fellowship Program**

by

Roger J. Fuller

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership & Change Program

of Antioch University

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



August, 2009

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

Threads in a Tapestry: An Ethnographic Evaluation of Milken Community High School's Tiferet Fellowship Program

Prepared by Roger Jason Fuller

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Change

Approved by

Committee Chair Dr. Carolyn Kenny Date

Committee Member Dr. Laurien Alexandre Date

Committee Member Dr. Alan E. Guskin Date

External Reader Dr. Michael Zeldin Date

## Abstract

This study explored an essential question, "What does the lived experience of students in the Tiferet program mean for them and others?" By exploring the background, implementation, and lived-experiences of two academic-year sophomore cohorts from Milken Community High School in Los Angeles as they lived and participated in a semester study abroad program at the Alexander Muss Institute of Israel Education in Hod HaSharon, Israel, the study shows the impact of that experience on the students in the program and the school culture at large. The study engaged in a description of the program's development and evaluation of the lived-experiences as they were reported by students and parents through surveys and video interviews and observed by the researchers. By using a mixed-genre approach and a media-enhanced web site, this study created a sense of the experience of living in Israel for one semester of the sophomore year.

The electronic version of this dissertation is accessible through the Ohiolink ETD Center at <http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd/>

The web link for the original and evolving dissertation is available through

<http://khronosreview.com/>

The dissertation is best viewed by going to this site. Features are present in the web/blog based version which are not present in the print edition. These features include interactivity and dynamic content. It is best read, viewed and explored via the web/blog experience.



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## Introduction to the Content and the Web Site

The Milken Tiferet Program is a unique semester length study abroad program for students in Grade 10 at Milken Community High School. Milken Community High School is located in Los Angeles, California. The Tiferet program places selected students from Milken in the Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education located in Hod HaSharon, Israel, for their spring semester.

This ethnographic case study seeks to examine and evaluate the first two years of implementation for this study abroad program through a variety of ethnographic, case study, evaluative, and technological means. By analyzing program overviews, student work, video-based interviews, survey results, and the collected work of email exchanges, this study will examine the lived experiences of program participants, and the impact of these experiences on the individuals, their families, and on the school culture. In many ways this study will present the lived experience of a group of children from Milken who engaged in a "pioneer" experience.

This web site is interactive and presents several opportunities for understanding the program and the data relevant to that program. The web site serves to reinforce some of the notions introduced in a recent edition of The Chronicle of Higher Education on the future of scholarly publishing ([Dougherty](#), 2009). The web site contains some of the features mentioned in Richardson's text about the "read/write" capabilities of the web ([Richardson](#), 2009, p. 5).

The links located at the top of the page can guide the web viewer to any of the several parts, and these links are repeated on each page. These links function as a "Table of Contents" page and allow the viewer to fully participate in the site. The viewer can always return to the upper navigation bar to review various aspects of the study. Furthermore, within the results section, an internal "page direction" can lead the viewer to the next pages within each sequence of results. At all times, the viewer can return to the upper navigation bar.

Additionally, a navigator "Menu" can help the reader move from section to section on the site – the "Menu" is located on the right hand side of each page and contains buttons for navigating to the major parts of the site. These buttons remain consistent throughout the site and can serve as a navigation menu. Many readers will want to "explore" the site rather than "read" the site, a metaphor in keeping with modern thinking on web sites. The "Menu Buttons" help in this process. Pages are best viewed on a minimum of a 17 inch screen.

This blog/web site contains several contemporary web-based and media enhanced features. First, there are several sections in the study where the viewer may wish to consult extra resources already published to the world wide web. Appropriate links are provided within these sections. Second, this web site makes use of modern web-based software to create dynamic and interactive content by "revolving" several pictures at the side of each page. Third, all citations within the study are enhanced with "roll-over functions" which allow the reader to hover above the citation in order to view the actual citation referenced.

Because this is a blog/web-based research and evaluation project, the viewer will notice several layers of analysis and commentary. A frequently used device in this study will be the use of a "Commentary" section at the bottom of each web page. This commentary section represents an attempt to present data and information in a unique blog-centric method. Additionally, the site invites the commentary of others at the bottom of each major section page; in this way, I do hope that the site itself begins to organically grow and develop as others participate in the content. Please feel welcomed to add authentic comments; inappropriate commentary will be deleted.

While a static copy of the web site is provided for PDF download from the Ohio Link. The most up-to-date content will be found on the web/blog page, located at

**<http://khronosreview.com/>**

The web site permits and encourages web based navigation in several ways, yet an overview of the contents may prove useful. The web site dissertation is divided into eight sections.

[Welcome](#) – *This page is the welcome page and serves as a home location. It also provides an introduction to the content and the technology used in the site.*

[Introduction](#)- *This chapter explains the background of the study, exploring the essential research question of the study. The chapter serves to ground the study by providing essential information about the schools and school culture involved, the participants, and the program itself.*

[Literature Review](#) – *This chapter explore a range of scholarly literature related to study abroad programs, issues in ethnography, program evaluation, and the philosophy and traditions of schooling as they relate to the program and living in the 21'st century.*

[Methodology](#)- *This chapter explains the research methods used to gather information and involve participants in the study. The chapter discusses the roles of ethnography and the use of a mixed genre approach.*

[Results](#) – *This chapter is perhaps the most complex chapter of the study, and is a collection of information gathered over two years. The chapter contains several sub-sections and its own internal system of navigation which always takes the reader to the “Results Home Pages.”*

[Analysis](#) – *This chapter examines the recurrent themes and ideas presented by the results. Three different threads of analysis are presented as a way to develop the ethnographic conclusions presented about*

*participant and school culture.*

[Discussion](#) – *This chapter represents the conclusions of the study and how the study has implications for the program itself and for leadership and change.*

[References](#) – *This section lists the materials used for the study.*

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## Acknowledgments

There are several people who have made this dissertation dream a reality. My committee, consisting of Dr. Carolyn Kenny, Dr. Laurien Alexandre, Dr. Alan E. Guskin, and Dr. Michael Zeldin have shown patience, understanding and good will as I have attempted to advance the boundaries of disciplined scholarship into new media. Dr. Carolyn Kenny has been a constant source of support and encouragement in the process of developing the topic and in finding articulation for that topic via the medium of the world wide web.

For me, there have always been heartfelt thanks to the parents and students on the Tiferet Program, who have been pioneers and settlers in what is a new territory for education. Of course a special thanks goes to the leadership of the program, Dr. Metuka Benjamin, Rabbi Eli Herscher, Dr. Rennie Wrubel, and especially to Rabbi Edward Harwitz, who brought it all together for the program's first two years. The many engaged professionals at the Alexander Muss Institute have become much more than colleagues in this process, and I value their insights and dedication.

Then of course, the "team" of students who has worked with me since the beginning, Dan Ulman, Daniel Nikzad, and Ghoncheh Nazarian – interviewers, editors, programmers, critics, observers, and truth seekers. This team has woven this tapestry over four years of hard work, good talk, and dedicated experimentation. And a hearty welcome goes to the new team members, Matt Novian, Lucas Fisher, Jesse Kay, and David Bloch. This team helped to make the study and the technology real. Just as there has been a student team, several adults have been involved in helping prepare this study. Scott Perloff, Debra Sokolow, Kimberly Goldstein, Karen Laibow and Cathy Avraham have been people I turned to daily for help and advice.

Finally, I must acknowledge my children Jason and Katrina and thank "Mrs. Fuller," my wife and co-worker of 35 years, for the depth of compassion and understanding as she transported me around in sightless times, and who found the strength to support me in many late nights of web work.

**NOTE: To best view this ethnographic case study, you will need Quick Time. You may download this free software for either Windows or Macintosh by clicking on the link below.**

[QuickTimeDownload](#)

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## A Welcome and a Beginning

Over and over and over again in writing this dissertation, I have been amazed at the creativity and insights of the "student team" who worked with me. The results of the last two years have created a huge repository of pictures, video, and text. One day in June, 2009, I came to school to find this slide show "attached" to an email with a note from the crew, "Good Luck, Mr. Fuller." I have placed the short video here in order to set the tone and to serve as an introduction to the study. The song which accompanies the slides is in Hebrew with the theme of dreams.

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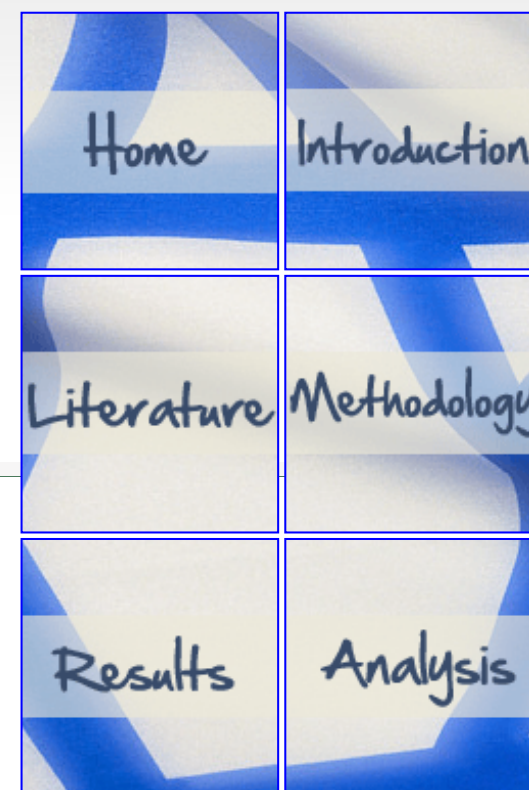
# Introduction

Writing an ethnographic and case study evaluation on a new high school program creates inherent challenges. This task is compounded when one is both the principal of the school and a student in a graduate program. The issue of positionality and the issue of objectivity are both integrated and constantly in tension. As principal, I get to attend many committee meetings on many topics. At the same time, writing about those topics as a graduate student requires me to assume some distance – perhaps a privileged distance. Nonetheless, as a student at Antioch University, and as the Principal of the Upper School at Milken, I have worked to maintain my role as an emic observer throughout the process of writing this study.

In many ways, writing an ethnography of a new high school program is like weaving a tapestry. The tapestry is the ethnographic evaluation, complete as that evaluation can be given the time and opportunity constraints. The concept of narrative threads will run throughout this study and provides a central framing metaphor for the study. A tapestry consists of a warp and a woof, threads intersect and through that intersection create a more complete picture. When creating a woven tapestry, it is important to set the warp yarns first. This tapestry can then best reflect both the school culture at Milken as a frame of the tapestry and the Tiferet program as the central image contained within that frame. These two cultures exist in relationship and understanding both is important to the study.

Clearly, the warp yarns in this evaluation – the initial beginnings – concern the program itself, the definition of the program, the role of the administrator, the role of the evaluation – in short, all things related to the school itself. Not coincidentally, weaving this tapestry requires the selection of “colors” and “textures,” and that is the role which I must play in this paper. In many ways, I do not create the yarn, or determine the colors of the yarn, but I must assume that these things are “givens.” My job in this study is to bring coherency to the many different threads surrounding the project and its implementation with a self-critical, but reflexive understanding of my emic position within the school.

At the very outset, it is also important to note that I have not gathered, written, or observed in isolation. As will be discussed later, this project has involved students, parents, teachers, and administrators who have both created and reviewed the process. In many ways, this project represents a kind of “team ethnography,” as many people have been involved its inception, implementation, and review. For additional web based information on team centered ethnographies, consult these links:





## [Community-based collaborative team ethnography](#)

### [Research design and procedures for team ethnography](#)

To best understand this warp, it is best to understand something about the school culture and the program contexts. Milken Community High School is the largest Jewish Day School in the United States with 781 students in attendance spanning grades 7-12. The school's mission statement reads:

*On the foundation of the highest academic standards and Jewish ethical and spiritual values, Milken Community High School of Stephen S. Wise Temple develops students with sharp minds, generous hearts, and kind souls. We value each member of our pluralistic community while we foster a deep connection to Israel, a lifelong dedication to the Jewish people, and a passionate commitment to the service of humanity and the perfection of God's world.*

Much of the decision making of the school happens in relation to this mission statement and it is an often quoted document in the life of the school. The words, "sharp minds, generous hearts, and kind souls" have formed a basis for academic, social and community life at the school. Just as important are the words "a deep connection to Israel," and "a lifelong dedication to the Jewish people." This second part of the mission is the essential driving force for the Israel exchange and study abroad programs. In this way, the mission statement establishes both a context and a tension between these two kinds of commitments – one to the academic and spiritual needs of the student body and one to the larger needs of Israel and the Jewish people.

For several years, the school had been engaged in an exchange program with either Lady Davis or with Tichon Chadash, both secondary schools in Tel Aviv. These exchange programs have been geared toward tenth grade students and the programs have involved the application and selection of students from each school. Students from Lady Davis would visit Milken for up to two months around the High Holy Days in September and October, and students from Milken visited the Lady Davis for up to two months around the time of Pesach and the important Israeli holidays of Yom HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron, and Yom Ha'Atzmaout – the observation of the Shoah, the Israeli Memorial Day, and the Israeli Independence Day. In this way the original programs attempted to meet the needs of both groups of students.

These needs were determined in part by the school culture, and institutional and philosophical issues. Because Israel is a largely secular society, the leadership of the institution of Stephen S. Wise and Milken Community High School felt it important to have Israeli students visit Los Angeles during the religious High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This enabled traditionally secular Jews to participate in the religious lives of Americans living in the Diaspora. At the same time, American Jewish youth often had little experience with the secular and political life of Israel, and they could gain this experience as well as experience with Jewish culture by visiting during the important political days surrounding Israeli independence. The Israeli holidays commemorating fallen soldiers, Yom HaZikaron, and independence, Yom Ha'Atzmaout, are two days that literally follow one another within twenty four hours. The civic mood in Israel



rapidly shifts from somber to celebratory, and American Jews have no basis for comparison.

During these early exchange programs, students were matched and spent time living with each other's families for two months. The exchange was as much social as it was academic as the students spent up to two months living with host families. The students formed close personal bonds with their buddies and with their host families. While this programming was effective, the social nature of the programming overshadowed the academic needs of the students. Both groups of students attended classes in their respective "exchange" schools, despite the fact that the classes might be fundamentally irrelevant to the home school curriculum.

The understanding of the "warp" of the program's history is an important first step in creating the tapestry of the new study abroad program. One feature of the previous program concerned the perception that Israeli students in high school do not face the same academic pressures as their American counterparts. Milken Community High School is a private independent day school which bridges several traditions including the independent school movement, the Jewish day school movement, and the college preparatory school movement. The students at Milken represent a middle to upper level socioeconomic status and their parents pay tuition to attend Milken. As a college preparatory school, one hundred percent of Milken students attend post-secondary schooling, and the competition for college is a stressful and fully-lived experience. This is a hallmark of the Milken school culture – that everyone goes to college, and that the competition for prestigious selection is a reality of life.

A clearly perceived reality by many Milken students and parents was the idea that the academic experience of attending a public day school in Israel did not sufficiently prepare the students to continue highly academic collegiate goals. Israeli culture is simply not like American culture. In America, students attend high school, then go to college, then engage in living what they all hope will be the American dream. In Israel, students go to high school, then join the Israeli Army or Israeli Defense Forces, and then attend college. Every Israeli child knows the reality of living in a war-torn country and faces the reality of death during service to the country. This affects their high school experience and their social life. Israeli culture tends to be less rule driven than American culture, independence and freedom come to Israeli youth at a younger age than in America. This is then a hallmark of Israeli culture – that the high school years are relatively less demanding than the achievements held later in college.

For some additional web-centric information on Israeli youth culture, please consult the following sites:

[\*Westernization and the Decline of Collective Culture\*](#)

[\*Culture in Israel\*](#)

[\*The True Face of Israeli Youth \(2002\)\*](#)

Consequently, students from Milken who participated in the exchange program often returned to Milken having had a greater social experience than an academic experience. The program goals of understanding Israeli society were clearly met, there was a sense of intense bonding with Israeli families; however, the academic aspiration of American parents engaged in helping their children find an appropriate college placement were not being met.

In 2002, Milken Community High School began the process of re-examining its connection to the mission statement and its connection to Israel by creating an Israel Task Force. This group met semi-monthly for three years to examine the school's relationship to Israel and to other schools. Several options were examined and several programs were studied. In 2004, Rabbi Eddie Harwitz rejoined the Milken staff as Rabbi-in-Residence, and showed an interest in leading the Israel Task Force. Under Rabbi Harwitz' leadership and the guidance of Rabbi Herscher and Metuka Benjamin, the school secured a six million dollar grant to begin programming in 2006.

As a part of the fabric of the program and the school's commitment to Israel, it was rather tacitly assumed that every student at Milken would have an experience in Israel at some point in their secondary school. As the program shifted its upper school experience out of its relationship to Lady Davis, two other programs began to grow. One resultant program was the grade 8 exchange program of two weeks duration with Lady Davis which follows the same model as the previous grade 10 program. Students visit and live with host families for two weeks with Israeli students visiting Milken around the High Holy Days, and students from Milken visiting Israel around Yom Ha'Zikaron and Yom Ha'Atzmaout.

The second program to develop during this time period was the summer exchange with Tichon Hadash in Tel Aviv. This program involves approximately 20 Milken students and is a part of the Bureau of Jewish Education Los Angeles-Tel Aviv Partnership. Again, this program focuses on the relationship between the American and Israeli buddies and is offered during the summer vacation period.

During this gestation period and the formulation of the Tiferet Fellows program, the Israel Task Force made several important and somewhat radical decisions. They decided that the program would be a four month residential program involving tenth graders. In this way, the program would meet the American-based academic needs of having a solid grade 11 year to accommodate the realities of the AP program and the needs for good grades. Second, by sending grade 10 students, their role in Israel advocacy could be enhanced during their grade 11 and grade 12 years. Israel advocacy has always been an important part of the program, and yet it had never been programmatically articulated.

In addition to the programs in Grade 8, and during the summer of Grade 10, Milken Community High School in conjunction with the Bureau of Jewish education in Los Angeles offers grade 12 students a chance to participate in the March of the Living Program. This program admits grade 12 students into a student "march" toward freedom from the concentration camps in German and Poland to the freedom of Israel at Yom Ha'Zikaron and Yom Ha'Atzmaout. Grade 12 students leave Milken almost immediately following Pesach break in April, journey to German and Poland with survivors of the Holocaust and then journey to Israel for the commemoration and independence days. At Milken, this often involves concomitant arrangements for AP tests which are usually held in the first weeks of May, the time that the students are on the trip. During 2007, fifty students from the senior class made the trip. During 2008, 80 students participated in the trip. As a trait of the school culture at Milken, the involvement with trips to Israel has expanded during the last five years.

For additional web-based information on this program, please consult the following sites:

[March of the Living](#)

[March of the Living – Los Angeles](#)

It should be pointed out that one of the resultant "successes" of all these programs emerged as statements made at graduation in 2007. Immediately following the Pesach break of 2007, approximately 150 students from Milken were in Israel. These included students from the Grade 8 program, students from the grade 10 study abroad program and students from the Grade 12 March of the Living program. It is apparent that the school is making an larger and larger commitment to Israeli programming.

It is against this background that the warp of the current program was created. The Israel Task Force considered several alternatives and decided that the centerpiece of the school's Israel program would consist of a four month residential study abroad program. This program, labeled the Tiferet program would seek to admit qualified freshman to a program which would take place during the second semester of the sophomore year. After a comprehensive review, the school decided to use the Alexander Muss Institute as a host school.

The Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education has experience in hosting other schools, but none for a four month period. For additional web-based information on the Alexander Muss Institute, please consult the following sites:

[\*Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education\*](#)

[\*Alexander Muss\*](#)

At the current time, the school is in its second year of sending students to Alexander Muss. It is against this background that the research for the program has begun. A quality of the research must concern the positionality of the principal. While I am involved with the school as principal, the Israel program of the school does not report directly to me – I am often cc'd on email exchanges, however, I am not a direct participant in the program. This structure allows both for a system of checks and balances and for a "respectable distance" from the program as it develops.

This condition clearly makes an emic observer of both the school culture and the emerging program culture, yet a relationship that is not fully informed. I do know what happens in the school, but am not always fully informed about what happens in the program. In many ways, I know about the culture of the school, but not about the culture associated with the program. Milken forms a frame culture for what happens within the context of the Tiferet program – there is a simple reality that a student must be admitted to Milken and be successful at Milken before even applying to the Tiferet program. Understanding the frame while examining the topic of the Tiferet program is the core task of this study. It is these concerns which lead to the essential question, "What does the lived experience of students in the Tiferet program mean for them and others?"

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# Literature

One single essential question serves to frame the context of this study. That question is "What does the lived experience of students in the Tiferet program mean for them and others?" This simple question is packed with opportunities for weaving a tapestry of knowledge.

There are several threads to be woven through this section of the study, and these threads involve reviewing relevant literature surrounding study-abroad programs, ethnographic methods, program design and evaluation, and the qualities of school and schooling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is the context of these threads that provide for me a background design in weaving the tapestry. Like all threads, these are each complex structures in themselves, narratives spun over time; threads woven on great spools of knowledge in preparation for the interaction of warp and woof.

It is upon this background that the tapestry will be woven as data is collected and a sense of coherence is achieved. These issues are addressed in the analysis section and concern how these background issues are interwoven.

This literature review is divided into four major strands of thinking and reflection and include the following ideas. The links below can take the reader directly to the desired sections.

[\*Study Abroad – Exchange Programs\*](#)

[\*Issues in Ethnography\*](#)

[\*Design and Evaluation\*](#)

[\*Qualities of School and Schooling\*](#)



## Study Abroad – Exchange Programs

In order to find literature related to study abroad programs, I conducted a thorough search of literature in several data bases including the ERIC system, the EBSCO data bases, the Education Full Text, PyschInfo, and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index. Throughout the literature search, there were virtually no articles on secondary education and study abroad programs. Some articles did relate to exchange programs, and herein lies one of the fundamental differences between the Tiferet and other programs. The Tiferet program is a four month study abroad program for students in grade 10 of secondary school.

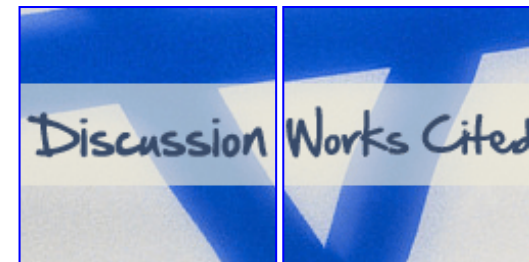
At the current time, there appear to be no similar programs with such a residential component for grade 10 students. Zimmer-Loew ([1986](#) & [1988](#)) discusses short term study abroad programs for secondary students where the program emphasis is placed on language acquisition and cultural appreciation. [Dragonas](#) (1983) also discusses the ideas of a secondary exchange, but not a study abroad program, as it relates to a high school exchange between students at Melrose, Massachusetts, and Hamburg, Germany. Clearly this is a call for further research.

The relevance and importance of study abroad programs has been a long standing subject of discussion. [Freeman](#) (1967) writes an early article about the need for evaluating programs relating to study abroad. [Smith](#) (1983) discusses the role of study abroad programs and their relationship to learning a foreign language. In addition to the learning of a foreign language, he states, "

*And finally, is there not a crucial political need for the influential sectors of younger generations from different countries to have the opportunity of meeting and working together in educational programmes which will equip them in their later careers for international co-operation in our ever more complex and interdependent industrial world?. (pp. 139-140)*

Smith reveals a decline in study abroad programs in the 1970's and laments the effect it may have on future generations. While that trend has largely reversed itself, it is clear that Smith believes in the value of extended study abroad programs. Smith argues for additional study into study abroad programs and states that the research has four important areas for investigation.

*Considering the impact of study abroad programmes in an educational sense, we are in essence talking about at least four different sectors of influence, nominally their impact on the curriculum, the individual student's performance, the institutions involved and in stimulating additional types of spin-off not envisaged as a primary goal of the programmes themselves. (p. 144)*



considerations about the Tiferet program as some of the spin-off developments have been significant.

On the issue of study abroad programs, more literature was available when the search parameters allowed for higher education and college experiences.

Several viewpoints and several issues developed as a result of this literature search. [Teichler](#) (2004) writes about the ERASMUS program for college students who chose the study abroad option from their European based colleges. Approximately 40% of the eligible colleges in Europe participate in the program, and the author sheds light on the student motivation for participation. He claims that the primary motivations include the following:

- *learning a foreign language,*
- *opportunity for self-development (87% each),*
- *wish to gain academic learning experience in another country (82%),*
- *wish to improve understanding of the host country (73%),*— *wish to improve career prospects,*
- *wish to travel (71%), and*
- *wish for a break from usual surroundings (p. 397)*

It would be interesting to ask the students in the Tiferet program the same kinds of motivational question in order to create a comparison; however, these initial questions were not asked of the Tiferet students. Nonetheless, the knowledge of other student's motivation is interesting. Teichler (2004) adds, "This shows that students expect the four major benefits of temporary study abroad frequently quoted by experts, namely, academic, cultural, linguistic and professional benefits, but that they do not mind combining them with an interesting extracurricular life during the period spent abroad" (p. 397). [Chieffo and Griffiths](#) (2003), [Allen and Herron](#) (2003) and [Davis and Mello](#) (2003) reach similar conclusions regarding the benefits of a study abroad program. These conclusions almost directly parallel some of the reasons and some of the results that Tiferet students cite in the survey results presented elsewhere.

[Marcum and Roochnik](#) (2001) explore the issue from an American rather than a European view. They see an expanded role for study abroad programs and couch the justification in the need for Americans to be more pluralistic in a global economy. They write, "If the United States is to be a leader in international education, we must strengthen our own study-abroad programs. As part of a "coherent and coordinated international education strategy" to prepare Americans for the "global environment," former president Bill Clinton urged U.S. colleges "to improve access to high-quality international educational experiences by increasing the number and diversity of students who study and intern abroad" (p. B4). Markum and Roochnik argue a big picture view for study abroad programs and it is apparent that there is a national interest at stake. It is clear that he sees American educational in a global context and he ends the article by claiming,

*In sum, study abroad is an increasingly important aspect of our institutional missions. In our role as*



*educators, it is critical that we encourage more students to consider going overseas to further their education, and remove any hurdles that keep them from participating in study-abroad programs. As we do that, however, we should not view those programs in isolation, but rather as part of a comprehensive strategy to enhance international education and to build lasting ties with our global partners. (p. 10)*

His justification is almost identical to the justifications used by the Tiferet program, except that the Tiferet program makes its justification to a connection to Israel. [Blum](#) (2006) makes further justifications for the presence of study abroad programs in the community college setting. The point is clear – that study abroad programs benefit the program participants, and that these programs build relationships to international partners.

Some researchers find changes in perception about host country members as a result of study abroad program. [Drews and Myers](#) (1996) have found that by study abroad participants are more likely to see host cultures in personal terms. They write,

*The main finding of the present study is that those who have studied abroad are more likely to conceptualize other national groups in terms of what we have called “personal” references. They are more likely to think of other national groups in terms of characteristics that reside in individual people rather than in terms of physiography, economics, politics, famous people and the like. (p. 4)*

This degree of personalization can be either negative or positive, however, this personalization is based on experience rather than assumptions about the host culture. In some ways, this degree of personalization is the result of the very experience of a study abroad program. The authors point out that this difference in the way of seeing others may in fact be due to the predisposition leading to the participation in the study abroad program.

The AFS program is well known to American educators. The AFS experience is designed as an exchange experience during which students live with a host family while attending school in the host country. Further information about AFS can be found at [AFS](#). [Hansel and Grove](#) (1984, 1986) write about the AFS program and its benefits. While the articles are somewhat dated at today, they do reveal interests in the experiential nature of exchange and study abroad programs. [Hansel and Grove](#) (1984) write:

*In other words, students can learn through “information assimilation” or through “experiential learning” – learning through actual experiences. Unlike classroom methods in which knowledge is gained largely through passive listening or reading, experiential methods compel learners to participate directly in “real life” activities, and so to engage themselves physically, socially, and emotional as well as intellectually in the skill*

*or information to be learned. (p. 3)*

[Hansel and Grove](#)'s article published in 1984, "Why an AFS Experience Accelerates Learning and the Growth of Competence," is one of the first articles which mentions the "outsider" and "insider" status of exchange students. Hansel and Grove write, "As outsiders in the host culture, AFS students are well situated to learn through observation. They often are able to perceive ideas and values in the host culture that are taken for granted by insiders, that is, by host nationals" (p. 2). This statement alludes to a concept relating to the boundaries of an exchange student. They are in fact outsiders until they experience an assimilation and adjustment period. In a 1986 self-report pre-and post-experience student study, the authors conclude, "The study described in this article has documented that adolescents traveling abroad show greater improvement in a number of positive personal characteristics than similarly motivated students who do not have the opportunity to travel abroad" (p. 90). While the study exhibits all the traits of a positivistic attempt to render meaning from the study abroad experience and while it is sponsored by AFS itself, this nonetheless provides early data on the gains from a study abroad program. The qualities of being "inside" and "outside" are also found in the results of the Tiferet program, although I must remark that because the groups stays together for the program's duration, this is minimized.

An interesting outcome of research into study abroad programs concerned finding several articles relevant to the Chinese experience in study abroad.

[Xiaoxuan](#) (2004) conducted a study on the benefits of Chinese students who engaged in a study abroad program. He writes of the study's purpose,

*Specifically, the benefits of study abroad work are manifested in the circumstances of academic activities by the returned scholars to China; the economic effects produced by research results; and the influence of studies abroad on the research work of the returnees on international exchanges and cooperation, on the administration of the units in which they work, and on social services, and on the personal qualities of scholars who return to China. (p. 62)*

Again the focus of the study is on university personnel, and again the methodology was based on a survey instrument followed up with focus interviews. The study itself has a decidedly "positivistic" ideology, providing much statistical data on the kind and nature of Chinese study abroad programs. Perhaps most interesting is Xiaoxuan's conclusions,

*We found, through comparisons and analyses of returnees and the academy's comparison group, that returnees made more contributions than the comparison group in such aspects as academic activities, open publications, research achievements, collaborative scientific research, management, international exchanges and cooperation, and social services. (p. 70)*

It is so very clear that in this study the intentionality of study abroad in China concerns the degree to which new and foreign ideas will be brought home to the home country.

[Nianqing](#) (1998) writes an equally interesting article about the Chinese experience; however, he explores the issues of returning to the host country, China. He writes about the dilemma of finding research funds in China, "The state does not invest sufficiently in basic research, and therefore young people returning from studies abroad find it extremely difficult to obtain research funds" (p. 10). Several other Chinese authors write about the developing and nascent field in study abroad for Chinese students. [Songguo](#) (2001) writes about the motivations of students in both college and "middle" school to go abroad from an interior city in China, and makes some interesting observations on the contemporary challenges. He writes,

*The students' desire to go abroad was largely a result of their parents' influence. Analyses found a high degree of consistency between students who want to go abroad and their parents wish for them to do so. Among parents who hope that their child will study abroad, 84.3 percent of their children also hoped to study abroad, whereas among parents who had no expectations of their children studying abroad, most of their children (82.4 percent) also did not want to go abroad. (p. 18)*

This is most interesting as parent support for the Tiferet program is also essential. While the national culture may be different, the motivation and reasons for study abroad are remarkably parallel. Similar and equally interesting ideas are found in [Xiaoguang](#) (1998) and [Xiaoxuan](#) (2004). It is notable that the focus of writing for Xiaoguang concerns the degree to which study abroad can benefit the home country. Again, the parallels in purpose and development reflect an increased awareness in study abroad programs from a global perspective.

[Dwyer](#) (2004) conducted one of the most comprehensive reviews of study abroad programs for college aged students. Her principle research question concerns the impact of year-long study abroad programs, and she does have the unusual ability to track data for fifty years as the data is all part of the International Education of Students files, an organization which has tracked study abroad programs. While she readily admits that program effect is difficult to judge given that a control group is not possible, she is able to make strong claims regarding the benefit of study abroad programs, especially when those programs are year-length programs. She notes at the beginning of the study, "During the past 16 years, due to a variety of academic, social, college policy and economic reasons, national study abroad enrollment trends have been moving toward significantly fewer students studying abroad for a full year" (p. 151). At the same time, the amount of data reviewed is considerable, as it does span that fifty year period. She writes,

*The number of years of data, the number of different locations, the variety of academic models and housing arrangements used, and the size of the alumni pool allowed IES to isolate and assess the longitudinal impact of specific program components for large enough sample sizes to make the results statistically valid*

*and reliable. Few other organizations have the sustained history of programming necessary to replicate these study features. (p. 153)*

Given the longitudinal nature of the study and the number of students involved, the conclusions Dwyer makes have great weight. She claims that for students involved in full year programs,

- *Full-year students (57%) were more likely than those studying other term lengths to engage in international work or volunteer activities.*
- *Full-year students were much more likely to have pursued a career direction, still speak a language other than English regularly in the workplace, and acquire skill sets and professional contacts that influenced their career paths.*
- *Full-year students were more likely to work for a multi-national organization in the U.S. and to get a job overseas.*
- *Studying abroad was almost two to three times as likely to cause changes in career plans of full-year students than those studying for shorter term lengths. ([Dwyer](#), 2004, p. 156)*

[Dwyer's](#) (2004) work on this issue is impressive, and has implications for the current study. On the other hand, clear differences exist between the programs under study. The concept of a full year of study abroad for high school aged children may be difficult if not impossible for parents to accept – there is the reality of being an adult in college and a teenager in high school. Yet, there are clear implications in her conclusions about the relationship between long term exposure and future career and social paths. Her conclusion about shorter programs is also interesting. She writes,

*One explanation is that well-planned, intensive summer programs of at least 6 weeks duration can have a significant impact on student growth across a variety of important outcomes. While it requires very careful educational planning, expert implementation, and significant resources to achieve these outcomes in a shorter-term length, the results of this study should encourage study abroad educators and should reinforce*

*the value of short-term programming of at least 6 weeks duration. (p. 161)*

As one of the few longitudinal studies on collegiate study-abroad programs, Dwyer's work has import for all study abroad programs.

### Issues in Ethnography

This study is largely based on an ethnographic model. Gathering stories and observing culture is part of the warp and woof of this tapestry. One of the most important issues involved in ethnography and education concerns the various roles played by all those involved in the process. Clearly, there are students, but there are also teachers, administrators, parents, and community. [Fetterman](#) (1984a) presents these challenges in a unique way by writing, "Ethnographic educational evaluation, like ethnography, is both an art and a science. The ethnographer is a human instrument, testing and shaping ideas and insights based on rigorous data collection techniques" (p. 13). In this way, the ethnographer attempts to gather a picture of the particular culture of the school or program, and through this process an understanding of the various social dynamics of that culture. [Dorr-Bremme](#) (1985) explores this connection between ethnography and evaluation in a similar way by writing, "Especially among writers in the field of evaluation, the prevailing view seems to be that anthropological ethnography is one of the principle foundations of naturalistic/qualitative inquiry" (p. 8). Both Fetterman and Dorr-Bremme see important connections between ethnography and educational evaluation, and they both move away from the purely positivistic paradigm regarding educational assessment. [Dorr-Bremme](#) (1985) writes about this condition of naturalistic inquiry,

*To summarize, naturalistic/qualitative inquiry and anthropological ethnographic inquiry share both a philosophical base (the phenomenological perspective) and a body of methodological principles. Both entail the holistic, inductive (or dialectical or responsive-adaptive) study of phenomena in their naturally confirm contexts. (p. 10)*

These early writers on the issue provide both a background on the issues and a foundation for further review.

It is so important to reinforce the idea that this study is based on some important inductive assumptions. It is a new program, there are no test groups or control groups, the culture of the school can be seen both in its entirety and as a frame of the Tiferet program, and so a naturalistic and phenomenological perspective like the one described seems the only method at this juncture to best study and analyze the program.

[Simon](#) (1986) discusses a theoretical perspective based on the work of Pelto and Agar. This theoretical perspective helps to ground the role of the ethnographer and the purpose of ethnography. Simon describes the role of the ethnography by describing what an ethnography should look like:

*A good ethnography should be comprehensive and detailed, providing a rich descriptive account. These accounts should present a theory of culture, that is, the content of the ethnography represent the*

*researcher's theory of what culture is and how it is expressed by individual in a social network. (p. 57)*

Perhaps just as importantly, she describes the levels of theoretical involvement in ethnography as they can be derived from the work of Pelto by describing the meta-theory that grounds all ethnography, then the personal biases or frameworks of the researcher, and finally a third framing level based on the particular theory of anthropology under use in the study. It is in the intersection of these levels of theory that Simon describes the role of "breakdowns." These are the gaps of understanding which occur in a cultural study, and they are the places in which the meta-theory, personal bias, and social theory no longer intersect neatly. [Simon](#) (1986) writes, "Core breakdowns become the focus of an ethnographer's work. Less important breakdowns are called derivative, and these may be mentioned in passing or omitted from consideration completely" (p. 62). While the use of the word "breakdowns" causes some concern, I might reframe this condition as the place in which cognitive dissonance occurs in the process of cultural research. The Tiferet program revealed its inner most workings only from the repeated two year practice of study and observation and writing.

Working from an ethnographic perspective provides unique opportunities and unique responsibilities. An ethnographic study allows the researcher to glimpse into the community and culture of a unique group. As [Finders](#) (1992) records, "Borders intersect and overlap. No one is ever completely from one community. We are all active members in many communities that come already equipped with tacit rituals and rules: ways of talking, acting, valuing, being in the world" (p. 61). The community represented by the Tiferet Fellowship is a unique community consisting of students and adults whose shared commonality is an extended stay in Israel. The challenges presented to understand and analyze the Tiferet program do in fact involve several levels of boundaries – not only international but also individual and institutional. As [Finders](#) (1992) records,

*In the process of looking at real lives lived with all the richness and messiness, compassion and contradiction that life involves, we can begin to recover our own buried assumptions. We can then turn back to our own classrooms with new insight into others and ourselves. (p. 60)*

[Eisenhart](#) (2001) also presents a unique perspective on the challenges and "muddles" of educational ethnography. She asserts that there have been significant changes in the ethnographic landscape itself over the last twenty years, and that these changes have created additional challenges for the educational ethnographer. When she writes (p. 16), "It seems clear that ethnographers should be thinking carefully about methods. But as I considered all this, I realized that whenever I tried to think about new methods of ethnography, I found myself in a muddle," then I couldn't agree more. She expresses both a hope and a concern for the practice of an ethnography that fits the situation being studied similar to the way [Dorr-Bremme](#) (1985) discusses a goodness of fit model. Eisenhart sums up part of the challenge in this study when she writes, "These issues are far from resolved, and the onus is now on collaborative teams and experimental writing strategies to somehow produce accurate, balanced, insightful, and respectful ethnographic accounts" (p. 19). It has been and will always continue to be a challenge to determine if the information and data gathered for this study adequately reflect the lived experience and the meaning of that experience for students. And yet to avoid the "muddles" she suggests is also then to avoid the complexities of gathering data about a program not essentially hosted within the school. In some ways, part of the data gathering has been "remote" and "distant," while the reality of the program's needs have always been very close. Her conclusions in some ways sum up an essential muddle of this study, "We have always been trying, with limited success, to understand some

aspects of a form of life—call it “culture,” “meaning,” “cultural forms,” or “public symbols”—that belongs to others. We have always been trying to convince others that we can learn something important by doing what we call “ethnography.” (p. 24) Studying a brand new program like the Tiferet program presents its own set of unique “muddles,” and I appreciate and value the sensible caution which Eisenhart brings to the discussion.

[Conteh, Gregory, Kearney and Mor-Sommerfeld](#) (2005) present some interesting definitions about the “rules” used in framing an ethnographic study in education. Perhaps the rules begin to clarify some aspects of how to handle Eisenhart’s muddle. Conteh et al. write about three core rules of ethnography:

*Rule One: Ethnography is a methodology not a method*

*Rule Two: Ethnography starts with a question not a hypothesis*

*Rule Three: Ethnographers make emic rather than etic observations*

In discussing these rules, Conteh et al. also discuss the roles of emic observations – that the role of the ethnographer is not really to assert but to assess. They write, “Ethnographers make emic observations, those that attempt to adopt the framework and perspective to the participants studied – rather than etic observations – those brought by the researcher’s own culture” (p. xxi). The process presented in Conteh’s work represents a collaboration – what they call a “collusion” between the researcher and the participants – such that both the researcher and the participants are in fact changed by the process of research. An ethnography is more than just a “visitation” by an outside observer is found in much of the literature, an ethnography is also also represents a collaboration by all the parties involved. In some ways, I can try to deny the real nature of my own emic involvement – I can try to distance myself from the program, however, there is also an intellectual responsibility to admit that as the principal of the school that I am also inalterably emic to the study – emic at all times, by choice or not.

One notable trait for this project is the presence of a “team” approach to ethnography. [Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhusers](#) (2002) reviews the framework of a team ethnographic approach. They discuss both the opportunities and responsibilities of team ethnography by reviewing the traditions and the the epistemology that gave rise to team ethnography One concern is surely the relationship between what is known by a single person and what knowledge is shared by the team. They posit questions about what is known truth when they say, “The turn is away from objective truth claims toward contextualized understanding and ultimately points to the need for further exploration of research as a process of knowledge construction” (p. 137). This represents a concern for the team ethnographer as it is so important to be sure that the “team” reaches the same general conclusions about the observed phenomenon. Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhusers also discuss the idea that team ethnography is relatively new to the field when they write, “We build upon these notions to examine the practice of collaborative team ethnography. This form of research is on the rise, especially with the increasing number of funded evaluation research projects, yet scant literature exists that examines this form of inquiry” (p. 138). The idea of collaboration in ethnography and evaluation and the challenges such an approach presented have also been discussed by [Tom](#) (1997), [Fetterman](#) (2001), [Woods, Boyle, Jeffrey, and Toman](#) (2003) and [Conteh](#) et al. (2005).

[Woods et al.](#) (2003) explores the idea of team ethnography in education. The methodology reported by Woods includes the development of a research assessment exercise in England as a collaborative strategy to study school and teacher effectiveness. On the issue of team work, he writes, “More ground can be covered, more minds brought to bear, more cross-checking and comparing done, more burdens shared out, wider perspectives taken. Others have also mentioned teamwork as a basis for heightened validity and for spreading the workload in a linked, principled manner” (pp. 85-86). This is an important

consideration for any academic work, given the complexity of a critical ethnographic work on a study abroad program it is almost a necessity. [Woods et al.](#) (2003) extend this thinking even further when they write, "Teamwork can open up new, unforeseen opportunities for its members. Ideas are often generated and formulated in discussion. They emerge from the interaction as people contribute different perspectives, pool their knowledge, talk round points, challenge and defend arguments" (p. 93). This strategy was an integral process in completing this study – a clear difference remains in the way that students were used as contributing members of the team. The student team has been an essential component of this study, and this will be further discussed in the methodology chapter.

[Handwerker](#) (2001) provides an interesting and perceptive analysis of the issues relating to the ethnography in the text *Quick Ethnography*. While he discusses the work inherent in completing an ethnography he also provides an essential guideline for completing an ethnographic review in a condensed period of time. The discussion of a unique methodology however is no less important than the guidelines he provides regarding the background he provides in understanding culture and the role of the ethnographer. He writes:

*Ethnography requires that we look at the interconnections between our informants. Standard forms of numerical analysis can't see these interconnections because they examine informant-by-variable matrices. Ethnographic analysis transposes matrices, turning them onto their sides, so we can see the connections, similarities, and differences among our informants. (p. 11)*

It is this understanding of the role of the ethnographer which is essential to begin an ethnography study in education, making it imperative to observe and record before analysis. Handwerker's book is specifically designed for the educator who wishes to do a "quick but valid" study in an effort to produce ethnographic and evaluative results in the shortest time possible.

[Handwerker](#) (2001) writes not just about process, but about the definitions of culture. These are important considerations. While ethnography is on one hand about the collection of data, it is also about the interpretation of that data. Again, this is worth noting as any project begins. The role of the ethnographer is to give meaning to what might be seemingly isolated bits of experience. Handwerker observes:

*In ethnography, however, distinguish carefully between cultural phenomena and data on the life experiences that may have shaped culture. Culture consists of the systems of mental constructions people use to interpret and respond to themselves and the world around them. Cultures consist of mental constructions and behavior isomorphic with those systems of meaning shared among sets of people. (p. 17)*

[Handwerker](#) (2001) goes on to point out that the role of the ethnographer is in part to understand the role of sampling in determining a population, and to



characterize spatial and temporal autocorrelation, not correct for it" (pp. 17-19). He writes about the need in completing an ethnographic study of focusing on a small number of variables and then seeing the manners in which the collected information relates to those variables. A real consideration to keep in mind when reading Handworker is that he is focusing on a short-term ethnographic study which can not by nature permit large variables. He also recognizes the role of subjectivity and "humanity" (pp. 67-68). His recommendation and observation that the structured interviewees are in fact teachers who provide knowledge is an interesting observation for an educator engaged in ethnography. Handworker's commentary influenced the development of the methodology for this study; his observations about understanding culture have a direct tie to understanding the culture of the Tiferet program.

The literature relating to ethnography and education is replete with examples of unique paradigms and approaches, and several examples reveal a perception of positionality, which is a key element in this project. In an early article, [Sotirin](#) (1999) discusses the value of a curriculum in a communications class which utilizes ethnographic techniques in an effort to have students confront some of their assumed values and paradigms. She writes,

*Bringing the outside/in by teaching students skills of ethnographic inquiry is a difficult task. Students are often uncomfortable with this kind of learning and resist engaging their experiences and field notes at a reflective level. Nonetheless, these are exercises in critical reflective that alert students to their own meaning-making practices and encourage them to question the taken-for-granted limits of those practices.*  
(p. 11)

The use of an ethnographic process for framing the learning of students represents an extension of the "scholarly" field into the pedagogy of a classroom, in some ways reminiscent of a team approach.

While Sotirin discusses the role of ethnography as a framing device for college classes, [Vaughan](#) (2004) discusses how ethnographic techniques can be used to understand a very unique school in New Zealand. The author presents convincing arguments regarding the role of ethnography in describing the school through a post-structuralist framework as a way to understand school culture. She writes, "The concerns and narratives of the people involved were an integral part of what constituted the historically-specific research and formed one point of disruption against the apparently seamless narratives of the good school, the good teacher, and the good student" (p. 392). While the school was later closed by the New Zealand Education Review Office, it must be noted that ethnographic methods were a part and parcel for understanding a unique school culture. She records,

*My emphasis on a multiplicity of voices, narratives, or discourses in the case of Metro was a strong expression of the post-structuralist view that there is not necessarily one truth or reality except insofar as there are things which are true within particular discourses about this school and education generally. Such things are true or real because they are invoked as truth and reality through those very discourses.* (p. 396)

Vaughn's (2004) unique approach is very meaningful as she attempts to gather information from a variety of sources. This process of recognizing not one truth but many truths also reveals the need in an ethnographic evaluation of gathering those truths into a complex whole. The school she describes as one where students had equal voting rights as faculty presents an environment which is rich with potential ethnographic study.

A third unique example of the use of ethnography in education explores the value of an ethnographic approach in understanding teacher emotion. [Zemblyas](#) (2005) writes about the value of an ethnographic approach in understanding teacher emotion in the classroom. Zemblyas' case study approach of a single teacher over a three year extended ethnographic study creates an interesting methodological paradigm surrounding ethnography in education. He records that his own polytonality changed in the course of the study from that of being a "participant-observer" to being a "participant-collaborator" (p. 471). His own reflections on this process reflect his internal awareness. He writes, "This change in the research relationship had two interesting epistemological and methodological consequences. Epistemologically, it marked a shift from a voyeuristic looking and hearing that initially privileged the representation of Catherine's presence to a more fully grounded, multi-perspectival epistemology that did not privilege 'observation' over 'collaboration' " (p. 471). In each of these three ethnographies, the authors had to confront and manage their own positionality in relation to the subjects being studied or in relationship to the political realities being imposed. These concerns with positionality have always been my concern; it is important to value an emic perspective which was finally adopted by all three of the studies mentioned.

The issues inherent to a digital framework in exploring an ethnological perspective are also important as they apply to this particular study. [McConnell](#) (2005) explores the ways in which networked groups and elearning communities can create culture. His study explored three different elearning groups and he worked to analyze the recorded text of the groups by using the ethnographic techniques of grounded theory. He writes,

*In the grounded theory analysis of the transcripts of the work of the three groups, it became clear that members of the groups took time to reflect on the ways in which they communicated and collaborated online. The language they use in these reflections indicates their concerns with the complexity of working in an online learning environment. (p. 28)*

McConnell is able to demonstrate the complexity of an online learning group noting that the technology alone is not able to provide a collaborative environment. [Browne](#) (2003) also explores the use of online learning and the role of collaborative online learning. She explains, "Cyber-ethnography provides challenges and opportunities for ethnographers. The challenge lies in gaining access to what might be a 'closed' community linked together by tentative threads of a common aim. The opportunity lies in the fact that cyber-ethnography provides great insight and depth into a range of thoughts, ideas, emotions and practices" (p. 250). This cyber-ethnographic concern plays a role in understanding the culture around the Tiferet program as so much of the information and knowledge has been created by using technology.

In the study of the Tiferet program's initial endeavors, a critical approach is required. [Thomas](#) (1993) writes about the notions inherent in this approach in a core text *Doing Critical Ethnography*. The initial tenets of critical ethnography as a philosophical framework for ethnographic approaches involves a relationship

between study and action – and action to free and/or liberate the oppressed. He writes, “Critical ethnography is a type of reflection that examines culture, knowledge and action. It expands our horizons for choice and widens our experiential capacity to see, hear, and feel. It deepens and sharpens ethical commitments by forcing us to develop and act upon value commitments in the context of political agendas” (p. 2). Clearly the ideas of knowledge and action are important concerns for any ethnographer; however, Thomas clearly believes that study of culture alone is insufficient for its own sake. Thomas is clear about this role when he writes, “The term critical describes both an activity and an ideology. As social activity, critical thinking implies a call to action that may range from modest rethinking of comfortable thoughts to more direct engagement that includes political activism” (p. 17). Political activism is not the intent of this project, however, refining the program is clearly one of the critical stances that any ethnographic evaluation must undertake, and that endeavor is clearly part and parcel of this project. Thomas continues in an important way, “Guided by the commitment that the production of knowledge should be applied to problems in the research setting from which it comes, participant researchers opt for relevance and identify closely with the needs and concerns of their subjects, using diverse perspectives that attempt to reconcile action with inquiry” (p. 26). As this issues of evaluation are developed in the project, as they must be, it is with the view that inquiry is tied to action, and that action will result in an enhanced program. This critical function finds expression in the analysis and discussion chapters of this dissertation.

Finally, the ethnographic perspective must be a reasoned one, influenced by many sources of data. As will be discussed later in this literature review, the issue of “school as place” is an important one. So too is the issue of perspective and the gathering of supportive data and observations. In a very unique way, a metaphor is important. [Hanh](#) (1998), as is befitting a Buddhist monk, explores the role of perception of reality, and this is an important concern for this study. He writes about Plum Village,

*If you come to Plum Village for one day, you have an idea about Plum Village, but that idea isn’t really Plum Village. You might say, “I’ve been to Plum Village,” but in fact you’ve really only been to your idea of Plum Village. Your idea might be slightly better than that of someone who has never been there, but it’s still only an idea. Its is not the true Plum Village. Your concept or perception of reality is not reality. When you are caught in your perceptions and ideas, you lose reality. (p. 55)*

It is for this reason that an important part of the study is concerned with gathering many perspectives on the program – in order that no one perspective dominates the discussion and that a more balanced notion of reality is assured.

### **Design and evaluation**

Given the paucity of programs for secondary students which feature a long term study abroad component, there is also a paucity of literature on the effectiveness of those programs. These evaluation constraints also limit the framework of the evaluation design. [Hadis](#) (2005) explores the concept of a single cell design where no real comparative data is available. He writes,

*This maturation context in which study abroad is undertaken, therefore, calls for a program evaluation*

*design that takes into consideration not only changes that take place between before and after studying abroad, but also one which contrasts these changes with those experienced by students who have not studied abroad-the control group. In short, a pretest/post-test, treatment/control group true experimental design is the prescription of choice. (p. 4)*

Given the notion that the school is one single culture, a true pretest and post-test scenario is quite impossible. The results and analysis section will reveal the impact of the program's "culture shock" realities.

Hence the initial study must first involve a rich ethnographic description of the program in an effort to understand the unique variables which might be studied at a future time with pre-post test or treatment-control group designs. [Hadis](#) (2005) sums up the dilemma of program evaluation succinctly when he writes, "In order to assess any changes introduced by studying abroad (the 'treatment'), an evaluation of its impact calls for testing relevant outcome variables both before and after students study abroad. In many instances, however, program evaluation is an afterthought to an ongoing program undertaken by extremely busy program administrator (p. 6). Clearly this is a challenge faced by an evaluation of the Tiferet program. Hadis solves this problem in the particular case of a higher education program sponsored through the New Jersey State Consortium of International Studies via a system of self-report questionnaires which attempt to control for the variables of pre-study abroad and the impact of maturation inherent in the process of study abroad. It is important to note that the data gathered for this evaluation report involved retrospective questionnaires, but did not include interviews or other forms of ethnographic study. A similar process was employed by [Hansel and Grove](#) (1986) in assessing the effectiveness of student exchange programs.

Clearly the role of ethnography in educational evaluation is relatively new. In fact, the field of educational evaluation itself is relatively new. The idea and concepts inherent in educational evaluation trace historical roots to the post-Sputnik era when American education came more directly under the close scrutiny of federal interests. [Shadish, Cook, and Leviton](#) (1991) provide a thorough overview of the field and the philosophies in what is in reality a yet emerging discipline. Social program evaluation presents both challenges and opportunities. They write about this issue in an introduction to the book,

*Evaluation is just one part of a complex, interdependent, nonlinear set of problem-solving activities. Such evaluation have always been with us and always will be, for problems will always occur, solutions will always need to be generated, tests of their efficacy will need to be done, and the test results will have to be stored if they are to help. (p. 21)*

This textbook on evaluation provides a solid grounding in the issues of evaluation and an overview of major theorists. [Shadish et al.](#) (1991) write about the development of the field, "As evaluation matured, its theory took on its own special character that resulted from the interplay among problems uncovered by practitioners, the solutions they tried, and traditions of the academic discipline of each evaluator, winnowed by 20 years of experience (p. 31). They identify five

different “themes” that under gird all social programming evaluation, and list them as

1. *social programming*
2. *knowledge construction*
3. *valuing*
4. *knowledge use*
5. *evaluation practice*

The authors have made it clear that there is more to program evaluation than simply observing and commenting on a program. The issues of program evaluation are important and they must in fact “fit” together. In many ways, an evaluation alone of the Tiferet program in its first year is important, as such an evaluation can provide both information and analysis concerning this five variables. [Shadish](#) et al. conclude their introduction to the issues of program evaluation by writing,

*At the same time, however, all evaluation practitioners are nascent evaluation theorists. They think about what they are doing, make considered judgments about which methods to use in each situation, weigh advantages and disadvantages of choices they face, and learn from successes and failures in their past evaluations. (p 35)*

This is an issue also discussed by [Fetterman](#) (1986) and [Wolcott](#) (2008). Fetterman writes about the process of ethnographic evaluation, “Ethnographic evaluators conduct their research holistically, nonjudgmentally, and contextually. Based on the results of this research they judge, assess, and evaluate educational systems. Their assessments identify discrete elements or variables as levers of changes within a complex network of interrelationships” (p. 13). Fetterman provides a good link between the fields of ethnography and the fields of educational evaluation. The interrelationships he discusses are the very relationships between the five dimensions of program evaluation discussed by Shadish et al. (1991) A good evaluation will take into account a description of the program and the valuing expressed by an analysis of program methods and results. The field of ethnographic evaluation represents then a combination of several fields of study, and is by its nature unique. [Wolcott](#) (2008) writes, “The appeal of the ethnographic approach lies in the very eclecticism that its critics find so disarming, together with the straightforwardness and lack of pretense in the terminology with which it can be described” (p. 66).

[Zimmerman and Schunk](#) (2003) explore this interesting role of the evaluator from an historical lens. During the early stages of evaluation practice, the role of the evaluator was somewhat detached. Zimmerman and Schunk write,

*The dominant approach to program evaluation at the time was an “objective” methodology. Evaluators should be detached, analyze results apart from the field (preferably statistically), and then reach conclusions based on the results. Limited involvement with program participants was desired in order to ensure neutrality and minimize the evaluator’s impact on the program. (p. 299)*

In writing about the legacy left by Lee J. Cronbach, Zimmerman and Schunk (2003) continue by elaborating on the changes expected in the role of the program evaluator. Zimmerman and Schunk discuss Chronbach's importance to the field, but also conclude that the field has changed in the last thirty years,

*In many respects the evolution of Cronbach's thinking during his lifetime mirrors broad trends in educational psychology itself, characterized by moving away from a monolithic, authoritarian, and at times simplistic world view to a more pluralistic, open-ended model that shares as much in common with the humanities as it shares with the physical sciences. (p. 301)*

This validates and explains the movement in education evaluation away from a strictly positivistic world view to the more inclusive and descriptive qualitative world view.

[Fetterman](#) (1984a) is credited with the marriage of ethnography and education with the publication of his work, *Ethnography in Educational Evaluation* in 1984.

In many ways, Fetterman linked the fields of ethnography and evaluation in education, and this is a critical text in the field. While he is an ethnographer, he makes clear the purpose of ethnography in education when he writes, “First, ethnographic evaluations are ultimately evaluations, not ethnographies. These studies begin with the aim of ethnography—to understand. However, they make the next logical step—to assess what is understood” (p. 13). This places the idea of ethnography firmly in the area of evaluation – a kind of method to get to the bigger issues of why evaluate educational programs. Fetterman’s work also reinforces the ideas mentioned earlier that every evaluation is unique and encouraging as Conteh indicates – that the process begins in emic and not etic design. He continues, “The use of the term ethnography for any form of qualitative research is a misnomer. Ethnography is a methodological approach with specific procedures, techniques, and methods of analysis” (p. 23). To simply engage in qualitative research is not enough, but to approach that research with a question about culture and then to engage in the methods of ethnography in an effort to understand and then evaluate culture is in fact an evaluation.

Within the same text, [LeCompte and Goetz](#) (1984) make the distinction between various types of data collection – baseline data and process data. Because of these various data gathering techniques, ethnography affords the educational evaluator a more comprehensive toolbox of evaluation options. They write,

*Because ethnography uses multiple data collection strategies, it provides the flexibility needed for the variety of situations that evaluators are requested to assess. Research designs based on combinations of data collection strategies. also provide more complete and complex data on phenomena than do unimodal research designs. (p. 39)*

As Fetterman (1984b) and others outline the roles of ethnography and educational evaluation in 1984, they are shaping an emerging field.

In a later work, [Fetterman](#) (1986) continues the definition of the educational evaluator and clarifies that role. He describes the role of the ethnographic evaluator in terms of his experiences and insights into the field. He writes, "Ethnographic educational evaluators have contributed to theory, theory testing, and practice in the course of their studies. They are characterized by their abilities to step analytically beyond description to judgment. These judgments are made within the highly politicized environment of education (p. 21). His sentiments are reflect a clarity in understanding both the goals and the roles of the educational evaluator. This introductory chapter in a larger text on ethnographic evaluation sets the tone and purpose for the ethnographic evaluator. Fetterman claims, "The ethnographic evaluator is a cultural broker. he or she communicates cultural knowledge across disciplinary boundaries. The ethnographic evaluator's contribution can be understood more fully by examining the nature and character of this change agent's role in practice" (p. 22). Here he reveals a continued understanding of the roles of the ethnographic educational evaluator. There is no single boundary of knowledge or expertise, but the successful evaluator will find that there are several fields to be used in gathering and analyzing data – and also that life experiences are important.

[Finkelstein, Pickert, Mahoney and Barry](#) (1998) write the most coherent analysis regarding the evaluation of cultural exchange programs. While they do not use the words "study abroad" or "exchange" in their description of cultural exchange, the concept of cultural exchange can include both concepts. They propose a unique set of criteria for the study of cultural exchange programs by discussing four separate realms of analysis for the evaluation these programs. The authors write about these criteria,

*Second, we discuss four dimensions of cultural education program excellence that warrant the attention of evaluators: the vision of leaders, the knowledge dimension of program contents, the instructionally evocative and communicative power of programs, and the capacity of programs to cultivate cross-cultural connections and transcultural communities. (p. 8)*

Finkelstein et al. are the first authors who expresses the need and definition of criteria for evaluating cultural education programs. They go on to express how each of these criteria can be used by the evaluator to make a sound assessment of programs. In fact, they are one of the only authors who integrate the role of assessment and evaluation. It is surely worth the time to quote the analysis regarding the role of the evaluator. They write,

*The design and evaluation of cultural education programs with these levels of complexity are not simple tasks. Program leaders and evaluators alike will have to navigate their way through a maze of definitional and programmatic dilemmas that inevitably await them as they organize and assess approaches to the challenges and promises of diversity, frame and analyze educational goals and objectives, assess and choose among alternative curriculum contents, evaluate instructional materials and cultural encounters, cultivate culturally sensitive forms of evaluation and assessment, and, finally, constitute ways to monitor, evaluate, and refine programs. (p. 12)*

The evaluation of the Tiferet program must meet these criterion as well. Much of what they discusses in this article are in fact the very framing devices used for the Tiferet program, albeit that these definitions were not used in the actual framing of the program itself. Finklestein et al. present a clear, concise, and cogent analysis of the issues involved in program evaluation.

Finally, [Fetterman](#) (2001) writes a nearly capstone essay on the future of educational evaluation in the short, but highly influential essay entitled, "The transformation of evaluation into a collaboration: A vision of evaluation in the 21st century." In this piece, Fetterman shows the benefits of a lifetime of dedicated work to the field. He looks forward to a time when educational evaluations will be collaborative, team driven, and dedicated to program improvement. He writes, "The future of evaluation will be characterized by critical and collaborative relationships. Evaluation will be a collaboration. Citizens will come to the table with a basic knowledge of evaluation as part of their democratic literacy skills" (p. 381). There is a different role expressed by Fetterman in this recent essay when compared to the role expressed in early works both by Fetterman and others. The idea of an "outside" evaluator, a person hired to complete the task of program assessment or "auditing" even as Fetterman describes ([Fetterman](#), 1984b) has changed and morphed into a different process. Fetterman now sees the role of program evaluation as an organic process, one that involves the evaluator and the evaluated in a kind of synergistic relationship. [Fetterman](#) (2001) writes, "There will be a commitment to building capacity and fostering self-determination. Our mission will be to improve the social condition. In essence we will be charged with the responsibility to do good through evaluation" (p. 386). Clearly, this is a different role for the ethnographer and for the evaluator.

Any evaluation of a program is a complex task. In the case of the Tiferet program, the task is made more difficult because the program is new to the school, and the concept of a grade 10 study abroad program is new to the field itself. Additionally the complexities of dealing with a program in a foreign country and the impact of that program on the school at home make for some interesting dilemmas. Finally, the challenges in understanding the individual student in the context of the program, the family, the school, and the larger society all suggest that much more research can be done. This is but a small attempt to understand a very large phenomenon.

#### **Qualities of School and Schooling**

Finally, and importantly, in discussing a study abroad program of this scope and size, there are also concomitant issues related to the very idea of what it means to go to school in the 21st century. Schooling in and by itself is a complex issue and it smacks of understatement that it could be a dissertation topic



itself. The field of complexity thinking represents a unique view toward understanding the many variables inherent in this study. [Davis and Sumara](#) (2006) open a new window on the field by writing about complexity thinking, "It is a new attitude toward studying particular sorts of phenomenon that is able to acknowledge the insights of other traditions without trapping itself in absolutes or universals" (p. 4). When they speak about the requirements or traits of complex educational phenomenon as having traits of being self-organized, bottom-up emergent, short-ranged relationship, nested structure, ambiguously bounded, structure determined, and far-from equilibrium, (p. 6), they are describing a feature set which fits the genesis of the Tiferet program in many ways.

[Davis and Sumara](#) (2006) are also describing a practice of analysis when they write, "Soft complexity science, then, refers to an increasingly popular movement within the social sciences toward an embrace of images and metaphors to highlight the intricate intertwining of complex. phenomenon" (p. 24). As an approach to education, research, and understanding an emergent program within the larger scope of school and the impacts on school culture, this soft complexity science offers in itself a metaphor for dealing with complex issues. They describe a complex system, "First, a complex system learns, that is it is constantly altering its own structure in response to emergent experience" (p. 100). This then is the very quandary of describing both the Tiferet program and its relationship to school as both are constantly evolving and changing and any study of the Tiferet program is essentially a description of a phenomenon trapped in time – the same contingent time of life in the school. Yet, that study and that phenomenon constantly evolve. As they remark at the end of the text, "Complexity thinking, then, requires that the teacher or researcher seek out a balance between attention to and ignorance of detail" (p. 160). This is a challenging conundrum.

[Boje](#) (2008) extends much of what begins with [Davis and Sumara](#) (2006). His theories of the story-telling organization begin with the role of complexity sciences. He rejects the notion of systems thinking as simplistic in a complex age, and replaces this concept with an extension of complexity thinking and narrative analysis. He writes,

*To summarize, my thesis is that in contemporary times, Storytelling Organization complexity exhibits highly interactive properties of storytelling systemicity complexity in holography that is not always about hierarchy. Most narrative research is stuck at BME (Beginning, Middle, End) (parenthesis mine), linear sensemaking and hierarchy thinking. (p. 41)*

While [Boje's](#) (2008) theories about narrative analysis are complex, they are also important to the concepts of how a storytelling organization exists in a school, an the ways that story telling and narrative analysis are a part of this study. The job of this study is to understand the stories told by students and parents as they begin a new program in the school. Boje's work has real implications for both the framework of the study and the methodology of the study, as the narrative and reflective experiences of the study participants are the grounding on which the study rests.

Clearly, as an educational philosopher, John Dewey's work is worth consideration in regards to the pragmatic issues inherent in the Tiferet program and in American schools. While Dewey's sentiments and ideas are pragmatic for the development of the child, these ideas are often neglected or subsumed in some kind of larger agenda concerning the purpose of school. Fundamentally, school leaders must ask if the purpose of school is to provide opportunities for students to "practice" at being adults or if the purpose of school is to provide a place for the processing of knowledge in the content areas. Dewy would suggest that the natural inquisitiveness of the child allows for the practice of social responsibility, and he sees an integration of the two purposes. "Still, educational reform is

essential as a way to break free from the unthinking reproduction of outdated institutions." ([Campbell](#), 1998, p 215) This then connects to an even more vital point. The role of the individual in society is both pluralistic and contributory. In many ways, the democratic ideal of both school and society finds that the individual is a contributing member of society, and this is something learned and practiced in school. As Campbell ([Campbell](#), 1998) points out, "The focus of education on judgement rather than on knowledg reminds us again of Dewey's emphasis on wisdom rather than on intelligence..." (p. 216). These are very important considerations for the school and the society at large as Dewey's conceptualization is that the community can supersede the role of the individual. The Tiferet program is about the community as much as it is about the individual, and there is no doubt that the experiential aspects of the program create the kind of real-life experience that Dewey advocated.

Philosophically, this resonates in the contemporary work of Richard A. Barker, whose short text on the role of leadership was one of the most profound works reviewed for this study. Barker maintains a highly "classical" view of leadership where success in leadership is grounded in the "service" to "community" or "polis" as he describes it ([Barker](#), 2002). Barker speaks about a "eudaimonic" form of life. "The eudaimonic form of life is an approach to living that is not self-conscious, it is not simply a set of motives, activities, or prescriptions for behavior given certain conditions. It is a form of life that, once established, is self-perpetuating, self-energizing, and self-validating." ([Barker](#), 2002, p. 44) In so many ways, Barker's eudaimonic form of living is exactly the expectation that Dewey would have of the successful graduate of school, one who gives to society having had practice in school. Pragmatic, practical, but above all philosophical as well. In many ways, the issue at hand is the creation of a unique community in Barker's sense, a polis, within the larger community of the school. These relationships of one community to another are worthy of a separate study. Yet, the notion of a polis which is self-defining is at the very core of understanding the impact of the Tiferet program.

[Duffin](#) (2006) raises similar issues related to the concept of "polis," but instead frames the culture of schooling in terms of "place." He writes, "Place-based education may be a "relatively new term...in the education literature" , but the substance of the practice of PBE can be connected to pedagogical traditions and socio-ecological conditions evolving over the last hundred years or so" (p. 21). The use of definitions is always a challenge, and it is possible to construct a category of school culture around the issue of the contemporary issues of "place" and the classical issues of "polis" as they are raised by Barker (2002). This is interesting because understanding school culture and the epistemological needs to define culture are also inherently bound to an understanding of geographical place. In this sense all schools are reflective of both their place geographically and their place within the community. Both Barker and Duffin echo the need for children to be engaged in that environment – the perspective of Dewey seems to overshadow much writing. Duffin makes the claim, "To the extent that PBE programs can support the claim that their programs increase student engagement and motivation in the learning process, then it is logically reasonable to suggest that PBE programs are likely to positively influence student academic achievement" (pp. 34-35). The issues of student achievement must be tied to an understanding of school philosophy and mission. Duffin makes it clear that there is more to understanding student achievement than place alone but that place is a determining factor in determining school culture. There is no doubt in my mind that an overarching concern in understanding the Tiferet program lies with understanding the place and the polis of that school culture – a culture determined in part by a frame of cultures.

[Duffin](#) (2006) raises a profoundly important concern when he discusses the role of change in schools, and by implication in the culture of schools. He writes, "How an innovation is perceived has a major impact on how likely it is to be adopted. The two most influential perceived attributes of innovations are "relative advantage" (i.e. the extent to which the new idea is thought to be better than the old way of doing things), and "compatibility" with existing values, cultural norms, and past experiences of the potential adopter" (p. 58). This is significant as it lead to two additional ideas. First of all, the change and the development of

the Tiferet program could have only happened in a very few schools where the role of Israel was an integral part of the school's mission statement. Second, the perceived beneficiaries included more than the student population alone – the perceived beneficiaries included the students but also the community as a whole. The entire school community was a consideration in the adoption of the program, and Duffin is so correct in that the program is compatible with the school values.

The issues of school development and school change are intimately tied to these philosophical concerns about schooling. [Schlechty](#) (1997) explores the need to invent better schools and he develops a comprehensive plan for such a change. He writes about the business of schools, "The aim of schooling is an educated citizenry, but the core business of schooling is engaging students in work that results in their learning what they need to learn to be views as well education in American society" (p. 31). Schlechty embraces the role of technology in contemporary education by claiming that the role of contemporary technical achievements is like the invention of the printing press. He goes on to explain the role of technology in education by writing, "The linear assumptions of the old of print undergird our systems of schooling. The random assumptions of electronic information processing technology dominate the emerging reality within which education occurs" (p. 32). This is an important concern both for the study of the Tiferet program and for the structure of this study. Essentially Schlechty is supporting the contention of the non-linear nature of narrative analysis discussed elsewhere. The assumptions that Schlechty makes are tied to an image of future schools. And this image of future schools is also tied to assumptions regarding the "modernity" of the Tiferet program. Schlechty writes at length about the future of schools,

*In the schools of the future, students must be viewed as customers for knowledge work (purposeful intellectual activity that calls upon them to master and use ideas, propositions, facts, and systemic thought processes) invented by teachers (sometimes in cooperation with the students), and teachers must be viewed as leaders and inventors. (p. 133)*

The emphasis that Schlechty places on the relationships of teachers and students is an important one and will be seen as an important part of the Tiferet program.

Fullan ([2001](#), [2004](#), [2005](#)) analyzes the role of school change and development. Fullan is an expert in the area of school change and development and essential reading for anyone interested in the contemporary school scene. His pivotal, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, uses the issues of the change process to focus on school leadership and development. His remarks about the five criterion of change also lead to comments about schools. He writes,

*In schools, good things are enhanced student performance, increased capacity of teachers, greater involvement of parents and community members, engagement of students, all-around satisfaction and enthusiasm about going further and greater pride for all in the system. (p. 10)*

Even though much of the book relates to the five criterion of change, this statement is also a reflection of the intended, albeit unexpressed, hopes for the Tiferet program, and as such are relevant for discussion here. Similarly, Fullan's statements about the importance of relationship building is relevant to understanding the Tiferet program. He writes, "To be successful beyond the very short run, all organizations must incorporate moral purpose, understand complexity science and respect, build and draw on new human relationships with hitherto uninvolved constituencies inside and outside the organization" (Fullan, 2001, p. 70). Surely, he hits the essence of building a study abroad program squarely on the head.

[Fullan](#) (2007) carries these ideas into a later book, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. He expands on his original observations with more detail and greater example. He writes,

*There are two basic ways to look at educational reform. One is to examine and trace specific innovations to see how they fare, and to determine which factors are associated with success. Let us call this the innovation-focused approach. The second way is to turn the question on its head and ask how we develop the innovative capacity of organizations and systems to engage in continuous improvement. I shall refer to this as the capacity-building focus. (p. 65)*

Fullan discusses the role that a community can play in the adoption of a change initiative and that this role will in part determine the outcome of the change. He cites the role of the community in relation to population shifts as the most frequently causative factor in change. He also writes about the reason that change processes fail.

*There are three interrelated reasons why most planning fails. It fails to take in account local context and culture, it is dangerously seductive and incomplete; and, paradoxically, too much emphasis is placed on the planning relative to the action part. In a word, the assumptions of policymakers are frequently hyperrational (Fullan, 2001, p. 108).*

The educational, institutional and communal changes inherent in creating a four month study abroad program demand a comprehensive review of both the change process and the importance of school and community values. [Reeves](#) (2009) echoes many of these sentiments when he writes, "Establish clear vision and values, expressing who you are and who you are not. If you can't write your mission and values on the back of your business card and you can't say them

without reference to notes, then they are not influencing your daily reality

The issues of school and community culture are the clear focal points of [Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson](#) in their important text, *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership* (1999) The authors speak of “schools as tribes” and hence each school develops its own set of cultural norms and values. This was apparent in the interaction of the students while at Alexander Muss, as each group developed a separate but unique culture. The exposure to the various types of town meetings was in reality an exposure to the individualized culture of each school.

*Students and teachers don't leave their humanity behind when they come to school. They need special moments in the daily grind to reflect on what's really important, to connect with one another, and to feel the common spirit that makes technical routine more like spiritual communion. (p. 32)*

In many ways, this is the enactment of the Deweyan precepts – that each school should reflect in the daily life of the school the behaviors and mores of the community. The authors speak of the kinds of rituals which determine the culture of the school, and the presence of a town meeting was clearly one such ritual. While the wording is different, the essential conclusion of the authors is solidly like Dewey. As Deal and Peterson point out, the culture of schools is a complex phenomenon of caring, culture, rituals, and symbols. In a very real sense, part of the purpose of this study is to discover the ways in which these traits are seen in the Tiferet program.

From a different vantage point, [Meier](#) (2002) looks at the purpose of schooling based on the needs of a democratic society, the issues of developing trust, and the traits of successful schools. Meier favors schools where people know one another, and where students and teachers have close relationships. She writes about the children in most schools. “Most children today are disconnected from any community of adults – including, absurdly, the adults they encounter in schools. Many young people literally finish four years of high school within knowing or being known by a single adult in the school building” (p. 12). It is clear that she sees this issue of trust and connection as one of the building blocks of effective education. This sense of connection and of trust is part of the transformative nature of the Tiferet program. Meier is correct when she claims,

*But for the vast majority of learning, it helps when their learning works in concert with their home and community, not in conflict with them, and expands upon the learners' known universe, rather than denying or trying to forget a part of it. And for this to happen, adults in schools need to truly know the children they server over many years, something almost impossible in traditional huge schools. (p. 26)*

Perhaps one of the traits of the Tiferet Program is the way in which it creates a closely knit and trusting community, a smaller and hence more educative environment than the size of Milken. When she writes about schools that work best by writing about them as being small, being self-governing, and being places of choice, she is pointing out a difference between the size and nature of the student experience at Milken and the intimacy of Tiferet.

[Berger](#) (2003) presents similar themes as Meier. He sees the development of successful schools as places where students and teachers are engaged in meaningful learning based on authentic projects and endeavors. He writes about the role of the community in the pursuit of educational excellence. "I believe the achievement of students is governed by large degree by their family culture, their neighborhood culture, and their school culture. Students may have different potentials, but, in general the attitudes and achievements of students are shaped by the culture around them" (p. 34). The real issue in studying the Tiferet program may be in understanding the unique qualities created by the culture of engaging in a study abroad program. It's clearly not school as normally experienced in the "traditional" American schema of school. [Berger](#) (2003) realizes, like Meier (2002), that the community is key to educational excellence. He claims,

*One thing clear to me though is that the power of the culture rests in community. When I've visited effective schools I've been struck with the realization that through the settings and resources are often widely different, every effective school I've seen as a strong sense of community. (p. 41)*

The primary issue in effective schooling relates to an understanding of the complexities of culture and community. Understanding culture and community is at the very heart of this study – for there is the framing culture of Milken and the target culture of the Tiferet program.

In conclusion, this literature review attempts to examine one key question through four different dimensions as they relate to the development and implementation of the Tiferet program at Milken Community High School. The literature review attempts to examine the ways in which an ethnographic and mixed-genre approach to studying the culture of an entirely new program impacts the continued study of best practices in 21<sup>st</sup> century American high schools. When studying the culture of the Tiferet program, I can not forget the larger culture of Milken. While this is no easy task, a balanced and informed approach based on reason, pragmatism, experience, and reading help frame the study to follow.

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An Ethnographic Evaluation of  
Milken Community High School's  
Tiferet Fellowship Program



# Methodology

The research methodology for this study is based on mixed-genre ethnographic and qualitative research techniques. Despite the fact that qualitative research is often defined in a confusing way and despite the fact that qualitative research techniques can vary, [Denzin and Lincoln](#) (2005) define it as: "Qualitative research means different things in each of these moments. Nonetheless, an initial generic definition can be offered: Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos the the self." (p. 3) [Denzin and Lincoln](#) explore the variety of qualitative techniques and the position of qualitative research within the context of the post-modern world. Their analysis is helpful as it sets a theoretic framework for this study. They claim, "Qualitative research involves the studies use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview, artifacts, cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (pp. 3-4). Given the various elements of the the study, that it is collected from a variety of sources over a two year period, [Denzin and Lincoln](#) help to establish credibility for the approach. In many ways it is the "bricolage" that they discuss, and yet it is also a tapestry woven of many threads.

[Creswell](#) (1998) also helps to develop a theoretical framework for qualitative research design. In his discussion of the five research designs for qualitative research, he provides both a background and a framework for the processes involved in gathering knowledge. It is important that he acknowledges the role of reflexivity in his work, as that acknowledgement is important for this study as well. He writes "Qualitative inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration without apology or comparisons to quantitative research. Good models of qualitative inquiry demonstrate the rigor, difficulty, and time-consuming nature of this approach" (p. 9). His discussions of the definitions and the difference of the five traditions between biography, phenomenological study, grounded theory study, ethnography, and case study are important ideas for this study and its combination of methodologies. The overlap he mentions between case study and ethnography are central to this study. He writes, "In case study research, one works with a smaller unit such as a program, an event, an activity, or individuals and explores a range of topics, only one of which might be cultural behavior, language or artifacts. Furthermore, in an ethnography, the researcher studies a culture-shaping group using anthropological concepts (e.g. myth, stories, rituals, social structure). These concepts may or may not be present in a case study" (p. 66). In fact, for this study, the bounded nature of the case study exists, yet the cultural study of a defined group is also present.

[Creswell](#) (2003) presents a handbook of research design which helps frame the entire process. He writes about the mixed methods approach. "This mixed  
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methods approach as many strengths. A researcher is able to collect the two types of data simultaneously, during a single data collection phase. It provides a study with the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative data" (p. 218).

The use of a case study techniques was important for this study. The elegant treatment given to case study research in *The Art of Case Study Research* by Robert E. Stake became a framing device for much of the work on the projects (Stake, 1995). A key point in the development of the case study itself was the concept developed in Stake of "progressive focusing" (Stake, 1995). As the case study developed, it became apparent that the actual data gathered was adapting and changing in the very process of data gathering. Second, Stake's recommendation that the data gatherer have a focused set of topics needing attention was important to the interview question development. The chapters entitled "Data Gathering" and "Analysis and Interpretation" took on an added value as they became the subject and topic of the training module developed for the interviewers from Milken (Stake, 1995). It needs to be pointed out that in the protocol developed, students from Milken read and discussed the chapters from Stake as a precursor to developing the questions which were asked in the interview process. These questions were then created by the students and me in an effort to emulate the progressive focusing recommended by Stake. Another key element in the learning and preparation of the Milken students concerned their own unique positionality, and this is reflected in several of their later comments.

Bensimon, Mara, Polkinghome, Bauman, and Vallejo (2004) also discuss the role of the qualitative researcher, and the role of the practitioner as researcher in an article entitled *Doing Research That Makes a Difference*. The article serves as a framing device for this study as the purpose of the qualitative approach is to evaluate the successes and challenges of the program. Bensimon et al. write,

*The practitioner-as-researcher model has elements of community, collaborative, and participatory action research in that the purpose of inquiry is to bring about change at individual, organizational, and societal levels. The methodology consists of outsider researchers working as facilitators engaged with insider teams of practitioners in a process of collecting data and creating knowledge about local problems as seen from a local perspective. (p. 108)*

Framing this study in these terms became an important part of the methodological approach. That approach would be grounded in the practical realities of discovering knowledge about a very unique program, and the results of that research could then benefit the program itself. Bensimon et al. (2004) continue "However, rather than conducting research that would culminate with papers and articles in which we would reveal patterns of inequity in educational outcomes and make general recommendations about how they might be reduced, we wanted our work to make differences at the very sites where inequities in educational outcomes exist" (p. 112). This groundedness has been an important aspect of the two years during which the research was conducted.

Another most important text on the issues of case study research became *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research* by David M. Boje (2001) In the chapter on microstoria analysis, he claims, "Microstoria is an antenarrative analysis due to its open history approach and its skepticism of grand narrative of macro-history" (p. 45). This single sentence provided a galvanizing moment as it lead to the consideration that the real purpose of this study is to gather the data from individual students; their stories are more important than the collocation of adult based conceptions. Boje (2001) reinforces this by the



statement, "In sum, the ontological approach is one in which there is knowledge that is specific to time and place, that can be read in the material remains of stories recorded in various archives and diaries" (p.49). This archive was to become the use of the video and the questions asked by the students as they gathered responses to a pre-conceived set of questions focused on the issues of defining culture as experienced in the Tiferet program.

[Boje](#) (2008) continues his work regarding the panoply of narrative positions in the text *Storytelling Organizations*. It is important for me to note that he begins the text with an analysis relating to the emergence of complexity thinking versus system thinking and in this analysis makes the clear case for facing the challenge of using complexity thinking as a method to understand organizations. He writes, "Complexity is a turn away from hierarchic levels, to something holographic. Complexity is not lines! It's spirals in the dialogical interplay of narrative-order with story-disorder that produces the self-organization of Storytelling Organizations" (p. 26). Boje contends that the process of understanding an organization is essentially one of understanding the interplay of several narrative positions in an "holographic" manner, a metaphor that lends itself well to a three-dimensional analysis. This current work is rather groundbreaking, yet he reverts also to the metaphor of weaving when he writes, "Story-telling and antenarrative trajectories pass through the event horizons of space-time stitching together, weaving together many agons" (p. 42). There are clear implications for the current study when considering the philosophical and methodological constructs advanced by Boje. The story, the weaving, is multi-dimensional and varies by the telling and the teller of the story. Capturing this story in many ways with many different kinds of methodologies allow me to "weave the tapestry." At the same time, the different frameworks of storytelling that Boje discusses then creates a system for analysis.

[Patton](#) (2002) reinforces this idea when he claims, "Quantitative findings often have this simple yet elegant and insightful character. This straightforward yet nuanced framework represents a creative synthesis of year of participant observation and personal inquiry." (p. 9). Patton's work brings a kind of austere and simplified view to the process, as he says, "In summary, all inquiry designs are affected by intended purpose and targeted audiences, but purpose and audience deserve special emphasis in the case of qualitative studies, where the criteria for judging quality may be poorly understood or in dispute, even among qualitative methodologies (p. 12). Patton's focus in the foundational chapters of his text place a clear focus on the positionality of both the observer and the observed, and these considerations are framing devices for the study itself. In short, it becomes important to observe students, and then gather information from both the interviewer and the interviewee. Again, this is not a straightforward process, but relies on an understanding of the several involved complexities.

[Greene & Caracelli](#) (1997) provide another most helpful and insightful text in *Advances in Mixed-Method Evaluation: The Challenges and Benefits of Integrating Diverse Paradigms* ([Greene & Caracelli](#), 1997). Greene and Caracelli explore the use of many different paradigms in the process of completing case studies; for this case study the issues of micro-macro storia in combination with a transactional analysis were important paradigms used in framing the study. The section on Mixed-Method Integrated Designs, the authors claim "In this class of design, we discuss four basic types: (1) iterative, (2) embedded or nested, (3) holistic, and (4) transformative" (p. 21). From these four mixed-methods, it was possible to design a paradigm for this case study which emulated three design qualities – that of being embedded, holistic, and transformative. The iterative process was made possible by a two year involvement with the program. The team of students involved in gathering data has been working with me for at least two years and have seen the variance in the program responses and have become intimately involved with understanding video interviewing techniques. There is a certain practical reality involved in qualitative case study evaluations.

[Greene & Caracelli](#) (1997) quoting Howe (1988) so appropriately write,

*Yet one must also be careful to eschew the tyranny 'of the epistemological over the practical, of the conceptual of the empirical;' and to insist 'that paradigms bring themselves into some reasonable state of*

*equilibrium with methods...’ such that the practice is neither static and unreflective nor subject to the one-way direction of a whole abstract paradigm. (p. 12)*

This approach makes an absolute sense. [Greene and Caracelli](#) (1997) make the claim that mixed methods research has an ultimately pragmatic goal by writing “In this type of mixed-method conversation, methods are mixed in order to represent a plurality of interests, voices, and perspectives better. That is, the value-based and action-oriented dimensions of different inquiry traditions becomes the ground on which methods and analysis decisions are made” (p. 14).

For further information on mixed-method evaluation consult these links

### [Research Design and Mixed-Method Approach](#)

### [Mixed Methods Research – A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come](#)

[LeCompte and Goetz](#) (1984) spend a great deal of time discussing the processes by which data is gathered and the methodologies to be used. While they differentiate between process data and baseline data, it is important to note that this study relies on primarily process data. The process data includes some ex-post facto analysis and some in-situ analysis, but it is the combination of data gathering techniques which is important to the study. They write about process data, “Process data: information determining what happened in the course of a curricular program or innovation. The way the program or intervention and the evaluation was approached and handled by participants provides data for assessing the impact and success of an intervention” (p. 39). At the same time, the study is filled with implicit data relating to values assumptions about the program’s genesis and implementation. While this data was seldom deliberately recorded and can seldom be explicitly referenced, it is nonetheless present in the decisions made by students and staff. [LeCompte and Goetz](#) define values data as “Values data: information about the values of the participants, the program administrators, and the policymakers who financed the program. The values implications of an innovation, whose values the intervention supports and whose are neglected, may affect decisions about further dissemination” (p. 39). In many ways, the data collection methodologies used in the study are based on “key informant” ideas – only those students and parents who were involved in the program were asked to participate in the study. It is interesting to speculate on future potential studies which would examine the reactions of non-participants. The purpose of this study was to examine participants in the program – a study on the non-participants is as important.

The pivotal work of [LeCompte and Goetz](#) (1984) is further advanced by the subsequent work of [Schensul, LeCompte, Nastasi, and Borgatti](#) (1999). They write,

*Traditionally, ethnographers have relied on the written record to capture informants’ responses or to note their observations in natural contexts. Audiovisual techniques – consisting of audiotaping and videotaping- provide an alterative or supplement to the extensive written record that is the hallmark of traditional ethnography. (p. 1)*

Their work on the use of videotape to record ethnographic data is both interesting and perhaps somewhat time bound as they did not have the advantage of digital video technology at the time of their work. They write, "When one has a choice, videotaping usually is preferable because it provides a broader array of behaviors data. Specifically, videotapes permit the consideration of nonverbal behaviors in interpretation of individual or interactive responses. Nonverbal behaviors can facilitate interpretations of interview as well as observational data" (p. 7). The use of videotape in gathering ethnographic data is clearly one source, but may not be the only source of data gathering. They also note the need for a team approach in gathering data by writing, "Given the multiple tasks required in conducting audio-visual recording, another critical consideration involves staff. Who will perform the multiple tasks necessary for recording? As noted in the previous section, it may not be feasible for one person to conduct a session (e.g. interviewer), monitor the recording equipment, and take written notes" (p. 11). It is interesting for the context of this study that the "on the ground" reality remarked upon by Greene became a necessary reality for this study given the number and the complexity of the video taping required.

[Lightfoot](#) (1983) establishes a different kind of model for ethnographic work, one based on observation and compassion – an attempt to find what works in schools. She sets a different expectation when she writes, "In recent years, scholars who study schools have become increasingly aware of this tendency toward negativism, the pessimistic thrust of a large body of research, and have begun to ask for a different series of questions. The inquiry begins by examining what works, identifying good schools, asking what is right, here, and whether it is replicable, transportable, to the environs." (p. 10) Lightfoot's ground breaking work in analyzing a series of schools is important work because it sets a tone and a process – frequent observations and interactions by a team of researchers done over time. Perhaps most importantly for this study, she writes,

*The piecing together of the portrait has elements of puzzle building and quilt making. How does one fit the jagged, uneven pieces together? When the pieces are in place, what designs appear? A tapestry emerges, a textured piece with shapes and colors that create moments of interest and emphasis. Detailed stories are told in order to illuminate more general phenomena; a subtle nuance of voice or posture reveals a critical attitude. What evolves is a piece of writing that conveys the tone, style and tempo of the school environment as well as its more static structures and behavioral processes. (p. 16)*

An ethnographic study requires both time and diligence, and the methodologies described here have spanned two years of effort. In all cases of data collection, appropriate IRB permissions were gathered, and every participant signed an IRB approved permission slip. Several methods of investigation and analysis are used to gather information for this study. The study of culture is a complex phenomenon in itself and the role of using that study to evaluate the relative successes of a new program complicate that study even further. Because there is virtually no literature on grade 10 study abroad programs, the collection of data from multiple sources takes on an added importance. Second, because the program involves not just individuals, but also families and institutions, a broad perspective is vital. The collection techniques included the following:

*Interview Data*

*On-Line Surveys*

*Expert Testimony*

*Text Analysis*

*Field Notes*

*Student Generated Blogs*

*Student Generated Pictures*

*Program Materials*

*Field Notes and Personal Experiences*

**Interview Data** – Interview data is essential. Interviews were gathered from both students and parents after the completion of the study abroad program for two years. The interview structure included a set of standard questions, and the same team of students conducted these interviews for the two year span. Given the nature of my position as principal, the creation of a trained interview team was important. The team read articles about the interview process, practiced the interview process, practiced using the question stems of the interview process in order to elicit further responses, and used their own system of feedback after each interview to establish quality standards. Within each interview context, it was made clear to all the participants that I was not present as my position as principal might alter and change the quality of the interview. All interviews were recorded on video tape, imported into a digital format and then recombined based on the question protocols.

Once the initial interviews were recorded and digitized, the interviews were then spliced together based on the relevance to the question. In this way the footage of the entire interview was reduced to only those relevant parts of the interview. These resultant interviews were assembled over a two year period, and the video interviews for both both parents and students represent a two year running narrative regarding responses to the program. These video interviews spanning two years for both students and parents became one source of information for the analysis. It is possible then to view the videos for the entire sequence by asking about each of the questions.

**On-Line Surveys** – On-line survey instruments provided a second source of important data. This data collection was again spread across a two year span. Again, for each online survey, we gathered appropriate IRB permission and the option to decline was extended at each interview request. At approximately the time that the students returned from Israel, each student and each parent was asked to complete an online survey. The questions and the process was repeated each year and the results were tabulated using SurveyMonkey capabilities. These survey questions also contained many opportunities for narrative feedback and that feedback was an important source of data. Again, the results of the two years was collated and is presented in the results section.

**Expert Testimony** – The review of materials from expert witnesses also provides a good source of data. The Stephen Wise Temple retained Ms. Rachel Kourazim as an evaluator after the first year. She willingly shared her report and that too is a part of the results section and is a source of first hand observation from a third party. As Ms. Kourazim provided a formal report to the Stephen S. Wise Temple regarding the program, this report provides a secondary source of analysis and observation from an Israeli familiar with the culture.

Just as Ms. Kourazim was able to observe the program first hand, I was able to spend a week at Alexander Muss in April of 2008, taking extensive field notes and shooting extensive video of the program in action. This ethnographic field note study is vital as no amount of data gathered from other sources can approximately living in the field. Field notes become an invaluable system of recording data and analyzing data during the visitation. Again, those field notes are a part of the results sections.

**Text Analysis** - Text collection and analysis is also an important source of data regarding the program, especially during the first year. This text collection and analysis involved the use of HyperResearch and I was able to review a great deal of parent-child exchanges in email. The school established a communication protocol and place for the students and parents to communicate during that first year; however, this system declined in the second year and has been abandoned in the third year of the program. Nonetheless, this process of using HyperResearch to analyze what was discussed is a very valuable source of information. During the second year, the program administrators in Israel used a system of weekly updates to parents, and as I was copied on these communications, they too became an interesting and provocative source of data.

**Student Generated Blogs** – There have been several other sources of media information over two years. Many of the students have kept blogs and made them available when asked. These blogs provide an invaluable source of narrative review. The four different blogs each create a different perspective on the program and then serve to create a valuable source of first hand information. Each of these blogs is featured in the results section. Additionally a rich source of visual material has been the digital photos taken by the students and adults on the program. These photographs lend a flavor and an appreciation of the setting to the dissertation which is usually not available.

**Student Pictures** – The pictures on this web site were taken by students and adults involved in the program. As these pictures are used in the web site to “rotate” across the top banner in random order they create a sense of the bricolage referred to by [Denzin and Lincoln](#) (2005). In many ways, the web site becomes an extension of the program given its interactive status and its dependency on student and program input. The pictures in this fashion help contextualize not only the web page but the study itself.

**Program Materials** – Several examples of materials relevant to the program have been generated by the program’s sponsors and by the program’s participants. First of all the Stephen Wise Temple produced a more “formal” video during the first year of the program and that video is offered here as yet another lens through which the program can be viewed.

**Field Notes and Personal Experiences** – During March of 2007, I had the opportunity to spend a week at Alexander Muss as an observer/participant of the Tifferet program. During this week, I took extensive field notes, pictures, and video of the students as they were engaged in classroom experiences and in Tiylul. I stayed on the Alexander Muss campus and had an opportunity to meet program administrators, teachers, and staff. Those notes, pictures, and video are part of the results section of the study.

The participants in the study consist of all the students who participated in the semester abroad program sponsored by Milken Community High School and hosted at Alexander Muss Institute of Israel Education in Hod A'Sharon, Israel, during the 2006-2007 and the 2007-2008 academic years. All students and their parents were asked to take an online survey about the program upon their return to Los Angeles in either June, 2007, or in June, 2008. A subset of student was selected randomly to participate in the video interviews which were held in July of 2007 and July of 2008. Each of the participants in the study signed a release and both parents are students were informed about the intentions of the study. Because the participants of the study were either students in the upper school and/or parents of students in the upper school, no potential harm was anticipated to the subjects or their parents.

[Christians](#) (2005) presents a thorough and complete discussion of the history of ethical issues in relationship to social science research. He purports that the Enlightenment values associated with individual freedom and autonomy when coupled with a scientific distance from the subjects studied led to assumptions about the relationship of the social scientist to the subject. This dualism then leads to a separation of intention. He writes, "But the Enlightenment's autonomy doctrine created the greatest mischief. Individual self-determination stands as the centerpiece, bequeathing to us the universals problem of integrating human freedom with moral order" (p. 140). Christians goes on to discuss and to present the values inherent in the modern Institutional Review Board process and the ways in which this process seeks to guarantee a respect for persons, the quality of beneficence, and the integrity of justice. In this study, those qualities were carefully guarded. Because the subjects were students in grade 10 and approximately 14-15 years of age, and because they and their parents were informed about the study in advance, ethical issues are minimized, but nonetheless present. The students and their parents knew that the study was being conducted. It was important however to consider my personal position in relation to the study. For this reason, I did not conduct the actual interviews with the parents or the students; however, these interviews were conducted by my "team" of students. It was important to the study that my role as principal not contaminate the honesty of the study report functions.

The methodology of a study impacts the results of a study. It is important that given the complexity of this study in both describing and evaluating a new program in secondary schools, that a balanced mixed-method approach be used. This approach both takes into account the personal nature of the program, the culture being developed and extended at Alexander Muss, and the impacts of that cultural genesis at Milken. The results which follow attempt to weave a tapestry between several elements of school culture and program implementation. Hopefully, that tapestry is rich, complex, and nuanced.

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## [khronosreview.com](#) - Threads in a Tapestry:

An Ethnographic Evaluation of  
Milken Community High School's  
Tiferet Fellowship Program



# Results

The results pages for this study consist of several different and unique results sections. These sections contain survey data gathered from both parents and students, information gathered from outside expert testimony, information gathered from field notes, information from both student generated and program generated materials, and culminating video data gathered as a result of the interview process. The data prsenet here is rich, varied, and complex.

Those sections include the following

[Student Survey Results](#)

[Parent Survey Results](#)

[Expert Testimony Results](#)

[Field Notes Results](#)

[Email Study Results](#)

[Student Generated Materials](#)

[Video Interview Results](#)

[Program Materials](#)

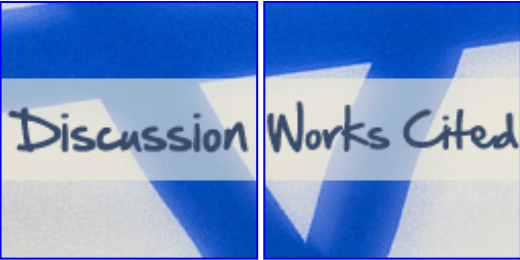
Given the wealth of related information and the need to navigate through that data, we have worked to establish an internal navigation system for the results section of this study. Not only is the reader able to use the floating "navigator," which appears on the right side of the screen, each subsequent web pages is linked both to the immediate past page and the immediate future page. Second, each page is linked both to the "Home" page and then also to this "Results



Home" page. This then allows the reader of the study to interact with the data in a variety of ways, in fact, at some point the reader become the participant in the data.

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## [khronosreview.com](#) - Threads in a Tapestry:

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# Analysis

## Introduction

The threads of the tapestry are interwoven and complex in this study. The purpose of this section will be to begin weaving that tapestry by examining the narrative threads from several different angles. Much of the central metaphor of the study has concerned understanding the warp and woof involved in creating a tapestry. To best facilitate this weaving process, I have labeled the parts into three larger categories of "Program Fundamentals," "Individual and Institutional Impacts" and "Narrative Threads." Several internal links or markers can direct the reader to the various parts.

The study attempts to answer the essential question "What does the lived experience of students in the Tiferet program mean for them and others?" This essential questions has several different dimensions and parameters; in an attempt to answer the question as thoroughly as possible, several viewpoints are necessary.

### [Program Fundamentals](#)

*The first strand or thread of analysis consists of Program Fundamentals and these are best represented as four essential strands woven together as statements about [Program](#), [Product](#), [Process](#), and [Practice](#). It is from this rather first level of analysis that the fundamental nature of the tapestry is obvious. These are the things that most viewers see most of the time when standing close to the tapestry of this dissertation for the first time.*

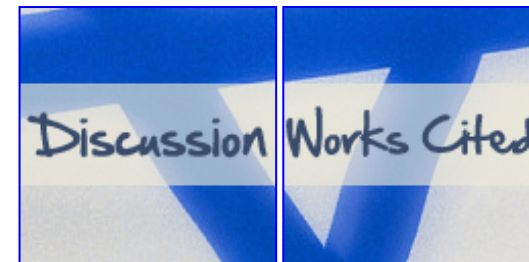


### [Individual and Institutional Impacts.](#)

*The second level of analysis concerns the impact of the program and the program experiences on the students and their families and the institution, what I have labeled [Individual and Institutional Impacts](#). This strand is important to understand as it has impact on the nature of the students and the schools and schooling and the definitions of what it means to obtain an education in the 21'st century. This educational view is important when considering the impact of the program on the students, the school and the school community. In many ways, this is viewing the tapestry from a different angle, perhaps a more distant view from the center of a room.*

### [Narrative Threads](#)

*A third thread of analysis useful in understanding this tapestry concerns labeling and describing narrative structures and the importance of story as told from many different viewpoints. I have labeled this level of analysis [Narrative Threads](#). This level of analysis concerns the commonalities of the "told story," and is dependent on seeing the entire program as a meta-narrative consisting of many micro-narratives. In many ways this is like viewing the tapestry from a distance, a distance that allows one to see the interrelationship of parts. As an ethnographic study, the gathering of stories has been a core methodology, and these stories represent the various strands of the tapestry. Yet is only when they are woven together that they can really develop coherence and meaning.*



## Program Fundamentals

**Program:** There are virtually no semester length study abroad programs for high school students in grade 10. During the process of researching and writing this study, I could in fact find no references to study abroad programs for students in grade 10. While Alexander Muss Institute has created programs for juniors and seniors in high school, the Milken Tiferet program represents the youngest large-group experience at Alexander Muss. At the same time, it was the largest grade 10 program in the “exchange” or “study abroad” program history for Milken Community High School. The results show this first two years have been a phenomenal experience for the participants and for both schools. When considering the number of events which could have “gone wrong,” it is truly amazing that the participants and the schools remained in such good stead.

Three central tensions pervade the interviews and data gathered during this study. While every student and every parent believes that the lived experience of being in Israel for four months was a worthwhile endeavor, and while every student and every parent believes that there was tremendous personal growth in the process, these three concerns surfaced in each of the media used to review the program and its implementation over the two years of data collection,

The first central tension concerns the relationship between “program” and “free” time. Several students and several parents remarked in the interview process that the students felt over programmed. From the ideas of “hitting the ground running” to the concept that “too much to do,” it became very apparent that the students from Milken wanted more time to “hang out” or to meet students from Israel. This can be for any program administrator a very difficult balancing act. While the program administrators may want to create free time for students, the reality of living in a country torn by war, the availability of a big city nearby, and the potential for risky behavior must all be held in account. One parent remarked that the former program did not provide enough supervision for children and yet this program did not provide enough free time, ironically holding both views simultaneously. Another parameter of this tension concerns the academic relationship of the Alexander Muss mandate to the needs of American students entering grade 11. While the Alexander Muss Institute has a clearly stated mandate to advance Israel advocacy and an understanding of Jewish religious and political history, American students in a competitive college preparatory program also need to advance academically. In many ways, placing the program as a grade 10 program avoided a certain collision between the mandate of Muss and the academic needs of students which would have occurred had the program been a grade 11 program. Given these complexities and the nuances involved in sending young adolescents to a foreign country, it is important to find a middle ground between programming and free time and academic needs. Nonetheless, this tension is omnipresent.

Clearly part of seeing the tapestry of the program is seeing the clear tensions that exist between these important variables. There must always be some kind of recognition that the day is limited to 24 hours, and yet how we spend that time is essential, and sometimes needs to be prioritized. There are clear narrative comments seen in the video interviews and in the survey results which indicate that some individuals were content with the academic program and the free time issues; while other individuals also clearly wanted additional academic time. The results of my onsite visitation clearly reflected full days and lots of planned

activities. The students reinforced this when they commented about being tired. One of the key observations from the on-site visit concerned the way in which the students learned to “sleep on the bus.” This practice was a clear compensation for the impacts of academic study; student did not have much free time, and had to gather it where they could – even if it meant sleeping while traveling.

A second central tension revealed by the interviews and data collection methods concerns the curriculum of the program and the need to build close connections to Israel and Israeli teens. This central tension is different than the “free time” concerns. In some ways this tension between the curriculum of the program and the need to build close connections to Israel is an historical and a cultural phenomenon of Milken’s reality. This is a program which is central to the mission of Milken, and hence the program has a validity to the school beyond being just a good program. It is an important part of the mission of Milken. Because several of the families had participated in the former “exchange” model, they knew the advantages of a cross-cultural experience, and some of them wished to duplicate that experience in the “study abroad” model. It is interesting to note that the “exchange” concerns are seldom mentioned in the second year of the program, as if those concerns had been subsumed by the reality of a continuing program. These are two different models of education, and the models need to be fully understood by all the participants and administrators. Additionally, this tension is compounded by the “free time” issue. In some ways there are four programmatic variables to be considered:

1. *The Alexander Muss Institute Mission*
2. *The academic needs of students*
3. *The bonding between Israeli and American teens*
4. *The recreational or free time needs of adolescents*

This listing is not meant to be hierarchal in nature, yet in many discussions this hierarchy was implied. There are several mentions of the need to understand Israeli history and culture, perhaps best captured in the capstone project at the conclusion of the Muss program. At the same time, students often discussed the needs they had to remain “on target” for Milken’s academic intentions. Several parents realized and discussed that the first two concerns about understanding Israel and remaining academically competitive were important, yet their memories of the close connection to Israeli teens and families remains important. The onsite visitation validated this assumption as the “core” class on Jewish and Israeli history is held first thing in the morning and the more “regular” or “traditional” classes are held in the afternoon. In some ways, these tensions in the program represent a “push-pull” internal conflict for the parents, the students, and the institutions. Everyone seems to want a closer tie to Israel, but not at the cost of any “academics.” Achieving a balance is a key to success.

The third and somewhat surprising finding concerned the tensions surrounding communications and system-wide technology. It is interesting to note that this

concern did not really surface in the interviews, but it did surface in the surveys and it did surface in the qualitative analysis of the emails. The onsite visitation also validated this reality. While there is a natural tendency to find this concern in email – as after all – the people using email are in fact using technology, this concern relates to a more fundamental observation about communication and “staying connected.” Parents and students simply want to remain in touch – more so at the beginning of the program than in the middle of the program. These needs to remain connected was so strong that students and parents purchased separate cell phone accounts and used individual and private email accounts. At one point in the program it became necessary to install wireless technology in the dormitory for Milken students, as “every Milken student has a laptop.”

Milken Community High School provides every student with a free email account, and the school attempted to provide every Tiferet parent with an email account. The school also developed a “place” and “process” on its system to encourage student-parent communication. Every parent in the two years of the study attended at least one training session on using FirstClass, and several received private tutorial help in special sessions. The dating of email exchanges and the analysis of the email suggests that this process was too late in the program’s “launch” phase to be of real use. Unless the use of the desired system of communication is encouraged and built in as a part of the regular academic year and a part of the parents’ system of being, then it is of real little use as a tool added late into the program. Additionally, it was very apparent that all parents were interested in “blogs” and the four blogs which were developed were important sources of updates. Again, the school was unable to provide a system of blogs before the students left for Israel, and so, its impact was minimized. During the 2007-2008 academic year, the second cohort made even more use of individual methods of communication. During my visitation, students remarked that they all had laptop computers, but that they would write to their parents private email accounts and not use the system established by Milken. This was also a compounding issue for Alexander Muss as they reported that “every student from Milken has a laptop.” For Alexander Muss, providing Internet services was a challenge, and the system was closed after 11:00 PM. Muss had installed wireless technology services in the student dorm, knowing that Milken students would use technology, and yet it was apparent from the on-site visit that Muss could not anticipate the high level of Milken student use. From this section of the analysis, it is clear that a school sponsored and hosted communications and technology solution would aid the program and personal needs of being connected.

**Product:** The product of this study is the web site itself. This web site provides the reader with the opportunity to see various aspects of the program from various viewpoints. In some ways, the creation of a web site almost allows a “360” degree review. My intention was to collect information from a number of sources. Some of the sources were simply matters of convenience, in that I was cc’ d on email communication. Other sources were a great deal more deliberate in that those people interviewed for the videos were invited to be a part of the interview. Each source of information provided its own unique qualities. Together they weave an interesting tapestry. It is that plurivocality that adds a quality of depth and authenticity.

Many academic papers are by nature “linear.” The authors begin, cite text, explain, theorize, and conclude. Given the opportunities and potentials of hyper-texting, a web based academic paper offers unique and challenging opportunities. In many ways, the web site can not be written in a “linear” fashion but must be recursive. In some ways this process is also “evolutionary” in that the web site evolves over time and is built in increments. I worked on one page for example, connected and considered another page, worked on that second page. Building the web site often involved working on several pages almost

simultaneously, and I was able to watch the site evolve. Additionally, given its digital nature, revisions were a part of daily work. Hyperlinking of text and resources provided me with an unusual opportunity to present additional content for the inquisitive reader. This is an important consideration as the creation of the product led to other insights on the quality of the narrative experience which will be discussed in more detail below. [Boje](#) (2008) indicates the degree to which the storytelling organization is more complex than than simple “Beginning, Middle, End” linear organization. I had not discovered Boje’s most recent work until most of the dissertation was completed – it was interesting to read his analysis.

**Process:** Several different kinds of processes were involved in this study. Clearly the first process involved asking key questions. What was the lived experience of an initial four month study abroad program in Israel like for Grade 10 students at Milken Community High School? What was it like to begin a new program? What is the international situation? What do parents think? What is the impact of such a program on the sending and host schools? As a framing device, these key question then led to several interesting ways to gather data. Finally this level of inductive questioning led to the essential questions of the dissertation, “What does the lived experience of students in the Tiferet program mean for them and others?”

The various data sources used in this project almost begged for a technological interpretation of that lived experience. I must reflect that the program, the students, the parents and the administrators involved clearly live in the technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Gathering the data for the project simply had to reflect the lived technology experience and needed to include various media. For example, today, students really don’t keep journals, but they do keep blogs, and so the blogs became a source of data. Similarly, the gathering of video for the institutional project almost necessitates a project using that data. In short, the presence of data in certain forms dictated the resultant form of the project. This information was gathered over two years and was stored appropriately.

A second process involved doing the literature based research on “exchange” or “study abroad” programs, ethnographic, evaluative research methodology, and the qualities of schooling itself. While a great deal of this process was driven by “texts” and “books,” a great deal of the process was digital. Gathering together the source work in order to complete the literature review was perhaps the most daunting of all the processes involved in the web site. At some point in the process, all material had to be rendered digital, a pretty natural conclusion given the fact that I had decided on the web as a medium of presentation. This reality then meant that all materials had to be stored digitally, and hence learning and manipulating the data base for this process was another source of learning. Because some of the work was digital, it is entirely possible to connect the original source material to the paper using hyperlinks. While this observation is not connected directly to the lived experience being described, I concluded that much of scholarship is digitally based in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A third process involved in the project involved acquiring and learning that technology in order to create the project. Frankly, this was no easy task. At some point in this process, I had to invest a large amount of money and time. This included the purchase of a video camera, software to complete the project, and a computer capable of handling the large data stream involved in video. Creative Suite 3 is a modern and complex software application, expensive in many ways.



In addition to acquiring the necessary tools to complete the project, I had to learn to use those tools, and this involved several sub-processes. First, I had to learn SurveyMonkey to create the surveys, then I had to learn iMovie to both record and edit the videos, then I had to learn the entire Creative Suite 3 software to create the web pages, and finally, I had to learn HyperResearch as a way to provide for qualitative analysis of stored digital data. Each of these steps had its own learning. The most difficult process involved the acquisition and learning of Creative Suite 3 and in particular DreamWeaver as this presented a new interface for web page design. In the middle of the study, Adobe released Creative Suite 4; however, the cost in time, equipment, and learning was not worth the effort to upgrade.

A fourth process involved in this project concerned building a support system for the study. In some ways, creating the support system was dictated by the IRB for the project which specified that I could not directly interview the students and parents. This degree of separation proved very useful as it involved others in the gathering, preparation, and analysis of data. A team of students did the filming of the video segments in June and July of each year. That same team of students was engaged in reading and commenting on the finished product. In many ways, this team is central to the study itself, and these "research liaisons" create a separate narrative structure themselves.

**Practice** – This project may have an effect on practice. There are multiple modalities of practice involved. First of all, as the principal of the school, the work here has been interesting and sustaining. It has provided me with the opportunity to learn about a very unique program, but also to learn about it with a new lens. Even though I have been connected to the program since its early planning stages, this opportunity has given me a hands-on grounding that was not possible before. This positionality allowed me to "collect" stories as an ethnographer; while I knew the background and field related to the program, I was not aware of the various degrees of personal narratives, the micro-stories which were collected via the interviews and the survey narrative tools.

Second, as a teacher interested in technology, this has surely influenced practice. The project itself has created its own sense of process in that the video had to be taken, the web pages created, and the follow up to be sure the technical details worked. A clear learning from this is concerns the amount of work involved in creating an integrated web site. The use and development of some rather new tools relevant to the technology itself is also part of the analysis of the study. The three additional technological features related to citation roll-overs, end of page commenting and the "Menu" navigator have altered the structure of the web page design for this study.

### **Individuals and Institutional Impacts**

Each of the Program Fundamentals exhibits a kind of summary of study findings and reflections. Another level of study findings includes the Individual and Institutional Impacts of the study. This then represents another thread in the weaving of a complex tapestry. This analysis harkens back to the core question which framed the study. "What does the lived experience of students in the Tiferet program mean for them and others."

Again, several threads begin to emerge from the data and results gathered. First of all, the study has been concerned with the nature of a study abroad program. This lived experience has meant that grade 10 students say goodbye to their families and take up a four month stay in a foreign and sometimes dangerous country. Yet the study results clearly indicate that the students met this challenge and in fact reveled in the study abroad aspects of the program. While there was one discordant voice in the first cohort of 2006-2007 which indicated that the stay abroad may be "too long," not a single other voice articulated a concern about the length of the stay aboard. More importantly, than just the study abroad, is the concept of "study" abroad.

While several of the participants in the study, and especially the parents worried initially about the impacts of the academic nature of the program, there appear to be no long term detrimental academic effects of the program. This finding is corroborated through the two years of survey and interview results. This issue regarding the academic nature of the program seems paramount as it is discussed so often. This concern also relates to the experiential nature of the program, and in some ways the accommodations which must occur lies between the validity of recognizing the programs experiential nature and philosophy. The work of [Duffin](#) (2006) and the philosophical concerns of Dewey are most important here.

While it is not part of the formal ethnographic investigation tied to this study, it is clear after two years of program study that there is a "place" phenomenon at work in the program. [Duffin](#) (2006) remarks

*As we take our first steps into this 21st century, the educational literature is full of a wild profusion of educational philosophies that promise to prepare young people for the complex society of tomorrow. PBE is not exactly the same as any of these, but it overlaps substantially with many of them. The list includes: problem-based learning, service-learning, integrated or collaborative learning, environmental education, environment as an integrating context (EIC), education for sustainability, conservation education, bioregional education, experiential learning, essential schooling, contextual learning, constructivism, democratic education, community-based education, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, and probably others as well. (pp. 21-22)*

The Tiferet curriculum as was revealed in the survey tool, the interviews, and the onsite visitation contained many of these elements. The entire concept of engaging in classroom learning and then engaging in visits or "Tiyul" of the places studied as a community of scholars is a clear indication regarding the "placed" nature of the program. Similarly, the work and dialog related to "living in Israel" is a rather obvious statement about the role of place in the program.

Every single child related some transformative moment which was experienced with living in Israel, whether that meant standing at the Western Wall, attending a soccer match, or walking to town in Hod A'Sharon. Place is a most important finding of the ethnographic study.

Third, the data and the analysis also led to a concept of a "frame" culture which exists within Milken and the program. This area needs further analysis and study; however, it is apparent by examining the context of discussion that there are in fact multiple culture phenomenon in place. To help define this, an example and discussion is necessary. Students attend Milken, they apply to the program, they travel to Alexander Muss in Israel where they live separately from family and community for four months, and then they return to the place of origin. While they travel to this new place, they also live within many of the rule structures established by Milken. In some ways, they create a micro-society within the larger Milken community. While so engaged, almost all students engage in a transformative experience – as this is clearly reported in the results sections.

At the same time, they then return to Milken and the community at the end of the program. Milken then creates a "framing" device for the experience of the program. While the purport of this study was to examine the life in Israel, it is an expectation that the Israel advocacy associated with the experience in Israel will continue throughout the junior and senior years in high school. Just as a tapestry as a frame, which can be overlooked while looking at the tapestry, so too does this program have a frame, and this frame is worthy of further discussion and research.

The issue of culture shock begins to emerge as a consideration of moving in and out of this frame theory of the school culture. [Pederson](#) (1995) defines culture shock as existing in six different manifestations, ranging from discomfort to depression. He writes

*The current perspective of culture shock makes several generally accepted assumptions. First, culture shock is not a disease but a learning process, however uncomfortable or painful it might be. Culture shock may, however, be connected with disease and pathological states or may result in unhealthy reactions under the right conditions." (p. 11)*

As the students move to Israel and engage in what is fundamentally a new culture, there is a process of adjustment which must occur. The survey instruments and the interview process indicated that this process requires two to three weeks. The students note that they can pass through a "honeymoon" period but then have to make the adjustment to life in Israel, where the dominant culture is decidedly not American.

Milken does attempt to prepare the students for this process by holding a series of meetings and forums to explain more about the trip. As [Pederson](#) (1995) remarks,

*Seventh, although culture shock cannot be prevented, it is possible to prepare persons for transition to new cultures and thereby ease the adjustment process. Preparation might include language study, learning about the host culture, simulating situations to be encountered, and spending time with nationals from the host culture before traveling there. (p. 10)*

What deserves mention here however is that culture shock theory is not discussed among the professional staff either at Milken or at Muss, and this reality might better be handled through careful preparation and staging.

Interestingly enough, [Christofi and Thompson](#) (2007) point out that returning to the host culture can be equally difficult. The students experience what I have labeled a "re-entry" process, described in detail by [Christofi and Thompson](#). They write, "Just as entry into a new culture will result in cultural shock for many sojourners reentry into the home culture may be followed by reverse culture shock" (p. 53). Christofi and Thompson echo [Pederson](#) (1995) by asserting that the process is essentially a learning process; they use a Piagetian model to explain this accommodation. "To become more balanced and be in a more peaceful state of equilibrium, they may use the process of accommodation, which Piaget describes as modifying one's current schemes to understand and process this new culture" (p. 54). Milken has a tendency to view this process as a re-adaptation to American culture and the role that parents play in re-asserting rule structures for students who have been in a more permissive society. Understanding culture shock and reverse culture shock provides an important tool to handle these realities.

As an emic observer, a person connected to the program by default, this "frame" theory needs further discussion because it begins to examine a real but often not discussed aspect of the program. One of the findings of the study must be that more study is needed, a longer longitudinal study of the long term impacts of the program is essential. It was the bounded nature of this study to examine the experience of Israel, and yet the impact of that experience over time is important. For example, because all of the survey and interview data was gathered almost immediately upon return from Israel in June and July, there was no opportunity to gather data regarding the re-integration process into the community of the school and the students relationships to each other and to their

parents. It is important to study and to provide transitions programs for the program participants, the parents and the larger school community as students engage in moving in and out of the frame culture. It is clear that in this process of moving in and out of the dominant community of Milken, there is a determined effect on the program participants and the school community. It is possible to speculate that there will be profound changes when the number of students participating in the program reach a kind of "tipping point" in the school culture.

Fourth, there needs to be further study on the relationship of the program to the students who "are left behind." Again, as the emic observer, the language and story framing about those students who do not go is one of being "left" behind. Again, this is not part of the nature of this bounded study, but it is part of the analysis of the program and its cultural impact on the school. It deserves mention here and further analysis. While the individuals involved in the program are having a transformative experience which extends the mission of the school, there is a defined sub-set of individuals not having that experience, or at least having a different experience. That relationship between students who participate in the program and those who do not participate in the program is worth further study to examine how those who do not participate feel about their own efficacy and self-worth.

Again, while it is not a direct part of this study, I would be completely remiss not to mention one impact of the site study. While in Israel, I was fortunate to engage in at least two extended "Tiyul." These are the experiential side of the place-based education phenomenon. While on these tiyul, I had a chance to consider the impact of a "Tiyulim Week" at Milken, and coined and framed the idea while in Israel. During the 2008-2009 academic year, those students who remained at Milken during the week following Pesach break engaged in a experiential education week. The program at Milken was called "Tiyulim Week" and gave students who "made the choice" to remain in Los Angeles a chance to engage in both divergent and experiential education. The impact of the Tiferet program on Milken was direct and deliberate – the tiyul of Muss became the Tiyulim Week at Milken. Interested readers can consult the impact of this endeavor by going to the following links

<http://www.mchs.school.org/tyulim/index.html>

<http://blogs.milken.school.org/Tiyulimweek/about-tyulim-week/>

Fifth, it is manifestly apparent from a two year study that the individuals who participated in the Tiferet program engaged in a unique and transformative experience. It is part of the intentions of this study to evaluate the impact of the program. The unique qualities of the program as it was framed by Milken and articulated by Alexander Muss have provided many children with the "experience of a lifetime." Toward that end, the data clearly suggests that the program is a success. On the other hand, if the school is to continue the program and work to improve the program, more study must be completed. Almost universally the data suggest that the students and parents support the program, and yet further study could indicate the ways in which the Muss program might be further

integrated into the Milken program, and/or ways that this continued success will affect the Milken community. It is vitally important to anticipate and study what happens when one half or two thirds of the grade 10 class make the decision to travel abroad and study in Israel.

Finally, the individual and institutional impacts of the program have decided effects on the nature of schooling itself. A program which has the potential to send an entire grade 10 class to a foreign country will decidedly cause change in the school along several different dimensions. This is the tapestry yet unwoven. While [Meier](#) (2002) suggests one important function of schooling is to build relationships to the adult world, it would be interesting to investigate if the relationships formed in Israel are in part due to a surrogate bonding as a by-product of culture shock theory. This could explain the role of the Madrichim in Israel, and in some ways, they are functioning as surrogate parents.

The literature review section of this study sets the groundwork for further discussion relevant to the nature of the secondary school experience. What becomes of the school, and the people in it with such a larger international program? Clearly, we are into a complex situation, like that described by [Davis and Sumara](#) (2006) and [Boje](#) (2008). This study attempts to study the individual and collective narratives of a set of program participants and that study has clear implications for the larger institution, some of which will be presented in the discussion section of the study.

### Narrative Threads

All humans tell stories in some ways. This telling of stories is how we define the lived experience. The role of the ethnographer is to gather the stories as best as possible and then attempt to bring coherence to those stories, rendering meaning. Yet at the same time, the perceived reality of a story teller may be different than the perceived reality of another storyteller, and hence it is important to gather many stories in that effort to weave the best kind of tapestry possible from these narrative threads. As this process occurs, several other kinds of narratives begin to emerge, as one narrative story leads to another. There are several narratives buried beneath the surface story of this program and the lived experiences of the participants as they are revealed in the various methodologies of story collection. From this study it is clear that we can separate out several kinds of narrative strands to bring coherence to the analysis. These are best listed and explained as a set of narrative relationships.

**The Narrative of Students and Parents** - This is one of the most obvious narratives being told and the data clearly indicates that this narrative thread is an important part of the tapestry of relationships in the program. While it may seem obvious, there is great discussion and talk that occurs between the members of the families prior to making the decision to go on the program, while in the program, and as the participants return from the program. Several of the program participants mentioned in the interview process that the largest single decision they had to make concerned the decision to go. At the same time, the survey results reinforce that the initial phase of deliberation was a difficult phase, but once having been made, then the rest of the process was seemingly more easy.

**The Narrative of the Families and Milken** - This is an “assumed” narrative, and while mentioned, it is often covered in the language of the “academic” nature of the program. Parents and students in both cohorts are concerned with their academic standing in the American community if they participate in a program held in Israel. This particular narrative strand is understated at times, and surfaces in unusual ways. It is in fact a “protective” device used by families in an effort to better understand the program before participation, as if it is an antenarrative prior to departure. Parents and students are attempting to diagnose long term impacts of departure prior to departure, creating an anticipatory set regarding separation and distancing. Of particular regard to this narrative is the assumed impact of leaving upon re-entering the school in grade 11. This is a very important concern to both students and to parents as they are members of a competitive academic community.

**The Narrative of Families, Milken, and the Community** - Throughout the 2006-2007 cohort dialog, the references to “pioneers” is constantly mentioned, and even more constantly implied. The fact that the Stephen S. Wise Temple created a separate video for this first cohort reinforces the degree of status given to this first cohort. They were chosen and followed and promoted as the first group of pioneers in order to set a model to the rest of the community. This modeling and this narrative concerns the role of the program in relation to the rest of the community – the idea that the first year was a success led directly to the second year success, and then to the level of third year participation. This is a lasting impact narrative, as I must relate here that the fourth year cohort has over 90 applicants. The program is growing in scope and impact as more and more students participate. While some of the other narrative strands may remain “static,” in that there will always be the narrative between students, and parents, this particular narrative strand is “dynamic” and will inform other narratives as it develops. One of the micro-storia narratives concerned the relationship which several students and several families felt for Rabbi Eddie Harwitz – his determination and charismatic leadership during nascent program development was crucial.

**The Narrative of Alexander Muss and Milken** – This narrative strand is both simple and amazingly complex. On the most simple level, students travel to Muss and take courses there, including the mission driven “core” class. On the other hand, the students also take “regular” academic courses, and the two schools work very hard to articulate the nature of the assignments. While this study did not focus on this articulation, several of the teachers at Muss mentioned the constant emailing and communication with faculty at Milken and the analysis of communication showed that Muss teachers frequently email both the school and the parents when academically necessary. While the academic narrative is important an almost equally important narrative concerns the social dimensions of the program as that social dimension interacts between the two institutions. My field notes revealed that the staff at Muss are interested, concerned, and sometimes in tension about the nature of that curriculum and the nature of what is important to them. This social sub-text weaves into the overall tapestry as the common assumption is that the students in the program while at Muss are still “Milken” students and hence held to Milken standards.

**The Narrative of Alexander Muss and the Students** – Once in Israel, of course, the nature of the lived experience and hence the narrative changes. Students begin a new life experience, at once experiential, academic, and communal. In many ways, they become an academic and social kibbutz, although that conception has never been advanced, but may serve as an adequate metaphor to describe the experience. Again, this is an amazingly complex narrative, and kind of meta-narrative, and while the students do not express it in terms of separate narrative from the lived experience of being in Israel, this is a key and important story and it has several sub-text narratives. In some ways it is best to clearly break these narratives into sub-textual components.

**Student Relationships with Each Other-** *This is the first time that these students have lived together for an extended period of time. Relationships build, enter into conflict, decay, and rebuild. Several of the interviews, the field notes, and the interview completed during the visitation indicate that students engaged in both bonding and “unbonding” activities. While they speak often regarding the benefit of “being with 39 friends” in Israel, they also record that sometimes there are disagreements and fights with roommates and program participants.*

**Student Experiential Learning –** *The design of the core classes, those dedicated to the history and politics of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, is a separate and vital narrative of the program. The students attend class and then visit the sites in Israel. This is an interesting narrative thread as it leads to further developments and thread concerning both Alexander Muss as a place and Israel as a place. It is this interweaving of the place based educational experience as it is designed by Muss that creates the essence of the program itself. While this narrative is essential to the program, and is in fact central to the program, it is ironically not fully reflected in the discussions about the program. In many ways, this narrative, this story is essential, and perhaps this essential quality is just taken for granted. At the same time, it is this narrative which lies in inherent conflict with the narrative regarding the families and Milken and the academic nature of the program.*

**Student Relationships with the Madrichim -** *This is truly an unexplored and unexpressed narrative, one that emerged very strongly from my visitation to Muss in March of 2008. The madrich have direct*



*supervisory authority over the students. They live in the dorms, they organize tiyul with the faculty, they check rooms, oversee clean up, work as counselors and nurses, and interact with the students on all matters of personal needs. In many ways this narrative is a key to program success as the madrich make things happen. During the visitation, I watched two particular events happen which reinforce this role and this narrative. When I worked out the details for an interview led by Rabbi Bernat-Kunin, it was the madrich who texted students to attend and saw that the needs were met. When the group attended a soccer match, it was the madrich who made the arrangements and “shepherded” the students in and out of the city and the stadium. This narrative needs further attention by the administrators at both Muss and Milken, as I believe it is one of the most important keys to the program.*

***Student Relationships to Faculty*** – *This narrative seems to take a preferential place in the many threaded narratives because of the learning involved. Several of the interviews mentioned the learning and discussed both the core and the academic classes and the importance that the students place on their relationship to their teachers. This narrative is reinforced as it is the faculty who give grades, and grades are important to Milken students as reflected in other narrative strands. The students build very close relationships with the core teachers, as after all, these are the teachers with whom they spend the most time in the classroom and on the tiyul. Learning is an emotional act just as it is an intellectual act, and the bonding which occurs is noticeable and profound.*

***Student Relationships to Hod A'Sharon and Israel*** - *As was reflected both in the interviews, the surveys, and the visitation work, this important narrative is tied to Muss. Every night the students have an opportunity to walk to town if they choose to do so. They sign out with the Madrich, and they are responsible for being*

back on time. This is often referred to as “free-time” and the students walk about a mile to the center of town. This in turn creates other narrative strands about their relationship to Israeli social life and what is entailed in visiting the town and engaging with residents and merchants. While this is a daily activity – or at least one that happens when there is not programming by the school – the engagement with Israeli’s of all types happens on a daily basis. Almost every tiyul stops for a break, be it “DOTS” (Dinner on Their Sheckles). This narrative concerns an informal social way for students to connect with citizenry. At the same time, Muss and Milken have attempted to provide more formal relationships with Israeli youth; however this has not been as successful as hoped. Finally, it is important to point out that at any given time, other schools from other locations may be in attendance at Muss, and that students have an opportunity to build relationships with these students as well. This narrative is one of the key reasons for beginning the program, to develop closer ties to Israel and to promote Israel Advocacy. It is amazingly clear from the data that the concept of place as described by [Duffin](#) (2006) and the concept of “polis” as described by [Barker](#) (2002) are foundational concepts.

**Student Notions of Independence, Growth, and Self-Efficacy** – This narrative thread is primary to understanding the impact of the program. Over and over again the students said that they felt more independent, that the transformative experience of the trip lay in the way that they developed independence and self-efficacy, a self-efficacy from living alone. In many ways, this is the primary narrative for students, whose personal interpretations events and program must of necessity be flavored by their sense of point of view and adolescent development. By the time that the students return to their families, they report several changes and are very open about their increased sense of independence. One of the sub-sub narratives here must concern how the families handle this increased sense of independence gained in Israel when the students return to the more “traditional” American rule structures of their previous lives. Again, while not a part of the nature of this study, this “re-entry” process can be a challenge in light of this narrative about

*independence. At the same time, and perhaps an independent observation derived from by emic position concerns the changes which occur in the students.*

**The Narrative of Program Impact on Milken** – Several of the families mentioned in the interview process and in the survey process that they were glad Milken had developed this program. There is an implied but not yet developed narrative about the relationship of the program to Milken faculty and staff. That alone is worth further investigation, and while not a part of this formal study, it is a reality mentioned and not yet developed. There is an assumed quality to this narrative thread – after all it takes program support, program management, and program funding to make this happen. This is also an evolving narrative as the program continues to grow and develop. As mentioned elsewhere – what will happen to the program and the school when 75-80 students participate?

**The Narrative of Program Funding** – It is only tangentially mentioned in the interview process that the program is funded by a grant from a local school family. Yet, at the core of the program success lies this funding, as no student pays the actual costs of the program. I mention this narrative thread last as it under girds the entire sequence of events which create the program tapestry itself. It is an important part of the general school culture to be concerned about continued funding in order to sustain the program.

## Conclusion

This is a complex tapestry, one bounded by frame and one containing several narrative truths. As an ethnographer, gathering together the stories and observing the culture is the also the framework for building coherency. At the same time, the process of being an ethnographer enables an understanding of the various components of the program. [Boje](#) (2008) refers to this process as a holographic interpretation of the story-telling organization, and writes "The Hologrammatic Principle is where the dynamics of the whole are present in the part, as in laser photography. Holography allows complexity properties to be non-hierarchic" (p. 37). His theorizing is valid in that he describes the overlapping complexity of a hologram as a metaphor for understanding organization narrative. For this study, I have used the metaphor of a tapestry in much the same way, as a narrative tapestry must be woven of individual threads gathered from the raw wool of experience. What these narrative threads constitute is a verisimilitude between the various stories. Building that verisimilitude leads to the process of evaluation and recommendation. Nonetheless, [Boje's](#) (2008) caution must always bear some weight. He writes, "In sum there is no whole story. One never gets the whole story. There are only narrative fragments in systemicty. Whole story is just BME (Beginning, Middle, End) narrative fiction. Nihilism is forever announcing the end of coherence in the restorytelling of our living story , as we and others reframe in acts of exclusion, embellishment, and terse telling" (p. 54). This is a noteworthy observation and a caution about describing universal and unchanging truth. It is enough to describe a truth of the time, and hopefully this analysis has created that truth.

Finally, as an ethnographer, this project has provided me with the essentials of the toolbox. Ethnography is not a “distant” science or practice. Rather, it is very much a hands-on process, or as [Wolcott](#) (2008) describes it, a “flat foot” process, one where it is necessary to see the person’s involved in a unique and creative way. He writes about the need to use multiple instruments and methodologies to gather ethnographic data. He writes,

*My point is that an ethnographer’s way of seeing tells us more about the doing of ethnography than does an ethnographer’s ways of looking. The ethnographer’s ways of looking are strikingly similar to the ways of looking shared by humans everywhere observing, asking, examining what others have done. (p. 70)*

This process of observing, asking, and examining have been the foundations on which the narrative descriptions are built.

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An Ethnographic Evaluation of  
Milken Community High School's  
Tiferet Fellowship Program



# Discussion

## Discussion and Evaluation – Implications for Leadership and Change

An update from the third year –

The task of this study was to analyze and report the findings of a two year bounded study of the Tiferet Program. On the other hand, as the author of the study and the principal of the school, it is also important to report in the framing of the study those events which had an impact on the third year of the program. While not formally a part of this study, being an emic reporter demands an update and discussion. Rabbi Eddie Harwitz, the director of the program for two years, made the decision to create a Jewish Day School in Connecticut, and left the employ of Milken at the end of the 2008 academic year. Milken was not able to find a replacement and made the decision to parcel out some of the job responsibilities, with the overall administration of the program being given to the current program administrator, Ms. Ruth Ickowitz, who had worked with Rabbi Harwitz during the previous year. In many ways, this created a leadership vacuum in the program, exacerbated by the fact that the former Head of School, Dr. Rennie Wrubel, retired in June of 2008. Her replacement, Mr. Jason Ablin, has ten years of experience at Milken; yet being a new Head of School implies its own kind of challenge.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, a total of 64 students attended the program, the largest group to date. While the administration of the program remains a gargantuan task, Ms. Ickowitz was more than able to organize meetings, create interest, and in fact oversee what had now become a rather large program indeed. In some ways the third year represented a duplication of the process steps of other years, and the reported, but not analyzed for this study, results have been consistent. Unfortunately, the program did face mid-point event when two students were "brought home" for consuming alcohol during the return trip at Pesach break. This was a troubling time, and may represent a "third year implementation" dip. It was also clear that the number of students engaged in the third year taxed the support system both at Milken and Muss.



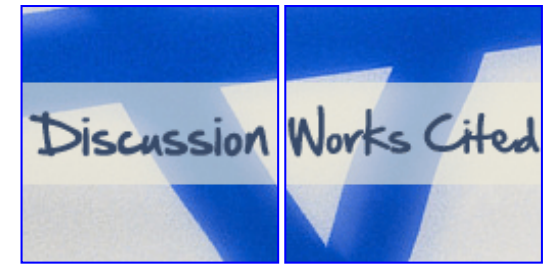
Nonetheless, it is vitally important to discuss and reflect on the program and to the findings of this study.. What conclusions can be reached? It is now important to begin again with that central question, "What does the lived experience of students in the Tiferet program mean for them and others?" Three relevant questions now emerge. What has changed so far? What are the recommendations for the future? What are the implications for leadership and change?

First of all, Milken has changed. This has involved a change in program and process. Over the first two years of this study approximately 75 students went to Israel on this program. This is no small endeavor for the school. Consider that the school has developed structures and processes to identify, select, inform, and send a group of students to a school in a foreign country. The logistics alone of this process are impressive. In addition to logistical challenges, the school has had to alter and adapt to curriculum needs, as the regular academic curriculum in the sophomore year must be transported to Alexander Muss where it is taught by teachers there. The communications back and forth has developed and changed as well; in December of each year, it is no customary for representatives of Alexander Muss to visit Milken in order to meet the students and parents, and engage in curriculum discussion with the faculty at Milken.

Not only has the school changed, but the school culture has changed. In some ways, this is the most dramatic change of all, and yet is the least expressed change. Students at Milken have the expectation that they can, may, and will go to Israel for a four month program. They are no longer afraid of that construct, they expect that construct. The students who participate in the program return to Milken and are then expected to engage in leadership activities and advocacy for Israel. These expectations may not be part of the "lived experience" of the Alexander Muss program itself, but they are real and they impact the overall culture of the school. For example, it was the "pioneer" group who took on the planning for the Yom Ha'Zikaron and Yom Ha'Atzmaout programs during the first year of their return. It may be no accident indeed that their planning "took over the school" and they redesigned the event from an assembly program to create an Israeli "bazaar."

The internal structure of the sophomore class has changed as well, and this requires a great deal more attention and study. The study's focus was to examine the lives of the students on the program, yet an equally valid and important study should concern the lives of those students who chose to remain at Milken. The separation of the class into "those who go" and "those who stay" also has a ripple effect in grades 11 and 12, as the students who participated in the Tiferet program have other expectations regarding Israel advocacy while "those who stay" do not. For the school, this may be one of the most important issues it confronts in the future. A connected issue regards the impact of the program on the grade 10 class and its curriculum as the Tiferet program continues its pattern of growth. Several questions beg analysis. Should the curriculum remain the same? Should the entire grade 10 curriculum be altered? Should the teaching staff remain in place? Should the Milken teaching staff be more engaged in the Muss program during the spring semester? What happens to those who make the choice to remain at Milken? These are but a sampling of the questions relating to the changes which have occurred at the school.

Second, the program participants have changed. The data remains convincing that there is a defined program effect. The students and their parents report consistently that the students are more independent and more mature. The residential and self-sufficiency needs of the program create students with greater self-awareness and self-efficacy. The students have also learned content about Jewish culture and Israeli history; it is clear that the experimental and place-



based content of the program creates changes in the students. There is not data however about the student changes for every single student; however, it is safe to say that every participant in this study reported a change in social behavior and academic knowledge about Israel. Their lived experience has changed them. They undergo several phases of the culture shock syndrome discussed elsewhere – first in going and then in returning, and at some point they face a culture shock of expectations regarding their new roles when they are fully returned to Milken.

Third, the parents and the community have changed. After two years, the program is no longer an experiment, and after three years, it is now a part of the institutional practice. Some students have made the decision to attend Milken as a result of the program. The parents can expect that they will have to discuss Israel and the chance that their child will want to travel and study abroad during the sophomore year. This then means that the entire community expects one-third to one half of the class to be in Israel. During both the first and second years for example, it became a “tradition” to have the students at Alexander Muss meet the students from the grade 8 exchange program and the students on the March of the Living program in Tel Aviv on Yom Ha'Atzmaout and or Yom Ha Zikaron, the Israeli memorial and independence days. This meant that 120-150 students from Milken were assembled in Israel at this time. That represents a sea change in community expectations and experiences.

Fourth, the program has changed and grown. It is apparent from the evidence that the mission of the program has been met. The original objective relating to having students spend an extended time in Israel is now a reality. The objective to continue their academic program while in Israel has been met. The objective to create an advocacy program for Israel by studying the history and culture of Israel has been met. The objective to sustain the program has been met, although the reality of funding is always a challenge. Essentially, the 2007-2008 cohort went to Israel for the price of transportation alone; the second and the third year program participants had to pay transportation costs and nominal program costs, averaging \$3500.00 per student, and yet, the program continues to grow. The institution of Milken and the institution of Muss have had to change in order to adapt to the expanding program, and this will continue to be a challenge. With an anticipated program enrollment of 80 students for the 2009-2010 academic year, addressing these changes associated with growth is now a mandate. All 80 students can not live in the same dormitory for example.

Despite these changes, the study also indicates that additional changes or improvements are important. The school at Milken in collaboration with the school at Muss needs to work through the issues of program integration. By this I mean two different things – first the operations of the programs need to be made more seamless and transparent and then second the ways in which the curriculum is developed and managed needs further integration. In many ways, the metaphor of “going” and “staying” needs further reflection and analysis. That metaphor of separation is challenging as some students do “go” and some students do “stay.” While that condition is obvious, the schools have yet to ask “In what ways can we build a collaborative, rather than a separative, culture?” This collaborative culture needs to be built on both an institutional and a programmatic level. For example, until this, the third year of the program, I was the only staff member from Milken, other than those directly connected to the program itself, to visit Alexander Muss. Even the program administrator, Ms. Ickowitz, has yet to visit the site. In many ways, there needs to be much more organic ownership of the program by the staff and faculty of the school. This organic ownership would also serve to address the issues of the “separative” culture.

Given the available technology and the reliance on technology, why aren't there more video chats or video conferences? It is possible to guess that these happen on the personal level, but they have not happened on the institutional level. Second, what common curriculum can be shared between the two groups? Alternatively, what common projects or experiences can be shared between the two groups? The creation of a series of common experiences, events, or curriculum shared between the two schools would also address this separate culture issue. While the students in Israel may study the same texts as the students in Los Angeles, they have virtually no interaction. This then is a serious concern as it creates that sense of "other" or "separate" and distances the students in the class from those on the program. It is almost as if the students on the program just pick up and leave and then are welcomed back when they return. That "re-entry" process might not be so stressful if the school's social curriculum were more integrated with the program existing in Israel.

Second, the nature of the communications systems can be improved. While it is perhaps cliché to say that communications can always be improved, it is also important to say that communications can be improved. This is not to say that there is not a system of communications, but it is important to point out that the communications at the current time is largely "individual-to-individual" and not "social-to-social." In other words, yes, emails are sent and phone calls are made, but they are not shared or communicated to the community. This is a call for leadership in communications, and it might easily be solved by holding a video chat between school administrators once every other week. It is perhaps somewhat amazing to me that this hasn't been considered yet. By the same token, this kind of organic communication can be used by the sophomore class and the parent community. Likewise, it is important to point out that the blogs and wikis featured on this site are again examples of "individual-to-individual" communication as there is no official school sponsored blog for the program.

Hebrew instruction while in Israel represents a third level of concern and a need for improvement. It is perhaps ironic that one of the goals of the program concerns improving the ability to speak and comprehend in Hebrew and yet the majority of social interaction at Alexander Muss happens in English. The students do take classes in Hebrew while at Muss; however the relative importance of those classes is closer to the relative importance of the regular academic course load as opposed to the core class of history and politics. Rachel Korazim remarked that "Hebrew is taught as part of the general studies program, and is related to in the context of language studies. This insures the level of teaching and the academic supervision but does not create a "Hebrew Atmosphere" for the program at large." During my on-site visit, all the programming and instruction was conducted in English. I will remark that the only time I heard "real" Hebrew spoken to me was during a somewhat "challenging" event in the dining hall, when I used the wrong tray at lunch, violating a kosher dietary rule, and the employee let me know about this mistake in pointed and direct Hebrew. While I could not understand the Hebrew, I surely got the message. One of the challenges for change is to create a more Hebrew-centric experience.

Program leadership is a core and vital issue; in fact, it may be the most crucial issue of all. The institution of Milken and Stephen S. Wise can "will" something to creation, the institution can hold meetings, write mission statements, and develop goals. But an individual must lead the program. Rabbi Harwitz is mentioned over and over again as the leader who really initiated the program, and he is in large measure the person responsible for its success in the first two years. He offered the program a kind of spirit and dedication and charisma which allowed his persona to be attached to the program identity. Rabbi Harwitz was a



visionary leader for the program, but one who also knew full well that the program is best served by a very capable and diligent administrator whom he found in Ms. Ruth Ickowitz. It was, as mentioned elsewhere, Ruth's dedication to the program and the internal communications system of the first year that encouraged her to take the position during the second year of the program. That was a beneficial synchronicity. Although the system worked, Ms. Ickowitz' position is administrative and she finds her time taken up with the logistics of operating an international program. A clearly designated and empowered person in the leadership of the program is necessary. This person can and should then address the institutional relationship to Alexander Muss, the transition issues of the participants, the evolving school culture and culture shock issues, and the organic development of communications and curriculum.

### Final Reflections

At some point, I need to reflect on my own position and personal history in the school and culture of the school. Not do so is dishonest and disingenuous. My own relationship to Milken has its own narrative, one that really begins in 1993 when I was awarded a Milken Educator award during the year that the Milken Family Foundation announced the construction of a "high tech high school" in Los Angeles. I have known about the school since that time, and was invited to apply for the position of Director of Education Technology in 1999. Working at Milken had been a goal of mine since 1993, and I made the journey from Maine to California in 1999. I came to Milken ten years ago as the Director of Educational Technology and became principal during my second year there. "Mrs. Fuller" and I have always worked in the same school, and she joined me in Los Angeles at Milken in 2002. Moving from Maine to Los Angeles creates its own kind of culture shock; and we engage that culture shock often as we have kept our home in Maine as well.

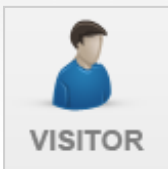
I am not Jewish. Yet, at the same time, it has been important for me to learn the customs and mores of this culture. I often refer to my transition to Milken as my "personal alliyah." To that end, I make every attempt to honor and value a culture I have come to respect and love by knowing holidays, by understanding religious practice, by attending services when appropriate, and by being a member of the community. As principal of the school, I am privileged to several sources of information, and in many ways have become an emic observer of the culture. I am now a part of that culture, yet also can never be fully a part of that culture. When school commissioned its own Torah, I had the distinct pleasure of writing my own letter in the school's Torah, a moment I shall never forget, and yet I could not touch the letter as I am not Jewish. I have attended countless Shabbatonim and have come to know families and create friends within this culture. Yet, I shall always be "in" and always be "out;" that's just plain a cogent reality. This position allows me to write about the programs of the school from a truly unique vantage point.

Perhaps there is an entirely different narrative at work here, some story deeply embedded and much more highly reflexive than that with which I began this study. At some root level, the two core metaphors which have governed the thinking for this study may have a touch of genetics at work. My family name, "Fuller," is derived from a medieval English worker's guild, that of "fulling" wool. Fuller's Earth is the white earth used to clean and purify the raw wool, removing the lanolin in order to make the wool acceptable for use in weaving. This metaphor of weaving and and working various lines of investigation also carries itself to my own childhood when my family kept a sheep farm for many years, shearing the wool to be woven into blankets. As my own father aged, he took up weaving, and by doing so completed a long circle of his own life, one tied to the land and one tied to the development of cloth and the design of cloth. As an

older man, one blinded by glaucoma, he continued to weave until his death, often claiming that he could see the colors by the warmth of their texture. So, today, perhaps his son weaves a different tapestry, a tapestry taken up by words, a tapestry of materials whose wool is filled by experience and observation.

And yet this new tapestry of words still tries to create a representative picture of the life as it has been lived by Tiferet students. My own interest in story and in narrative allows me the warp and woof to create a different kind of tapestry, but one also seasoned and one also representative of real living. Verisimilitude may be a literary term, but it is also an ethnographic term, hoping as I do that the telling of the tale, the description of the lived lives of students creates a sense of the truth as it is lived by those students. There is not one simple narrative here, but there is a complex of narratives, and it is that complexity of narratives which hopefully leads to a richness of understanding.

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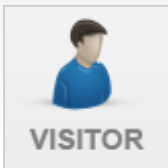
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# Student Surveys

## Introduction to the Student Survey Results

Welcome to the Student Survey Results section. As in the Parent Survey Results section, the students were also asked to complete an anonymous survey at the end of their participation in the program. This SurveyMonkey survey was emailed to all program participants and students chose to engage in the survey in June and July of their respective cohort years. The student survey results consisted of 14 questions, several of which had a narrative or essay response option. The survey results were an important part of the data gathering methods as the survey allowed the students an on-line and anonymous forum to reflect and comment about their participation. To the degree that several students reported the same kind of experience is a measure of the degree to which they shared the same kind of experience.

Each of the cohort's descriptive statistics are presented in one page relating to the question, and a commentary about the descriptive statistics and the narrative follows each question. In this way it is possible to focus on the trends over time, and to analyze and comment upon each of the questions separately.

A summary of questions and links is provided below. Please remember that you can use the navigation bar above and the navigator icon to the right.

**Student Survey Question 1** – Which of the following statements BEST reflects your initial interest in becoming a Tiferet fellow?

[Link to Question 1](#)

**Student Survey Question 2** – Which of the following statements best sums up your process in initially explaining the program to your parents?

[Link to Question 2](#)



**Student Survey Question 3** – Which of the following statements sums up your decision making process in your decision to participate in the Tiferet Fellowship?

[Link to Question 3](#)

**Student Survey Question 4** – Which of the following best represents your most difficult experience in leaving school – and the country?

[Link to Question 4](#)

**Student Survey Question 5** – As you made the transition to life in Israel and life at Alexander Muss, which of the following statements best represents your experience?

[Link to Question 5](#)

**Student Survey Question 6** – About how long did it take for you to feel "at home" in Israel?

[Link to Question 6](#)

**Student Survey Question 7** – Which of the following statements best sums up your reaction to the academic program at Alexander Muss?

[Link to Question 7](#)

**Student Survey Question 8** – Which of the following best sums up your academic experience while at Alexander Muss?

[Link to Question 8](#)

**Student Survey Question 9** – Which of the following statements best sums up your social experience while at Alexander Muss?



[Link to Question 9](#)

**Student Survey Question 10** – Which of the following statements best sums up your experience with the Hebrew language?

[Link to Question 10](#)

**Student Survey Question 11** – Which of the following statements best sums up your learning regarding the state of Israel?

[Link to Question 11](#)

**Student Survey Question 12** – How has your view of Israel changed?

[Link to Question 12](#)

**Student Survey Question 13** – Your turn! Please describe what you felt was the most important change for you as a person. What did you notice about your own growth and development?

[Link to Question 13](#)

**Student Survey Question 14** – Your turn 2 – If you were going to recommend any changes to the program, what would you recommend?

[Link to Question 14](#)

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# Parent Surveys

## Introduction to the Parent Survey Results

Welcome to the Parent Survey Results section. Another invaluable source relating to the lived experiences of the program participants, especially, the parent body, proved to be the Survey Monkey developed tool. All parents in the 2006-2007 cohort and the 2007-2008 cohort were invited to participate in the survey after the end of the program in the months of June and July. The survey consisted of 14 questions and was completed by having the parents link to Survey Monkey. Many of the questions had open answer opportunities and this generated narrative style responses. While the descriptive statistics gathered in the survey were important, the narrative responses were equally if not more valuable as the narrative responses gave insight into the thinking of the parents. All the surveys were anonymous by design, and yet there are occurrences in the narrative when parental identity is apparent. Each of the cohort's responses are presented in a separate question based web page which first examines the descriptive statistics results and then examines the narrative or parent commentary.

A summary of questions and links is provided below. Please remember that you can use the navigation bar above and the navigator icon to the right.

**Parent Survey Question 1** – Which of the following statements best sums up your "initial" reaction to the Tiferet program?

[Link to Question 1](#)

**Parent Survey Question 2** - Which of the following statements best sums up your family's decision making process in permitting your child to participate in the Tiferet program?

[Link to Question 2](#)





**Parent Survey Question 3** – Which of the following statements represents your most important initial worry or concern about the Tiferet program?

[Link to Question 3](#)

**Parent Survey Question 4** – As your son/daughter began the program at Alexander Muss, what was your initial reaction to the program?

[Link to Question 4](#)

**Parent Survey Question 5** – During the initial phases of the program in Israel, how often did you communicate with your son/daughter?

[Link to Question 5](#)

**Parent Survey Question 6** – Did you maintain the same level of communication with your son or daughter throughout the program?

[Link to Question 6](#)

**Parent Survey Question 7** – Did you feel that you had adequate communication and support from Alexander Muss regarding your child's learning?

[Link to Question 7](#)

**Parent Survey Question 8** – Did you feel that you had adequate communication and support from Alexander Muss regarding your child's learning?

[Link to Question 8](#)

**Parent Survey Question 9** – From your experience, which of the following statements represent the program's best outcome?

[Link to Question 9](#)



**Parent Survey Question 10** – Which of the following best represents your opinion in regard to the program's inclusion of American and Israeli students?

[Link to Question 10](#)

**Parent Survey Question 11** - Please choose one of the following statements which you think represent the program's most important and significant outcomes/strengths.

[Link to Question 11](#)

**Parent Survey Question 12** - Please choose one of the following statements which you think best represents a program challenge for the future.

[Link to Question 12](#)

**Parent Survey Question 13:** Your turn! What "message" would you deliver to Milken Community High School about your experiences with the Milken Tiferet program?

[Link to Question 13](#)

**Parent Survey Question 14:** Your turn! What message would you like to deliver to Alexander Muss about the Tiferet program?

[Link to Question 14](#)

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# Expert Testimonies

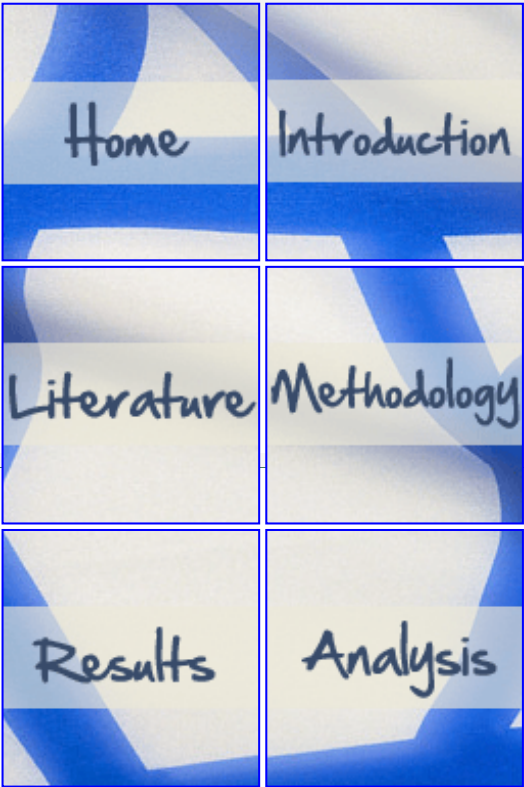
## Introduction to the Expert Testimony Results

Welcome to the Expert Testimony Results section of the study. During the first year of the program, the Stephen S. Wise Temple retained the services of an Israeli expert in education, Dr. Rachel Korazim, to visit and study the program. Dr. Korazim's report is included in this section, as well as her recommendations to the program administrators for improvements after the program experiences. Her materials here are used with her permission.

[Link to the Expert Testimony Results](#)

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# Field Notes

## Introduction to the Field Notes Results Section

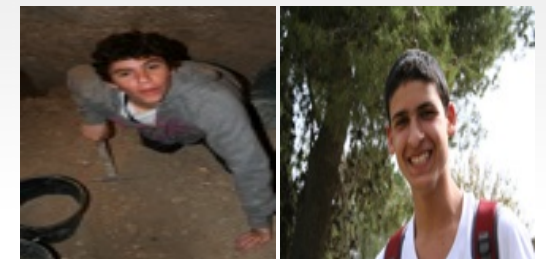
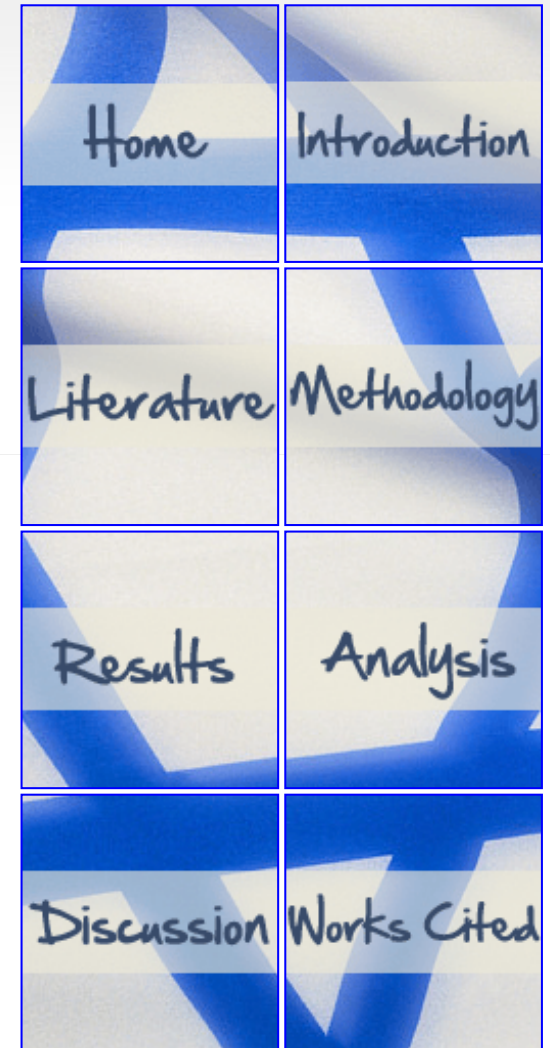
Welcome to the Field Notes Results section of the study. Understanding that the best research study design should include an on-site visitation of the program led me to a visit to Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education in March of 2008. This involved travel to Israel and staying for a week on the campus at Alexander Muss. In some ways, this was the very best part of the whole study as I had the chance to see the program and the students in a direct, personal, and yet professional manner.

During the visit I took copious notes and pictures and video and these sources of information have provided a key background in understanding the program's intentions and its outcomes. No amount of reading or interviewing can match the value of an on site extended visitation. While I would have wanted to visit the program each year, the realities of taking over a week out of every year and the attendant responsibilities of being the school principal simply make that goal impossible.

[Link to the Field Notes Results](#)

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# E-Mail Study

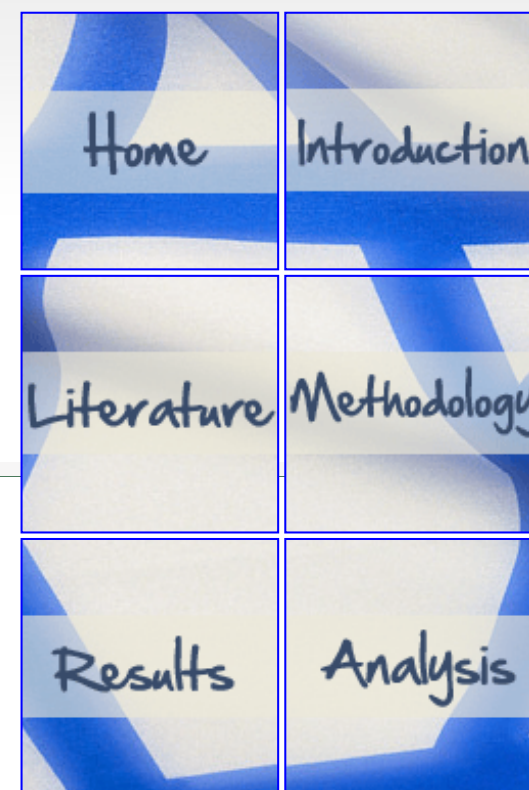
## Introduction to the E-Mail Study Results

Welcome to the E-Mail Study Results section. During both years of the study, the system at school attempted to gather appropriate email correspondences between the program participants, including students, parents, teachers, and administrators. This process was completed by encouraging but not mandating that program participants use the school's FirstClass mail system and by asking that several people be copied on email exchanges. The use of a collaborative forum during the first year of the program and internal to FirstClass assisted this process in the first year of the program but not in the second year of the program as parents and students found other methods of communication. This results page examines primarily the first year of email communication as I used the program HyperReasearch to decode and follow trends of communication. As the results will indicate, the expectations met the realities as they are found in the email communications made available.

[Link to Email Study Results](#)

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# Student Materials

## Introduction to the Student Generated Results

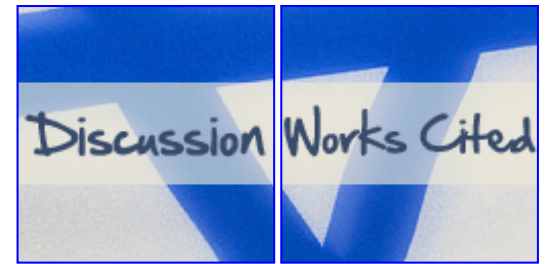
Welcome to the Student Generated Results section. As mentioned elsewhere, the use of technology as a form of communication was integral to the program. This communication was conducted via telephone, email, and the creation of several student blogs. The blogs represent yet another way to see into the lives of the students and into the program itself. The blogs were not necessarily a "family" consideration, but were in fact used by the entire community of participants, including parents, other students involved with the program directly, students not directly involved with the program, and faculty and staff. The blogs that are listed are used with the permission of the students. and represent a unique view into the program from the student vantage point.

[Link to Student Generated Materials](#)

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# Video Interviews

## Introduction to the Video Interview Results

Welcome to the section of this study relating to the video interviews gathered during June-July of 2007 and then again during June-July of 2008. These video interviews were gathered at Milken Community High School after the return of the students from the Tiferet program. The video interviews included separate interviews with a group of students and their parents. While the students and their parents visited the school for the interviews at the same appointment time, the interviews were held separately – each student had a chance to respond and each parent had a chance to respond.

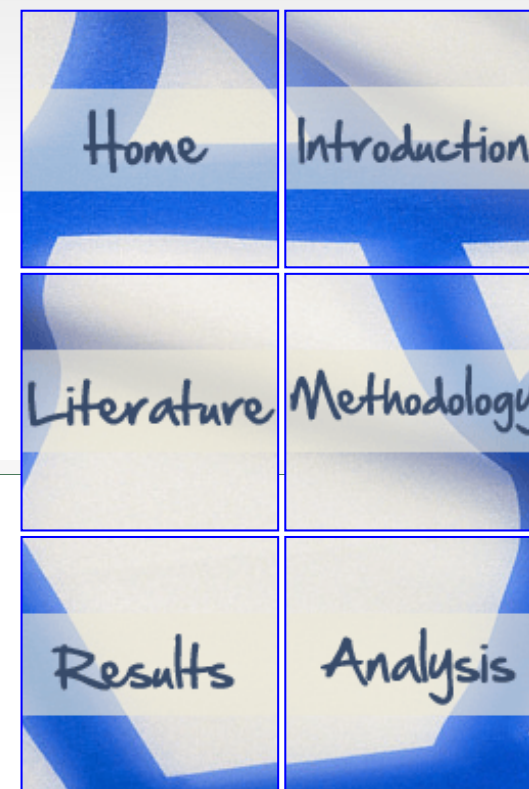
The protocol for these interviews is in some ways key to understanding the study itself. I worked for two years with a group of students who studied the art of interviewing, practiced sample interviewing skills and filming techniques, and who actually lead the interviewing process. Those students, Ghoncheh Nazarian, Daniel Nikzad, and Daniel Ulman have been with me in this endeavor for three years. They were engaged in conducting and filming the interviews and then also engaged with me in editing the interviews and then re combining the interviews under my supervision to produce the resultant video clips. This team became the team which held conduct and frame the discussions regarding the final product.

This protocol was both deliberate and very intentional. As principal of the school, and with the inherent authority that this positionality brings, I wanted to deliberately create the "space" and "opportunity" for some open interviewing techniques. This is discussed in the IRB proposal and a part of the study intentionality. As families arrived to campus, I function to welcome and host and introduce them to the video team, and then I spent time outside the studio engaged in talk about school, and talk about the program with those participants not actively engaged in the interview process.

The question prompts consisted of the following question stems:

**Prompt #1:** Please explain how you were involved in the Tiferet program, and what this involvement meant to you.

[Link to Prompt 1](#)



**Prompt #2:** In what ways did you find the program successful?

[Link to Prompt 2](#)

**Prompt #3:** In what ways did the program meet its defined mission statement?

[Link to Prompt 3](#)

**Prompt #4:** Can you share a time with me that you feel created a profound memory for you?

[Link to Prompt 4](#)

**Prompt #5:** What does this time say about you, or about your involvement with others? or about your involvement with the program?

[Link to Prompt 5](#)

**Prompt #6:** Can you share a time that you were challenged and may have had to make a serious decision? What was that like?

[Link to Prompt 6](#)

**Prompt #7:** If you had a chance to make a change in the Tiferet program which could help others, what change would you suggest?

[Link to Prompt 7](#)

**Prompt #8:** How will having been involved in the Tiferet program influence your role as a student or as a student leader here at Milken?

[Link to Prompt 8](#)





**Prompt # 9:** What other comments would you make about the Tiferet Program?

[Link to Prompt 9](#)

The reader can use the links above as a method to view the individual questions and/or can use the navigation bar at the top of the page to view the interview questions, or can use the Navigator to the right to view these links.

As we began the process, and as we continued to evolve the process, the group also evolved more specialize roles. Ghoncheh became the interviewer, and she learned the importance as both following the interview prompt and allowing the participant leeway to take the conversation in new directions. Daniel Nikzad and Daniel Ulman performed the technical duties of the interview and most often engage with me in the editing process. As Daniel and Daniel became seniors, the team then evolved to include other students, most notably Matt Novian and Lucas Fischer.

An IRB Research Liaison Form was gathered for the students involved in the program and is listed below.

### *Consent Form*

*Informed consent by “research liaison” students*

*in a Research Project*

*June 2008*

***Title of Study: Ethnographic Study on The Israel Tiferet Program – a high school semester abroad program***

*Contact Information: Roger J. Fuller, Principal,*

*Milken Community High School*

*15800 Zeldins’ Way (at Drive)*

*Los Angeles, CA 90049*

*310-440-3500*

*rfuller@mchschool.org*

*In this study we will be examining the ideas, reflections, and attitudes of a sub-set of the group of students who spent a semester of their sophomore year in Israel. We will also examine the ideas, reflections, and attitudes of the matched parents for selected students. Your role will be to learn the basics of interviewing techniques and conduct the video interviews described below for the project. As a “research liaison” you will be paid a small stipend for your work and learning, and you have permission to opt out of either the training or the procedures if you wish with no fear of repercussion or impact.*

*This project will involve video-taped interviews with a sub-group of the Tiferet Exchange program. Four students, their parents, and selected administrators will be selected by the program director and the researcher for reflective questions about the experience and the learning. Students will be asked about their successes and challenges, hopes and fears, experiences and learnings. These student’s parents will also be video-taped and asked questions about their responses to the program.*

*This form is given to you to make sure that you understand our project and your participation in the project. Your name and your stories and words can remain confidential if you wish. While our video taped interviews and the data collected will be a part of a graduate school project for me related to my work at Antioch University, that information will remain locked in secure places and part of a password protected digital environment.*

**PLEASE READ THE CONSENT FORM BELOW CAREFULLY AND SIGN IT IF YOU ARE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.**

*I have read this form and understand the purpose of the study and my role during the interview process.*

**Name: (print)** \_\_\_\_\_



Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

*Once signed, a copy of this consent form and a participant feedback form should be provided to you.*

Check one:

Confidentiality \_\_\_\_\_ No confidentiality \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

An introductory letter and an IRB was gathered for each study participant and a copy of that IRB is on file at Antioch and is found below.

#### **Introductory Letter**

*June 21, 2008*

*Dear Tiferet Students and Parents:*

*Congratulations to you all on having been involved in Milken's Tiferet Program – from its inception to having been involved in the semester long exchange program. Welcome home to the students, and congratulations to all the parents.*

*I would like to ask for your help in completing a project and paper for my graduate work at Antioch University. One of my learning activities involves using various methods to collect data for use in my dissertation on Tiferet. This second year of work on this project will help me by providing me a chance to engage in some ethnographic research to better understand the culture of the Tiferet Program and of school*

*itself.*

*This process of study will involve video taping your responses to a set of questions about the program and your involvement in the program. These interviews will be conducted by fellow Milken students who will be trained by me in the role of research assistants or “liaisons.” Not only will your commentary and observation be important for a project in graduate school, it will be important for the way we conduct our business in evaluating the Tiferet program and for planning for the future . If you have questions, please speak with me or send me an email at [rfuller@mchschool.org](mailto:rfuller@mchschool.org)*

*Sincerely yours*

*Roger J. Fuller*

*Upper School Principal*

*Milken Community High School*

**IRB Consent Form**

*Consent Form*

*Parent Consent for Student/Parent Involvement*

*Informed consent by Parents in a Research Project*

*June 2008*

*Title of Study: Ethnographic Study on The Israel Tiferet Program – a high school semester abroad program*

*Contact Information: Roger J. Fuller, Principal,*

*Milken Community High School*

*15800 Zeldins' Way (at Drive)*

*Los Angeles, CA 90049*

*310-440-3500*

*rfuller@mchschool.org*

*In this study we will be examining the ideas, reflections, and attitudes of a sub-set of the group of students who spent a semester of their sophomore year in Israel. We will also examine the ideas, reflections, and attitudes of the matched parents for selected students.*

*This project will involve video-taped interviews with a sub-group of the Tiferet Exchange program. Four students, their parents, and selected administrators will be selected by the program director and the researcher for reflective questions about the experience and the learning. Students will be asked about their successes and challenges, hopes and fears, experiences and learnings. These student's parents will also be video-taped and asked questions about their responses to the program. All participants are free to opt out of the interviews at any time with no fear of repercussion or impact.*

*This form is given to you to make sure that you understand our project and your participation in the project. Your name and your stories and words can remain confidential if you wish. Confidential means that your name would not be part of our report. While our video taped interviews and the data collected will be a part of a graduate school project for me related to my work at Antioch University, that information will remain locked in secure places and part of a password protected digital environment.*

*PLEASE READ THE CONSENT FORM BELOW CAREFULLY AND SIGN IT IF YOU ARE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.*

*Parental Consent – I have read this form and understand the purpose of the study and my role as a parent during the interview process.*

*Name: (print)* \_\_\_\_\_

*Address:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Parent Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

*I have also read this form and understand the purpose of the study and my child's role during the interview process.*

*Child's Name: (print)* \_\_\_\_\_

*Address:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Parent Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

*Once signed, a copy of this consent form and a participant feedback form should be provided to you.*

*Please check one:*

*Confidentiality* \_\_\_\_\_ *No confidentiality* \_\_\_\_\_

*Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Comments:*

## Conclusions

This protocol was central to the study and "we" made every possible attempt to follow the protocol as closely as possible. In this way, I was able to create a space for open response while allowing the "research liaisons" to learn about the program and to be engaged in the process of study. As is discussed elsewhere in the study the narrative of this teamed approach is fundamental to understanding the results themselves.

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# Program Results

## Introduction to Program Generated Materials Results

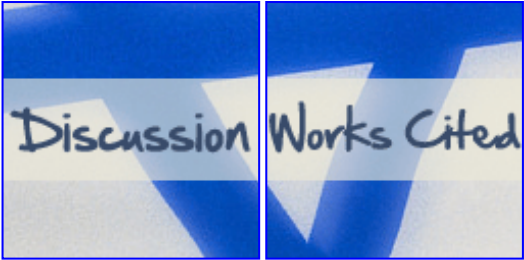
Welcome to the Program Generated Materials results. Both Alexander Muss and Stephen S. Wise have generated relevant materials. These materials include both web pages and a more professionally prepared video relating to the first year of the program. Again, these sources of information provide yet another view into the operation of the program and the development of the program's mission and goals. Through this "institutional" lens, we are able to see the kind of materials most often viewed by public viewers who are not directly connected with the program itself.

[Link to the Program Generated Materials](#)

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# Student Survey Question 1

**Student Survey Question 1** – Which of the following statements BEST reflects your initial interest in becoming a Tiferet fellow?

Results for 2006-2007

<i>I wanted to try something new and be a pioneer while in high school.</i>	35.3%	2
<i>I had always enjoyed a close connection to Israel and wanted to return.</i>	35.3%	6
<i>The idea of a semester abroad was appealing to me.</i>	35.3%	6
<i>I was skeptical at first, but my peer group encouraged me to try.</i>	17.7%	3

Results for 2007-2008

<i>I wanted to try something new and be a pioneer while in high school.</i>	15.0%	3
<i>I had always enjoyed a close connection to Israel and wanted to return.</i>	30.0%	6
<i>The idea of a semester abroad was appealing to me.</i>	25.0%	5
<i>I was skeptical at first, but my peer group encouraged me to try.</i>	30.0%	6

## Commentary and Discussion

This question attempts to explore initial motivation. The Tiferet program at Milken admits students who become “fellows” in the sense that they belong to a group of like-minded students. This question then posits two fundamental reasons for joining the program. It is interesting to note that the students who responded to the question recorded that there were two mutual attractions to the program. Six students had already a close tie to Israel, and six students were impressed with the semester abroad approach. This may be the result of having an exchange program in the school for several years before the Tiferet



program, so that students both knew about Israel and about exchanges. The section on the survey for the written response is most interesting when one student records,

*"My initial interest was a combination of several different things. Firstly, I have always felt a close connection with Israel, even though I had never been there previous to our trip, and I wanted to strengthen my connection my actually being able to be there myself, instead of just hearing about her from friends, family, and synagogue. Second, this opportunity sounded amazing, and definitely was, especially for making new and everlasting friendships and a lifelong connection and bond with the state of Israel. At first, I was hesitant, because I was not going with any close friends, but it turned out to be, by far, the best decision I have ever made."*

In many ways, this comment sums up so much of the background behind the decision to go, and represents a mature viewpoint from a student who has just returned from the trip. A second comment, "I had a brother go on Milken's old exchange. I knew how life-altering the experience could be. I wanted to go. Rabbi Harwitz really helped me get there....to the point that I felt comfortable saying, "I'm going to Israel." also serves to sum up the conditions surrounding the decision to go. In both years of collected data, the idea that the student was actually "going to Israel seemed important.

The similarity between the two years of collected data is expected but surprising nonetheless. There is more recorded "skepticism" from second year students, yet they are also quite closely tied to Israel. There is not an apparent reason for this, but it is also interesting to speculate that the halo effect around first year students may have been more tangible than first expected. The comments recorded by the students in the survey process are also revealing. One student recorded, "I always had a love for Israel, and 4 months at first seemed way to long, but after talking it over with my family, I knew it was the best opportunity in high school." This also reveals some of the anxiety present, but also the overwhelming desire to be part of the adventure. Another student writes, "I had never been to Israel so it was going to be a new experience for me. I was the first person in my family to go to Israel."

The concept and the idea that a student might spend time in Israel is a concept familiar to the whole group of children. Very few students felt that it was inconceivable. This then makes the next step possible. It is from these conceptual acceptances that the program could begin.

[Student Survey Results Home](#) | [Next](#)



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# Student Survey Question 2

Question 2 – Which of the following statements best sums up your process in initially explaining the program to your parents?

Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>I told my parents about my interest in the program from the very beginning.</i>	55.6%	10
<i>I did research on the program and then told my parents.</i>	11.1%	2
<i>I was worried about my parents' reactions and so worked to understand the program first.</i>	5.6%	1
<i>My parents encouraged me to join the program from the very beginning.</i>	27.8%	5

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>I told my parents about my interest in the program from the very beginning.</i>	28.6%	6
<i>I did research on the program and then told my parents.</i>	14.3%	3
<i>I was worried about my parents' reactions and so worked to understand the program first.</i>	23.8%	5
<i>My parents encouraged me to join the program from the very beginning.</i>	33.3%	7

Commentary and Discussion

This question is important for a single most important reason. It indicates that Israel programming is a part of the culture of the school and the community and not something that needs to be introduced at a beginning concept level. Students and parents in Jewish high school should know about and be supportive of



Israel programming; however, this indicates that it is a part of the current culture. Students were not hesitant to tell their parents about the program and what was meant by the program. The Tiferet program is unusual in that it places students in Israel for a full semester, yet the results of the question indicate that students and parents were both in favor of the program since its inception and initial discussions.

The narrative sections of the survey provide a more detailed and personalized level of response. Comments gathered over the two years of data collection reveal the depth and scope of the issues being experienced by the students.

*"Years ago, when I first started hearing about the 10th grade exchange program, both my parents and I were excited and looking forward to the time when I would be able to go on this program. When the program changed from 2 months with a family to 4 months in a dorm, both my parents and I decided that it was too long to be away from home. However, after talking to Rabbi Harwitz at length and numerous times, we decided that it would be fine, even though it was a long period of time. After talking to Rabbi Harwitz, my parents really wanted me to go and so did I. Even though I was nervous, I decided to go and again, it was the best decision I have ever made. Just thinking about the fact that there were times when I was strongly considering letting the fact that I wasn't going with any friends and that it was so long away from home keep me from going seems crazy because I made so many close friends and our dorm in Hod HaSharon truly became my home."*

*"I applied right from the beginning and had some doubts but in the end I took the chance and was so happy with the results!"*

*"I also chose to invite Rabbi Harwitz over for dinner one night to help my parents understand the program and the positive lessons which will come out of it."*

These narrative comments reveal the depth of feeling regarding the program. Not all comments are as detailed as the ones above, as in "Mr. Fowler brought up the program in conversation with my mom on the phone. My mom loved what she heard about the program and I loved everything she told me and my entire family was practically sold at that point and eager to hear more..." but each of them shows something more than the survey indicates alone. The narrative commentary reveals a deep level of commitment from the children, and a willingness to work to change the minds of their parents in some cases. Quite apparently, there is a period in the adoption of the program by each family that requires some convincing, some persuasion, although the persuasion is not



Israel is acceptable.

In many ways, this initial conversation begins a process of cultural bifurcation which occurs in the school. The students and their families know that they are leaving the "home" culture of Milken for a period of time. Nonetheless, this "risk" is worth the rewards, perhaps in part because the students and families can see that they are "reacculturated" to the home school during the next two years. The presence of the Tiferet program creates a "culture within a culture," at Milken. It is perhaps as if there is a "frame culture" at Milken which grounds the experience in Israel, even if the experience in Israel is fundamentally different than the experience at Milken.

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# Student Survey Question 3

Question 3 – Which of the following statements sums up your decision making process in your decision to participate in the Tiferet Fellowship?

Results for 2006-2007

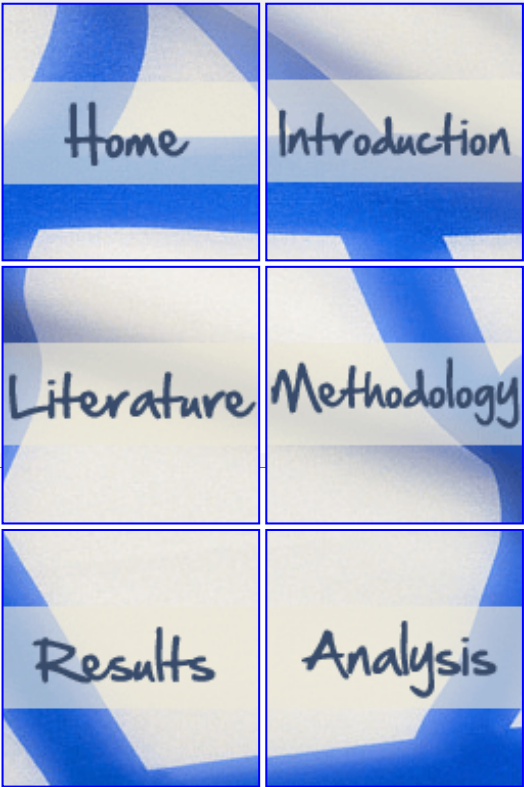
	Percent	Votes
Rabbi Harwitz convinced me that this was a unique opportunity.	33.3%	5
I listened to the program options, discussed it with my parents and then made up my mind.	33.3%	5
I thought it was an appropriate program for Grade 10 and had heard about life in Israel.	0.0%	0
I viewed this as an extension of my past visits to Israel and a chance to live independently.	33.3%	5

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
Rabbi Harwitz convinced me that this was a unique opportunity.	31.6%	6
I listened to the program options, discussed it with my parents and then made up my mind.	21.1%	4
I thought it was an appropriate program for Grade 10 and had heard about life in Israel.	0.0%	0
I viewed this as an extension of my past visits to Israel and a chance to live independently.	47.4%	9

Commentary and Discussion

This question begins to examine the motivation behind the decision making options. It is important to examine the role that Rabbi Harwitz plays in the program, and while his role is important, it is not the only criterion used to make decisions. Rabbi Harwitz is a perfect representative for the program as he is familiar with



many Israeli programs, has served as the Head of School of a Jewish school in San Francisco, and has taught previously at Milken. He brings a solid reputation to the program. Equally important were the roles played by parents and by past experience. In some ways, this question begins to reveal that the culture of the school was ready for a unique semester abroad program. It is very apparent from the two years of collected data that there is a charismatic quality to the work of Rabbi Harwitz and that he works to provide support to the program. As a 2007-2008 program participant said, (in caps) IF IT WASN'T FOR RABBI HARWITZ I WOULD NOT HAVE GONE TO ISRAEL"

As revealed in the survey itself, there were eleven narrative responses. These responses ranged in detail from "Rabbi Harwitz sold it to me." to more details analysis of the situation. One comment is illustrative of the social condition at the school, "Really it was just that I would go to Israel whenever I got a chance and here was a whole four months, and was as far as my thought process got. Guess I'm a bit brainwashed, eh?" Another comment from the narrative section revealed a deeper commitment to Israel. This student wrote, "In the beginning of 9th grade, Ms. Benjamin came to visit Rabbi Harwitz's Jewish studies class. At the end of her visit, she quickly said that we might be the first class to go on a trip to Israel. As soon as she said that, I gained an interest and began speaking to Rabbi Harwitz. Israel has always been a home for me, even though I had never been there." These narrative comments are illustrative of the culture and condition regarding Israel at the school, and speak to the culture of the school itself. It is clear that the first year students in the program saw themselves as a kind of pioneer in the program.

Some of the narrative comments from the 2007-2008 students is also illustrative. They write, "My decision was based on all 4 of the above statements and speaking to the TIF 07 members also greatly influenced my decision." and "I talked with people who had gone before and they convinced me that it was a good and unique opportunity." This reflects an added dimension to the program which was not present in its first year, the idea that students could consult with one another about the nature of the program and what is entailed in the program. As a culture then, the program is beginning to be self-sustaining. It is interesting to speculate just how much inter-grade discussion is happening with the students, whether this exists formally or informally.

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# Student Survey Question 4

Question 4 – Which of the following best represents your most difficult experience in leaving school – and the country?

## Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>I have traveled quite a bit and wasn't really concerned about leaving.</i>	37.5%	6
<i>The idea of leaving my family was difficult.</i>	37.5%	6
<i>While it was difficult to leave my family, I knew that I could be technologically connected and was able to cope.</i>	18.8%	3
<i>The idea that school work would be disrupted was challenging for me.</i>	6.3%	1

## Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>I have traveled quite a bit and wasn't really concerned about leaving.</i>	38.1%	8
<i>The idea of leaving my family was difficult.</i>	9.5%	2
<i>While it was difficult to leave my family, I knew that I could be technologically connected and was able to cope.</i>	47.6%	10
<i>The idea that school work would be disrupted was challenging for me.</i>	4.8%	1

## Commentary and Discussion

This reveals that while the culture of the school was ready for the program, separation created anxiety. The Tiferet program placed students at Muss for four



months, a residential program of significance for students of the United States. The language of preference was Hebrew, and it is apparent that for some students this was anxiety producing. On the other hand a significant number of students recorded that they were not anxious about travel or residential programs as they have experience in traveling, and it may be assumed traveling to Israel. It is also clear that while families would be separated, the use of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was appealing and a factor in keeping the family connected. The students in the 2007-2008 pool indicate that they may be more willing to separate from the family because they can rely on this 21<sup>st</sup> century technology. The number of students responding that this was in fact their experience was significantly higher in the second year reports, moving from 18% in year one to 47% in year two. This opens the door to speculation about whether the advances in technology are happening independently of the program itself, or if the program and its reputation for the use of technology are influencing further use of technology.

While there were several written narrative comments for this question, they lack useful detail. One student writes, "I was not that concerned, but it still a long time. So even though I was not too concerned, the idea of phones and computers did help." and another writes, "I haven't traveled all that much but I was excited to leave and I knew/thought I could be very technologically connected." This is an indicator supporting the contention in the question that the technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century creates a sense of connection.

One second year student writes,

*It was difficult for me to leave my family, mostly my parents, and even though I knew I would be able to chat with them and call them, it was still a great difficulty. The reason why it was so difficult was because I knew that if I had made any wrong decisions, or anything had happened, God forbid, they would not physically be in Israel with me to 'have my back'. However, the fact that they were not following my experience right beside me was the step to a greater independence that I would gain.*

This narrative calls for further reflection. The student is quite aware that the separation from family is important, and yet also realizes that he/she can be in contact with home rather easily. At the same time the child is weighing the balance which exists between dependency and independency. These are important considerations for an adolescent who stays at home, let alone an adolescent who spends four months away from home.

At the same time, the questions reveal a complex phenomenon about the culture of the school. Travel is relatively easy and familiar, and these are children who are familiar with the world of travel. At the same time, while being familiar with travel, they face the anxiety of separation. Any discussion about the program must always keep in mind that the study participants are grade ten students – fourteen and fifteen year old adolescents.

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# Student Survey Question 5

Question 5 – As you made the transition to life in Israel and life at Alexander Muss, which of the following statements best represents your experience?

## Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>The transition to a new culture and a new living situation was very demanding.</i>	10.5%	2
<i>The facilities at Alexander Muss required some transition time.</i>	36.8%	7
<i>It was easy, and I adjusted quite quickly.</i>	21.1%	4
<i>The connection I had with home and with Milken made the transition easier for me.</i>	31.6% td>	6

## Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>The transition to a new culture and a new living situation was very demanding.</i>	5.3%	1
<i>The facilities at Alexander Muss required some transition time.</i>	26.3%	5
<i>It was easy, and I adjusted quite quickly.</i>	52.6%	10
<i>The connection I had with home and with Milken made the transition easier for me.</i>	15.8% td>	3

## Commentary and Discussion

This question examines the transition process, as opposed to the awareness and decision process. It is apparent that students who live at home in an middle-



upper class environment in Los Angeles and attend a private Jewish day school had some issues in transferring to a new environment that was dormitory based and perhaps more rudimentary and basic than the environment they had left. Only two students in 2006-2007 and one student in 2007-2008 recorded that the transition was demanding, and six students in 2006-2007 and three students in 2007-2008 recorded that the connections they maintained with home made this process easier. The transition seemed to be relatively easy for most students. The commentary on the question reveals that the real issues had to do with facilities and dorm living more than any other concern. This is to be expected for students who have made a transition from their own bedrooms to the community living arrangements of a dorm.

In the process of the narrative section for this question, two responses deserve mention. One student in 2006-2007 writes, "The tradition (SIC) to a new culture and a new country was not the difficult one. It was somewhat difficult living with four other people that I was not so much expecting to. The most difficult task was transitioning to Alexander Muss, not only the facilities, but also the staff, the way they operate and the manner in which they treat their students." This student is clearly indicating the social nature of the transition. On the other hand, another student wrote, "perhaps as the youngest in a big family, my parents knew how to 'detach' safely just for those 4 months. And that made it easier for me." This is another indicator that there is not a clear universal pattern, but that each individual lived a unique experience. A student in the 2007-2008 cohort records the following extended narrative about the transition process

*The transition would have been much easier, yet I was the problem of the hard transition. I did not allow myself to actually feel comfortable without my LA life for 4 months. I had never been away from home for more than 1 week, yet I could have said it was OK. It took me the longest to transition out of many on the trip. I was one who cried and longed for my life back home for 3 weeks or so in the beginning. I was actually planning to get a plane ticket back home yet I knew I would greatly regret it. I adjusted well after the first 3 weeks.*

While this student is internally reflective about the transition process, and admits it as a challenge, the student also says that his lasted three weeks. More typical of most students was the comment, "After the first week or two, I was settled in for the most part to Alexander Muss and the program." In so many ways, this narrative about transition is also the narrative about finding a new cultural experience – both in the sense of living in a new country and in the physical act of living differently through the residential life experience at a dormitory.

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# Student Survey Question 6

Question 6 – About how long did it take for you to feel “at home” in Israel?

## Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
One week	23.5%	4
Two weeks	29.4%	5
Three weeks	35.3%	6
Four weeks	11.8%	2

## Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
One week	38.1%	8
Two weeks	38.1%	8
Three weeks	14.3%	3
Four weeks	9.5%	2

## Commentary and Discussion

This question tries to quantify this transition process. In both years, the transition process lasted two to three weeks for most students. There was a range of answers indicating that it was a unique experience for each child, and there may be no clear indicators of actual transition. While it is apparent that the group



maintained its sense of integration and integrity throughout the program, it should be recorded that there was no articulated program of transition. Such a program of transition was not considered or planned in the initial planning for the program and so the results of the question may not be surprising. The program has in some ways improved as the 2007-2008 cohort had a generally shorter recorded transition time. One of the discussed "complaints" which surfaced in email correspondence was the way in which the program in Israel began with a "bang."

On the other hand, the question itself did not result in a great deal of narrative discussion. The responses range from statements about Israel being home the moment that the student landed, to statements revealing that the student did not enjoy the program until the end when it was apparent it would be missed. One student writes more copiously, "The second I landed in Israel, I felt that I was truly home. I don't think that I ever quite felt at home at Alexander Muss. I just considered it to be a temporary place of inhabitation. Truthfully the times that I felt most at home, were while I was on the soccer field with my team. Whether it be a game or working hard at practice, it was always the highlight of my day." For this student, the experience in Israel was joyful. There is a quality in many of the comments of having been involved in the program as "pioneers" and it is relevant to understand the total program experience of the role that being "pioneers" played, and this is true for the 2006-2007 cohort but not for the 2007-2008 cohort. One student in the 2007-2008 cohort reported, "I stopped feeling homesick the second day but it wasn't until about 2 weeks after our arrival that I truly identified Alexander Muss as my home."

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## khronosreview.com - Threads in a Tapestry:

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Tiferet Fellowship Program



# Student Survey Question 7

Question 7 – Which of the following statements best sums up your reaction to the academic program at Alexander Muss?

### Results for 2006-2007

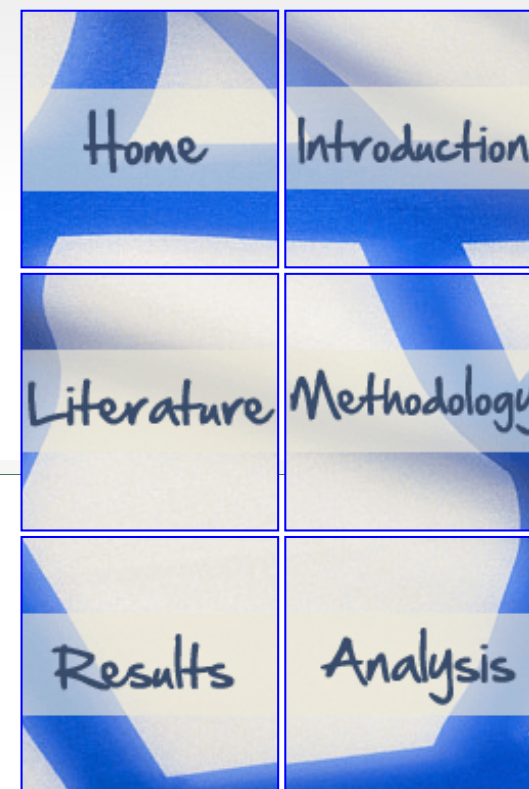
	Percent	Votes
<i>The program was not as demanding as the academic program at Milken.</i>	33.5%	5
<i>The academic was very demanding and rigorous.</i>	0.0%	0
<i>Some parts of the program were demanding; however, the essentials were like the academic program at Milken.</i>	66.7%	10

### Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>The program was not as demanding as the academic program at Milken.</i>	50.0%	10
<i>The academic was very demanding and rigorous.</i>	5.0%	1
<i>Some parts of the program were demanding; however, the essentials were like the academic program at Milken.</i>	45.0%	9

### Commentary and Discussion

Clearly the overwhelming sentiment here regards the academic demands of the Alexander Muss program. The students were in class for very long days, from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM on four days a week. On Thursday evening the students frequently traveled on "tiyulim" or trips of enrichment, only returning to the campus on Sunday afternoon or evening in time to prepare for school and classes on Monday. The nature of the demanding schedule is reflected in the





commentary by students and by parents. Both cohorts noticed the same kind of physically demanding nature of the Muss Program, however the 2007-2008 cohort also noticed that the program at Alexander Muss was not as demanding as the program at Milken. It is interesting to speculate that the students in the 2007-2008 program had a different experience in Israel because they had the chance to speak with students in the 2006-2007 program and hence had a "heads-up" about what to expect.

The narrative responses for this question reveal similar concerns. This was one of the most frequently addressed questions in the narrative response to the survey, and there is a range of comments. Some of the comments are as follows:

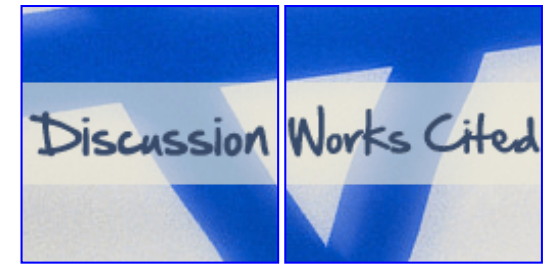
*"Certain parts were demanding, but my teachers were flexible due to the trip schedule." (2006-2007)*

*"Although the academics were not as demanding (we did not receive as much homework, etc.) we still followed the curriculum of our Milken classes, and I did not feel more behind than my other classmates who stayed at Milken." (2006-2007)*

*"The academics were focused on certain themes that aren't as focused on at Milken, which is how it should be. I studied very hard and learned an incredible amount of Jewish history and general Israel history, which was just much more important than wasting time on Algebra 2 and other general studies classes. We did follow the academic program of Milken, but the school was aware that if we did have Milken's amount of homework it would be IMPOSSIBLE for us to experience life in Israel because we would be inside working all afternoon and evening like I do during the school year at home. The point of this program was to learn in a different way, outside of the classroom." (2006-2007)*

*"Ebb and Flow. At times it was hell week, other times it was smooth sailing (not too much work, not too much studying). If the program becomes harder and more studying is required you run the risk of ruining the Israel experience." (2006-2007)*

*"There were many demanding things that were similar to Milken however there were different things that I learned too. it is extremely difficult to cover so much material in such a short time and I think Muss' relationship with Milken did a fantastic job to the best of their ability. and even if i didn't learn some of the*



*things that students at Milken learned I had a totally different experience that I believe is 10x more rewarding and stimulating. (2007-2008)*

*I felt that the education was adequate. The work load was definitely less than back home and the tests were less difficult. I felt that the program prepared us for next year while considering how busy and demanding our schedules were. (2007-2008)*

*CORE was the only class that was demanding and rigorous. I feel as though we did not learn enough in some of our sequential classes, such as math, science, and electives. (2007-2008)*

These comments by students are important. The comments were written after the experience of the trip, so the students are already somewhat distanced from the experience itself. The students were willing to cope with the needs of a program in development if they saw themselves as the people who could help frame the content of the program for succeeding generations. At the same time, there was not a substantial difference between the nature of the academic program at Muss and the program at Milken. This was clearly due to the fact that communications about the academic program were continual throughout the study abroad program. Representatives from Alexander Muss had visited with the teachers and with the department chairs at Milken in December of 2006 and again in December of 2007, and had communicated academic program expectations. Milken and its students and its teachers had shipped to Muss the required books, support materials and testing materials.

Additionally, Milken hired two program residential counselors called "madrich" whose function was to keep in constant communication with the teachers and families at Milken. Both Tuvia Aaronson and Benji Davis worked with the students from Milken in this capacity for the duration of the program in its first year. In the 2007-2008 school year, Alexander Muss hired two "madrich" who were Israeli natives and who worked directly with the students on a daily basis and who stayed in touch with the program administrators and with the parents in Los Angeles. Perhaps a comment from the 2007-2008 cohort sums up the situation best, "I felt that the education was adequate. The work load was definitely less than back home and the tests were less difficult. I felt that the program prepared us for next year while considering how busy and demanding our schedules were."

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# Student Survey Question 8

Question 8 – Which of the following best sums up your academic experience while at Alexander Muss?

Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>I found the academic experience easy.</i>	31.6%	6
<i>The academic experience at Muss was a challenge, but I learned to cope well.</i>	21.1%	4
<i>The academic experience was rigorous, and it took more work than I expected.</i>	5.3%	1
<i>The time challenges regarding the many expectations were the most challenging experiences for me.</i>	42.1% td>	8

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>I found the academic experience easy.</i>	15.0%	3
<i>The academic experience at Muss was a challenge, but I learned to cope well.</i>	35.00%	7
<i>The academic experience was rigorous, and it took more work than I expected.</i>	10.0%	2
<i>The time challenges regarding the many expectations were the most challenging experiences for me.</i>	40.0% td>	8

## Commentary and Discussion

Here again the respondents in both the 2006-2007 and the 2007-2008 cohorts indicate that the time required was more demanding than the content mastery



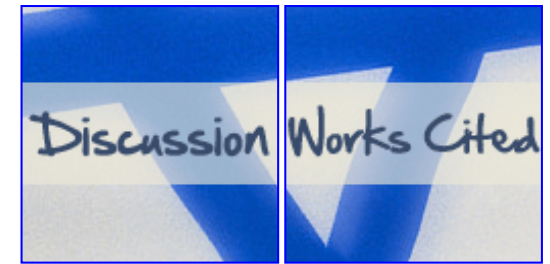
required. This question clearly reflects the responses to the nature of the program itself. Alexander Muss believes that a core component of its mission is to promote modern Zionism, and as a result much of the morning instruction is tied to Israeli history, culture, and politics in a class called CORE. The essential framework of that morning instruction is to trace Israeli history from its inception in Biblical times to modern times in the space of four months. This is a demanding mission. Whenever possible, the classroom instruction was tied to "field" experiences – tiyulim – trips – which took the students to the actual sites mentioned in the instruction. Afternoon instruction was devoted to standard academic plan of Milken – the areas such as English, math, and science, and electives.

One student in the 2006-2007 cohort writes at length about this issue

*"It was really hard to have work and tests/finals to do when we were getting home late from tiyulim, but we managed to do our best under these circumstances. The program demanded a lot of work, but if you are responsible in deciding when to do your work and when to have fun, you will be fine. It was a great opportunity for us because we had to be the judges for ourselves as to when we could go out and when we had to stay home. It wasn't up to our parents to say that we couldn't leave because we had a test or homework. We had to make our own decisions. I found that getting my work done and then having fun was the best way to approach this situation, because I wanted to make sure that all my work was completed and that I had put all my effort into it. My roommates and I were very good about getting our work done and then going out to grab a bite to eat and hanging out. Doing it this way was beneficial because we were able to have fun without having to worry about doing homework when we got back."*

Embedded in this student's description is a re-current theme throughout much of the survey and interview work. There is an unstated goal regarding student independence and student initiative. It is clear that the students quickly realized program demands and mandates, and yet took it upon themselves to manage their time in such a way as to also enjoy student free time. This question did not generate the same level of comment from the 2007-2008 cohort, and only four students responded. Typical of those responses was the following, "It was more of the amount of time we had to complete assignments or study for exams. The work was, i have to stay, fair to handle, yet we were not given a great deal of time to finish our assignments and study." Again this may be due to the fact that the reputation and daily workings of the program were more well known and understood by the 2007-2008 cohort. They simply know what to expect and were not so "taken aback" by the experience.

There is a concurrent theme in many of the interview questions about the nature of Israeli youth culture. Partly due to the fact that all Israeli youth must serve in the army directly after high school and before college, an attitude and tolerance for student initiated social time exists in much of Israeli society. Despite this, the students at the Muss program clearly understood and managed both academic and social time. Nonetheless, the cultural norms and expectations of Israeli life



are fundamentally different than American cultural norms and expectations.

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# Student Survey Question 9

Question 9 – Which of the following statements best sums up your social experience while at Alexander Muss?

## Results from 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>I found that I was able to bond closely with other Tiferet fellows.</i>	33.3%	6
<i>My most close relationships will come from the experience I had with other Israeli students.</i>	0.0%	0
<i>The combination of being with Tiferet fellows and other Israeli students was just about perfect.</i>	22.2%	4
<i>There could be even more set aside for the social experience.</i>	44.4%	8

## Results from 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>I found that I was able to bond closely with other Tiferet fellows.</i>	66.7%	14
<i>My most close relationships will come from the experience I had with other Israeli students.</i>	0.0%	0.0
<i>The combination of being with Tiferet fellows and other Israeli students was just about perfect.</i>	28.6%	6
<i>There could be even more set aside for the social experience.</i>	4.8%	1

## Commentary and Discussion

This survey question begins to explore three deep seated concerns with the Muss program, and this question also reflects programmatic changes made between the two cohort experiences. An initial concern was the kind of bonding which might occur within the cohort of Milken-Muss students. It is clear from the



response and the narratives taken in the 2006-2007 cohort that this kind of bonding did occur, perhaps in part because they were all involved in a residential program away from their homes in Los Angeles. On the other hand, familiarity breeds contempt, and one student was quick to reflect this in this commentary, "I grew to strongly loathe the other students on the program, and found myself different and alienated from those Israeli teenagers in which we were exposed." While confusing at first, this student reflects the desire to have a wider social experience than just that offered by the Muss program.

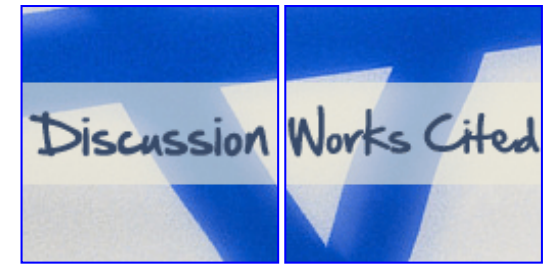
A second level of concern about the social experience related to the way Milken students might get to know Israeli youth. While the program did try to establish "buddies" with our sister school in Israel, Lady Davis, the number of interactions and the time for interactions with Israeli youth was limited. It is difficult to build a long lasting relationship with anyone based on a few Shabbat dinners. This condition is clearly reflected in the commentary by one student in the 2006-2007 cohort who writes,

*"I believe one of the biggest flaws with the program is the lack of exposure to other teenagers. Though we had meetings with the Israelis, there were few opportunities to get to know them independently (not during a discussion). Though the meetings were interesting, there wasn't enough "fun" time. Also, I felt discouraged to spend time with the Israelis on campus (for example, they are not allowed in the dorm). We also were never encouraged to interact with the other groups (from America and around the world) on campus."*

The issue of social interaction on a "study abroad" program is a real one, and it is made unique given the age level of the participants, especially when those participants are sophomores in high school and 15-16 years old. One student in the 2006-2007 cohort from Milken enjoyed a rather unique bonding experience from the chance to play on an Israeli soccer team. The understanding of Israeli youth and Israeli culture is different for this student given the depth of the experience.

*"My closest relationships and ones that I will have for the rest of my life, came/come from soccer here in Israel. I became close with the my teammates. Although I was the youngest one on the team, and most of the girls had been out of their army service for at least a couple years, they befriended me and became some of the best friends that I have. Some of them are even like family. Outside of that team at Ramat Hasharon, my closest friends came/come from the national team. I have become good friends with these girls, some of which are closer to my age and most of which are older than me."*

On the other hand, one student from the 2007-2008 cohort writes,



*There could not have been any more time set for the social experience other than staying for longer than 4 months. My social experience lasted from the very 1st day we arrived, every single hour, even while I was sleeping at nights, to the very last day when we took the plane ride back home. I say even at night while i was sleeping, because when any of my roommates or even me, for example, had problems or situations to cope with while we were sleeping, none of us would ever mind waking up the other to help us out or comfort us. I loved my rooms bonding. Every minute of every hour of every day throughout the 4 months.*

The numerical responses to this survey question are also summed up in the narrative section when one student in the 2006-2007 cohort aptly writes, "I would like to check off the first option and the last option. Although I found that I was able to bond most closely with other Tiferet Fellows, I do wish that there was more time set aside for this. In addition, I think it would be extremely beneficial to have much more time set out to really get to know other Israeli students." This comment represents a third area of concern for social interaction in Israel – and that concern is the degree to which students from Milken understand and know the general parameters of Israeli culture. It is also apparent from the 2007-2008 cohort that this social bonding with other Israeli students was not the same kind of issue as it was for the students in the 2006-2007 cohort. Again, it is possible to speculate the group size made a difference, in that there was more social bonding internally with a smaller group in the second cohort.

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# Student Survey Question 10

Question 10 – Which of the following statements best sums up your experience with the Hebrew language?

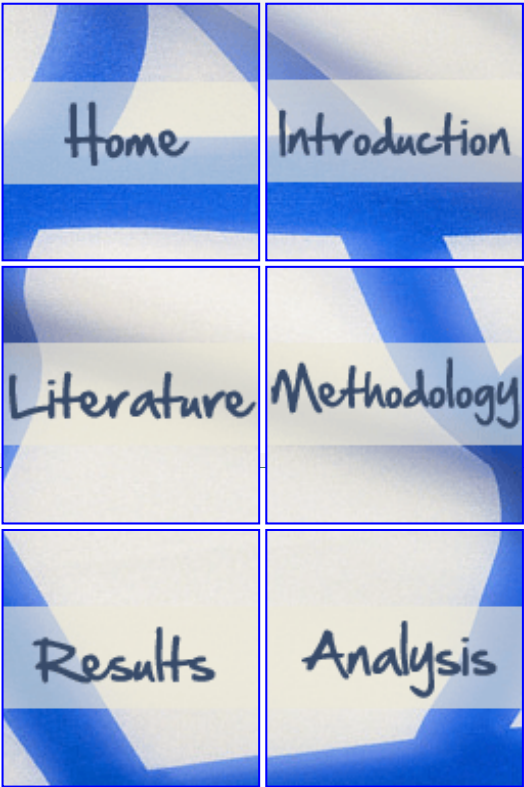
Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
I was fluent, or nearly fluent, in Hebrew before I left for the Tiferet program.	44.4%	8
I believe my studies in Hebrew prepared me for living in Israel.	5.6%	1
At first, I was concerned, but I learned more Hebrew as I lived there.	27.8%	5
I'm very pleased with how fast I learned Hebrew and felt fluent in Hebrew when I returned.	11.1%	2
Speaking Hebrew was problematic while I was there.	11.1%	2

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
I was fluent, or nearly fluent, in Hebrew before I left for the Tiferet program.	25.0%	5
I believe my studies in Hebrew prepared me for living in Israel.	0.0%	0
At first, I was concerned, but I learned more Hebrew as I lived there.	35.0%	7
I'm very pleased with how fast I learned Hebrew and felt fluent in Hebrew when I returned.	30.0%	6
Speaking Hebrew was problematic while I was there.	10.0%	2

Commentary and Discussion



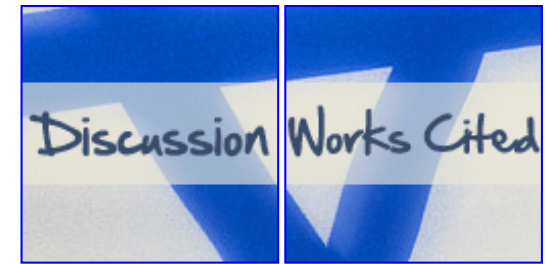


Instruction in Hebrew is a regular part of the Milken curriculum. Every student in the school takes Hebrew every year. As a philosophical construct behind the concept of a Jewish day school, Hebrew is an express mandate. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that the students in the program felt fluent in Hebrew before they left and that their studies in Hebrew did not in fact prepare them for the study abroad program. The two concepts appear in opposition; nonetheless, a primary goal of the program is to improve student fluency in Hebrew.

Two students in the 2006-2007 cohort write at length about the experience in Hebrew.

*"While in Israel, my Hebrew drastically improved, although at times it was difficult. Because most people in Israel do speak English, at times people were a little bit impatient when I was trying to practice my Hebrew. For example, some would say, "you can just say it in English". But I actually wanted to say it in Hebrew. I had the most amazing Hebrew teacher I have ever had and I truly developed a love for the language and the learning of the language while in Israel and one that is still with me and will be with me forever, even though I have returned to the US. By the end of the semester, I had a list of over 1000 words that I had learned while in Israel. I kept a list of all the words I learned and tried using them as much as possible. I love Hebrew and I think that it was one of the best aspects of the academic program at Alexander Muss. I also think that certain techniques used there would be beneficial in Hebrew classes at Milken as well. I love Hebrew!"*

*"My background in Hebrew could have been much, much stronger than it was when I left for Israel. I think the NETA system is entirely ineffective. How could I be in Hebrew Honors at a pretty average level and learned words such as 'time capsule' but not have learned such basic conversational phrases as 'can i please order..' etc. It seems crazy to me, because I have learned more than one other foreign languages at Milken besides Hebrew and the systems were much better. I don't understand why there isn't a Hebrew textbook like the Spanish one, Realidades, that teaches the language in order and teaches in an organized and effective way. I improved my Hebrew somewhat on this program, but not very much because we weren't spending enough time with Israelis. We were with other Milken students all the time, and we are obviously not going to perfect our Hebrew skills in the dorm with our American friends. If most of our*



*weekends had been free weekends, I probably would be fluent now."*

Similar comments were made by students in the 2007-2008 cohort who wrote:

*I already spoke Hebrew pretty well, and learned a lot more, to the point where I am significantly more comfortable in Hebrew. I wish we spent more time working with Hebrew, but since our group had such disparate Hebrew levels, we couldn't do anything with Hebrew outside of our Hebrew classes, and we missed out. I know some people whose Hebrew barely improved. There should have been more conversational Hebrew taught as opposed to a curriculum similar to Milken's more formal classes. This is a vital opportunity to stray from the NETA format and to teach Hebrew in a conversational, interactive way that reflects the language spoken on the street.*

*I feel I can skip a Hebrew for my next year in 11th grade. I spoke every day, to everyone, and I loved speaking because it was also a fun adventure. Israelis would know, by my accent, if I was american or not. The Israelis would encourage me to speak Hebrew and it helped every much.*

These students had different experiences – vastly different experiences. In some ways, while a great deal of the daily language at Muss was in Hebrew, the reality of the situation was that the Hebrew was being spoken in a more formal way – the classroom and external social world. The internal social world was largely conducted in the dorms and in English. It would be very interesting to see if the teachers and madrichim spoke Hebrew while with the students and within the dorms. The real learning of a language occurs in the daily informal settings of social interaction. Nonetheless, the learning of Hebrew remains a fundamental goal of the Tiferet program and concerns with instruction regarding the language appear elsewhere in the study.

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# Student Survey Question 11

Question 11 – Which of the following statements best sums up your learning regarding the state of Israel?

Results from 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>We didn't really discuss politics or current events while in Israel.</i>	5.9%	1
<i>Living there alone made understanding Israeli politics more easy.</i>	17.7%	3
<i>Our discussions about Israel helped me to understand more about the state of Israel.</i>	17.7%	3
<i>Upon returning, I feel much more knowledgeable about Israel and Israeli politics.</i>	58.8%	10

Results from 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>We didn't really discuss politics or current events while in Israel.</i>	0.0%	0
<i>Living there alone made understanding Israeli politics more easy.</i>	4.8%	1
<i>Our discussions about Israel helped me to understand more about the state of Israel.</i>	19.0%	4
<i>Upon returning, I feel much more knowledgeable about Israel and Israeli politics.</i>	76.2%	16

Commentary and Discussion

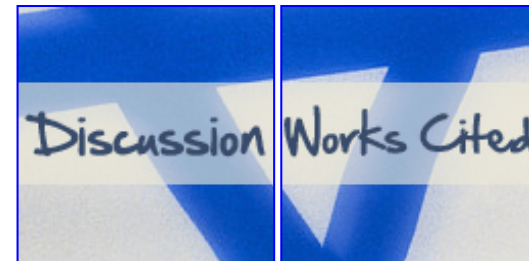


keeping with the mission of Milken Community High School. The results of this survey question make clear the program's success in this goal. Students returned with a more clear knowledge of the issues facing Israel, and a better understanding of Israeli history. The student narrative section for this question supports the contention that a real program success was the support and discussion given to Israel. One student in the 2006-2007 cohort writes, "I have always had a keen interest in Israel and Israeli politics, but I had never been to Israel prior to the TIF. After the program, I feel that I understand the politics better now that I have seen where it comes from." Another student from the 2007-2008 cohort writes, "Every single day except for Saturdays, because those were our weekends, we always read the newspaper in the mornings. We reviewed every new thing or decision that was made in politics or daily life of agriculture and sports. It was actually something I always looked forward to in the mornings of our trips and in the mornings of our core classes."

While the discussions and presentations on Israel were a success, it is also clear that four months may not be enough time to complete the study adequately. Another student in the 2006-2007 cohort wrote, "Our studies were more surrounded on the history of the Jewish people and the establishment of the state of Israel. At that point, we did go on and eventually make it to present day, but not in very much depth. In my opinion, present day should be the most important part of the studies. It is important to understand Israel's situation now, to be able to stand of for Israel in a political debate." This is important given the notion that these Tiferet Fellows will become spokespersons for Israel as they return to Milken. As this is being written, the students have already been involved in several talks and discussions regarding their work to advocate for Israel. While it is not in the scope of this study to explore that advocacy in full, it is important to note now that the students are engaged in Israel advocacy in significant ways. The long term benefits of the program will only be realized from the school's perspective when the students take on advocacy projects in the community.

There is an absolute complexity to Israel and Israeli politics. The political situation in Israel needs clear explanation and some great thinking from someone who is experienced in the field. A third student in the 2006-2007 cohort writes, "I am very impressed with how Aubrey taught the entire background of Jewish history, leading up to the present which gives me a deep understanding of not only the Israeli political situation, but how that situation came to be and the deep issues of it. The intense core final was a crucial part of my learning experience because everything I learned for the entire four months was set in stone and I understood how everything was connected." In many ways the "core" program of the Alexander Muss Institute and the final exam which asked students to write a 15 page paper on some aspect of Israeli politics and history is the capstone experience for the both the program and the program's mandate to instruct students about Israel. It is important to note that both groups felt much better informed about Israeli politics after returning to Los Angeles; it is interesting to note the degree to which the 2007-2008 cohort felt more informed about Israeli politics and history. This may indicate an improvement in the program and the delivery of content.

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# Student Survey Question 12

Question 12 – How has your view of Israel changed?

## Results from 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>I understand the issues facing Israel with a more balanced perspective.</i>	37.5%	6
<i>I have become a stronger advocate for Israel.</i>	62.5%	10
<i>I have become less involved in advocacy for Israel.</i>	0.0%	0

## Results from 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>I understand the issues facing Israel with a more balanced perspective.</i>	35.0%	7
<i>I have become a stronger advocate for Israel.</i>	65.0%	13
<i>I have become less involved in advocacy for Israel.</i>	0.0%	0

## Commentary and Discussion

As reflected in question 11, the students in the 2006-2007 cohort all became more knowledgeable about Israel, and 62% became stronger advocates for Israel. No students recorded that they have become less involved in their advocacy for Israel, despite the fact that this was an anonymous survey and no tracking records were kept. It is so very clear that the advocacy for Israel became an important part of the program's successes. One student in the 2006-2007 cohort writes about the experience by saying, "I believe that I am more knowledgeable about Israel's current situation and how it came to be, though I find myself





equally as much of an "advocate" as I was before the trip. Although my views have not changed drastically, I feel that that they are greatly educated." This sentiment is also expressed by a student in the 2007-2008 cohort who writes, "I have also wanted to do more with Israel now. Israel is not just a thing to raise money for but anything to do with it catches my eye and I want to participate because I feel like now I know what I am raising money for or advocating for. being and learning in the land strengthened this connection by far." This expanded view about Israel is a fundamental consideration for the program as the program itself extends the mission of the school. In some ways, it may be claimed that for a Jewish day school living in the diaspora of the 21'st century, Israel advocacy is one of the most important parts of the school mission and many programs of the school should advance that mission.

The education about Israel and Israeli history is an education which somehow can not happen in the United States. In many ways, this must a "lived experience." While it is possible to study texts and interview persons, there is no substitute for living in the country and engaging citizens in the discussions that affect daily life in Israel. A second student in the 2006-2007 cohort writes of this experience, "I believe that I am more knowledgeable about Israel's current situation and how it came to be, though I find myself equally as much of an "advocate" as I was before the trip. Although my views have not changed drastically, I feel that that they are greatly educated." This student has now returned to Milken with a changed understanding about Israel. On a related note, every student during grade 12 participates in a spring semester course entitled "Senior Seminar: Understanding Modern Israel." It will be interesting to note what changes might occur in this seminar as a result of these children's' experiences in their sophomore year. Clearly, given the parallel responses between the two cohorts, the instruction in Israeli history and politics has been successful.

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# Student Survey Question 13

Student Survey Question 13 – **Your turn! Please describe what you felt was the most important change for you as a person. What did you notice about your own growth and development?**

It is not possible or practical to list all the student narrative commentary for this question. I have chosen four representative comments as these reveal program successes and needs.

### Results from 2006-2007

*While I was in Israel, I watched myself grow. I saw positive change in the social aspects of my life. I learned to cope with issues independently and to ask for help when needed. I learned to love Israel, the country and the people. This is one experience I will never forget.*

*I became more independent-I had never gone to sleep away camp or away from home for more than 5 nights, so after being away from home for 4 months, I can do anything! I also liked the "core" curriculum, and although I wish we could have learned the Modern/World History II S2 topics, I enjoyed learned the 4,000 years of Jewish history in Israel. I also became closer with TIFers and became good friends with people that I barely knew before the program.*

*The program challenged me to think and act more independently than I would in my regular family circle.*



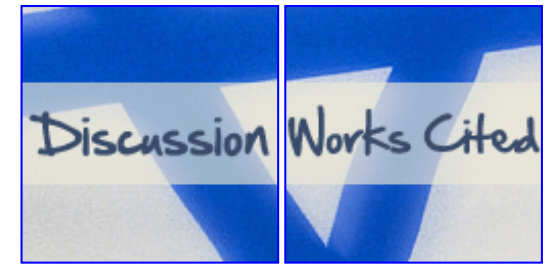
*For instance, I had to take care of my self when I was sick, with no family to help me, I had to oversee my own nutritional goals (without parents preparing meals for me), I had to schedule my study and recreation time around all the planned and required activities from MUSS and make sure I had enough time for academics in spite of the very intense schedule. I became more independent and more comfortable in "out of my comfort zone" situations.*

*I felt that living on my own with a group of kids I hadn't been close with before made me feel like I needed to be more social, outgoing, and confident. I think that is what has changed the most for me, is that I can now be put in situations that I feel strong enough to cope with.*

#### Results from 2007-2008

*I feel so lucky to have even had the chance to go on this trip. I feel bad for the rest of the students that did not get to go because I feel truly blessed to have been on the program. Although it was challenging it was the hardest and best thing I have ever had to do. i feel like i learned more about myself and others there in such a short amount of time when it takes many teens years. i came home knowing more about myself than i ever thought possible by being away and coping with my life away. I hate when people say oh I have been completely changed by this experience but I think the change takes time. after just getting home it is hard to see a difference but I know it is there it will just take time for me to realize what it was that changed me and how I can apply that to my life at home. It is hard to come back with a different view and way of life in Israel and apply it to my life in Los Angeles because the two places are so different. but I have tried really hard to connect what I learned there and bring my best self from there back home.*

*I became more independent and I learned how to do things myself. I learned to not take things for granted and to be happy with what I have because I am very lucky to have all of these things that I have. I have learned to deal with different situations by myself.*



*If there is one great thing I learned in Israel it is patience. Amongst my family and friends I do not get aggravated easily. It is an instinct for me to be calm about everything and by this I also help my peer be calm and understanding about everything.*

*This is experience has taught me so much about myself and others. Living for 4 months on my own has taught me how to deal maturely with my problems and challenges and how to cope with them in a healthy, new way. I grew to be a strong, young leader for my peers. Living in a new place gives you a new perspective and outlook on life and open opportunities ahead of you. Taking advantage of everything was a huge goal of mine and Israel played a huge part in helping me achieve that.*

It is clear that the personal aspects of the program, the individual growth and development is most important to the students. They are self-aware and able to comment on what they have seen change in themselves about the program. At the same time, they are able to comment on what they see as valuable to the program such as the enhanced and deep relationship to Israel. This kind of commentary is to be expected, given the social nature of adolescents. The parallels between the two cohorts reinforce the notion that a tremendous amount of personal growth is a part of the program outcomes.

It is also very clear from the comments that the students have had an experience not normally possible in the traditional high school experience. They have formed a sub-set of culture within the larger frame of the Milken culture. This is an important consideration when examining the relationship between the school and the program.

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# Student Survey Question 14

Question 14 – Your turn 2 – If you were going to recommend any changes to the program, what would you recommend?

Again, I have listed four representative comments. There is a wide diversity of opinion among the students, and this question gave them an opportunity to engage in some reflective practice.

### Results from 2006-2007

*Overall, the program was great. However, for future years, there should be some changes. First, our finals should not be the last week/weekend. I did not enjoy going on trips during our finals and having to study during our last shabbat in the Kinneret. Also, the Chugim were never really carried out. I do not think that there was a point to the Va'ads. I also think that there should be an adjustment period in the beginning. I felt that we were thrown into it really fast, because the first day we got there, we bought our supplies and started class the next day. I feel that there should be a day to get organized and be able to relax and think. There are many other little details that were problematic, but I can not think of them right now.*

*I would recommend working with the homework schedule, especially on the weekends. We would be assigned homework on Friday to be due on Sunday, then we would go away for the weekend, come back to campus at around 9:30-10:00 and be expected to complete all our work. That was very difficult.*



*I would recommend that the program allow the MCHS students more time for internal reflection and the opportunity to assimilate important lessons from the core curriculum as well as social and cultural interactions with Israelis ( which we did not experience enough). In order to accomplish this, the core curriculum must be modified and more social and cultural opportunities have to be provided. In addition to this there should be more time to assimilate the important lessons that are learned in the core course. For example we lived 20 min. from Tel Aviv and we only visited twice in our planned program. We were not allowed to venture there at any other time. While I respect the security concerns that prompted some of this type of restrictions, there are creative ways to allow for more cultural and social experiences. The trip would have been much better and more meaningful if we would have been able to connect on a stronger cultural and social component, (concerts, athletic games, exploring neighborhoods in the big cities, eating out on the town). The Muss staff on the whole did not inform us of their decisions about the itinerary or any of the field trips-until shortly before the trip and then with only limited information. This had the effect of making many in the group feel infantilized.*

*I signed up for a program which seemed to be tailored to my said interests and appeared-self during the initial individual meetings. I was told many things that the program was and wasn't going to be and told that those activities and interests which would be inconvenienced by a seeming four month hiatus would be accommodated in Israel (music lessons for myself, activities for others such as dance, art, sports). Of all, I recommend that program staff truthfully advocate for the program's capabilities without empty exaggeration. Secondly, I felt that four months in Israel on the Alexander Muss campus in Hod HaSharon was a bit too long- by the 14th week (or so) most were counting down the days until the program ended. If the program was a month shorter than the overall experience would have been remembered much more "sweetly". Thirdly, I recommend a better immersion into Israeli culture and society, including getting to know kids our age (whom are most able to be empathized with as 15 and 16 year old Americans). A weekly (or bi-weekly)*



*trip to Tel Aviv as an option during on-campus nights to museums, concerts, etc. would have allowed me to experience the general Israeli aesthetic.*

**Results for 2007-2008**

*I would recommend having more preparation between the teachers in Israel and at Milken because the teachers at Muss seemed not to know what we were specifically learning by the time we left.*

*A chance to meet more Israelis, or other people in Israel that are from the United States.*

*Education-wise, I would put a stronger emphasis on modern Israeli history as opposed to Biblical and medieval Jewry. Additionally, I would recommend having more activities with the Israeli students. Overall, I think it was a great program and I would recommend it to anyone going into 10th grade.*

*More communication between the teachers, more freedom for the kids (later curfew, not being so strict on rules, the consequences should not be so harsh for breaking a small rule) better food, more communication to the kids, and on holidays the kids should get to do what a regular Israeli would do.*

*I loved quality time with the Israelis at Alexander Muss even when the school planned it. I would definitely love to change the amount of time and activities we have with them. They are a great detail to the program and made me feel all the more Israeli and all the more at home. I love them!!!*

*The two main changes I would recommend are the emphasis on sequential classes (making sure we will not fall behind next year) and improving the cafeteria food if at all possible.*

*I have no big suggestions because the trip was amazing and the small challenges we faced only added to the program and made us grow. Small changes: better salad dressings in the dining hall, slightly later*



*curfew and introducing us to kids in Tel Aviv as well as Hod HaSharon.*

It is clear that these extended narrative commentaries from students reveal students who think deeply about the program. In some ways, knowing that these responses were gathered almost immediately after their return from Israel contributes to their depth of expression. It would be interesting to know what the students reflections might be like some six months after the program. Clearly there is a need for more longitudinal and anonymous study.

The students genuinely feel the program was a success. As another student from the 2006-2007 cohort wrote, "Twas perfect as is, wouldn't change it in a million years." Yet at the same time, several students had suggestions for refining the program. The trend which is revealed relates to the relationship between expectation and reality. It is interesting to note that the language of "pioneer" does not really appear in the comments made by students or made by parents, yet this metaphor appears often in the video interview sessions. In some ways, the students reveal that they have been led to expect one kind of program to meet individual needs, but were in fact delivered an more institutional program to which those individual needs were asked to conform.

Perhaps the greatest indication of this tension between expectation and reality concerns the interaction with Israeli youth, a topic also discussed by the parents. Initially, the students were told that there would be a strong program component with an "exchange" milieu involving students from Tel Aviv. Unfortunately, the Milken students only had two organized meetings with these "buddies," a reality due in part to the highly structured life at Alexander Muss. There is a "micro-cosmic" quality of life at Alexander Muss, and the students over the two year period recognized their need to explore Israeli life and society more fully.

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# Parent Survey Question 1

Parent Survey Question 1 – Which of the following statements best sums up your “initial” reaction to the Tiferet program?

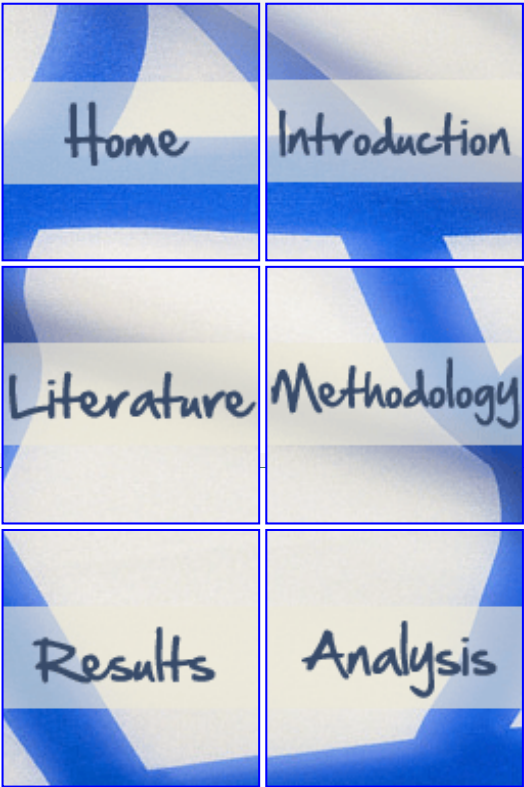
Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>I was excited that the school was offering such a program.</i>	80.0%	12
<i>I felt my child was too young to leave home for such an extended time.</i>	0.0%	0
<i>I had concerns at first, but was willing to listen and learn.</i>	13.3%	2
<i>At first, I had absolutely no intention of letting my child participate.</i>	6.7%	1

	Percent	Votes
<i>I was excited that the school was offering such a program.</i>	52.6%	10
<i>I felt my child was too young to leave home for such an extended time.</i>	0.0%	0
<i>I had concerns at first, but was willing to listen and learn.</i>	36.8%	7
<i>At first, I had absolutely no intention of letting my child participate.</i>	10.5%	2

## Commentary and Discussion

The response to this question is overwhelmingly in favor of the program and the school’s creation of the program. It may very well be that the survey participants chose to participate in order to provide some positive feedback, and there may be a “halo” effect. Nonetheless, the opportunity to present opposing views was present through the interview process. Clearly the parents who responded are in favor of such a program.



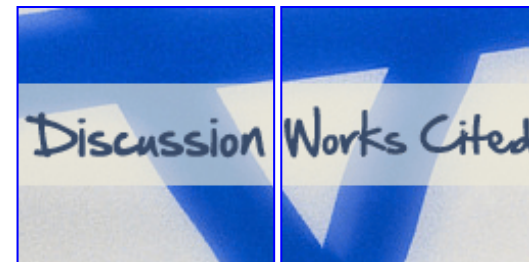
Two parents in the 2006-2007 cohort made the following narrative commentary.

*My only real concern was whether my child would be able to survive the experience with reduced athletic activity. In retrospect, I probably should have had some concerns about “adjusting to room-mates etc” but it never would have changed my/our minds about wishing her to participate in the program.*

*We were unaware of the program until our child brought it to our attention, but when he told us about it and he indicated that he wanted to participate, we supported him without reservation or hesitation.*

Interestingly enough there was very little comment in the 2007-2008 cohort regarding this issue. It seems as if the parents knew what to expect from the program. The single comment refers to Rabbi Harwitz’s influence, and this influence can also be traced in other questions. It is apparent from Question 1 that the parents were pleased the school was offering such a program. In any change process, expectations matter, and the conclusion here is that the second year cohort knew what to expect from the program, given the feedback and talk from the “pioneers.” The second year cohort had some greater initial concerns, but was willing to listen and learn.

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# Parent Survey Question 2

Parent Survey Question 2 – Which of the following statements best sums up your family’s decision making process in permitting your child to participate in the Tiferet program?

Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
We attended the interviews, listened to the presentation, and decided as a family.	30.8%	4
The decision making process was relatively easy.	53.9%	7
The decision making process was difficult given our concerns about academics and safety.	7.7%	1
Once we saw that there were other families engaged, we felt more comfortable in making a decision.	7.7%	1

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
We attended the interviews, listened to the presentation, and decided as a family.	66.7%	12
The decision making process was relatively easy.	22.2%	4
The decision making process was difficult given our concerns about academics and safety.	11.1%	2
Once we saw that there were other families engaged, we felt more comfortable in making a decision.	0.0%	0

Commentary and Discussion



It is interesting to note that over 80% of the parents who responded in 2006-2007 felt that the decision making process was relatively straightforward and easy. The responses here indicate that a parental comfort zone and trust surrounds the issues of sending their children to Israel for four months. It would be interesting to know why three parents skipped this question, as it seems important for the other decisions that the family must have been making at the time of the program. The parent narrative commentary on this question supports the ideas presented in the survey results as parents claimed that "we decided after a conversation with Rabbi Harwitz" and that "We allowed our daughter to decide for herself if the program was right for her. We had no concerns about safety or academics." In several of the responses, the charismatic leadership qualities of Rabbi Harwitz are mentioned.

On the other hand, the parents who responded in 2007-2008, felt overwhelmingly that it was the process of attending meetings to get information which was a pivotal decision making process. It is always difficult to second guess what really happened in the transition from year one to year two in the program development; however, it is manifestly apparent that the parents in the second year of the program had a sense of initial "buy in" based on the reported experiences of the first year of the program.

While they still record that the decision was relatively easy, they also seems to feel that that they process of getting information about the program was more important than other concerns. The one comment left by a parent in the 2007-2008 cohort was telling, "Nate just wore us down." is a statement about student initiative.

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# Parent Survey Question 3

Parent Survey Question 3 – Which of the following statements represents your most important initial worry or concern about the Tiferet program?

### Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
We were concerned with safety in Israel.	6.7%	1
The continuation of the academic program was our largest concern.	26.7%	4
We felt our child may have been too young to engage in a program which included a semester away from home.	13.3%	2
We didn't have too many concerns.	53.3%	8

### Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
We were concerned with safety in Israel.	26.3%	5
The continuation of the academic program was our largest concern.	47.4%	9
We felt our child may have been too young to engage in a program which included a semester away from home.	10.5%	2
We didn't have too many concerns.	15.8%	3

### Commentary and Discussion

Again, this question supports and reinforces the tenor of the first two questions in the parent survey. Parents overwhelmingly responded that they did not have





great concerns about the child's participation in the program. There is some concern about academic matters and about the idea that the child would spend four months away from home; however, parents are comfortable with the essence of the program during this first "pioneer" experience. While the pioneer experience is not reported in the 2007-2008 cohort, the concerns with academic rigor are repeated.

The narrative commentary section of the survey reveals more detail about parent concerns. The commentary from two parents reads as follows:

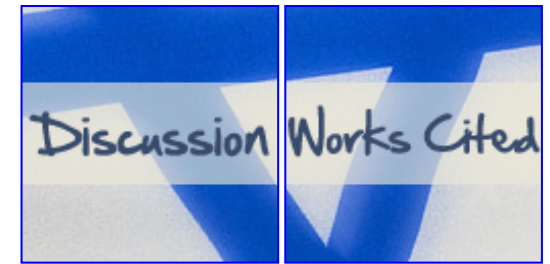
*Academics were a concern- we didn't want STUDENT to miss out on any of his studies- didn't want him to be behind his classmates that stayed at Milken. This was STUDENT first time away from home, so of course we were concerned about him being away, but he was so excited to participate in the program that it made me believe he was ready to go away from home despite the huge distance.*

*Given that the program was being directed by Rabbi Harwitz we knew that our student would be heard and that the parents concerns would be heard. Yes, we did want to make sure that the academics would not be lost during the program but the overall learning experience to be gained was as important to us.*

One of the trends of the survey results indicates that Rabbi Harwitz played a very important role in recruitment and trust-building. Several of the comments throughout the survey reveal that the parents had an explicit trust of the Rabbi Harwitz and the different ways he made programmatic decisions. Within both cohorts, the reputation of Rabbi Harwitz was central to the program's acceptance. Rabbi Harwitz created the credibility the program needed at its inception.

One difference between the 2006-2007 and the 2007-2008 parent cohorts was the concern about academic programming while in Israel. The 2007-2008 parent respondents maintained that a concern was the academic program. Again, this may be an emergent concern, and it may be a concern based on the reporting of the 2006-2007 cohort. Nonetheless, this is a concern reported by this cohort.

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# Parent Survey Question 4

Parent Survey Question 4 – As your son/daughter began the program at Alexander Muss, what was your initial reaction to the program?

Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
I liked the connection to Israel.	46.2%	6
Initially, I didn't feel that there was enough connection to Israeli life and culture.	15.4%	2
The program and instruction seemed a suitable replacement at Milken.	15.4%	2
The program and instruction was different than what I expected.	23.1%	3

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
I liked the connection to Israel.	44.4%	8
Initially, I didn't feel that there was enough connection to Israeli life and culture.	0.0%	0
The program and instruction seemed a suitable replacement at Milken.	44.4%	8
The program and instruction was different than what I expected.	11.1%	2

Commentary and Discussion

This question reveals the different “polarities” of experiences with the Alexander Muss program. Some parents were very content with initial aspects of the program, believing that the connection to Israel was the most important factor in their involvement. At the same time, about 23% of the parents in the 2006-





2007 cohort revealed that the lived experience being reported to them was different than the expected experience. This is direct evidence related to the theory of a culture shock experience. The first group experienced a greater culture shock; in fact, it was a part of their defining experience. Adjustment was a challenge for this group.

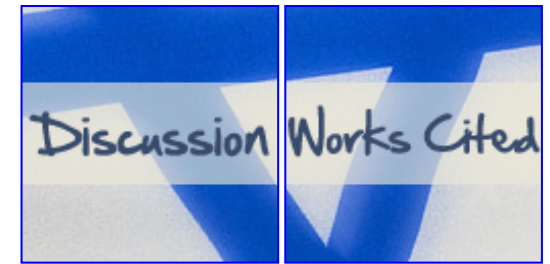
It would be normal to expect some transitional issues, and there was much discussion in the interview process regarding the dormitory experience. At the same time the parental levels of expectation for the 2007-2008 cohort were more adequately met as 44% of the reporting parents indicated that their expectations were met. For most students this represented their first long term dormitory living experience. Again, this relates to the expanding culture shock theory; however, the second cohort reported a less traumatizing experience; it may very well be that the narratives explained by the first cohort on their return helped set the context for the transition to a new culture.

Two extended parent comments from the 2006-2007 cohort deserve mention.

*There were a variety of things about the program and instruction which I/we did not anticipate. Largely, the academic program seemed inconsistent. The quality of instruction in certain classes seemed inadequate (based solely upon what my child has shared since I have no other basis for the comment); in the Core curriculum the instruction exceeded expectation, although there was substantially more tiyulim and physical hiking from the outset, than I expected. I had anticipated, also, that there would be a better adjustment period and program so that the jet-lagged kids had some opportunity to recover from jet-lag rather than jumping in so extensively that it impacted the health of most of the kids, as well as their respective abilities to adjust. Since there is no commentary section for Question 5 of the survey, I our child's father, sister and I left the communication to our daughter, but her adjustment was so difficult during the first few weeks that we were getting many many tearful phone calls every day and were not sure she would be able to adjust.*

*We knew what the "core" program would be like from prior experience with Muss. What we didn't know was if Muss would really take the partnership with MCHS and the give and take that it represents seriously-they played very good lip service to the cooperative spirit. Muss was not responsive to many of the students concerns especially with regard to integrating into Israeli life and culture in the early stages.*

Clearly these families faced some adjustment difficulties. The written commentary is interesting as it reflects an articulation of a concern shared in one degree



or another by several parents. This concern is also shared in the interview process – that the transition was too quick for a proper adjustment. The frantic pace of the first stages of the program was counterproductive to a good transition to a new culture.

This is also reflected in a comment from one parent in the 2007-2008 cohort, a parent who wrote, “It was a very different set up than what they were used to at Milken. They also had to be extremely disciplined to work under the rigors of field trips and very high expectations.” This adjustment to a different set of expectations is an oft repeated theme across the two years of the study, and is an indicator that a culture shock phenomenon is present.

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# Parent Survey Question 5

Parent Survey Question 5 – During the initial phases of the program in Israel, how often did you communicate with your son/daughter?

### Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
We communicated every day by either telephone or email.	56.3%	9
We communicated at least twice a week by either telephone or email.	31.3%	5
We communicated once a week by either telephone or email.	6.3%	1
We left the responsibility of communication to the child.	18.8%	3

### Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
We communicated every day by either telephone or email.	31.6%	6
We communicated at least twice a week by either telephone or email.	42.1%	8
We communicated once a week by either telephone or email.	15.8%	3
We left the responsibility of communication to the child.	10.5%	2

### Commentary and Discussion

There was no narrative commentary section for this question, as it seemed important to get the most straightforward and forced choice answer possible. It is clear that parents communicated frequently with their children, especially during the initial parts of the program. Clearly the issue of technological access is an



important function of the program. It is clear that the parents relied on technology to make communication happen every day – at least in the beginning of the program. This is an often underplayed aspect of the program as this kind of communication created the link between home and Israel.

As noted elsewhere, the school established email accounts and digital conferences for all the students and their parents. The training for this aspect of communication was created as a “just in time” response, and so it was not used as extensively as it might have been. It became very evident in the second year of the program that the parent and student body simply preferred to handle communication “on their own” without the involvement of the school. Each cohort communicated often, at least twice a week. Communication in the 21’st century seems to be an easy process, although clearly still an important process.

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# Parent Survey Question 6

Parent Survey Question 6 – Did you maintain the same level of communication with your son or daughter throughout the program?

Results for 2006-2007

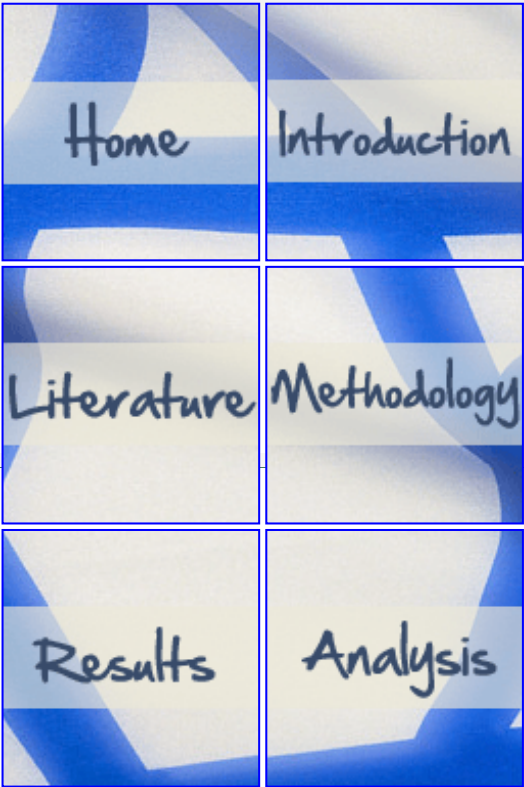
	Percent	Votes
We maintained the same level of communication all during the program.	35.7%	5
Once the program had begun in earnest, the communication tapered down.	64.3%	9
We increased communication through out the program.	0.0%	0

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
We maintained the same level of communication all during the program.	73.7%	14
Once the program had begun in earnest, the communication tapered down.	26.3%	5
We increased communication through out the program.	0.0%	0

Commentary and Discussion

Communication with home is an important aspect of this program. It was in fact essential. Nonetheless, this survey question reveals that the rate or level of communication tapered off for most parents answering the survey question, at least for the parents in the 2006-2007 cohort. The question does not posit a relationship between the manner of communication – either email or phone – but given the number of stored messages kept in the email system, it is most likely that the tapering off concerned cell phone communication. While this is an entirely normal phenomenon as once parents are confident about health,





safety, and education they are more likely to allow their children more freedom, it is unusual for the second cohort of 2007-2008 as they maintain that the communication frequency was continuous throughout the program. It is difficult to speculate why the second cohort kept the communications systems so active.

These contentions are supported by the narrative commentary from one of the parents in the 2006-2007 cohort.

*The communication tapered down after the adjustment stage (not necessarily the program beginning in earnest); however, there were ups and downs when communication increased and decreased. On average, our child communicated with us once or twice almost every day of her own volition. (Our child has continued to communicate with us at least once a day, almost every day over the summer.) Communication did not appear, after some time, to be due to home-sickness or upset, just a pattern of sharing (which her college senior sister likewise seems to have adopted.)*

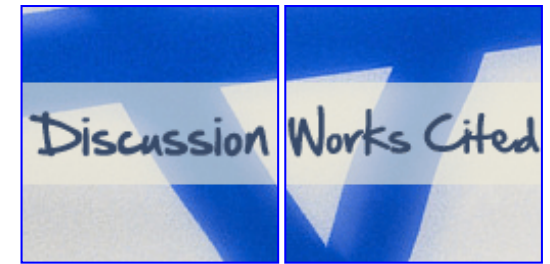
One parent from the 2007-2008 cohort wrote, "Our child wrote a blog that helped everyone understand what the kids were doing every day. Many other parents read the blog because kids don't give as much information over the phone or by e-mail." The use of a blog represents a whole new communication tool, and was an important part of the program itself. The blogs are displayed as part of this study, and they provide yet more information about the culture of communication developed around the program.

There seems to be a pattern of two prominent blogs per cohort, and these represent an "internal" system of communication in that the parent community can read the blog as a unit, and that is a different system of communication than either email or telephone. In some ways, each cohort developed "blog experts" who took on the role of sending messages and notices about the program to the parent body.

The parents who participated in the survey for the 2006-2008 cohort report that they maintained a consistent level of communication throughout the program. The question does not require a response about the method of communication, and it is unsafe to assume that one method predominated. It is important to note however that communication is an important part of the program, and perhaps pivotal to its success.

It may also be a reasonable hypothesis that the actual level of communication in the 2006-2007 cohort was greater than the initial level of the 2007-2008 cohort and that the reason we see a tapering down in the 2006-2007 cohort was a natural by-product relating to the "pioneer" condition. Simply put, the first year parents may have simply communicated more with their children during the initial phases of the program.

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# Parent Survey Question 7

Parent Survey Question 7 – Did you feel that you had adequate communication and support from Alexander Muss regarding your child’s learning?

**Results for 2006-2007**

	Percent	Votes
Yes	71.4%	10
No	28.6%	4

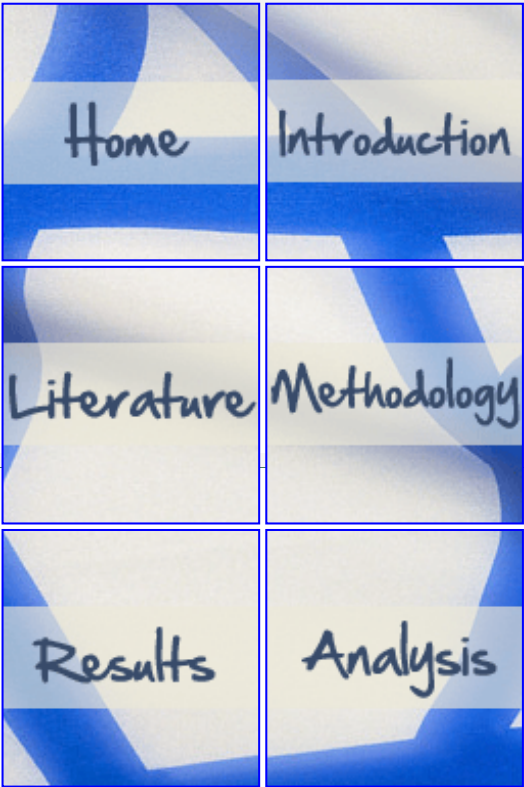
**Results for 2007-2008**

	Percent	Votes
Yes	68.4%	13
No	31.6%	6

**Commentary and Discussion**

This question begins to analyze the academic realities of the program at Alexander Muss. As has been noted, the Muss program advocates a program of its own based in Israeli history and Zionism. Despite the fact that the school was in Israel and that personal communication is difficult, an overwhelming majority of the parents felt that there was communication and support from Muss. Given some of the discussion regarding the academic program and the use of time, this is a positive indicator for the program. When parents are informed they are more likely to be supportive.

In regards to this issue, the parent narrative commentary runs a gamut of opinions. One parent in the 2006-2007 cohort claimed, “We felt we were very





informed. No problems with communication at all." Another parent from the 2006-2007 cohort counter claimed, "There was very little communication beside grades and trip information." A third parent from this cohort looks at the situation differently and writes, "We received some feedback and it was our impression that no news was good news. Nevertheless, we wanted more feedback, even if being told that our son was doing well and adjusting well to the program and class work." It is interesting to note the variance of the narrative commentary in relationship to the actual question asked. The narrative commentary reveals more dissatisfaction with communication than satisfaction, and the difference here may be due to the quality of communication. One parent remarked that the communications seemed "canned."

Finally, the most comprehensive responses seem to come from the same parent in the 2006-2007 cohort who in this case wrote at length.

*Alexander Muss' communication regarding what our child was learning in the context of the CORE curriculums was exceptional- truly outstanding. However, there is a distinction between curriculum and actual learning. I really had little to no communication or support from Alexander Muss regarding my child's LEARNING progress (although we did have communication on other matters.) In fact, I was very disappointed that I was so clueless as to my child's actual progress, although my child generally communicated how she thought she was doing and described what she felt she was actually learning in the various subjects. On the whole, my impression is that the teaching and actual learning in the CORE curriculum was excellent (whether or not demonstrated by a grade) but that the actual quality of the teaching and learning in math, science, english and hebrew was inferior and inadequate, notwithstanding that a lower level of actual learning would be expected given the depth and breadth of the program as a whole and achievements of its life altering experiences. I am not sure how that issue is addressed, but it is a concern for its impact on students' abilities to proceed in their next levels of class work, their SATs, SAT IIs, APs and the like.*

On the other hand, this comment from a parent in the 2007-2008 cohort is substantially different.

*We barely had any communication from Alexander Muss. We just got 2 sets of grades, and some phrases about him as a student. We would have liked more info since the teachers were absolute strangers. Also, our child complained about the fact that one of his teachers spoke in an unintelligible way. I believe others*



*communicate mathematical ideas.*

It seems a general trend in this parent's responses, which although anonymous can be identified by length of response and style of response as belonging to the same parent, that the parent has identified key issues in the program implementation. The program can not possibly cover the academic subjects with the same intensity as Milken given the programs mission to build as this parent writes a "life altering" experience. This is a rather important point – the program has a very good focus on its primary intentions – that of furthering the Zionist agenda concerning Israel. On the other hand, the program doesn't communicate effectively regarding the regular academic subjects. This is an area on which the program can spend additional time. Nonetheless, the parent body seems content with the level of communication as a totality of experience.

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# Parent Survey Question 8

Parent Survey Question 8 – Did you feel that you had adequate communication and support from Alexander Muss regarding your child’s learning?

Results for 2006-2007

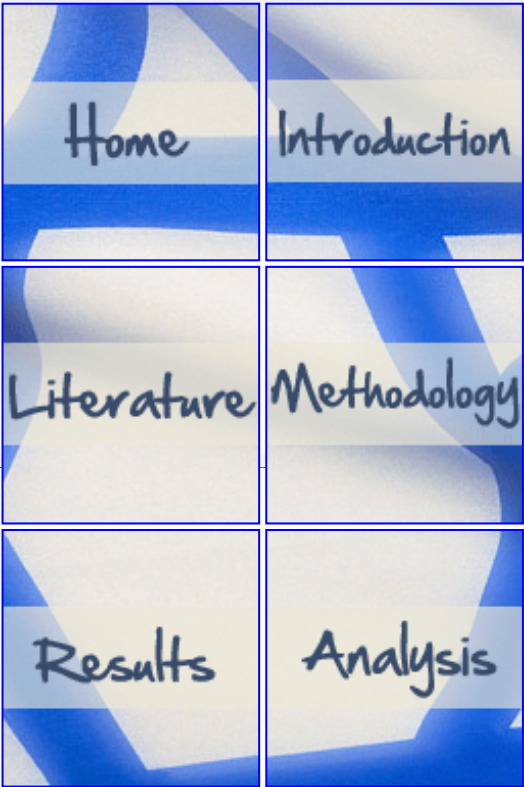
	Percent	Votes
Yes	86.7%	13
No	13.3%	2

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
Yes	77.8%	14
No	22.2%	4

Commentry and Discussion

This question clearly begins to indicate a difference in the perceived roles and the collaboration between the two agencies of Milken Community High School and the Alexander Muss Institute in Israel. At the same time, this difference is to be expected, as Milken hired two individuals during the 2006-2007 academic program to work with and supervise the students in a direct manner while they were in residence at Muss. Tuvia Aaronson, an adult who has subsequently made aliyah to Israel, and Benji Davis, an alumni of Milken and a former participant in the Israel Exchange program, stayed with the students in the dorm and provided a daily contact with them and with the parents back in Los Angeles. By the 2007-2008 program, Alexander Muss hired “madrichim” to work with the students in this direct way. The madrichim are young adults who live in the dorm with the students to oversee daily activity, adherence to rules and study times,



and to plan and carry out student programming. The madrichim program during the 2007-2008 academic years was one of the real highlights of the program.

One parent in the 2006-2007 cohort sums up the situation by writing, "When Rabbi Harwitz was in Israel he was on top of the non-responsive communication and programmatic issues at Muss. Benji Reynolds did a very good job. He was hindered by pressure from Muss and the demands that they placed on his time beyond the scope of a counselor in the program." This sentiment is echoed by another parent in the same cohort who claims, "I did not feel that I had adequate communication and support from the Milken representatives at Alexander Muss. I felt that I had better than adequate support from Eddie Harwitz for the most part and through him for Benji Reynolds in so far as the program was concerned (exclusive of the learning)."

Communication is always a challenge, and the single comment left by a parent during the 2007-2008 cohort takes a decidedly different direction. That parent writes:

*I can honestly say I would have preferred more communication. The kids were so very very far away. The Milken reps absolutely were supportive of any requests we made, or questions or problems we had. They acted immediately every time we called. But I would have liked to hear from adults how the kids were doing in Israel. My son made some reference to David Mitchell yelling at them at the end, and I would have liked to know if he felt that way about the kids the whole semester, or if it was just a minor one-time explosion.*

This issue of communication is fundamental to the program. The data is conflicting in that the survey data indicates parents felt the communication was good, but the anecdotal data reflected in the narrative summaries indicates the communication was spotty and incoherent. That this is reflected in two years of data indicates that the communication system needs work. On the other hand, Alexander Muss also addressed this issue during the second year of the program by creating weekly reports – summaries of the student work sent home each week before Shabbat.

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# Parent Survey Question 9

Parent Survey Question 9 – From your experience, which of the following statements represent the program’s best outcome?

### Survey Results for 2006-2007

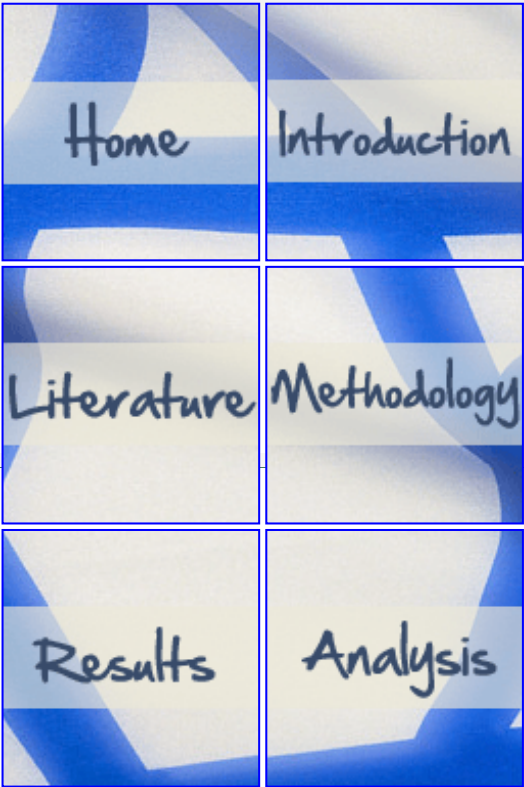
	Percent	Votes
<i>My child grew personally and became more independent and mature.</i>	73.3%	11
<i>My child became more fluent in Hebrew.</i>	0.0%	0
<i>My child learned more about Israel and is becoming an advocate for Israel.</i>	20.0%	3
<i>My child formed a more complete Jewish identity.</i>	6.7%	1

### Survey Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>My child grew personally and became more independent and mature.</i>	50.0%	8
<i>My child became more fluent in Hebrew.</i>	6.3%	1
<i>My child learned more about Israel and is becoming an advocate for Israel.</i>	37.5%	6
<i>My child formed a more complete Jewish identity.</i>	6.3%	1

### Commentary and Discussion

This survey question has very different responses given the tenets of the program and the expectations of the parents. It is very clear that the parents valued the personal growth more than any other facet of the program. Yet the program sought to increase the advocacy for Israel and only 20% in the 2006-2007 said





that this was an important program outcome. This response is different in the 2007-2008 cohort as 37.5% reported the increased advocacy as important. The reason for this may be the immediacy of the survey in relationship to the return home – and it is fascinating to ponder if the parents would answer the question the same way after the children have been home for four months and have returned to school. It is also fascinating to note that very few parents over the two year period recorded an increased fluency in Hebrew as an important program outcome.

As has been the pattern with the narrative commentary section, the answers are unique, different, and sometimes not in keeping with the tenor of survey questions. One parent in the 2006-2007 cohort writes, “We expected this to happen and we knew going into the program that our student could handle the pressure and stress. We knew that it would be an amazing growth experience for our student. What frankly surprised us was the “1970’s” educational approach. The glass was always half full and there was never any time to reflect on a program before going onto the next theme. There was never any time to respond in a thoughtful manner. This is not the way students at MCHS are taught to learn.”

This comment reflects an interest in the philosophy under which Alexander Muss operates and this parent essentially argues for an updated program. One parent in the 2007-2008 cohort relates “Our children, both found a very strong connection to Israel and had a tremendous growth personally and became more independent and mature. And of course the Hebrew improved also! ” In so many ways, these comments are indicative of the system of culture framing referenced before – it is as if the parents are defining their success at Alexander Muss in terms of what would be an accepted success at Milken, somehow forgetting that the cultures are vastly different.

At least three parents in each cohort suggest that the question should have had an “all of the above” option, indicating that they saw change in all four areas; however, the question created a forced choice response. It appears over the two years of the survey data that no one single choice is appropriate but that the parents clearly see multiple benefits of the program. While they see multiple benefits, the overarching benefit after two years of study concerns personal growth and transformation.

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# Parent Survey Question 10

Parent Survey Question 10 – Which of the following best represents your opinion in regard to the program’s inclusion of American and Israeli students?

Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>My child had a great opportunity to become close friends with a fellow Israeli student.</i>	30.8%	4
<i>My child met, but did not bond, with an Israeli student.</i>	30.8%	4
<i>My child does not feel that this is a program strength.</i>	38.5%	5

Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>My child had a great opportunity to become close friends with a fellow Israeli student.</i>	Percent%	Number
<i>My child met, but did not bond, with an Israeli student.</i>	Percent%	Number
<i>My child does not feel that this is a program strength.</i>	Percent%	Number

Commentary and Discussion

Unlike other questions in the survey, this question had three responses, again in an attempt to create a forced choice paradigm. It is clear from the responses that there is no single dominant perspective – perhaps an indicator that the program did not have a clear goal in this regard. Approximately 40% of the parents who responded did not feel that the individual bonding experience with an individual Israeli was successful. While this was a stated program goal and while there was some time built into the program for the meeting of individual Israeli students, it is also apparent that this could simply not become a major program



initiative given the other work of the program.

A total of nine parents wrote narrative commentary for this section of the survey, an immediate indicator that other opinions are important.

One parent from the 2006-2007 cohort writes, "It would have been nice for the kids to have had contact via email prior to their arriving in Israel. Maybe if they had been communicating with a particular child in Tel Aviv, the program would have been better. Jeffrey didn't have a strong connection to any of the Israeli kids- he enjoyed being with them, but there won't be any further communication with them."

A second parent in this cohort writes, "My child happened to have befriended some Israeli kids but they were not from the forum. She did not particularly care for the kids in the forum. She would have liked to have more connection with those kids but apparently their personalities were too different."

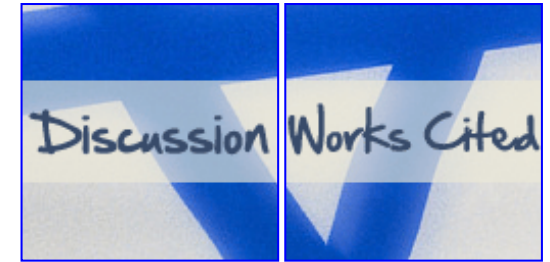
A third parent from this cohort writes, "Our student enjoyed the meetings with the Israeli students very much. Too bad that there were not more opportunities. In fact one of the recommendations that our student has is that in future years the program cut some the core "historical" class (our students have learned much of this -never this intensely- before) in favor of more cultural and social integration opportunities."

The situation is echoed in the 2007-2008 cohort by a parent who writes, "In this case my child didn't bond with an Israeli but I do feel that it is important for our kids to meet and interact with the Israelis. In my child's case. we also have family so she may not have put as much emphasis on it."

And, again, a similar condition is reinforced by a second parent in this cohort who writes, "We have nephews and nieces close in age to our son who live quite close to Muss. Nate was already very bonded with them, as he sees his Israeli cousins often. He also spent most of his free Shabbats with them."

The original intentions of the program defined the program as a "residential" program and not as an "exchange" program. This is in fact a key observation. If the program were an exchange program, it would be expected that there would be greater social interaction with Israeli youth. It is interesting to suggest that the purposes of the program at some point became rather ill-defined, and that everyone in the program lost sight of its prime "residential" goal. What can be reported however is two observations – first, that the program by itself did not reinforce the bonding between American and Israeli youth, and second, that in the second cohort, there were several filial relationships already in existence in Israel, which may have provided a context for an Israel connection which was more organic than anything possible for Muss to create.

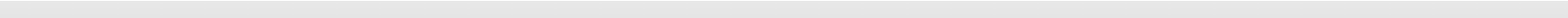
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# Parent Survey Question 11

Parent Survey Question 11 – Please choose one of the following statements which you think represent the program's most important and significant outcomes/strengths.

### Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
<i>The program delivered an academically rigorous program comparable to Milken.</i>	6.7%	1
<i>The program allowed my son/daughter to grow independently.</i>	26.7%	4
<i>The program created a close relationship between Israeli and American students.</i>	6.7%	1
<i>The program fostered a better understanding of Israeli and the Jewish people.</i>	60.0%	9

### Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
<i>The program delivered an academically rigorous program comparable to Milken.</i>	10.5%	2
<i>The program allowed my son/daughter to grow independently.</i>	31.6%	6
<i>The program created a close relationship between Israeli and American students.</i>	5.3%	1
<i>The program fostered a better understanding of Israeli and the Jewish people.</i>	52.6%	10

### Commentary and Discussion

The responses to this question represent the essential bi-modal nature of the program's construct. There is the option to create independence for the



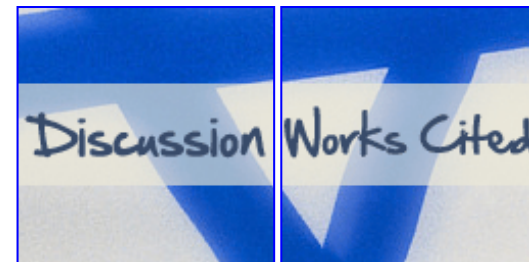
participants. The students are after all living in a foreign country for up to four months in a residential situation – away from their parents in a society which values youthful independence. On the other hand, the program also sought to build much stronger bonds with Israel, and it is important that the results indicate this reality. Both cohorts essentially report the same results – that the students found a new sense of independence while also finding a new understanding for Israel and Israeli advocacy.

There was no option for parents to create a narrative commentary related to this question. While all the narrative commentaries are important, it seemed very important to force a choice in the responses at this point. This causes the parent participants to “declare” a kind of intentionality for themselves. What is important to report here is simply, and profoundly, that the parents saw both a “personal” and an “Israel” identity aspect to the program’s outcomes.

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# Parent Survey Question 12

Parent Survey Question 12 – Please choose one of the following statements which you think best represents a program challenge for the future.

### Results for 2006-2007

	Percent	Votes
The program should foster greater collaboration between Milken and Alexander Muss.	26.7%	4
The program should develop a more rigorous academic program.	13.3%	2
The program should develop a more articulated interchange between Israeli and American students.	46.7%	7
The program should work to create a greater appreciation for Israeli history and culture.	0.0%	0
The program is really doing fine.	20.0%	3

### Results for 2007-2008

	Percent	Votes
The program should foster greater collaboration between Milken and Alexander Muss.	11.8%	2
The program should develop a more rigorous academic program.	0.0%	0
The program should develop a more articulated interchange between Israeli and American students.	47.1%	8
The program should work to create a greater appreciation for Israeli history and culture.	0.0%	0
The program is really doing fine.	41.2%	7

### Commentary and Discussion



This is the last question in the formal part of the parent survey and as such is represents the diversity of parent opinion. At least 20% of the parent respondents in the 2006-2007 cohort feel the program is doing just fine, an indicator of their satisfaction. Apparently another group of parents felt that the program had a sufficiently rigorous academic program. A larger group of 26% in this cohort felt that the collaboration between Milken and Muss should be improved, and this has been a re-current theme in several of the questions and in the narrative commentary.

Overall, almost half the parents felt that the program should seek to create closer ties with other Israeli youth. It can be speculated that this response is in part due to the earlier questions on the same topic – it can also be speculated that a group of parents had exposure to the “exchange” program of the past and felt the personal benefits of an exchange. This theme is developed in the interview process, and some parents and students lamented that the program as it exists is too institutional and de-personalized.

Three parents in the 2006-2007 cohort responded in narrative commentary, and each of the responses was articulate, developed and reflective. They wrote:

*The intensity of the program and its rhythm should be more gradual. Many students had not slept several nights before the program started, then were jet-lagged, then were launched into the program with full intensity. I think the beginning should have been far more gradual. My son told me the Hebrew teaching and learning was very weak and he did not make any progress whatsoever in Hebrew and even worse in Tanach. He loved his French and Math science teachers. He says his written Hebrew has regressed instead of progressed!*

*Muss needs to really be ready to understand who our students are. What type of learners they are and what type of learning they have experienced at MCHS. Muss should revision the program to better take into account the needs of our students. The social-cultural component should be enlarged but so too should the core course.*

*This was a tough question to answer. I believe, however, that if there were a greater desire and practice on the part of Alexander Muss to collaborate with Milken and fuse its program with Milken’s approach and directives, the program would improve over-all. It is difficult to suggest that a program of this nature be more academically “rigorous.” In some ways that would be inconsistent with the need of the students to process*



*what they are learning experientially, spiritually, socially and historically. It would be nice if some of the non-core classes instruction clarity or level improved, but making the academics more “rigorous” would, in my view, take away from the other intended and actual benefits of participating in this program. I suspect that if the collaboration between Milken and Alexander Muss improved on the Alexander Muss side of the equation (Milken did more than its part), then there would be an improvement in the interchange between Israeli and American students (no matter which Israeli student “group[s]” was [were] involved in the Program.*

While the results for the 2007-2008 cohort are similar, there is a notable difference in the frequency of the “just fine” component. Apparently the parents of the 2007-2008 cohort were more pleased with the program as 41% of them report that the program is “doing fine.” This is interesting as it leads to the speculation that the program at Muss made changes between the two years and that the improvements in the program paid off for the parents involved. Yet, two parents in the 2007-2008 cohort wrote:

*I still would like more certainty that the academic program is as rigorous as it is at Milken. I want to make sure that my child is prepared for AP’s and honors classes in 11th grade. When kids have problems with teachers in Israel, I am not convinced that that information is brought to Milken’s attention.*

*We don’t know if we can truly evaluate the academic rigor of the program when compared with regular Milken classes. Upon Nate’s return to normal academics next year, we will have a better sense of how prepared he is versus his classmates.*

I have taken the liberty to quote these parents at length as they have something provocative to say. What is most apparent is that none of them is angry in any way about any of the program initiatives. What they do say is that there is room for improvement, and that a further analysis of the program and program participants (Milken and Muss) educational philosophies needs to be explored. These are surely involved, supportive, and reflective parents. It is so important to determine the source of these tensions internal to the program and try to analyze different methods to discuss them. In some ways the notion of a “pluralistic” education could be teased out of the responses – that the parents see this as a tension may indicate the degree to which they can truly see this a a pluralistic endeavor.

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# Parent Survey Question 13

Question 13: Your turn! What "message" would you deliver to Milken Community High School about your experiences with the Milken Tiferet program?

### Results from 2006-2007

I have chosen four representative comments from the parents relevant to what they would like Milken to hear about the program. These comments from the 2006-2007 cohort are as follows:

*This really was a courageous and important program to establish. I hope that it continues to flourish. Given that this was a brand new concept for Milken, the results were truly amazing. I think the balance between maintaining academic standards while giving the students a meaningful semester in Israel is difficult but Milken could help maintain this balance by making some changes such as giving students taking a second language more time in their schedule (same probably is true for those participating in sports and other "extra" activities). Perhaps Milken could encourage some changes in the Jewish Studies program so that there is more new and different material covered rather than repeating what they already have covered at Milken. Thank you so much for giving our son this opportunity of a lifetime!*

*Yasher Koach!!!! The program was better than we ever dreamed it would be. Rabbi Harwitz' commitment to Israel, the children and their well being was phenomenal and key to the success of the program. Personal,*





*spiritual growth of our child has been remarkable. Deep emotional connection with Israel was achieved and is cemented in for life. Our child attained a very sophisticated understanding of the politics and of the history of Israel . He is eager and ready to go back to Israel at the first opportunity. Our child is becoming a a voice for Israel in the Diaspora—remarkable. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Work with MUSS to create more down time, better spacing of classes and a couple more free weekends with Israeli partners.*

*It is an excellent program but like every new venture needs a bit of modification and adjustment here and there. It was however a once in a life time opportunity for our “cocooned” and fairly “over protected” children to experience and exercise their sense of independence, decision making abilities and looking at the world with a new perspective.*

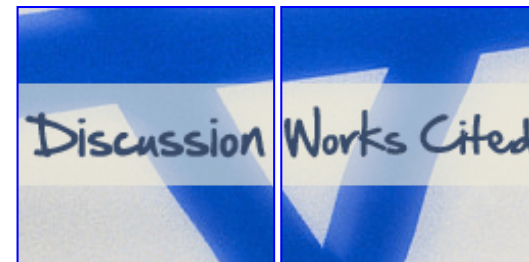
*Overall, this is a very good program. From a parent’s perspective, and according to our son, from his perspective, the program is too long. Three months in Israel would be ideal. That would avoid the necessity and expense of bringing the kids home for Passover vacation due to homesickness, and would allow more time for the kids to be taught by their Milken teachers in the spring semester.*

#### Results from 2007-2008

Just as there are different students, so there are different parents. The kinds and levels of response to this question were quite diverse.

*TIF is a great opportunity to have a life-changing experience at a relatively young age. The in-depth learning experience cannot be duplicated in a classroom environment. Not only will you get to know Israel and her people, but you’ll get to know yourself!*

*I believe every child that goes through this program will leave with an experience of a life time both in terms of knowledge, understanding and connecting to Israel and it’s history and challenges today, as well as the*



*personal growth and transformation that inevitably comes with such an amazing experience.*

One parent left a list –

- 1. See below regarding comments to Muss.*
- 2. The program is wonderful.*
- 3. When social issues arise during the semester, utilize the Milken counselors to help the Muss madrichim in resolving the issues.*
- 4. Have Muss teachers give out academic awards at the end of the semester. The TIF kids feel that they missed out on recognition by being away.*
- 5. Have TIF kids make a presentation to their classmates in September, on what they learned, experienced, etc.*
- 6. Set up a buddy program for TIF kids, maybe of kids in their advisories, so they feel connected to what's happening at Milken during the semester.*
- 7. Have TIF 2008 kids be buddies with TIF 2009 kids, so when the kids next Spring have issues, they can have a buddy to email and chat with.*
- 8. Have programming/supervision available at Muss so kids don't have to fly home for Passover.*

A "life changing experience" for both our daughter and our family..an absolute "gift"..thank you, thank you!

If your daughter/son does not have strong academic skills don't expect them to get similar grades as they would get while at Milken as the program lacks proper academic support.

### Commentary and Discussion

These comments are reflective of several themes developed throughout the survey and in the narrative commentary. Some observations are in order. First, these comments reflect a population of parents who are involved and committed to the education of their children. The parents are reflective about this education and are willing to make suggestions about program improvements. Not one of the summary comments from parents made the suggestion that the program should be cancelled, and simply, this represents a huge program accomplishment. The comments are parallel across two years of study and they reflect a genuine set of observations gathered over time.

It is also apparent from several of the comments that the work of the Milken Community High School program leadership, and in particular the work of Rabbi Harwitz made much of the program work. His dedication to the state of Israel, his charisma as a leader, and his abilities as a program manager all contributed to this success. In several of the questions and in the narrative responses, Rabbi Harwitz' role is seen as pivotal.

There is a recurrent theme here about the articulation between the two institutions, but this theme has not created a crippling need. This articulation between the two institutions can only be seen as a necessary growth and development issue as the program matures. These concerns are interesting, as the parents are reporting how they measure success – in terms of Milken's definitions. At the same time that the parent are supportive of the program, they are also willing to make concrete suggestions for improvement. Those suggestions include two vital areas for further consideration – the academic nature of the program while at Muss and the enhanced relationship to Israeli youth.

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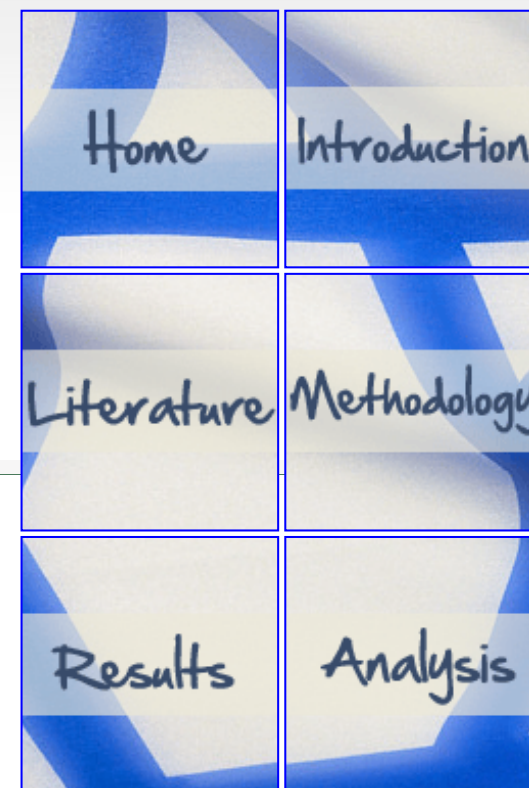
# Parent Survey Question 14

Question 14: Your turn! What message would you like to deliver to Alexander Muss about the Tiferet program?

Again, I have chosen four representative narrative commentaries from the 2006-2007 cohort of parents.

*Given that this was a brand new concept at least for a combined program involving Milken and Muss and 10th graders, the results were truly amazing. I believe that Milken made an excellent choice in selecting Muss for this program and would very much like to see that continue because the two schools really have the same values and concerns in common. I think that some adjusting should be made to give the students some more "down time;" maybe some of the time could be used for interaction with Israeli student partners while at Muss. Also, it would be worthwhile to improve access/communications regarding health/medical treatment.*

*Thank you for hosting our kids- our son loved your school- enjoyed learning in Israel and felt like Muss is now his 2nd home. He felt completely comfortable on campus, safe and really enjoyed Hod HaSharon. The classes were a bit too lengthy and Jeffrey felt that his foreign language class at the end of the day was hard to concentrate in as he was so tired, but we understand that it's hard to fit it all in!*



*There seemed to be a layered interaction with the school so communication was difficult at times. Also, the food in the cafeteria was unacceptable (unappetizing and not properly cooked). Most of the kids stopped eating there altogether. The teachers were great!*

*The staff at Alexander Muss needs to have a better understanding of the Milken students and their needs and strengths. They also need to modify the program so that the children can have a better balance between their academic work and their task of learning about and bonding with Israel. It seemed like a great challenge at times because of the time factor and the not-so-flexible schedule of the school.*

The narrative remarks of the 2007-2008 parent cohort are also important, and unique.

*There was no feedback during the semester from the teachers to the parents about the students' academic progress. We only knew how our child was doing in a class based on what we were told by the student. We got one progress report (which was very brief) and then the final report card. Similar to what we receive from teachers at Milken, parents should be updated as to their student's academic progress. There was no communication between the Muss staff and counselors and the parents. When there were social issues that arose during the semester, parents found out through other parents, not Muss. If there is an issue that needed to be resolved and the counselors or Aubrey had to speak to the student, it is only fair that a "heads up" email is sent to the parents letting them know of the situation and what course of action has taken place. Sometimes issues arose and parents were completely in the dark. Even if there are no issues arising with your student, I think it is only fair that the counselors send bi-monthly emails to the parents letting the parents know how things are going with their child. If summer camps can have counselors send 2 postcards during one month on how the camper is doing, I don't think it's too difficult for the madrichim at Muss to communicate twice a month via email to the parents on how their child is doing, how they are adjusting, etc.*



*The weekly updates about their experiences while visiting the different sites made us feel like we were visiting as well. thanks for this.*

*Alexander Muss did an incredible job in both the academics as well as their curriculum ensuring the children got a variety and balance of everything Israel has to offer. Communication between school and parent was professional, detailed and appropriate. At all times one felt the safety and well being of the student were an utmost priority of the school.*

*Thank you for an incredible job. Since the program entails a living situation in addition to an academic program, I would like more information as it relates to the kids' emotional well-being and how they are getting along together. The lack of communication in this respect made me feel like they were in college already, which they are not.*

#### **Commentary and Discussion**

While these are not the narrative commentary of all survey respondents, these comments are representative of the parent sentiment regarding Alexander Muss over a two year period. It is clear that the parents are very appreciative of the experience of a semester abroad program, and yet one parent was concerned about the length of time spent abroad, suggesting that the program end at Pesach in order to facilitate a transition back to Los Angeles before the end of the academic year. This comment reflects some understanding of the time required for a culture adjustment and this comment also reflects the idea that the students will experience a culture shock on returning.

Another parent writes about the need to understand Milken students better. What these two comments have in common is the recognition that a group of Milken students represent a separate cultural identity and as such need the validation of Muss. While each year is distinct an unique, it is very apparent that the parents want more connection with the program and a greater sense of communication with the daily affairs of their children.

Nonetheless, the parents who took this survey are also clearly indicating that they value the program, understand the needs to improve, and have watched their children grow and develop in unique and unexpected ways. The universal sentiment concerns refining the program, never abandoning the program. The collection of this information is important as it reflects two years of parent perceptions. That perception is remarkably aligned; we are not seeing two programs here, but instead one program which is trying to improve and refine its development.

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# Expert Testimony

**Expert Testimony** – Dr. Rachel Korazim, an outside consultant located in Israel, has been informed about the Tiferet Program since its inception. In The first year of the program, Ms. Kourazim was hired to complete an onsite evaluation of the program. The reader may find more information on Dr. Korazim by consulting the following links:

[Windows to Israeli Society Through Literature](#)

[Israel at 60 – Rachel Korazim](#)

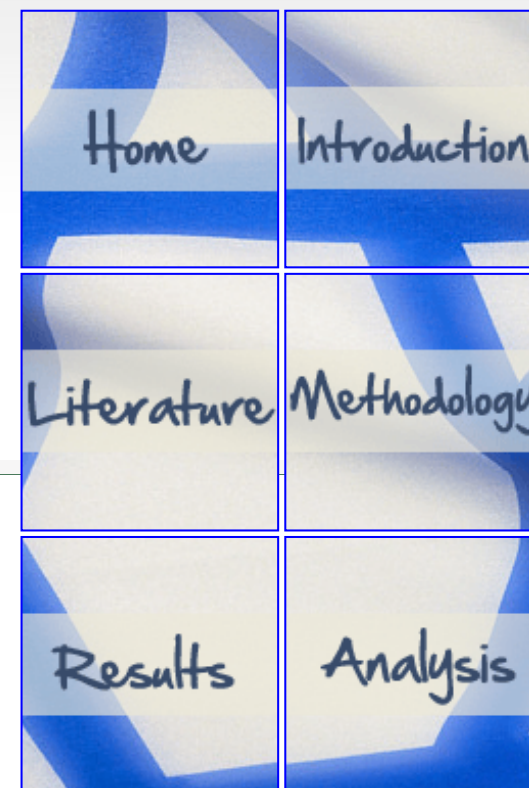
[Message to Educators – Key Issues](#)

As a result of her own visitations and observations, she made the following general recommendations in April, 2007. These materials are used with the permission of Ms. Korazim. It is important to note that these notes and recommendations were sent to the program leadership group at Milken at the end of the 2006-2007 year. They were sent to me during the 2007-2008 program year. While I have had them in archive for that time, I have not read them until the end of the 2008-2009 academic year.

### **Part I – General Recommendation**

As I have previously stated, I think the Tiferet Israel fellows program at Alexander Muss is a well structured and good program. Yet, like all things it can be improved in a few areas.

**Hebrew**



*Hebrew is taught as part of the general studies program, and is related to in the context of language studies. This insures the level of teaching and the academic supervision but does not create a “Hebrew Atmosphere” for the program at large.*

*I recommend a review of this policy and the development of an approach that would encourage and create opportunities for Hebrew to be part of the core curriculum as well as of the every day life of the students:’*

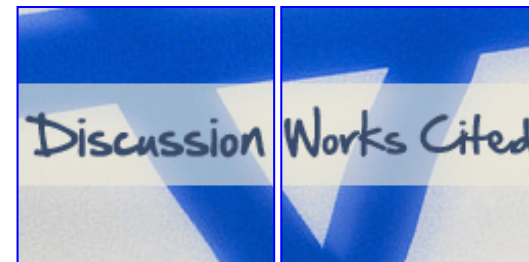
*Core curriculum educators can include Hebrew terminology in their classes, Hebrew word of the day to suit the topic addressed, special periods in the day when only Hebrew is spoken and Hebrew recess time. These are but a few examples that come to mind that could and should be developed into a work program to be implemented next year.*

#### Integration of General Studies and the Core Curriculum

*While some attempts are made towards this, I think much more could be done in order to create a more seamless program. Although not all general studies courses lend themselves to this, the ones that do should be addressed. English literature, arts, history, geography, music and language courses can include content that offers an academic dialogue with the core curriculum and the Israel environment in which the program enfold.*

*If this becomes an educational goal of the program, teachers of both program parts should engage in joint preparatory seminar to develop the content in a way that avoids duplication yet enriches the students’ experience as a whole.*

#### Meaningful Encounters with Israeli Peers



*Since I have not visited the any of the existing meetings with Tel Aviv youth, my remarks are in no way a criticism, just thoughts based on my conversations with students.*

*As one of the educational goals of the program is to allow students to experience life in Israel, its informal and non academic components should be addressed as seriously as the academic ones. Students of the Tiferet Israel Fellows feel they are missing out on something they refer to as: "the real Israel". They compare their own program to the previous Exchange program and express an interest in having more meaningful encounters with every day life in Israel.*

*I do not recommend going back to the Exchange program, but I do suggest that in the future, Tiferet Israel includes a well structured component of Mifgash, including a permanent peer group of Israeli students, home hospitality, joint projects and other elements that may enhance the students' ability to experience life in Israel at first hand.*

## **Part II – A report of a meeting held at Alexander Muss**

Meeting at Alexander Muss

Thursday January 17th 2008

Haim Fischgrund, Jill Segal, David Mitchell, Yardena Spector- Nizri, Rachel Korazim

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss venues for a better integration between the different elements of the Tiferet Israel program including the core curriculum, general studies, Hebrew and informal-extracurricular activities.

The most natural venues of integration between the core curriculum, focusing on Jewish and Israel studies, and general studies are the areas of English literature and World History.

- *Since the curriculum for English literature was already approved by the school, the Alexander Muss teachers had already received it and are prepared to teach it. It is now suggested that the new curriculum*

could be included in the second half of the program. The Alexander Muss staff recommends "Dawn" by Elie Wiesel. The novel deals with the years between the end of WWII and the birth of the state of Israel thus complementing and enriching the core curriculum. Another option could be Poems of Jerusalem by Yehuda Amichai. Since the main theme for this year is Jerusalem this too could be a natural way to serve as a bridge between general studies and the core curriculum while exposing the students to contemporary Israeli poetry.

- Tiferet Israel 2008 general studies program does not include a World History course. The inclusion of this option can be addressed by enlarging the core curriculum by a number of hours and topics to allow for a World History course credit. Since all study units of the core curriculum address Jewish history in the context of world history, this would be a natural and legitimate addition to the program.

Hebrew language classes for Tiferet Israel 2008 are based on the NETA program and are supervised by Ms Esti Shimon. Integration between Hebrew classes and the core curriculum can and will be further developed through the following venues:

- Core curriculum educators are already creating an addendum of Hebrew terms to the resource books. Thus geographical, historical and other terms will be taught in Hebrew as well as by the English translation;

#### *The Patriarch Road*

- Biblical and literary resources will be offered in Hebrew along side the English translations.
- The two counselors this year are native Hebrew speakers and will be able to offer extra curricular activities in Hebrew.
- Hebrew teachers will be encouraged to address, in their classes, topics related to the students' experiences in field trips upon their return.

## *Mifgashim*

- *Encounters with Israeli peers will be developed this year with students of the local Mosinzon High school grade 10 students of the communication class. The details of the program are being developed these days with the new High school principal and educators. They are planning social/content meetings every other week, hosting at Israeli families for Shabbat as well as joint field trips for Israeli and Milken students. This last element depends on budget to cover costs for Israeli students and accompanying teacher. Yardena will forward a detailed program shortly.*
- *For future years it maybe worthwhile to explore an exchange program with Israeli students as well as an ongoing partnership with the local school around themes of communications, debating and Israel advocacy.*

*More...*

- *Signs in Hebrew are posted in the campus*
- *Rachel Korazim will look at the core curriculum text books and will suggest literary texts to accompany the historical story line.*
- *It may be worthwhile to explore an option of 1-2 weeks family hospitality for students in future years; to develop a closer and more meaningful relationship with Israeli peers.*

Rachel Korazim will bring copies of the two books upon her upcoming visit to the school.

## **Part III – General Report**

### ***Visit to Alexander Muss High School in Israel***

by Rachel Korazim

Tiferet Israel Fellows program

Introduction

While meeting with Dr Metuka Benjamin in Israel, to discuss Israel education curriculum development for Stephen Wise and Milken schools, it was suggested that I visit the grade 10 program at the Alexander Muss High school in Israel. The purpose of my visit, as well as of this report, was to examine ways in which the Tiferet Israel Fellows program could become a cohesive part of the school's Israel studies curriculum.

This report is based on a single day (8:00am-5pm), visit to Alexander Muss. The visit was coordinated with the Executive Director Mr. Chaim Fischgrund. Haim and his staff were extremely cooperative and hospitable. Since Chaim was the only person who knew about my visit ahead of time, what I saw was authentic; no one had made an effort to put on a show for me. All in all, I have met with five Alexander Muss staff members and seven Milken Community High school students.

Staff members I met were: Chaim Fischgrund (Executive Director), David Mitchell (Dean of Education), Tuvia Aronson and Aubrey Isaacs (Core Program Educators) and Jill Segal (Dean of General Studies). Regrettably, I could not meet the Councilor from the Milken Community School and couldn't learn about the Mifgash with Tel Aviv teens. I intend to do so before the end of the program. Since I could not visit outdoor and social extracurricular activities they are indirectly related to, through comments made by educators and students

#### **Classroom Activities:**

*During the days prior to my visit, students dealt with issues linking between Yom Hashoa, Israeli Memorial Day and Israel's Day of Independence. A field trip to Atlit Clandestine Immigration Camp and to the British Prison in Acco was conducted as part of that week's study program.*

*My day started with an incident worthwhile mentioning, since it illustrates my impressions of the program. Upon my arrival, both teachers welcomed me and told me their plans for the upcoming classes. I have mentioned to them my personal connection to the Atlit Clandestine immigrants' detention camp. Without hesitation they have asked me to share my story with both their classes. This gave me an opportunity to meet all students in their real learning environment, speak to them directly and respond to their questions and comments, which were testimony of their newly acquired knowledge and caring. I also appreciated the educators' decision to alter their original lesson plan in order to make this happen.*

#### **Description of class activity:**

*Students are divided into two classes, both started with a test, summarizing the chapter about the Shoah*

*and the struggle for the creation of the state. A series of terms were read out loud and students had to define each one in writing. After all the questions were read, students graded their own exam and corrected their mistakes, based on class discussion. Thus, correcting the test becomes another educational opportunity.*

*The topic of the following lesson was the Partition Plan taught through maps. Students had to examine the map from both the Jewish and the Palestinian points of view. The lesson addressed the illegal immigration, the British policy in Palestine and the UN and Palestinian attitude towards it.*

*In the other class the same test was administered but it was reviewed with a lot more depth and room for discussion. Here too the teacher had meant to continue with a lesson about the Partition, but he had decided to dedicate the rest of the class to an open conversation. Students were invited to share their feelings and impressions of the past week, which was particularly moving and emotionally challenging for them. I think the decision to alter the day's agenda in order to address the students' emotional needs was a professional one and a good example of both educators' responsibility and caring for their students.*

#### **Note worthy elements**

*I found the self graded test to be pedagogically creative. I appreciated the educator's efforts to present the complex topic of the 1947 partition Plan through varied relevant points of view and his effort to relate it to the current state of affairs between Israel and the Palestinians. The map exercise was a good way to balance acknowledgment of historical facts on the one hand and facing emotional and value clarification issues on the other. Class atmosphere was very pleasant. Students seemed eager and their comments showed thorough understanding and personal engagement with the material discussed. The teacher encouraged and challenged students for further insights based on their own remarks and used their ideas and words when summarizing the topic.*

**Conversations with Alexander Muss staff:**

**Core Program Educators' comments:**

*The teachers know the program workload is relatively high, but would rather see “a sweaty student than a bored one”. They use the readers available at Alexander Muss, but add other texts, which they feel are relevant, or help create a better balance of the issues discussed. The core program evolves around a chronological order, and not a thematic one. Therefore, the same teachers teach varied subject matters; Tanach, Jewish history, literature, ethics and more. This gives them the opportunity to examine the same topic as it evolves through time. This is a unique pedagogy and it seems very effective for the students, since it clarifies concepts that were vague before. When relevant, teachers bring their personal stories into class. Aubrey showed the students his mother’s diary from the time of the siege on Jerusalem in 1948.*

*Both teachers think a preparatory program at the Milken Community High School is very important and believe it should not focus on teaching the subject matter but rather on setting the “Israel atmosphere,” through reading works of Israeli literature.*

*My impressions of the Alexander Muss staff and program were very positive. I find it to be a thoroughly prepared program, with a lot of flexibility and willingness to meet the unique needs and educational goals of each school.*

*The core program represents the unique pedagogical agenda and mission statement of Alexander Moss while the General Studies program represents the Alexander Muss client oriented approach, where the content is tailor-made to meet specifically the requests of each student. I find this balance to be effective.*



*Jill Segal – the Dean of General Studies thinks that students regard the General Studies program as more disciplined and would prefer to have the more informal way of teaching of their core curriculum. It is not easy to bridge the worlds of the two components of the program. They are intrinsically different; the core curriculum stands for all that is different here, while general studies should feel and look exactly like school back home. Jill and I have discussed the possibility of including core curriculum related texts into both Hebrew and English language classes in order to work towards a more seamless program.*

**Conversation with students:**

*I met with seven students for about an hour, in an open discussion on the different aspects of the program. I explained the purpose of my visit and they were all willing to help.*

*When asked why they joined the program, about half had said they always knew they would do it, because older siblings joined similar programs and liked them. The others mentioned reasons like the impact of a recent short visit to Israel and a rising interest for a deeper understanding.*

*I had asked them about the significance of the program's name: "Tiferet Israel Fellows", they said they did not feel "better" or more deserving than students who didn't join, but they think the uniqueness of the program is in the group experience (being each others' fellows) and future expectations upon their return. They showed interest and had initial thoughts on how to harness their experiences in the program for further activities in the school, the L.A Jewish community, college and other encounters. Five out of the seven already have plans for their final projects*

*Students find the program, as a whole, very moving and significant for them as Jewish teenagers. Spending time in Israel during Yom Hashoah and Independence Day had a particularly strong impact on them*

*Students find the academic program very challenging, although somewhat overloaded. They refer to it as very systematic and “seamless”, since it creates the relevant links between past and present, general history, Jewish history and more.*

*They were all making comparisons between The Tiferet Israel Fellows and the former Exchange program.*

*They thought the previous program gave more opportunity for an encounter with “the real Israel”. On the other hand, they feel the current program is better academically. They felt they were not getting enough freedom to leave campus to do what they wanted, but they do understand the security issue and realize that these restrictions are for their own safety.*

**Some free unsolicited comments I found interesting:**

- a. Our teachers should have an Alexander Muss program.*
- b. The Israeli kids we meet know less about Israel then we do by now.*
- c. They (The Milken School) will have to come up with something for us to study as a group next year.*
- d. Initial thoughts on integration with the proposed new curriculum:*

*The Alexander Muss core program methodology is very unique; it evolves around a chronological axis, creating the necessary links between text, context and site. All studied topics are examined in an interdisciplinary approach, where geography, literature, Tanach, Jewish history and social studies are all prisms the students use in their analysis of the issue discussed. All Alexander Muss core program educators are trained as site educators as well, beyond their classroom skills. I think some of these methodologies may be incorporated in the Milken Israel studies program, even when it takes place in classrooms in LA.*

As part of the Comprehensive Israel Studies curriculum, an anthology of Israeli literary texts related to the core program, should be created for both Hebrew and English language classes. Texts will be reviewed by both Milken and Muss educators to help create a seamless approach.

Final projects of the 2007 Tiferet Israel Fellows may be the first documents in the Israel studies database that will be created as part of the proposed comprehensive curriculum.

#### **General Recommendation**

*As I have previously stated, I think the Tiferet Israel fellows program at Alexander Muss is a well structured and good program. Yet, like all things it can be improved in a few areas.*

#### **Hebrew**

*Hebrew is taught as part of the general studies program, and is related to in the context of language studies. This insures the level of teaching and the academic supervision but does not create a "Hebrew Atmosphere" for the program at large.*

*I recommend a review of this policy and the development of an approach that would encourage and create opportunities for Hebrew to be part of the core curriculum as well as of the every day life of the students:*

*Core curriculum educators can include Hebrew terminology in their classes, Hebrew word of the day to suit the topic addressed, special periods in the day when only Hebrew is spoken and Hebrew recess time.*

*These are but a few examples that come to mind that could and should be developed into a work program to be implemented next year.*

#### **Integration of General Studies and the Core Curriculum**

*While some attempts are made towards this, I think much more could be done in order to create a more seamless program. Although not all general studies courses lend themselves to this, the ones that do should be addressed. English literature, arts, history, geography, music and language courses can include content that offers an academic dialogue with the core curriculum and the Israel environment in which the program enfold.*

*If this becomes an educational goal of the program, teachers of both program parts should engage in joint preparatory seminar to develop the content in a way that avoids duplication yet enriches the students' experience as a whole.*

#### *Meaningful Encounters with Israeli Peers*

*Since I have not visited the any of the existing meetings with Tel Aviv youth, my remarks are in no way a criticism, just thoughts based on my conversations with students.*

*As one of the educational goals of the program is to allow students to experience life in Israel, its informal and non academic components should be addressed as seriously as the academic ones. Students of the Tiferet Israel Fellows feel they are missing out on something they refer to as: "the real Israel". They compare their own program to the previous Exchange program and express an interest in having more meaningful encounters with every day life in Israel.*

*I do not recommend going back to the Exchange program, but I do suggest that in the future, Tiferet Israel includes a well structured component of Mifgash, including a permanent peer group of Israeli students, home hospitality, joint projects and other elements that may enhance the students' ability to experience life in Israel at first hand.*

**Commentary** – As this study evolves and finds new information sources, it is important to point out the current role that Rachel Korazim plays at Milken Community High School. Subsequent to this consultation and as a result of the foundational work she has done for the school over the past three years, Rachel is now considered a full time staff member at Stephen S. Wise Temple who works in Israel. Her current job description involves working with her own staff of people in Israel to prepare a technology driven and interactive media enriched and web based curriculum on Israel study and advocacy. This curriculum is currently being written and implemented in grades 7 and 8 and Milken and will be implemented in grades 9 and 10 and then in grades 11 and 12.

In many ways the extension of the Tiferet program into Nofim, or the development of the Nofim program in conjunction with the Tiferet program represent a large commitment of time and resources by the institution to Israel education. This subject alone is worth further study and evaluation as the school seeks to expand the Israeli and Jewish narratives throughout the curriculum via the development of these interactive units.

Rachel's considerable experience in developing programs for Jewish education have been a part of the motivation to continue her relationship both to the school and to the Tiferet program. Her testimony and results represents the work at the end of the first year of the program.

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An Ethnographic Evaluation of  
Milken Community High School's  
Tiferet Fellowship Program



# Field Notes in Israel

## Introduction

In March of 2008, I had the opportunity to journey to Israel and visit the program at Alexander Muss. During this visitation I took notes, pictures, and video, creating detailed field records of one week in the program. What follows is a reporting of those notes as they were re-written each day.

Monday, March 24, 2008

*Early Monday morning -*

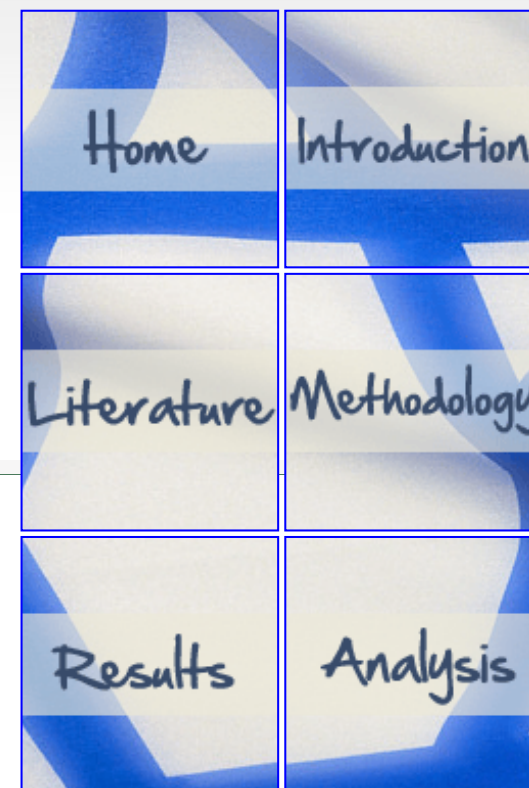
*Whew.. there is so much to record... and I'm not sure of the time and the plan to do some of the recording. I*

*know that if I leave it till the end, it will be forgotten. I'll plan to take notes and write every day.*

*First a plane trip from LA to Tel Aviv with a six hour stop over in Newark, meaning that I spent all of Saturday and Sunday in transit. Amazing.*

*Finally, a long flight here, how easily one forgets... It seems as I spent the whole time asleep and was grateful to have the seats open beside me.*

*Finally, arrival here, in Tel Aviv, and all that is entailed there – airports, customs, baggage, and then a very*



*nice sign that welcomed me: Mr. Roger Fuller.*

*The students did not know that I was coming and so were amazingly surprised. Hugs all around and then they insisted on showing me their rooms. All of this meant a very late night, and my current immediate fear is that I missed the trip today, although they said that they would get me. It's difficult to make the time and culture adjustment. I'm recording here as my camera charges, and although I have been around the campus several times, I have seen no indication of any action, and so am wondering what this is all about.*

*It's s 7:30 AM, I'm in a bit of a panic, and will pack up and head out again.*

*Tuesday – 6:00 AM*

*I'll begin to recount yesterday, feeling better from the apparent jet lag of the day.*

*The day began very early, and of course involved my being way too early for the events of the day.*



*We had breakfast in the school's cafeteria, and I ate with the students engaging in small talk with them. I will determine here not to use students names in as much as possible as I want to maintain some degree of separation. At breakfast, my group and I discovered that the gruel which is served was in fact cream of wheat and they all laughed as I told them that this is what we grew upon as children.*

*We all then boarded the bus, backpacks underneath. As we were boarding the bus, it was made very clear*





*by Eitan that we all needed water bottles. Jenna directed me to a place to use “Shecks” and then purchase something. The very first thing that I had done on entering the country was be sure to get enough shekels for a few days.*

*Once on the bus, Aubrey began speaking about the lesson of the day and spoke to them about the movement of Jews to Israel just after WWII, and he spoke about how the immigrants became “Immigrant Bet” as they were coming in the back door and were not supported by the British.*

*We traveled to a beach on the Mediterranean and the two classes, one led by Aubrey and one led Rabbi Phil Nadel, a former Milken employee, each moved to a separate part of the back. I joined Rabbi Phil’s class and began taking pictures. After the lesson, again from the source book, an the note-taking into notebooks, the students all gathered for some “training” in rescue operations, including three different activities involving how to help wounded or hurt immigrants and how to trick the British from intercepting them. The end result of this was having one group go into the Mediterranean, and be “rescued” by Israeli partisans.*



*This lesson involved trading shirts (we had been given precise instructions beforehand to wear bathing suits and an extra set of clothes) The students*

*and teachers then spent about a half hour in this game and activity and then spent about a half hour getting dressed and back on the bus.*

*Aubrey instructed them that they needed to stay on schedule once everyone was settled. This first lesson was over by 10:00 AM.*

*We then traveled to the second location, a British internment camp.*

*On the way there one of the students became ill, and he spent a bit of time in the front of the bus and was sick in a plastic bag. We stopped the buss and allowed him to get some fresh air.*

*We stopped at the British internment camp and I spent the time with Aubrey and his class. Aubrey took us through the remaining buildings of the camp and spoke about the similarities to Nazi camps, complete with the work of disinfectants, naked showers, and a main “building,” which in and by itself had a smokestack. Aubrey drives a very pointed curriculum. We visited the “bunk” houses, again, almost replicas of the concentration camps. Aubrey asked the children to consider what it might be like for the immigrants to go through this experience.*



*A large part of the time spent there was also spent under a tree, during which time Aubrey discussed the three different narratives of the immigration – statehood movement, again by asking questions of the students to prompt them to an answer, or at least a consideration. The concluding activity involved having the students divide into three “factions” and discuss why they chose this role. There was lots of good*

*discussion.*

*We had a sandwich lunch at the site, food was brought with us by the school, and we then filled our water jugs and went on the way.*

*Throughout the day, Aubrey reminded us to drink water. The temperature was about 90 degrees, and dry. It was so apparent to me that although I dressed casually with nylon workout pants, that the rest of the students had been instructed to bring shorts. I wish I had been told what to bring.*

*Once on the bus, it was pretty apparent that the ill student was still not feeling well and Aubrey, Rabbi Phil, and Eitan decided to take him to the hospital in Haifa. Eitan stayed with him for the afternoon and the plan was to pick him up on the way back. We dropped them off at a hospital in Haifa.*

*Of course this points to my role here as principal, yet I made the conscious decision not to be involved, and much of the discussion was carried on in Hebrew, which I respected. It is interesting to ask if the conversations would have been conducted regarding this student's situation if I were not there.*

*Nonetheless, they made the decision and I kept out of it. I could myself see that the child was very overtired and as Aubrey said, "Rather fragile."*



*We then continued our travels to Accra, in the northern part of Israel. While we visited the citadel there – built in medieval times, we were there to see the place as a British Prison during the time before independence. This then becomes very important as Aubrey's class again explored questions*



*about what they would do. He presented three different scenarios about the work and*

*role of both the British and the Israeli factions.*

*After exploring the problems and scenarios by sitting in a cell, he took us to the execution area.. the place where prisoners of the British were hanged. He always says “they hung.”*



*He told the moving and poignant story of one Israeli soldier who was accused of assisting in an escape, and who refused to beg for his life, and as a result was hanged. Aubrey knows the curriculum well and he was able at just the right time to “throw” the trap, making a noise in the very quiet room, and shocking the students. Aubrey has a touch of the dramatic, and he has a point to make.*

*We then re-boarded the bus, and I noted again that Eitan “counts” the children – on each boarding, and we headed to the very northern tip of Israel to see the caves and grottos next to the Lebanon border.*

*Personally, at this time, the jet lag did catch up to me and I zoned and slept most of the trip up and back.*

*We stopped to pick up Orly, the other madrich, and made the decision to wait on the highway for Eitan and the ill student.*

*As we passed Haifa, we tried to make a connection with Eitan and with the ill student, but instead had to turn around and get them, adding time to the journey.*

*At Netanya, we stopped for “DOTS,” which is “Dinner on their shekel.” and I had a bowl of soup in what amounted to an Israeli “Whole Foods” market. At this location, replete with a IKEA...we switched buses as apparently we were beyond the time of the bus driver’s allocation.*

*Our bus driver returned to campus, brining Orly and the ill student with them.*

*Some reflections on Monday -*

*There is a cast of characters here. Aubrey, who has been with he program for many years, is clearly in charge. Rabbi Philip, who few people call Rabbi, is new to the institution and in fact new to the country, having only made Aliyah last July, some ten months ago.*

*I notice that there is a great deal of planning carried on during the time we are in transit. They prepare lessons almost immediately before delivery, clearly made necessary by Rabbi’s Philip’s new status in the program.*

*Eitan (and by implication) Orly are key to the program’s daily operation. They manage students and live with he students in the dorm. This is important.*







*Every trip has an armed guard to accompany them. I have not yet figured out his name but it is clear that he goes with them on each trip.*

*The need for water. I did not realize how very important the water was. It is something that Aubrey and Eitan remind us about constantly.*

*Jet lag... even-though I slept most of the way here, jet lag is very real. It takes at least a day, as today I was up early and walked into town....*

*Electricity – this is just plain a pain... converters and plugs and switches are all different than in America... not that they have to be the same.*

*Equipment – There's all this "stuff" that needs to be cared about... cameras, ,and video, and palms and computers and cell phones and they all need to be charged and then recharged.*

*Pacing – I have yet to figure out if yesterday was a long day, or if I was jet lagged. The day began at 7AM, and then ended at 10-11PM... It really was rather amazing, and the pace is frantic.*

*Geography – The campus is not easy to find one's way about.. and that may speak to my being a "tourist." I find it personally better to go for walks and then get a lay of the land. And so every morning I will try to go for a walk to the town and around the campus.*

*Positionality – This is a bit of a challenge. I find myself here as the principal of the school, and yet here as an observer, and yet here as a kind of equal coworker with the other adults. I took pictures yesterday, and will today take more notes.*

*Gordon is planning to attend on Thursday. I will have to secure the names of the students we wish to interview and see that they are available at lunch to be interviewed. This will have to be a major focus of tomorrow.*

*Technology – At one point in the day, one of the teachers, Rabbi Philip remarked that he had not seen a group so connected to their computers as the students from Milken. The institution here is not soundly equipped to handle the many demands.*

**Tuesday, March 25, 2008**

*This morning I was up at 4:30 AM, and did the write up for Monday. Then I went for a walk to the center of town in the early morning, bought two loaves of bread, searched for coffee, got some money in the ATM, and returned home. I left the facility here by speaking to the guard who did not understand my English, and I re-entered without being checked at all.*

*The day began with breakfast. I left my room here at 7:15 AM and then went to see the students, and they were not up yet, even-though I knew we had a speaker at 8:00 AM. They all made it to breakfast at 7:40 AM and then were at the Beit Midrash for the speaker.*



*Breakfast today was interesting as it involved the entire school, and there are many more parts of this school than Milken. The dining hall was filled with about 200 students. I sat with students at Milken and asked about the life of the dining hall. They mentioned that there were two other schools from America,*



each school sending juniors and seniors.

They also discussed the idea that there were several Russian immigrants in attendance here as being here illegally is better for them than remaining in Russia. It was so apparent that I heard about five languages being spoken and that they all were there for breakfast. In fact the dining hall is clearly the center of cultural interchange, if it is accepted as that. I saw that two of our students sat directly opposite students from Israel and did not engage in conversation.

It seems that much of the jet lag has in fact passed, and my morning was clearly better, a fact remarked on by the students.

We went to the Beit Midrash and heard a speaker who retold the story of the illegal immigrants and his role as an American Jew who had been asked to outfit and retrofit "boats" and ships to bring Jewish immigrants from various parts of Europe. He told how it had all been secretive, that they could tell no one, that the ships were in dreadful shape, and how he worked with his crew to pick up 1500 Jews and take them to all but 50 miles of Palestine, only to be interred in Cyprus at the end. While he was clearly bitter about this role of the British, he was also a "character," who could talk like a sailor and recorded incidents with punctuated cuss. The children loved him. I videotaped segments of his testimony. Most important were his conclusions where he stated that the Arabs today were not going to be interested in peace, but in world domination, and that we all must "stand up" against the untruths being circulated in the American press.

We then boarded the bus and headed for our first site. On the bus trip I had a good opportunity to chat with Eitan who discussed the differences between American and Israeli culture, principally centered on the need for all Israeli's to go into the armed forces. He told how Israeli children have different expectations, and that a "formal" school education in one sense is but a "part of the picture." He discussed his own involvement in the armed forces as a medic, his love working with the children at Milken, and how their age at sophomores makes them at once challenging and at once rewarding. We discussed the life patterns of the society and



*how after service in the military, many Israeli youths travel about the globe for a few years before returning home to Israel, where they will first go to school and then marry.*

*We picked up Aubrey at the junction of the road to Jerusalem and the road to the south, and as we would be returning there, Aubrey was able to drive his own car to the site.*

*As we traveled the road to Jerusalem, Aubrey delivered a lesson on the beginning war of Independence and the need to keep the road to Jerusalem open. We stopped at one location and he explained the strategic necessity of how the Israelis felt it so important to keep Jerusalem, for "who owned Jerusalem owned the country."*



*Our second site, some distance away was at the crowning top of the road to Jerusalem, and we climbed the hill (mountain?) to the summit, and then walked along the trenches which encircled the event. When we reached the top, Aubrey held a lesson and discussed the ways in which when Independence was declared that this hill was fought over by the Arabs and the Jews, and perhaps favorably*

*left to the Arabs. He told how the Jews finally took the hill based on a stupid mistake of the Arabs, as the Arabs "will never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Even though it was windy and cloudy, the strategic importance was noticeable.*

*The students all sit in a circle when Aubrey speaks and there is a definite range of involvement. Some students take active notes and engage actively, others students are more passive and listless. Aubrey*

*challenges and questions everyone at some point.*

*On the way down to lunch, one of the students slipped and hurt her ankle. She rested a bit, and everyone keeps telling the students to drink more water. In fact, they wouldn't let her up until she had consumed almost a liter of water. They feel that American students do not know how to hydrate well, and they remind us continually to drink water and wear a hat. After lunch, another student slipped and hurt his ankle, which required wrapping and ice from the guard, who is also trained as a medic. I noticed today that he always brings up the rear and keeps his head above us most of the time. He is truly "watching out."*

*After lunch, we again boarded the bus and returned to the intersection of the roads. I sat with Rabbi Phil's class and he discussed how this was a battle site against the Arabs after the declaration of independence. However, he also mentioned that the soldiers were largely Immigrant Bet immigrants, all with a different language and all without real training. Rabbi Phil discussed how this was a*



*terrible loss, and an degrading battle. As this is now a national monument to the military, he gave the students time to explore the area where there were lots of tanks and then lots of pictures, and then ice cream.*

*We again boarded the bus to visit an "educational" kibbutz which completes educational programs on the use of this kibbutz to build and produce bullets for the war before the war actually started, and all underground. The speaker was passionate about his work and the role that these kibbutizm played in the war for independence. He took students on a tour of the facility.*

*As I was typing my work today, Orly stopped by the main office, where I use a Cat5 cable to plug into the Internet directly. We had a good conversation about working with the Milken kids and she shared that she and Eitan have to personally manage the dorm sign out sheets, keeping it with them at all times. The students can sign out during free time and then go to town, but they must sign out and report in. Orly shared that this level of supervision is not necessary with the older students, however, it is necessary with the younger Milken students.*



*Issues of the day – conclusions and observations.*

*First of all, writing these notes takes a very long time indeed. They are summaries taken from notes during the day and an attempt to bring context to the day. I noticed that I am both an observer and a participant.*

*At the last stop, the students began to call me by my first name, as if they were testing out the proposition as here in Israel they all the teachers by their first name. This is not the American way, and they are betwixt and between. There is a clear positionality issue as I do spend time with them, and not so much time with the instructors.*

*Pacing, again today was an exhausting day. The students have all learned to sleep while on the bus. Believe me, I do too, and the way home today was almost frightening as I couldn't stay awake. In fact, I came to my room at 4:30 PM and fell asleep till 7 PM, missing dinner and an event with the students. I walked to town and bought two slices of dreadful old pizza, and returned here at 8:00 PM to answer emails.*

*Student schedules – The students today spoke about the way in which they have to study all the time and three mentioned that tomorrow they have three tests and a quiz. It seems as if they talk about class all the time and sometimes are more focused there than on the core classes of Aubrey and Rabbi Phil.*

*Pictures... today I noticed that my camera was behaving slowly and I discovered that I have taken over 140 pictures in two days. This is a good thing, I believe, and I walk around with either the camera or the video camera with me all the time.*

*Charging the technology.. what a pain this is I have but one plug and sometimes wake up in the middle of the night to make the switches in order to be sure that everything is charged for the next day. Today, I found that I can not find a way to charge my Palm, and my walk into town today did not produce a charger. With two days left, I saved the data there. Additionally, the laptop is on the charger, I shall put the camera on the charger, wake up later to put the video camera on the charger, and then the telephone. This is a challenge.*

*FirstClass – The students shared with me on two occasions today the way in which they depend on FirstClass. They use it all the time as their regular email client, even if it means that they send out email to their parents on their parents accounts. They were very clear with me that they are the only group to be here who all brought laptops, and that they use the laptops every day.*

*Security – This place is filled with locked doors, and I have a set of seven keys, but entering and leaving the facility is a simple walk through. Although I did not go with the Milken students tonight, I did see that the*

*road up and back to Hod HaSharon is a virtual highway of students moving in and out of the local town. I walked right through the gate with students from two other schools and the guard was reading a book.*

Wednesday, March 26, 2008

*Today it's 4:30 AM and I'm up. I woke up three times in the evening to change the chargers.*

*Today I plan to attend classes, perhaps by shadowing one student around.*

*I will have a meeting today to hand out college folders from Milken, perhaps the most "intrusive" I have been.*

*Eric Pakravan*

*Jared Herschler*

*Adina Miller*

*Jonathan Batscha*

*Daniel Tal*

*Cibelle Levi*

*Alexa Ottenstein*

*Evi Havivi*

*These are the students who were suggested by Rabbi Harwitz to be a part of the interview procedure. I will take the time to work through the madrichim to let them know about the interview on Thursday.*

*At 7:20, I met with Orly and explained that I had the packets from college counseling at Milken and asked her to work with Eitan to call a meeting of the group as they saw fit. They agreed that 12:20 would be best. I also explained that I would want to see the eight students for the purpose of an interview on Thursday. Orly*

*and Eitan agreed to help.*



*Today I decided to shadow Yoni for the entire day. It seemed to me that I had spent two full days with the core classes on tiyulim, and it would be appropriate to see the world of Muss through the world of a student. I had chosen the names on the list above as they are the people who should be interviewed on Thursday (it's 5AM Thursday as I write this as there was no time on Wednesday). I had*

*initially decided to pick the first person who I saw while waiting for breakfast in the dorm. I first saw Eve, however, she was not feeling well. The next person who walked into the group room was Yoni, and I have a unique relationship with him. Yoni was a freshman who stole a bag of french fries as a freshman. While the usual punishment is suspension, I asked him what had happened and he had said that he had forgotten his money and was just plain hungry. I explained to Yoni that there is always fruit in my office and invited him to help himself. I did not suspend him, but insisted that he apologize to the teacher on duty and the cook of the day. This past history made my relationship in asking Yoni to let me shadow him for the day easier – and in some ways more honest.*

*Yoni and I had a short meeting together and I explained my purpose in shadowing him. He agreed to the ground rules which were that I would always be in the same room as he, but that I would not directly interact with him in the classes. I would speak with him between classes and in public areas like the lunchroom and the hallways. I also informed him that he should feel free to “call it a day” when he was ready. Yoni agreed and we walked to breakfast, he with his book-bag, and me with my backpack containing note-paper,*

*cameras, and of course, water.*

*Yoni went to breakfast at 7:40, and we chatted about how he was today. He told me that he was tired because of the long days on Monday and Tuesday and that he had to study after returning home. During breakfast with several other students, I remarked that they looked tired, and several of them explained that they were up until midnight studying. One student protested my taking a picture of her as she was "having a bad day." I promised her that I would delete the picture from my camera.*

*It may be important to know that during the day, I routinely took out the camera and the video camera at each setting and took a few minutes of film, and a few pictures. I tried to capture Yoni in many settings when the light was right. I mention this now as I began at breakfast to take the pictures.*

*Today was Tefillah day, and the room had been switched to the Holocaust Memorial room from the Beit Knesset of the administration building. Yoni was asked with four others to bring the siddorim to the room and we left breakfast at 7:55 for Tefillah. This meant that we had to go to the administration building and fetch the siddorim and then return to the classroom building. When the four of us reached the Beit Knesset of the administration building, Yoni and the others discovered that the siddorim were already moved, and we went back to the classroom building for the Tefillah program. We were five minutes late to the beginning of the Tefillah. Aubrey noted this in passing and hear a quick explanation about fetching the siddorim, a total exchange of not more than five seconds in the middle of services.*

*The Holocaust Memorial room is both a Beit Midrash and a room of prayer. There is a front to the room facing the inside of the building and window in the rear of the room. The chairs are gathered in either rows or a circle depending on the use. There are maps on the left side of the room and several posters about Zionism. On the right side of the Holocaust Memorial Room were the words along a dedicatory wall, "There are the names of the 300 Hungarian Jews selected in Auschwitz in 1944-1945 to work for the German Arms*



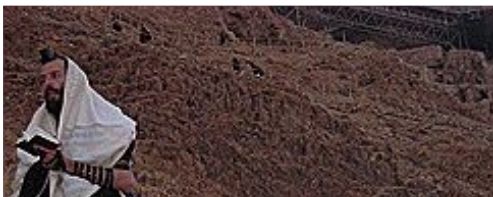
*industry of the Volkswagen factory in "Stadt des K.d.F Wagen." Most of them perished in the Holocaust."*

*Aubrey led the services, although he seems to be loosing his voice. He mentioned the difference between an "enjoyable" service like entertainment and a "challenging" service as one that encourages one to reflect and think.*

*The service begins with a Prayer of Thanks and Yoni does chant along with the rest although he may be uncomfortable knowing that I am with him. I note that Orly is with the group today, but Eitan is not with the group. I can only speculate that Eitan used this as a chance to sleep in for the morning.*

*Two students are quite late to this event.*

*We engage in a discussion about the purpose of a Bracha, and engage in a choral reading of the section in the Torah. I am reminded while reading of my own emotional reaction at hearing Torah chanted. We then engage in chanting the Schma, which I also note personally that I know and can chant with the group. Yoni leans forward in his chair and reads and chants along with the rest. We are sitting in the back of the room and I'm sitting to his right and slightly behind him. When Aubrey asks what we pray for when we pray, Aubrey also makes the remark that we pray for the Israeli soccer team tonight and this prompts a brief discussion about soccer and Yoni raises his hand saying the score should be 2-1. This and several other comments lead Aubrey to a further discussion about the role of prayer and how it influences our lives – and the group concludes that we can pray for strength and hope, but not for results. Yoni, when prompted, adds that the purpose of prayer is to improve people, but not to "improve me."*







*During this process there is active discussion in the center of the room while one student on the left is engaged in davening, almost independent of the group.*

*As I observe the process, I note 16 white T-Shirts on various members of the group. Of course, this can be further examined in light of Milken's dress code.*

*Rabbi Phil and two students enter toward the end of the service, and hear the content and context of Aubrey's remarks.*

*As this discussion of the role of prayer continues, Yoni again raises his hand and says that we can pray for the strength of the players but not for the results of the game. Aubrey tells a poignant story about prayer on Yom Kippur in a very quite voice and has the attention of everyone in the room. It is a focal moment. Aubrey tells the story of Ishmael?, who is asked by God what he wants from God. Aubrey continues by explaining that Ishmael tells God that he "wants to help God help us." Aubrey calls this praying upside down, and continues the discussion by mentioning how it is about the relationship of man to God and man to man that matters, not the end product. He ties this to the classroom excitement about going to a soccer game that night.*

*All the students stand in prayer and we end the service with a choral reading. at 8:30 AM. It is time to head to the core class.*

#### *Core Class – Rabbi Philip*

*Rabbi Philip begins the class with an overview of the class and a discussion that he sees the students looking very tired and worn out. He mentions the student who has been sick for two days and he mentions that Eve is not well today, and he discusses the need to take a “time out” to rest if that is necessary. He says, “You look tired, stressed, and sick.”*



*I sit to Yoni's right again, and while we are gathered around tables, I move my chair to the “back” of the circle, to be “in” the area, but not “in” the discussion.*

*At some points throughout the first part of the class I notice that there are all kinds of cell phones going off. Students pick up their cell phones in class and note a message, apologize to the teacher and put them away.*

*Rabbi Philip asks for some students notes on which to base the quiz and then makes up questions based on the notes. The students all write the answers on a separate sheet of paper. Question 2 creates some confusion about the intended response and Rabbi Phil then uses the chance to cancel the question and make it into a learning moment to go over the material as it relates to the agenda of the Haganah. The quiz concerns the response to the British White Paper about “immigration, building, and fighting.” Several of the*

questions are “negotiated” and Rabbi Phil changes both the question and the time for the answer to meet some of the needs of the students. He is interrupted by Aubrey, who tells him it’s time to put the classes together for a presentation.



Rabbi Phil shortens the quiz and collects them, saying “Thank you” to each student. Yoni hands his quiz in last, and forgets to put his name on the paper, to which Rabbi Phil rejoinders, “C’mon Yoni, names are important.”

We join with Aubrey’s class in the next room, some students sitting on the floor and others bringing chairs. Yoni sits by the windows, and the first thing that Rabbi Phil does is to be sure that the windows are open. The day is lovely outside, cool and refreshing, partly cloudy with a beautiful azure blue sky behind.

A chime of some kind interrupts the room and my quizzical looks cause other students to explain, “That’s from the other classroom building. It used to drive us crazy, but now we just talk over it.”

Aubrey begins to tell the story of his mother who came to Jerusalem in 1947, just as the war of independence was beginning. His mother is ill now and unable to attend the class herself and Aubrey wishes to tell her story. He remarks that it is sad that she is so ill, but that in moving her to a nursing home, he was able to discover a treasure of materials, including four volumes of her journals from the time of 1947 to 1948 and the Declaration of the State of Israel. He shows the class the materials and passes them

*around and then begins a power point review of some of the pictures he found.*

*"My she was a lovely lass when she first came here." he says. Aubrey displays his slides on a computer at the front of the room, and while it is difficult to see detail, everyone is able to see the slides, and participate on some level. He tells the story of food and water rationing and takes time to explain what life was like living on two liters of water a day, which included using the same water to wash bodies, wash dishes, wash the floor, water the plants used to grow the food, and finally flushing the toilet once a day, and once a day only.*

*He tells of the siege in graphic terms followed up by pictures and news clippings. Yoni sits on the left side of the room, near the windows, his head on his hand, and watches and listens. He does not participate in the discussion, but listens attentively. After 20 minutes some of the students grow restless and go to the next room for chairs. There seems to be endless nose-blowing by two students who have apparently begun to develop a cold.*

*Aubrey tells the story of David Marcus, who is responsible for building the Burma Road, and what a harrowing story it is to complete the road before the UN Cease Fire. This road saves Jerusalem, and as he is telling the story, Rabbi Phil finds the passage in Aubrey's mother's journal and reads it aloud, noting the number of new convoys that bring food and supplies to Jerusalem.*

*Aubrey ends the story by explaining how on the first day of the Cease Fire his mother is able to travel to Tel Aviv, "a real city, with shops, and things to buy, and a toilet to flush." He shows the class a collection of four letters and postmarks sent by his mother during the time of 1947 to 1948. The four letters have four postmarks – from Palestine to the state of Israel. He tells a side story of Ben Gurion's interest and determination to have a stamp for the new state of Israel in order to give the country a kind of legitimacy.*

*It is 10:00 AM and the class applauds and leaves for the next class.*

*Yoni thinks that the next class is a math class, but it is a Chemistry class and he has to run back to the dorm to get his Chemistry books. I walked back to the dorm with Yoni between classes and we talked about social relationships at Muss. He told me that he had met a friend from Israel, Robby, with whom he had shared two Shabbat experiences. "They are a very religious family, but that's an experience for me as well." He spoke about how they form informal relationships with several students in the program who may not be tied to the Milken program.*

*As we enter the classroom, I introduce myself to the teacher, Rochelle, and explain my purpose and request permission to take pictures and shoot video. Rochelle is from London, and has a British accent.*

*Once in the classroom, the teacher returns tests to the students. Yoni asks to borrow a calculator. (Later I learn that he loaned his to another student to use in a math test during the same period.) The teacher visits with each of the six students to review any materials on the test.*

*Rochelle announces that there will be a test next Thursday, and there is a quite a bit of negotiation with her as apparently there is a core test on Thursday as well. She maintains that they will keep the test date unless there is another discussion about learning on the chapter. Yoni does not participate in this discussion, but is attentive to his test.*

*Rochelle hands out a worksheet with several chemistry problems. Yoni begins working the problems and Rochelle again visits and circulates with every student to be sure that they understand the problems and the process. Several of the students work in hevruta of two or three, but Yoni works alone. Like the Holocaust center, the windows of the classroom are in the back of the room; Yoni sits on the back right side, and I set in the back left. As the students are working, I begin to shoot both photos and video.*

*As the students are working the first problem on PH, it becomes apparent that they need some review and Rochelle takes a bit of time to review acids and bases and the calculations to determine them. She explains to me that the last time the class had been together was two weeks ago, due to scheduling and due to Purim. As she is presenting this to me, there is a side conversation that Pesach is but two weeks away, and several of the children are excited about going home for the holiday. (Remember the discussion on the bus with another student.. Tom Lahav) Rochelle says to the class, "A whole new group comes in after Pesach, and I have trouble remembering when I saw you – even though I'm here at school a lot."*

*Yoni asks to borrow a pencil.*

*There are six students in the class, and I notice that the stronger students gather on one side of the room, and the less strong on the other. Yoni sits almost alone.*

*Rochelle goes over that first problem and I wonder if the worksheets are tied to the book, and I begin a side conversation with one of the students about how they get the information. The student tells me that they all live on FirstClass, and that Ms. Morlok emails Rochelle the information. Rochelle jumps into the side conversation as she walks about and informs me that this year is better, "We didn't do that last year." The students inform me that the only the dorms are networked and the classroom building is not. This conversation morphs into a conversation about where they are in the book compared to students at Milken. One students says, "We are two chapters ahead of Milken."*

*Yoni is working on the second problem by this point.*

*The room is very quiet as the students work individually and together on a second problem worksheet. Yoni works alone and asks the teacher for help. She sits on the desk, takes his pencil and shows him the first steps in the problem.*

*11:24 AM – Yoni doesn't have a calculator to work the problem and the teacher returns to him to help him with the second problem.*

*When most of the class has finished the problem set, the teacher reads out the answers and double checks. She speaks quickly and with authority and with a definite British accent.*

*The teacher tells them that they can choose when to have a break and the class decides to complete a third problem set based on pages 631-632 of the chemistry book.*

*11:45 AM – The teacher leaves to get a book and Yoni turns on the fans in the room. As I watch the class and the work of Yoni, I must wonder whether the teacher here has communicated with Ms. Morlok about Yoni's work. I can see that he is struggling with the concepts and the application of the concepts to particular problems. I also notice a "media cabinet" built into the corner of the room which contains a video player and a CD player and has a TV on the top. I later notice the same kind of cabinet in each room.*

*12:00 PM – The teacher asks Yoni to stay behind a bit at lunch to go over a few things.*

*12:05 PM – The teacher and the students go over the answers to pages 631-632. Rochelle tells Yoni to write the answers down so that he can work them backwards.*

*12:10 PM – Class ends and we go to the dorm for a meeting I have called.*

*12:20 PM – I meet with the students from Milken as a group in the dorm and tell them three things. I first thank them for their hospitality and for their energy and enthusiasm. I tell them that I can see why they like this program and that I really don't want to leave on Friday. Next I tell them that I have brought along their first "college folder" from College Counseling. They audibly groan, and I mention to them that there is nothing to complete, fill out, or do, and that this are information for them to read as they can. I do not hand*

*them out at this time as the rest of the time will be spent looking at them.*

*I finally tell that group that I too am a student, a full time graduate student going to classes and working on projects. I tell them that I'm interested in the Tiferet program and that we will be having an interview with Rabbi BK tomorrow, and that my role is to study the culture and the beliefs and actions of the group and not to evaluate any single person or any single program. I mention that my work will most likely result in an interactive web site spanning two years of the program. I ask if anyone has questions, and no one does, and then I invite them to engage me in conversation if they wish.*

*I ask the students how they knew of the meeting, and they all respond that they were "texted" by Orly and Eitan during the morning. This was the rash of cell phone messages that I had noticed earlier in the day.*

*I ask for help in handing out the folders and then we go to lunch.*

*At lunch I notice that the trays are a different color and remark on this to Yoni, who says he hadn't noticed. When we sit with Eitan, he explains that to keep Kosher they use two sets of trays, one for milk and one for meat, and the noon meal is the meat meal of the day. Our conversation at lunch revolves around the fatigue of the students at the hectic schedule and Eitan informs me that he had in fact slept in a bit.*

*After lunch Yoni returns to the dorm and I notice that some of the students have sandwiches not served a lunch. When I question them, Yoni says, "Not everyone goes to lunch. Have you seen the hangout?" He then takes me to the local "hangout" which is adjacent to campus. (Later in the day as I'm walking about waiting for the bus to the soccer game, I notice that there seems to be a fence running around the whole campus and that this hangout is inside the fence. In fact, I can see now way through the hangout to get outside the campus.)*

*During this walk, Yoni tells me that he is up until almost 11:30 PM each night working on homework and that*



*he is overwhelmed with work. "I do the best I can, but it just takes longer than others. Still this experience is worth it." I ask Yoni about his favorite class and he responds, "Core, of course. I love the core class despite the work."*

*After lunch, we go to Math class, again with Rochelle. She and I exchange pleasantries about getting to know one another pretty well today. I ask her why she has come to Israel, and she says, "Zionism, that plague and that promise."*

*There is lots of individual chatter in the class as the students all have individual needs. I cause a bit of stir in the hallway/class as I went into the ladies room to use the facilities by mistake. The Milken students in the hallway have a party with this and we are shushed by another teacher anxious to begin class. I return to Rochelle's classroom.*

*This class has 13 students of differing ability levels. Yoni sits in the same seat and is one of three students who carry over from chemistry to math.*

*Rochelle again announces a test next Thursday, and the students chime in a chorus that there is a core test next Thursday. They negotiate with Rochelle, who says she will consider moving the test, but that the class must start the next chapter on Sunday. She continues by saying that the overlap will be something that they will have to adjust to, and that they do need to take a test. As she walks about the room, she tells me that she will have a special study session but that only one student will show up.*



*Yoni is working the problem set at the desk. It is apparent to me that Rochelle goes over the material and uses the class time to do some of the homework, a reality given the busy*



*schedule of the students. I notice that Yoni has his calculator now and appears to be more confident, but still quiet. He works with one other student in the back corner of the room.*

*There are many simultaneous questions to the teacher in the room. At one point Arielle pipes, "At Milken, they only give us one problem. Right Roger?" The class seems based on individual needs and the teacher circulates for most of the period, stopping to demonstrate key concepts on the board.*

*(I am left reflecting about three concepts which I note on my paper.... What is the nature of the "creation of instruction," "the ownership of instruction," and the "assessment of instruction." I also reflect on what happened to the old practice of having students solve problems on the board – as I notice the same kind of pedagogy happening at Milken. I vow to follow up on my own on these issues and recognize that my personal observations may be "extra-ethnographic." I'm also convinced more and more about "Today we will learn and explore."*

*Yoni works very diligently through the homework assigned, but works quietly.*

*2:25 PM – Five minute stretch break*

*2:30 PM – Back on task*

*2:40 PM – Practice on the problem sets continues*

*2:45 PM – I finally figure out that the schedule of the institution for Milken is built on the day of the week – a Shabbat oriented schedule in that certain classes are offered on certain days of the week, and that Core is always a Sunday, Monday, Tuesday program of almost whole day instruction and that the general studies*

*programs are taught on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday in the afternoons.*

*3:00 Class ends, we take a short break and I meet Yoni in the room across the hall for English Honors.*

*Yoni sits on the left side of the room with his back to the windows. There are 13 students in this class, 5 white T Shirts... and the teacher is Jill Seigal, Academic Dean.*

*Jill is also British with a definite English accent. I reflect that today I have heard teachers from Great Britain entirely. Aubrey is Scottish with a brogue and both Rochelle and Jill are from London.*

*Jill begins with an overview of the day, indicating that today the students will listen to an introduction to Equus, do a section in vocabulary and then read silently in Equus.*

*Jill discusses the stage and setting of the play, noting it's fantastical and unrealistic qualities which hold it in artistic tension with the realism of Hedda Gabler. She notes that the play is about relationship, sex, and psychology, and that these are all important concerns as we grow up. She also notes that there is an historical inception point for the play saying, "The author didn't pull this entirely out of thin air, and he chose it to represent deeper psychological concerns."*

*She then tells the students to work on their Vocabulary for College books, pp. 176-185. As they are working we step into the hall to have a conversation about Yoni – as she has heard that today I chose to follow him.*

*She inquired as to my methodology and I explained that it was both planned and circumstantial, not discussing my past relationship with him. I explained too that I knew Yoni was not the strongest student in the program, but that by following him for the day I hoped to get a feeling for the tensions of the program.*

*She remarked that she thought this was a great idea, "More teachers should see the world from the student's point of view."*

*She then asked me about any ideas I had for the program and I explained that my purpose here was not to criticize or necessarily evaluate yet, but to see and study. As the curriculum and scheduling person she explained to me her role in setting the schedule and that she literally has to “build backwards” to include the minutes required for instruction in the sending school in relationship to the core program. She also explained that the core program requires great resources and support and is central to the mission of Muss, so that there are often times when teachers in the general studies program must resort to allowing students to work on the homework during the class time.*

*Jill asked me what I thought and I told her that at this point, I’m latching on to two key ideas – teacher visitation and looping grade 9 and 10 teachers. It’s very easy to move from the ethnographic concerns to the concerns of the principal and program planner.*

*We return to the classroom and Jill lets the students read from Equus silently. She checks the page numbers for each and then assigns ten pages beyond the average number read.*

*As the class is dismissed at 4:30, I shake Yoni’s hand and tell him that he is “released” for the day. He says, “No problem at all, Mr. Fuller. It was just fine and kind of fun. Hanging out with you is easy.” I say “Thank you.” and he leaves. Yoni has not raised his hand once in this class, but has been diligent in doing the work.*

*As we are leaving, Jill and I put the chairs on the desks, and we walk back to the administration building together, talking about the ideas of a focused child study on Yoni, the ideas of sharing ownership of the program by sending teachers, and the idea of looping a foundational set of teachers committed to instruction in Israel. As my room is near her office, we stop at her office briefly and continue the conversations, and this she discloses to me that the grade 10 model is working so well for Muss that they are trying to convince other schools to move to this model. She says “The younger children are more challenging, but also more rewarding.”*

*At 5:00 PM, I get my lap top and sit outside David's office. We chat a bit and exchange tidbits about the number of hours we work. I did share with him the idea about visiting faculty and looping foundational teachers and he had to think a bit about the looping idea until he saw that a core set of teaches could complement and enhance the practice here.*

*We were interrupted by Gideon, whom I met, and I did some email, and then prepared for the soccer game at 6:15 PM.*

*I completed some typing and then prepared for the game, sneakers, white shirt, blue windbreaker and then walked around campus. I wandered. On the far left hand of the campus was a "settlement" of some kind and it was 5:30 and people were gathered there. When I was walking through the area, one of the residents interrupted me and asked me what was my business, and I told him that I didn't speak Hebrew, and he responded, "Then you shouldn't be in this place." I apologized and left.*

*I then wandered the rest of the campus and had quite a view. I learned that the campus is fenced and that there really is only one entrance. I also learned that there are multiple "schools" on the campus with multiple levels of residents. I saw the basketball courts and sat for a while in the warm sun, enjoying a diet coke.*

*At 6:00 PM I wandered to the dorm and met the students and just hung about for awhile. We all boarded the bus at 6:15, and the excitement of the children was only overshadowed by the excitement of Aubrey, who joined us, and of Eitan and Orly. Once on the bus, I promptly fell asleep and slept until we arrived at the game.*

*We were dropped off before the entrance of the game and then we all walked together through the crowd, which was estimated at some point at 40,000. Eitan and Aubrey coordinated this event through cell phones. We made it around the back of the stadium and entered from the rear, making it closer to our seats. Once*

*we found our seats, and settled for a minute, I promptly left to find the men's room, and another student joined me, saying, "That was a long bus ride." The men's room was a tad bit interesting as the stantions for urinating were little more than a series of connected ceramic panels with an automatic flush, very old style in a new stadium.*

*Everyone was excited for the game against Chile, although it was billed as a friendly game. I shot both photographs and videos of the start of the game, and then Eitan brought out the face paint and the students were even more excited. The whole process took about a half hour and Eitan gave me my dash of paint along with everyone else. Again, I took pictures. I sat close to the students at first who when they found seats closer to the game left, and then Aubrey moved into to sit closer, and we chatted about the game. The clock for the games counts continuously upward for two 45 minute periods with no time outs. Time outs and penalty time only occur in the second half and are tallied by the referee. Aubrey ran an almost constant narrative of the game and explained things to me, and he was excited when the "new" player for Israel, an 18 year old with the number 18 came onto the field.*

*Israel won the game with a score of 1-0, and the crowd was jubilant. I hope some of the video captures this.*

*At the end of the game, Eitan and Orly gathered the students and put them in a natural "spot" to wait for some of the crowd to exit. Then they each took a role at either leading or following, and escorted the group out of the game, down a road, across another road to the waiting busses. They literally herded the students like a flock and kept watch on the beginning and ending of the group, both encouraging and commanding them to keep ahead. Two boys had stepped in behind a bridge support to relieve themselves and Eitan was prompt and blunt with them to catch up – all in Hebrew and with determination. Event though my job is to report, I must comment that this was one of the most professional things I have seen in all my travels here. I was so very impressed with those two young people. I may have broken some unspoken rule about confidentiality or privacy, but I mentioned this to Orly the next morning in the most complimentary of terms.*

*We traveled home and I sat beside another student, who I know pretty well, but whom I forgot was taking Chinese at Milken and so is taking Chinese here at Muss. He is the only student in the class and I asked him how it was going. He said well, and we chatted about Brandon and Simon's efforts to go to China next year. I asked him about Muss and he raved about the good time and the great work. He freely told me that the key to every student's work here is FirstClass and that they would not be without it. They get information from home and from teachers through this program, and depend on it without end.*

*We arrived home at about 11:30 and I went promptly to bed.*

### *Reflections on Wednesday*

- 1. The day is busy. Yet at the same time, this is essentially a "boarding school" in the tradition of boarding schools. My own experience here is that the children do need to be scheduled and busy.*
- 2. I'm noticing a general absence of the issues relating to athletics and physical exercise. It may not be possible in the daily schedule given the role of the core class and the other regular classes.*
- 3. I also notice that our group takes their laptops with them everywhere. It makes me realize that we have achieved a 1-1 computing environment for this program and perhaps a laptop needs to be a part of the program. At the same time, it is very apparent that the system at Muss needs to have the capability of accepting the laptops. There doesn't seem that intentionality or resource present at the current time.*
- 4. Most of all I wonder about the "ownership of instruction" issue. It seems to me that the students are almost passive learners, in their seats all the time and not active in the process of learning. It is almost exclusively directed learning and I can see that this must be exhausting for all the faculty and almost tedious for the children.*

5. Finally, and most importantly, there is the quandary of "Yoni." There is no doubt of two realities here. First, that he is academically overwhelmed. He is just not able to keep up with the pace of work and the extent of work. He tells me this himself. Yet at the same time, he will be one of the students who will grow and benefit from the program the most. He is having the experience of a lifetime and he tells me that himself. In some ways, I wish he were more comfortable in his own skin and could let go of some of the academic responsibilities.



Thursday, March 27, 2008

### Opening Notes

Last night a new visitor came to the dorm at about 10:00 PM and went to the room next to mine. The walls are paper thin and I could almost hear her unpacking her suitcase. She was wearing clacking heels.

Today, I made the decision to use the day as a writing, catch up, and interviewing day. I will not visit classes. I did stand outside the dorm at 7:45 AM to say good morning and to wish the students a good day, reminding those who are to be interviewed that we will do an interview today. The students remarked that it



*felt like Milken. When I remarked to one student that my life career was as a Wal-Mart greeter, she responded, "We like you better as principal."*

- 1. At 10:30 AM- I have an appointment with Gideon Shavit, Chief Executive Officer*
- 2. At 11:30 AM – Gordon is arriving from Jerusalem to help with the interview and to take me about.*
- 3. At 5:30 PM – I will try to have dinner with the students.*
- 4. At 7:00 PM – I will try to meet with David*

*Sometime I need to pack and be ready and make arrangements for tomorrow's departure. I have been up since 3AM, went for a walk at 6 AM to the downtown where I have taken to freshly baked bread, a delicious breakfast and perhaps the most memorable part of the trip.*

*I went to breakfast briefly and told some of the students that this had to be a Mr. Fuller student day, that I had to have some time to catch up, meet with administration, and then meet with Gordon.*

*I returned to the room, and huddled over the computer to type the notes from yesterday, which turned into extensive notes. This actually took from 8:00 AM until 10:30 AM and I did not leave the room at all.*

*At 10:00 AM, I happened to walk into the faculty room and meet with David, who was lamenting about a Milken parent who had written to take his son out of school during the week that they do Israeli military training in order to attend a wedding. David was somewhat put out and was writing a terse letter back to the parent. We laughed a bit about the similarities of our positions and that we never get to do the emails as everyone was dropping in to the office all day. Jill Segal dropped by and chatted, and then Chaim Fishgrund dropped by and I noted that the conversation switched to Chaim. I introduced myself and then said I'd drop*

*by his office.*

*At 10:15 AM, I went to join Chaim briefly and sat at his conference table briefly. We discussed the program and how pleased he is with Milken's presence and the idea of the grade 10 age group. "While they are not so individual, they are more manageable." Chaim told me of his narrative having been there many years, becoming operations director, then principal, then head of the school. It was a brief meeting as another person interrupted and said he had a scheduled meeting.*

*AT 10:30 AM, I met with Gideon Shavit, whose office was next to my room. We began rather promptly with a review of his narrative, that he had been a CPA and accountant and that he had worked for the Israel Nuclear Commission \*(name?), and that he had then worked in various places on the world as a person who brings the technology of the Nuclear Commission to production of product and invention. He had joined Alexander Muss only six months before this as he had retired from another position in Miami, wanting to return to Israel and be with family and grandchildren.*

*He informed me that due to the declining value of the dollar that the institution was in some financial straits and needed to do some fund raising. We talked about programming and I shared with him my desire to see additional Israel programming during summer months. He explained that he had been working for a year to develop a summer college experience with Ruppin College, who has a campus on the Mediterranean and an experience in Marine Biology. When I showed some interest in this as a possibility, and he said, "Well, what are you doing for the next three hours. Let's go see the campus."*

*I explained that I had to see Gordon and that complete an interview. He said, "Well, we shall go after that. You need to meet the head of the school and the science teacher today."*

*We continued speaking about the potentials of an Alexander Muss component in an expanded summer school program, and he agreed that this is a collaboration to be followed up. Gideon is an older person,*

*short hair, buzzed cut, glasses, almost like looking at an Israeli version of myself and he doesn't mince words at all. He discussed how he had to convince Muss that it was time for some customized programming and that the institution needed sprucing up. His own office was very newly redone and "sparse" of the usual Zionist materials that seems to litter the other offices.*

*Immediately after meeting with him, Gordon telephoned and I literally walked out of the administrative building and saw Gordon in the driveway walking toward me, talking on the cell phone. We hugged and then walked toward the dorm. I had no idea of where to take him for an hour, and then he remembered the "hangout" at the rear of the property. We did discuss the hangout as a place which seems to be between three schools and yet no one school and intermingle with the other school. Gordon ordered a pastry and a Diet Coke and I ordered a Diet Coke and we sat at one of the picnic tables.*

*It is our way to talk without an agenda and we exchanged pleasantries about the family and about living in Jerusalem. We spoke about issues at school, the emerging Israeli curriculum and the work that it requires and how we move a mandate into an owned process. We spoke about Bereshit and he complemented me on my interpretation – and he reminded me that he was impressed enough to have left a phone message at the office in Los Angeles, which I recall as having been very complimentary. I continued our conversation on Bereshit saying that God did work every day, that he called every day "good." We spoke about the meaning of "Tov" in the expression and Gordon said, "I interpret this Tov as a good of completion of being done and not as an assessment per se of the product. We talked about the sequence of days, and that it is on day six that God says, "Very good." and I maintained that this very good is also a very good on the work of the week and the complexity involved in man's creation, a very good at having done the job and at having ended well. I was very sure to make the point that every teacher should be content to do a "good" piece of work every day and end the week with a "very good."*

*We spoke about Rennie's retirement, and were joined by two students, happy to see Gordon. At that point, I*

*asked Gordon to facilitate the interview with the eight students picked by Rabbi Eddie. I explained that there were five cascading questions and that his only job for 45 minutes was to facilitate and not direct the conversation. Gordon agreed willingly and we walked the short distance to the dorm, rearranged some of the seating. When the students entered, I asked them how they knew, and they said, "We were texted yesterday."*

*I explained that an ethnographer is a gatherer of narratives and stories and that my work is not to evaluate them or the program but to understand what they think and value and what they are finding and experiencing. I explained that I was "prohibited" from being a part of the interview and that Rabbi BK had driven down to help me. I staged things and then left for the outside. At this writing I have not seen the video.*

*Rabbi BK finished in about 45 minutes, Nate Schloss shot the sequence and he mentioned to me that he wanted to speak at dinner with me about technology issues. I thanked all the students and then reset the furniture.*

*Gordon made a call, and in about 10 minutes we headed off to see a friend of his who lives in Hod HaSharon. As we were driving into the neighborhood, he was explaining what a special person this was and how he had known her and her former husband for years through a connection to Brandeis Bardeen. I casually remarked at one location, that "I will take this house," and he drove simultaneously into the driveway. I had serendipitously picked Ruti's house.*

*Gordon introduced me to an elderly lady who will soon be celebrating her 80'th birthday and who lives in a "moshad," the original agricultural cooperative established in 1946-1950, and that each "parcel" has five acres on which a family can build two houses. Ruti explain that she lives in this house now which was build room by room by her husband, by her, and by their son since that time. The house was like a cottage with several smaller rooms, and one unusual free form ferrous concrete structure with arched ceilings off the rear*

*of the house. Ruti has a natural proclivity for hosting and was welcoming of Gordon, whom she has known for years, and me. She offered us fresh squeezed orange juice which had been taken from the four acres of trees behind the house and bread she had baked yesterday.*

*As she had to make a quick run and drive, she left after about 15 minutes of social welcome and commentary on architecture, and Gordon and I reviewed her story of having met her husband in the states while he was there learning agriculture and then returning to Israel in 1947, working for the Moshad to build a settlement and working with the Haganah to repel English rule. This was a real life framing event for the work that had been covered by Aubrey all week.*

*When Ruti returned, we took a short walk around the property, overgrown with weeds and little brush and through the orange and citrus groves which were in bloom, and rich with a fragrance which was almost overpowering. I told Ruti that is had been my morning walk dream to take a nap in an orange grove and that I might not leave. She explained, "I'm much too old now to take care of all this so someone else comes in to manage the property. I kept this first section, such as it is, for sentimental reasons as these are the trees we planted in 1947. "*





*We stopped at one tree, huge, and covered with a green light grapefruit, and she said, "And this is what Gordon planted, his chocolate pudding tree." She explained that Gordon had wanted to plant this tree because the fruit tastes like chocolate pudding, and now the tree is grown beyond all proportion. Gordon took our picture in front of the tree.*

*After we walked a bit more, we returned to the house and she began to explain the role of her husband in the war for independence, that he had met Shalom Bardeen and received a unique recommendation, despite what she labeled as his dyslexia, and that this had taken him to the United States where Shlomo had given him a 1200\$ scholarship to attend agricultural school, but that he would only get 100 a month for school as Shlomo had determined he was terrible with money, his having thought that he would get from Israel to California on less than 100\$.*

*Ruti then went on to explain the roles her husband had played in the formation of the state, and in particular the role he was given by Ben Gurion to bring the first currency, which had been printed in America, back to Israel. She had trouble remembering names and had to go to the archives stored in plastic paper covers to see them and remind herself and show us. She showed us the letter from Ben Gurion authorizing her husband to travel with "documents" and asked everyone to be of assistance as he was an important courier. She showed us the documents and copies of the currency so important to the new state of Israel.*

*After several wonderful and delightful stories told by a woman who has seen history and lived history, and who Gordon wished, "May you live to be 120." Gordon said that we had to leave.*

*I found her presence and her narrative so comfortable and so compelling that I could have stayed another hour to hear and listen. I did think that there must be several of these individuals who built the state of Israel, whose stories should be recorded and documented. I hated to leave this, but Gordon did have*

*Gordon delivered me back to Muss. I entered my room, gathered all my loose shekels and headed into town to buy stationery, and a pen. I went to the stationery store I had found on Tuesday in my mad search for a converter. I picked out some stationery to write thank yous to the people I had visited and then asked the clerk for help using the shekels. She and I counted out the 29 shekels, numbering them one by one, 10 by 10 until I had the right price. I left with a "Toda Raba." and headed back to school.*

*This time I took the left side of the road and stopped to buy an ice cream, again with the intent to use the shekels I could not take home. The clerk asked me if I spoke Hebrew, and I said, "no ivrit" and he said, "En Francais?" and I responded, "Oui, un peur and tres mal." We counted the shekels in French, shook hands vigorously, and I headed back to school this time with a strawberry ice cream on a stick and walking by the orange groves in full bloom.*

*I returned to my room, wrote thank you notes and about 4PM the secretary from Gideon's office knocked on the door and inquired what I was doing that night. I said that I needed to say goodbye to the students and that I was free.*

*"Good," she said, "Gideon wants to take you to the hotel at Herzelia to meet with the president of Ruppin College."*

*"OK, why not."*

*"Fine, I'll make arrangement and let you know."*

*A half hour later she told me to be ready at 8:30 PM to go to the Dan Hotel and meet with these two persons.*

*I went to dinner with the students, particularly to find Nate Schloss, as he had asked to speak with me. This was the first dinner I had attended, and I noticed that the blue trays had returned and that there was no meat at the meal.*

*I found Nate, and we began a conversation about the technology. He said, "They shut the Internet off at 11:00 PM and yet we do not have lights out till 11:45 PM."*

*"Why?"*

*"They want to be sure that we are studying, but we are all uploading picture and text to our blogs and it's slow because there is not enough bandwidth. They are running the Internet on what I think is the equivalent of a home system and it slows down when we all use it every night."*

*We spoke about this for some time as he really had a great deal to say. He told me that he can hack into the servers and that there is really no Internet security at the school.*

*We then went outside and I began an explanation of the way that First Class is really a design front end to SQL, and he had not heard that before. He did say, "Mr. Fuller, I found the article about you and First-Class in Maine."*

*"I've been outed," I said.*

*"Quite impressive," he said. "How long have you been using this?"*

*"Since 1989 or thereabouts"*

*"But, Mr. Fuller, that was before there was an Internet."*



*I explained how we could gate conferences and asked that Nate write to me directly about his concerns.*

*I went back to my room and took a shower and a fifteen minute nap.*

*I met Gideon at 8:30 and we journeyed to Herzelia to a very lovely resort hotel where we met with the President and Marine Biology professor about their summer programs. The professor said, "We are hungry to build a program and bring students to Israel."*

*"We can take them to the Mediterranean, to the Red Sea, to the Dead Sea, and they can integrate all the sciences in one course."*

*We spoke for about a half hour and then they had to leave as they had spent the day being hosted by the Canadian Consulate General. I agreed to bring the program material back to Rennie and Metuka.*

*Then, Gideon suggested that we go out to eat, saying, "After this week, no one has hosted you in Israel."*

*We found a late night restaurant, Gideon ordered a bottle of wine and a set of four Israel style appetizers and we had a good conversation about school and about programs and about bringing students to Israel.*

*We spoke at "dinner" about the program, and Gideon spoke candidly about the financial situation of the school, his drive to improve that situation, and his goals. He wants to outsource the food program, increase the student body, and expand the programs, particularly the summer program. He told me that the school "leases" the land on which it sits, and in fact does not own the property. He informed me that there were "other" schools on the land, including a law school.*

*At 11:30 Gideon drove me back to the dorm, I thanked him, went to the room, wrote another thank you note, set my clock ahead to 12:30, packed to leave and then went to bed.*

*Now, at last... who knows what time it really is, I'm on the plane bound for Newark, to be home before*

*Shabbat almost before the time that I left this morning at 8AM. Well, it will be 7:30 PM, but on the same day.*



#### *Reflections on the day*

*1. It was not part of my initial plan to have such a whirlwind day. I had hoped to catch up on the notes and then get some of my own work done. While I had brought some books for research, I never got to open any one of them.*

*2. Gideon is an interestingly aggressive person. I thought I might meet with him and have a short conversation, and yet most of the day seemed tied to his presence, either in the brief meeting of the AM or of the trip to meet the people from Rippin College. I have lots of information to share.*

*3. I recognize the multiple purposes of these notes. They are on one hand raw data, and on the other hand a mandate for program refinement. There are many opportunities here for the right person.*

*4. How much I value Gordon. He rented a car, drove from Jerusalem and helped me with the interviews and a lovely afternoon out among people he knew. While most of this day was not spent with the students, it was a very valuable day indeed. This was a day learning about real culture and real history.*

## My Week in Israel

Clearly the on-site visitation was an important way to gather cultural data – it was an invaluable source of information. From the different photographs and video, we have assembled a video clip about the week. The clip is divided into three sections, reflecting the social, the experiential, and the academic learning.

[Download Video](#)

## Commentary and Discussion

Field notes are so vitally important. This entire process of taking field notes defined the experience of visiting Muss. It was extremely important to write up the day's observations as soon as possible at the end of the day or very early the next morning, or in some cases as I woke in the middle of the night. What most impressed me was the range and the diversity of the note taking process. While I tried to grab as much as possible in the process, it soon became evident that it was impossible to script every single event of every single day. Nonetheless, by taking notes and being attentive to writing each night, I do feel that I was able to capture a good impression of life and culture at Muss for one week. There is no doubt that a week of field notes is better than no field notes, but I also felt that I knew a good deal before coming here as I have been informed all along the way. It would be wonderful to spend a month here during the four month stay, and I am sure that the rhythm of living would soon sink in more clearly. Nonetheless, the process here has been interesting and informative.

Returning to these notes almost a year later and re-reading them for preparation in the web site is an interesting experience. It is as if all field notes should be put away for a time and then reviewed in order to see if they stir "accurate" memories. These do for me. How interesting to me that after this length of time, the notes do in fact re-create the essence of the visit to Israel, capturing the ambiance of the school, the town, the experience of living in Israel. The review has taken a very long time and yet is also so very important to keep the notes fresh. The culture of the school comes alive, not just through the text, but also the pictures and the video.

There are several important conclusions for me to note here and then expand upon later. First, this is clearly a residential program in every sense of the word. I saw people giving of their lives in a way that can only really be experienced. It is not unusual for David Mitchell to work late into the night every night, only to be up early the next day for another event. It is not unusual for the Madrich to work from "shift to shift" as I call it, working with the students almost every minute that they are not in class. I noticed a unique division of responsibility – that the Madrich are responsible for everything but class time, and so the class time, when the students are with the teachers is a "reserved time" for them to rest, prepare, clean up, relax. On the other hand, when the Madrich are with the students, the Madrich work full tilt ahead – attentive to every single detail and every single child. One clear conclusion that I reached concerned the invaluable role of the Madrich. Clearly they are central to the program's success.

Given the residential nature of the program, there is another feature which is noteworthy. People tend to forget that these students live with each other for four months. Every single behavior and every single quirk is somehow made transparent and communal. They must function in some regards as their own support system and every single room develops its own unique subculture. Some rooms are just messy, some are neat, but each room maintains a kind of "territory" for

each child. They do live closely together, but they also live very independently, as they each have cordoned off a small individual and private space. This may be the desk, this may be the bed, this may be a chair, but it was very obvious when I was in and out of student rooms that while they live communally, they also exist independently.

Clearly, the most important mission of the school is the teaching contained in the CORE program. This is the heart of the academic life of the school. Students spend up to three hours a day learning the history of Israel and then up to two or three days a week touring the country to reinforce the learning. I know that I will appreciate the battle for independence having seen the places in which the battle took place. Because this is the primary mission of the school, other academic areas are simply less important because there is less time for them. This is just a plain reality. I find myself wondering about the long term impacts here. What will happen to the students academic lives if they don't complete chemistry in the same fashion as they would have done in Los Angeles? What will happen to their college acceptances? Will it matter in the long run. Clearly a longitudinal study is called for which examines the role that this might play for the academic lives of the students.

Finally, there is just a raw physicality of being in the "place" of the school. The situation and the environment are just plain different. The students live differently, they attend different classes, the smells of the farmland around the school are different. They are allowed time to walk to town each and every night and it is a town, a kind of Israeli village, not the urban-suburban dichotomy of America. In that regard, they are living in an Israeli environment with several different ethnic populations represented at every turn. Even at Muss there is a kind of territoriality and a "place." Muss has several program operating simultaneously, and there are clear boundaries between places. At one time, I was asked to leave a communal outside gathering place into which I had wandered while on a walk.

Knowing the Hebrew warning posted signs would have helped in this case. Nonetheless, the place aspect of school here is vital to understand the culture of the the school.

Most of all, I felt the transformative nature of the experience at the end of that single week. I lived rather very simply in a very small dorm room for visitors to the campus. While I was offered a hotel, I would not have had it any other way, living as the students lived, eating in the cafeteria, learning to buy water at the water dispenser before tiyul, napping on the bus, listening in classes, and collapsing exhausted at the end of the day were all part of the experience. As I engage in preparing the notes, and in discussing what I observed, I must also remark the degree to which some of the text might be inaccessible to the general reader.

This is very interesting to me, as I may have unintentionally internalized some of the language and assumed that the reader will know the content and the sub-text of some vocabulary. This may be the result of being an emic observer.

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# Communications Study

**Introduction:** Another source of information relevant to the Tiferet Fellowship is the digital correspondence received by the school. This correspondence is restricted in nature because the data set is based on two presuppositions. First, it was necessary that I be copied or directly involved in the correspondence, and second, it presumes that the senders of that correspondence were comfortable with digital communication. From the outset of the program, I had been added to the email lists in order that I be informed about the program's development and consequently there were many emails which I saved. For the purpose of this section of the report 346 emails were saved and analyzed.

This process worked well during the 2006-2007 academic year and it did not work well during the 2007-2008 academic year. The reports listed directly below reflect the 2006-2007 academic year.

### For 2006-2007

**Methodology:** The method of analysis used involved HyperResearch, a qualitative analysis software program which allows for discrete cases and coding on a targeted data set. The emails were summarized in FirstClass, creating a large text document which was then opened using HyperResearch. The program allows for the independent creation of codes or the auto-encoding of key words. The following codes were used in the first level of analysis. The software allows multiple codes to be assigned to the same text passage, allowing for cross-analysis where multiple topics are found. I conducted two kinds of analysis, first by reading the text passage and coding by the criteria listed below, and then by "open coding," which allows the software to find all the occurrences of certain text passages.

**Academic Concern** – *This code was used when a particular concern about classes, grades, instruction was found.*

**Celebratory Statement** - *This code was used when any person in the digital dialog paid a compliment to another person.*

**Concern about a Student** – This code refers to particular and individuals concerns about an individual student or when an individual person expressed a concern about a student issue.

**Evaluation Concern or Statement** - This code refers to any statements or emails referring to an evaluation process.

**Israel Related** – This code was used when a particular mention about Israel was made. This code was very specific in nature.

**Parent Concern** - This code was used for concerns expressed by parents about their children, about conditions at the Alexander Muss Institute or Milken, or about travel, instruction, or support issues.

**Parent Origin** – This code was used when a parent initiated a concern or opinion.

**Parent-Student Communication** – This code represents those direct communications between parents and students on which I was copied.

**Programmatic Concern** – This code was used when issues about the program were raised by either parents, students, or faculty at either Alexander Muss or Milken.

**Reflective Statement** – This code was used when either a parent or staff member engaged in a reflective statement about the program or about the activities in the program.

**Presenting Information** – This code represents those times when the major purpose of the passage was to simply present information to either the parents or program personnel.

**Request for Information** – This referred to a request from a parent.



**RETURN HERE** – This was a code I used to alert me to places for further research or later analysis.

**Safety Concern** – This code referred to a particular student safety concern.

**School or Program Origin Concern** – This code refers to the times when an Alexander Muss or Milken staff member initiated a concern about program operations.

**School-Student Communication** – This code refers to the times when the school initiated a contact with the student on which I was part of the mailing list.

**Results:** HyperResearch permits a graphic representation of the coding results. That simple tally is telling. The graph below reveals the codes used, their frequency, the mean use of the code, the codes standard deviation in relation to the other codes used, and a bar graph tally of that relationship.

Coded Results Graph

Code	Total	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	Bar Graph
Academic Concern	15	0	15	7.5	10.607	
Celebratory Statement	17	0	17	8.5	12.021	
Concern about a student	14	0	14	7	9.899	
Evaluation Concern or Statement	17	0	17	8.5	12.021	
Israel Related	5	0	5	2.5	3.536	
Parent Concern	10	0	10	5	7.071	
Parent Origin	12	0	12	6	8.485	
Parent-Student Communication	2	0	2	1	1.414	
Presenting Information	33	0	33	16.5	23.335	
Programmatic Concern	56	0	56	28	39.598	
Reflective Statement	7	0	7	3.5	4.95	
Request for Information	6	0	6	3	4.243	
RETURN HERE	6	0	6	3	4.243	
Safety Concern	6	0	6	3	4.243	
School or Program Origin Concern	17	0	17	8.5	12.021	
School-Student Communication	9	0	9	4.5	6.364	

One of the conditions inherent in digital communications involves the frequency of emails relating to the concept of email and the use of FirstClass. This became

apparent as I coded the emails and discovered in the process that several of the emails had to do with the very topic of email and how the program might make

better use of the existing FirstClass system. These findings are important as they have an implication for the subsequent work in the 2007-2008 cohort. As indicated in the graph above, most of the communication which was forwarded through the system indicates parents were concerned with programmatic issues and with presenting information. It was as if the parents were looking to the school and the Alexander Muss Institute to be engaged in direct communication with them in regard to the program.

Prior to the departure of the 2006-2007 cohort of students, the parents were invited to school for a training session regarding FirstClass. Each parent was given an account on the school server and was shown how to use that account in order to communicate digitally with their child. Two different training sessions were held. This proved to be an important concern for parents as the open-coding report listed below indicates. Much of the digital communication had to do with the use of the email system itself, as if the parents and students were making an attempt to figure this out for themselves.

Code	Total	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	Bar Graph
Code for First Class	126	126	126	126	00nan	<div></div>
role of communication	53	53	53	53	00nan	<div></div>
Use of Email	558	558	558	558	00nan	<div></div>

The use of digital communication through the school server was an important part of the communication proto cal for the first year of the program. By the second year of the program, changes in the nature of the digital communication forced a change in the reporting of that communication.

For 2007-2008

Although the parents in the 2007-2008 cohort were trained in the same manner as the parents from the 2006-2007 cohort, they apparently did not feel the need to use the school server for email communication. By the second year of the program, the parents used their own independent email accounts to email the students in their school sponsored FirstClass accounts. There was so little digital traffic, that reporting the traffic patterns here becomes inconsequential.

This marks a rather decided departure from the first-held assumptions about communication. The program leaders first believed that most communication would be handled by the school as that is easier for children and for adults. On the other hand, that communication was also in a large part private communication between a parent and a child, and so was not something that was perhaps shareable. Secondly, by the time for the second cohort, the parent body had become more adept at digital communication and frankly preferred to use their own private system, although the students preferred to used their school sponsored FirstClass systems. Thirdly, Alexander Muss took up the mantle of creating appropriate communications for parents about program events through a weekly newsletter written by the program headmaster, Mr. Chaim Fishgrund.

These updates provide a unique history to the program, and while there is not space to list every update for every week of the 2007-2008 cohort, four updates seem important, as they were the main means of communicating with parents and Milken administrators.

## **HEADMASTER'S UPDATE MUSS – MILKEN TIFERET YISRAEL PROGRAM**

**February 1, 2008**

This is the first update that will be sent to you on a weekly basis. We hope these updates will assist you in following the progress of your sons and daughters throughout the session.

As I added several addresses to my lists, I would like to repeat what I wrote in my previous update. The students arrived safely on Wednesday January 30. David Mitchell, our Dean of Education, Orly and Eitan, the madrichim, met them at Ben Gurion airport. They drove to the campus where the students were welcomed by most of the staff. Welcoming the students in a ceremony is an opportunity to show our students how special they are for choosing to study at the Alexander Muss High School in Israel. This has been a tradition of the school for many years. Arriving at the school is the first of many special moments that together create a tapestry of the AMHSI experience. The rest of the evening was spent settling into their rooms and meeting their dorm counselors.

Thursday morning was Orientation Day. During the day the students heard explanations about the school by Yardena Nizri-Spector the Dean of Students, Jill Segal the Dean of General Studies, Sandy Hason the school nurse, and David Mitchell, Dean of Education. The students also had an introductory lesson by their Core Curriculum teachers – Aubrey and Philip. An important element of the orientation sessions was a review of our security regulations and procedures to ensure the students' safety throughout the session.

In the introductory lesson the students studied about the ancient Near East and why the Fertile Crescent became the Cradle of Civilization. Much of the material is, of course, a review of what the students learned in the past but is important information for the understanding of the history of Israel.

In the afternoon they had a dorm meeting, went on a tour of Hod Hasharon and just relaxed, catching up on sleep and getting over their jet lag.

Today the students began their general studies classes. After lunch, they will depart to spend Shabbat in Jerusalem. Some of you may have seen in the media that Jerusalem experienced a snowstorm on Wednesday and Thursday – more than a foot of snow fell. There is still some snow left on the ground and the students may get a chance to play in the snow. More importantly, they will go to the Kotel for Kabbalat Shabbat.

Attached is the pre-arrival letter as well as the student dorm and cell phone list, that I sent which some of you did not receive.

Introducing the TIF staff to you:

Aubrey Isaacs

Aubrey Isaacs was born and brought up in Glasgow Scotland, moved to England as a teenager and spent a year in Israel after graduating high school in 1980. That year turned into a second year, then a third and now twenty four years later, it is beginning to look rather permanent!

In Israel, Aubrey attended Yeshivot in Jerusalem and Gush Etzion and then served in the IDF tank corps before attending Bar-Ilan University where he took his B.

A. in Jewish History and Education. Aubrey also attended rabbinical school and acquired his teaching diploma, specializing in rabbinic literature and Tanach.

Aubrey returned to Glasgow in 1989 to serve as Director of Jewish Education for the Glasgow Jewish community. In that capacity, he served as Head of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the local day school and directed the Glasgow Jewish Teenage Centre. Upon returning to Israel in 1992, he served as Deputy Principal of a school in Jerusalem before moving to the desert town of Arad to take up an appointment as Rabbi and Educational Director at the WUJS (World Union of Jewish Students) International Graduate Institute. Aubrey was the Director of the program

On the academic field Aubrey continued his studies and acquired a Masters Degree in Jewish Thought from Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

Aubrey joined the faculty of the Alexander Muss High School in Israel in 2004. Aubrey taught the TIF class in 2007.

Philip Nadel

Philip Nadel grew up in southern California. He holds a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley in Political and Economic Development in the Third World.

Philip received rabbinic ordination from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1988 and has focused his professional endeavors in Jewish day school education. From 1990 – 1995 he served as rabbi and teacher to students in grades 9-12 in the Milken Community High School. Simultaneously served as congregational rabbi at Stephen S. Wise Temple, and worked weekly in the synagogue nursery/pre-school.

Prior to making Aliyah this summer with is wife and three daughters, Philip lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin since 1996 and was the Co-Director and Jewish Studies Principal of the Milwaukee Jewish Day School.

Philip is also a graduate of the Senior Educators Program of the Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at Hebrew University.

The Madrichim will be Orly Charas and Eitan Mor

Orly Charas

Orly grew up in Haifa, was very active in the Israeli Scouts Movement both as a member of the movement and a Madricha. Her army service was in a field intelligence unit up north.

Orly was sent as a shlichah through the Jewish agency to a Summer camp in South Africa; she also spent two summers as arts and crafts specialist and then as an Assistant Unit head in camp URJ Eisner.

During summer 2007, she spent some time volunteering in Africa working in a school in Kenya.

Orly spent a year in Jerusalem in the “Betzael” art school in Hebrew University. She decided to take a year off and is happy to work with the Milken group.

Eitan Mor

Eitan grew up in Jerusalem and attended the Jerusalem Yeshiva during high school. As a teenager, he volunteered in Magen David Adom and as madrich in Bnei

Akiva.

He Served as a medic and commander in Sayeret Givati (the Givati Reconnaissance unit) and was a recipient of Brigadier's "excellence" commendation for outstanding performance during his service.

Eitan spent two summers as a Shaliach in camp JCC in North Virginia.

Last year Eitan was a madrich at the Alexander Muss high school working with a group from the Jess Schwartz Community High School in Phoenix.

This year Eitan spent a few months in the states working for Hillel at North Arizona University.

Shabbat Shalom

Chaim Fischgrund

Headmaster,

Alexander Muss High School in Israel

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## **MUSS – MILKEN TIFERET YISRAEL PROGRAM**

**February 17 – 22, 2008**

On Sunday Feb. 17, the students studied about the Hellenist period. The focus of their studies was on the open conflict between the Hellenist and Jewish cultures as well as the opposition to foreign rulers; a conflict that led to the Hasmonean (Maccabee) Revolt.

The immediate result of the revolt was the cleansing and rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. This event has been celebrated by Jews ever since in the festival of Chanukah.

Because of the revolt, the Hasmonean family (known as the "Maccabees") established an independent kingdom. The kingdom was short-lived, lasting only 80 years (142-63 B.C.E.) and was conquered by the Roman Empire. Roman rule eventually led to conflict and revolt. During this period one of the kings in Judea was Herod the Great who built many monumental structures that are still visited – the Kotel and Massada to mention two of the important ones. All the above was the background for the overnight tiyul on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The tiyul on Tuesday began in Jerusalem with a visit to the model of Ancient Jerusalem at the Israel Museum (some of you may have seen this model in your

visits to Israel when it was still located at the Holy Land Hotel). It is a scale model showing Jerusalem just before it was destroyed in 70 CE. The model enabled the students to see Jerusalem in its grandeur. Seeing and studying this model helped them place the archaeological remains they saw later in the day in perspective. We also took the opportunity of being in the museum to visit one of the most important exhibits – the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Shrine of the Book. These scrolls were written during the end of the Second temple period. Many believe that the scrolls were written by the Essenes who were members of a sect of Jews who believed that city life was much too influenced by Hellenistic culture. They left the urban life and formed colonies in deserted areas. They believed that by their pure living they could bring the Messiah.

The students had both a challenge and a treat on Tuesday. It snowed in Jerusalem on Monday night and Tuesday morning. Although it was cold and wet (raining heavily on them), the students found the strength to overcome the weather restrictions and still take advantage of the sites in Jerusalem.

From there the students went to the Old City and toured the excavations near the Kotel. Visiting all these sites enabled the students to see and understand the lifestyle of the Jews, how Rome influenced them and why the Jews and Romans were in conflict. This conflict led to revolt which this time ended in destruction, the remains of which are still visible.

At the end of the day they continued to the Ein Gedi Youth Hostel where they settled in for the night.

On Wednesday, the students arose very early and drove a short distance to Massada. They climbed the historic snake path to the top of the mountain fortress. The climb began at first light and the students still managed to see the sunrise from the top of the mountain. When they reached the top of the mountain they went to the Synagogue of Massada, one of the oldest Synagogues discovered in Israel. This is truly a fitting place to begin the inspirational visit to this important historic site. The hike gave many students a real sense of accomplishment but this was only the background for the real purpose of the tiyul. The students spent several hours on the mountaintop learning about the values and lifestyle of the Zealots. These values are the everlasting values of the Jewish People and Jewish culture. The students were able to re-enact in discussion much of the story they learned and really felt the history they studied.

After descending from the mountain the students went to the Dead Sea for lunch and had the opportunity to “swim” in the lake located in the lowest point on earth. Swim is a bit of a stretch – float is more accurate.

On Wednesday the core class was devoted to studying the rise of Christianity. The focus was on understanding the historic background that led to the development of one of the Jewish sects into a separate religion. This happened during the Second Temple days, in the decades preceding the Great Revolt.

On Thursday, the classes studied about the Jewish origins of Jesus and the historic background of Christianity.

Today was General Studies day.

This Shabbat will be a campus Shabbat but most students have opted to visit family and friends.

Shabbat Shalom,

David

David Mitchell

Dean of Education

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## **HEADMASTER'S UPDATE MUSS – MILKEN TIFERET YISRAEL PROGRAM**

**March 2 – 7, 2007**

I was away from the school in the past two weeks visiting a number of communities and schools. I returned yesterday and have been updated on the progress of the group.

Unfortunately, last night there was a terrible and tragic terror incident in a Jerusalem Yeshiva. Merkaz HaRav is named for Rav Kook, of blessed memory, the great moral thinker and beloved first Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community in the land of Israel in the 1920's. We are all, of course, very saddened and concerned by the events. We spent a long time this morning consulting amongst ourselves and some colleagues about the scheduling. We were and are in hourly contact with the "situation room" today. However sad and tragic the events at the yeshiva were last night, it does not automatically indicate that we should cancel tiyulim. We will be monitoring the situation throughout the day to see what changes, if any, are required in our scheduled programming. This is our longstanding policy and practice. Please be assured that we will do whatever is prudent and will not hesitate to err on the side of caution. The madrichim discussed the situation with the students last night and the students know that if necessary, there may be some modification in the itinerary.

On Sunday and Monday, the students began to study the period loosely referred to as the Middle Ages. The focus was to learn about the Jewish communities that emerged in the Diaspora. In particular, they focused on the Franco-German community (Ashkenaz) and the Golden Age of the Spanish Jewry. In this context, they also learned about the rise of Christianity and Islam and the impact these civilizations had on world history.

On Sunday night the group saw an Israeli Movie Halehaka (The Troupe)> The movie, a comedy, drama musical tells the story of an army entertainment troupe and has become a classic in Israel.

The tiyul on Tuesday, was to Belvoir and Tzfat. At Belvoir the students learned about the Crusades; the clash between the Christian and Moslem worlds. Belvoir was a Crusader fortress built in the 12th century. Here the students learned why the Crusaders came to Israel, what they did here and why their kingdom collapsed so quickly. Much of the time was spent re-enacting how the fortress was attacked.

In addition, the students also learned about the impact the Crusaders had on Jewish history both in Israel and in Europe. In fact, the 400 years starting with the Crusades in 1096 and ending with the expulsion from Spain in 1492 were the most brutal in Jewish history that led many Jews to search for meaningful answers.

The answer was found in Tzfat – the community of Mystics who developed the Kabbalah. In Tzfat this morning, the group had free time to walk through the artist quarter and shop. More importantly, they visited the ancient synagogues where the "Saintly Men" (an expression coined by James Mitchener in The Source) developed their unique lifestyle. The students were introduced to many concepts of Kabbalah and their significance to Jewish history. The visit to Tzfat included the ancient cemetery where many famous rabbis, Talmudic scholars and mystics are buried.

Between Belvoir and Tzfat the group stopped at the hot springs of Hamat Gader for lunch and the opportunity for a swim. The hot springs are located in an area

that has been famous for its therapeutic waters since the ancient times. It is known that many Romans traveled this long distance to bathe in the hot springs. At present the site also has an alligator farm and parrots.

After stopping for dinner in Afulah, the group returned to campus.

The group will return to Tzfat later in the semester to spend a Shabbat

Shabbat Shalom

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#### **HEADMASTER'S UPDATE MUSS – MILKEN TIFERET YISRAEL PROGRAM**

**May 2 – 9, 2008**

The students had a very enjoyable, spiritual and relaxing Shabbat in Tzfat. On Friday evening, the girls attended a Women's minyan and the boys the service in a Hassidic synagogue. They returned for a very spirited and musical meal followed by an Oneg Shabbat. On Shabbat morning the students had the opportunity to attend services in synagogues near the hotel. Later in the morning, they went to the park near the citadel in town. In the afternoon they met several of Aubrey's friends who live in Tzfat who spoke to them about their special life style in the city, one of the four holy cities of Israel. After Havdalah, they returned to campus.

We changed the activities scheduled for Sunday through Tuesday this week. We had originally planned to hike from the Mediterranean to the Kineret. However, we were able to get invitations for the full dress rehearsal in Mt Herzl for the Yom Ha'atzmaut ceremony on Monday night. Had we continued with the original plan of the Yam LeYam hike, the students would not have been able to attend the dress rehearsal. It was a good decision as the students thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

On Sunday and again on Monday the students hiked in the Judean mountains near Jerusalem. On Sunday night, the madrichim arranged a "Kumzits" with a campfire and story telling. On Monday night they saw the full dress rehearsal for the ceremonies that usher in the beginning of Yom Ha'atzmaut. The ceremony, in the presence of the Speaker of the Knesset, includes a military march and the lighting of 12 flames in honor of the 12 tribes of Israel. The students reported that this was truly amazing. One of the highlights was the performance by Sarit Hadad. Her career as a pop singer has been highly successful, with many of her songs topping the Israeli charts. Israeli Television selected her to represent Israel in the Eurovision Song Contest 2002 with the song, Light a Candle. She has been on a successful tour in the US in 2006. Many of the students knew her music well. Another highlight was the great fireworks. After the performance, they returned to the campsite.

On Tuesday, the students again hiked in the Judean Mountains. This time, however, the hike related to the theme of the 1948 War of Independence. This was very fitting as it was on Erev Yom Hazikaron, the Memorial Day to Israel's fallen soldiers. They began at the Machal Monument. During the War of Independence



3,500 volunteers poured into Israel and fought alongside Israel's finest, first in the Palmach and Haganah and after the State was declared – in the IDF as part of Machal, Mitnadvei Chutz L'Aretz (Volunteers from Outside Israel). The exact number of volunteers per country is still in some dispute, but the best estimate is that about 1,000 came from the United States. Most of the volunteers had fought in World War II and were eager to put their combat expertise into action to help defend the Jewish State. In addition, Machalniks staffed the ten 'Aliyah Bet' ships that brought 31,000 Holocaust survivors to Mandatory Palestine under the very noses of the British occupiers. That is half of all illegal immigrants who arrived through Aliyah Bet. This was Israel's costliest war and the toll was heavy for Machal. 119 Machalniks were killed in action with casualties particularly high among Machal pilots. After serving Israel in her hour of need, most of the Volunteers returned to their home countries, but about 500 stayed or returned soon after and decided to make Israel their home. The students hiked up the Burma Rd. This road, was paved as an alternative route away from the dangerous main road to Jerusalem. The Arabs in the mountaintops fired upon convoys carrying food and supplies and this alternative road enabled us to break the siege on Jerusalem. After reaching the top of the hill, the students got on bicycles which we had arranged for them and rode back to the monument. At the end of the activity, the students returned to campus.

In the evening, the students joined thousands of Hod Hasharon residents and walked to participate in a ceremony to commemorate Memorial Day in Israel. The Memorial Day is dedicated to the memory of Israel's fallen soldiers and fighters dating back to the pre-State period and in recent years, it includes ceremonies in memory of the victims of terror as well. Throughout the country, a siren is sounded at 8:00 PM, which ushers in the day's activities. The students, as everyone else in Israel that very moment, stood at attention to pay their respects. The students were very moved by the ceremony and many were impressed by the fact that so many people of the town came out to the ceremony. Students commented on the unifying feeling of realizing that at that very moment everyone in Israel, in hundreds of ceremonies were doing the same thing. Concluding with Hatikvah gave the students an extra special feeling. In the dormitory, the madrichim arranged a special program for the students during which they shared personal stories about friends who were killed in action.

On Wednesday the students drove to Latrun. In this area Joshua fought one of his important battles in Biblical period and the Maccabees had one of their important victories. In the modern period, the British built one of their Tegar fortresses in this strategic location. These fortresses were built in strategic locations around the country to enable the British better control. The British also used the Latrun fortress as a prison camp in which many underground fighters and leaders of the Yishuv were held prisoner.

Latrun was the site of one of Tzahal's painful defeats in the war. With Tzahal's inability to capture the fortress the siege to Jerusalem was not entirely lifted and alternate routes were needed. One of the famous alternative routes was the Burma Road.

Despite the defeat some important things happened in the battle. It is one of the places where Mickey Marcus, a Jewish American Colonel Machalnik distinguished himself becoming Israel's first Aluf (general). Unfortunately, Aluf Marcus was killed in a tragic mistake by "friendly fire" not far from there.

At Latrun Israel's Armored Corps was born. It is for this reason that Latrun today is a museum and memorial site to the Armored Corps. In addition, the amphitheater is the location for the graduation ceremonies of many courses in the army (basic training, swearing ceremony for some units, officer training course etc. The students saw the display of the armored corps.

In Latrun, the students participated in the Yom Hazikaron ceremony. Precisely at 11:00 AM a siren is sound throughout the country and hundreds of ceremonies take place in army bases, military cemeteries, memorials and schools.

In honor of Yam Ha'atzmaut most of the army units had exhibits in Latrun. The students met soldiers and spoke to them. Some even learned to paint their face in

camouflage.

Later in the evening all the students on campus walked to the central park of Hod Hasharon where they joined tens of thousands of the local residence in celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut. Some of Israel's top entertainers were on stage. The featured performers were Kaveret. Kaveret (meaning "beehive"), was an Israeli rock band in the mid-1970s that won much fame around the world for their often humorous songs and unique style of music. Their shows included many skits. In Israel, Kaveret is widely considered a breakthrough band in Israeli rock and pop history. Many songs by Kaveret became embedded in Israeli culture and are familiar to the new generation of Israeli youth.

Once every decade or so, Kaveret holds a reunion tour with performances in Israel and abroad. Reunion tours took place in 1984, 1990, and 1998 (which was held in honor of Israel's 50th Independence Day, as well as the 25th anniversary of the band's first album). Their last performance with the entire ensemble was in 2000, for a single show. The band did not reunite in its entirety, but most of the members came together to perform in Hod Hasharon in honor of Israel's 60th anniversary. There were fire works and a great atmosphere.

As somber and sad the atmosphere is on Memorial Day, so overwhelmingly joyous is Yom Ha'atzmaut. The students were able to experience both. During Yom Ha'atzmaut, the mourning gave way to celebration. It is a day that recalls the miracle of the state's founding in 1948, and its survival from the war launched against it the very next day by an array of powerful Arab armies. Unfortunately the fighting has never stopped. The juxtaposition of a national day of mourning followed immediately by a national day of merriment may seem jarring to many. However, this is the rhythm of life in Israel, where succeeding generations have learned to appreciate our independence and life more deeply and fully precisely because we recognize the sacrifice many made to give us this precious gift.

On Thursday, the students slept in late and then went to the beach. At the beach, they were able to see the flotilla of the Israeli Navy and the fly-past of the Air force near the beach in Herzeliyah. They returned to the campus for a festive Independence Day BBQ with all the students currently studying at AMHSI. Some students then walked to the park in Hod Hasharon where the festivities were continuing.

Today the students had general studies classes after which they departed for home hospitality

Shabbat Shalom

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#### **HEADMASTER'S UPDATE MUSS – MILKEN TIFERET YISRAEL PROGRAM**

**May 30 – June 4, 2008**

This is the last update we will be sending this semester. I am writing this update the morning after the group departed Israel to return to the US. (in fact the

students have not yet landed in LA as I write these lines). Some of you may be reading this update after meeting your sons and daughters. In the updates that we sent, we tried to convey to you the students' experiences. We are certain that your children told you throughout the semester how the program has affected them. You are now ready to meet your children and share all their exciting stories.

As I previously wrote, the students' last Shabbat was spent on campus. Towards evening, the students conducted a Kabbalat Shabbat service on campus. All the students gathered in the dining room for a festive Shabbat dinner. After dinner the students had an Oneg Shabbat activity.

Shabbat was primarily a day of rest and some closure activities with the madrichim. The students, of course, also studied for their final exam. After Havdalah the studies picked up in earnest

On Sunday and Monday, the students took their final exam in the core class. On Monday evening, the group drove to Jerusalem to participate in a festive Yom Shichrur Yerushalayim concert. This gala concert, with many of Israel's top entertainers, marked the end of the activities throughout the 40th year of the liberation of Jerusalem. Several of the speakers mentioned various historic events and the students were excited to recognize the historic significance of these events.

On Tuesday morning, the students relaxed on campus and went to the beach. In the afternoon, they packed, cleaned up and prepared for their final banquet and party. It was lovely dinner and party. In my closing remarks to the students, I asked them not to take this experience for granted. I asked them to be appreciative of the wonderful opportunity that you the parents and the Milken School leadership gave them. I pointed out that with this great privilege comes a responsibility. It is their responsibility now to bring everything they learned to their general community and the school community. I am certain they will all do so.

Yesterday was "Symbolic Day"- the last day of the program. We refer to this as "symbolic day" because the activities we choose are symbolic visits and activities to help the students review much of what they experienced to bring closure to the program. The students returned to Jerusalem to visit the Herzl Museum. The museum is located atop of Har Herzl (Mount Herzl). The museum details the life of Theodor Herzl, and describes the many contributions he made to the Zionist cause. A multi media presentation creatively portrays the motivations and visions of the Zionist leader. While the film and the museum depict the greatness of the Israeli cause, they do not pretend that Israel is the perfect state. The film also notes the work that needs to be done to fulfill the original goals of Zionism. The presentation concludes with a beautiful movie showing all that Israel has achieved in agriculture, science, culture and industry. It is a wonderful way to review much of what the students studied.

Har Herzl is Israel's National Cemetery and is the burial site of many great Israeli leaders including Herzl, Jabotinsky, Yitzhak Rabin, Golda Meir, Teddy Kollek and others.

Har Herzl is also one of Israel's military cemeteries. Visiting Herzl was an opportunity to pay homage to Israel's leaders and heroes. This was an important element in putting closure to the program.

The students had some free time for last minute shopping on Ben Yehuda Street, one of Jerusalem's pedestrian malls, before ending the day at a lovely garden restaurant at the Ticho House. In addition to a farewell dinner in Israel, the students also had a final discussion with their core teachers and madrichim. From there they went to the airport.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the confidence you placed in us in sending your sons and daughters to us. It is truly appreciated. I don't know

whether we can adequately express our appreciation and thanks to you for giving your sons and daughters such an important gift; the gift of an educational experience in Israel. We are certain that in years to come you and your children will be able to reflect back to this time in their life and appreciate how much they gained and how much they grew. We are all confident that we always did all that was prudent in caring for the well being and safety of your children. No less important, of course, is that we did all this without compromising the students' experience in Israel.

I know that the updates do not begin to reflect all that the students learned and experienced here. The Alexander Muss – TIF Program is much more than the itinerary reflects. The students learned and experienced Israel; its history and culture in a variety of ways. They traveled from Rosh Hanikra, Metulla and the Golan on the northern border to Eilat in the south and participated in many enriching activities including quality time with Israeli peers. All these activities were important pieces in a rich educational tapestry. I am certain that the students will always treasure their time in Israel. The students created a wonderful community. We on the staff were privileged to be part of this Kehilla.

We wish our students a soft landing home. All of us on the staff always try to imagine what the reunion of the students and their parents is like. If any of you would like to share this with us or send us any feedback, please do so. Feedback from you would be very helpful to us in evaluating what we accomplished and in preparing for next year's program

Please visit us when you are next in Israel.

Toda

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### **Commentary and Discussion**

Communication and digital communication alone could be suitable for research, and the Tiferet program complicates this study because it of its location and its distance. What is so manifestly obvious here is that there is no single paradigm of communication for the program, and that the communication which does exist is based on individual needs. If a parent needs to communicate with their child, they do so in the manner which is most convenient and expedient to them. If they need to communicate with either Milken or Muss, they do so again in the manner which best meets their immediate need. During the 2006-2007 academic year, it was apparent that the parent body was willing to try the method recommended by the school, however, this fell into disuse. It appears that there is just too much "overhead" in using a system which is not "owned" by the parents. Even during the second year of the program, there was a great effort on the part of Milken to provide for a communication system for the students and parents, however, this was not successful.

While the students used the default application FirstClass for almost all their communication back and forth to the United States, there is also no indication that they did not use their own independent means of communication with home and family. Milken has a policy not to accept "second or third party" emails, so the students are forced to use the standard methods; however, of course, no such restriction can apply for home and personal communication. There is a reality of

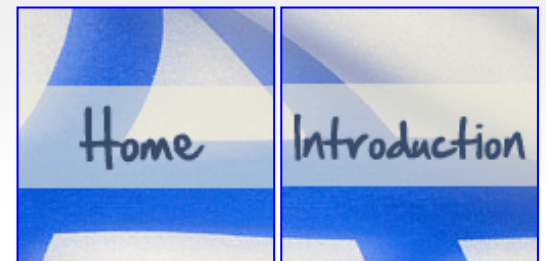
living in the 21'st Century that individuals may have multiple email accounts, and this reality impacted the study of communication for this study.

On the other hand, it is also apparent that Alexander Muss understood the need to be more proactive in its communication strategy and developed a weekly update plan for the 2007-2008 academic year. This permitted Alexander Muss an opportunity to create and to control at least one range of communication between home and family. At last once a week for four months, every parent was informed about the group level activities of the program. While parents may have had individual concerns, their concerns about daily life and daily learning and daily activities were allayed as the system progressed. Everyone connected with the program came to rely on these weekly updates. While the individual communication patterns of the students and their families became something that changed in the 2007-2008 academic year, the level of programmatic information may have increased.

All this is an indicator of culture. First of all there is the place of Alexander Muss and the issue becomes one of judging and analyzing the ways in which this subculture communicated with the dominant culture of Milken. A very real kind of "frame" communication and culture exists in this paradigm, much as if Milken is the largest frame of cultural expectations and norms and Muss represents a culture within a culture, feeling as it does the need to communicate with the larger cultural entity. The materials from Alexander Muss do address the developing culture at Muss, and the weekly updates do also provide a way for the parent and school to be informed about that culture. The weekly updates therefore serve two purposes – they are a communicative tool and a cultural tool. I'm not sure that the weekly updates have been considered as a cultural tool, but they are clearly artifacts of a culture in development.

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## khronosreview.com – Threads in a Tapestry:

An Ethnographic Evaluation of  
Milken Community High School's  
Tiferet Fellowship Program



# Student Generated Materials – Blog

While many of the students took picture, sent emails, and created documents, several blogs stand out as good examples of student generated ethnographic materials. The students in both cohorts used blogs as a way to communicate with home, and with the community at large. In many ways, these blogs were generated as external forms of communication, giving the students a kind of freedom they might not have experienced if the blog was an “official” school blog. Milken is relatively new to blogging software and the concept of blogs. These examples show a unique perspective of the program and are surely worth examining.

The five links below will take the reader to student blogs about their time in Israel. Please note that I have included

[\*Jonathan in Israel\*](#) (2006-2007)

[\*Joey's Updates\*](#) (2006-2007)

[\*Adina In Israel\*](#) (2007-2008)

[\*Barabara' Blog\*](#) (2008-2009)

[\*Michael in Israel\*](#) (2008-2009)

These resources provide a background on the topics covered in the program, the role of the Tiyyulim, and the perspectives developed by the students. I have



## Commentary

As a source of authentic commentary about the program, these blogs are an invaluable resource. Students tend to “tell it like it is” when working on a blog. The sites are naturally dynamic and represent an uniquely student view. The students describe and comment on the events of the day. Some of the blogs are largely diaries of information, they tell what happened on each day of the trip, or as student time permitted. One might suggest that these blogs are in fact worth of a dissertation alone as they reveal so much about the life and culture of the students. In some way, this is where the more technically able students live. There is a wealth of material here.

## Jonthan's Blog

Jonathan begins his blog with an appropriate description of his separation from the home and school community at Milken. It is this frame culture of the school which provides him with his first entry in the blog, and he discusses how the giving of a necklace is important. He writes, “My best friend David gave me his necklace with T'filat HaDerech (The Traveler's Prayer) on it, which I've had on since the moment I stepped on the plane.” This indicates his connection to home as he travels to a new country for four months, and reinforces the notions of a frame culture and the idea o culture shock as Jonathan is writing the blog from Israel and is obviously still affected by his connections to home. He then writes about the departure, “It's a feeling with no name that I'll never forget. A mix of thrill, anticipation and lots of butterflies.” Michael expounds on this idea of separation and the anxiety of departure when he elegantly writes, “We walked, a pack of 120 emotional wrecks, to the final gates, stopping for a big group picture that was quite an experience. Imagine 40 kids, surrounded by twice as many parents, with flashes and camera shutters going off left and right. I think its safe to say there are at least 500 different versions of that picture. At the final security border, we had a final hug and goodbye, parents and kids alike choking up and heading finally for “the tunnel”. It was tough, to say the very least.” There are several buried metaphors here, all of them ripe for interpretation, not the least of which has to do with the concept of being born via a tunnel.

Jonathan continues his blog with his own “thick description,” and a rich emotional content for several continuous entries. While it is impossible to catalog the depth of all the entries, some of them do deserve mention. Jonathan's entry for March 8, 2007 on Purim represents his own insights into the culture of Israel and Judaism. He writes,

*On Sunday morning, we all dressed once again in our Purim costumes, as many Israelis have been all week. A group of us dressed up as the 7 Dwarves; I was Doc! We headed off to Holon, the site of AdLoYada, the biggest, craziest Purim parade in Israel. In fact, 300,000 people turned out this year to celebrate the holiday! AdLoYada means “until you do not know” in Hebrew, a reference to the Jewish custom of getting just drunk enough on Purim so that you can't tell the difference between Haman and Mordechai. Needless to say, we avoided this specific ritual. As if in an act of God, I ran into my Great-uncle and aunt, in this bustling crowd of hundreds of thousands. That's Israel for you!*



Jonathan's blog is rich in this kind of texture and it begins to represent his own commitment to the communication of experience. The combination of pictures and text and analysis create a kind of personal experience not possible to convey in other ways. It is uniquely his and uniquely personal. As equally interesting are the comments and posts from others as they are reading his blog. It is interesting for the purpose of this study to note the ways in which the community is involved as the experience evolves. One of the contributing factors for the success of Jonathan's blog relates to his good eye for photography. Jonathan has made photography a passion and is currently entering Stanford in the fall of 2009 as a photo-journalism major. Jonathan captures the entire experience of living in Israel and the concerns of what it means to be engaged in the program when he writes his last entry, "With only 5 days left until our return, I am both excited to go home and sad that this experience is coming to an end. In the next few days, we will pack and prepare, saying goodbye to Hod HaSharon and looking ahead to the summer. I look forward to seeing you all very soon!" In this way the blog is a personalized and complete recording of the experience of participating in the program and of living in Israel.

#### Adina's Blog

As might be expected, every child who completed a blog did so differently. Adina's blog represents a different kind of view point, and a rendition of the passing of days. Yet as a source of material about the daily life of the students, the blog is rich with details. Her second entry, completed in March of 2009 indicates clearly the joys and challenges faced by the students in the program. She writes,

*Hey everyone! Today was a kind of boring day, but I felt it necessary to comment (I'm not sure why). I will start with last night: I went out and had an AMAZING falafel with some Israeli kids that came with us to Ein Gedi. It was really fun. Then I come back to the dorm and the internet is out (again). It just started working about an hour ago and it was really hard not being able to go on the computer... Anyway, tomorrow we have a big test in our "Core" class, so everyone has to be back at our dorm at 8 (instead of the usual 10) so we can all study. So yesterday, I went and dropped my laundry off at this place called Dr. Clean. Although it was 40 shekels a.k.a \$10 (for 5 kilos a.k.a. 11 pounds), it was totally worth it because I picked it up today and it was so nicely folded and smelled really good! I thought it was much better than having the school lose my laundry or do it myself and turn all of my clothes pink... I also got a hair straightener yesterday for about \$30, which was a really good deal compared to the \$100 ones I found everywhere else. Oh! And I almost forgot about this morning: We had to be at our first class at 8 AM, so wakeup time was at 7:15. Every day, we switch off doing "Toranut" where 4 kids have to take out the trash and help in the kitchen. They are also supposed to make sure everyone in the dorm is awake. Unfortunately, the people who were supposed to wake us up didn't want to come in (because they were guys) so I look at my watch and notice that it is 7:48*

*AM and rush out of bed. It was extremely stressful and hectic... Anyway, just thought I'd mention it. :)*

Clearly Adina's style is different than Jonathan's, yet she does reveal the kind of thinking that a teenager at 15 might be thinking. The daily routine, the exchange of Hebrew in town, the doing of wash, the failure of the Internet are all a part of the ethnographic detail and the lived experience of the program. The blogs are clearly rich sources of lived experiences.

While her style is different, Adina reflects the same kind of passion at the Israeli commemoration around Yom Ha'Atzmaout – Independence Day. She writes, "Okay, so immediately after Yom HaZikaron was over, we transitioned into Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day. It was soooooooooooooooooooooo much fun!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Everyone gets totally crazy for it!!!!!! We all got dressed in blue and white and walked to this big park in Hod HaSharon for a concert and for a fair and all sorts of fun stuff. It was great! I'm pretty sure that like whole town was there (about 40,000 people) so it was insane." As this event occurs in May as the program is beginning to end, there are no further posts from Adina. She does not engage in the reflection at the end of the program. Despite this the reader of Adina's blog can see the process of recording and analyzing their own culture as it was developed at Muss. This is invaluable information.

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## [khronosreview.com](#) - Threads in a Tapestry:

An Ethnographic Evaluation of  
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# Video Results Question 1

Prompt #1: Please explain how you were involved in the Tiferet program, and what this involvement meant to you.

Interview Results for 2006-2007

[Download Video](#)

Interview Results for 2007-2008

[Download Video](#)

### Commentary and Discussion

This first question makes an introductory statement about the ways that both parents and students saw themselves involved in the program. From the first student who did not have an initial awareness of the role that Israel could play in her life to the student who comments that Israel has always played a large part in his life, the opinions range and differ. Without exception though, the students in both years felt that the program had a great impact on their lives and that they felt the program was an unbelievable experience.

Some common themes do emerge. One of the most prevalent themes concerns the role of Israel to the program. In some ways, it appears that under the surface both students and parents saw the program initially as a semester abroad program where the location was essentially not a real factor in determining



participation. There is a certain awe and magic involved in spending a semester abroad during the high school experience. However, the experience has changed that initial perception and the reality of a semester abroad in Israel, the homeland, became more important than the mere participation in the program.

Many of the students and the parents spoke about the ways in which the students gained a sense of independence as well as a familiarity with the the land and people of Israel. Students and parents in the 2007-2008 cohort have a distinct impression that they are not “pioneers” in the sense of the experimentation of the first year students. The experience for students in the 2007-2008 cohort is a similar experience, but also a fundamentally different experience.

A second theme which emerges in this first question relates to the unique and individual growth and development of the child. Several of the parents are appreciative of the fact that the school has offered the program, that they see it as a growth opportunity, and that they understand the potential for tremendous risk. One parent labeled the program as a “pioneer” program, and early on in the video process announces a language of “pioneer,” which in turn may have created a halo effect for the program. There are frequent mentions of the experience as a “life changing experience” – almost as if the outcome from the initial involvement could not be predicted. One person mentions the unique experiences created by [Metuka Benjamin's](#) involvement which lends a unique and also important quality to the program itself. This leads me to reflect on the nature of the frame culture being developed at Milken. In many ways, it is the safety of the frame culture at Milken which allows for experimentation in the Tiferet culture. At some point, I believe that parents and students are looking to school officials for the approval to journey abroad.

A recurrent theme discussed in several video clippings will be the role of communication to the program. Ruth Ickowitz discusses her role as the central “communications” person for the parents. In fact, Ruth was so instrumental in creating the communications patterns for the parents and students that she was hired as a program assistant in the fall of 2007. In this regard, Ruth has clearly recognized a personal strength which benefit the program in its “pioneer” state and has worked to improve the program since. After the first year, Ruth Ickowitz became the program administrator and went further to assume the roles of the program “communicator.”

One parent also points out the difference between an “exchange” or “study abroad” program. This distinction – or this tension – runs through the many of the video segments and also manifests itself in the parent and student surveys. In fact, understanding this tension is a prerequisite to understanding the nature and the impact of the program.

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# Video Results Question 2

Prompt #2: In what ways did you find the program successful?

Results from 2006-2007

[Download Video](#)

Results from 2007-2008

[Download Video](#)

### Commentary and Discussion

"I built close relationships with my peers." Clearly this is a success of the program and the way that the program works is a testament to both the program growth and the individual growth of the students. Students comment that they learned about Israel and that they learned about independence. "We actually experience Israel as we lived there." is a comment which is important in determining how the program attempted to influence student learning. "I was able to grow in so many different ways." is a common theme in both years. One parent clearly remarks that the program gave the child a sense of independence and maturity.



"Four months with 38 of your friends in Israel" – This comment by a student continues the video sequence on the success of the program. These are almost prophetic words as they sum up the totality of the experience. The commentary from parents supports this idea that there was a great deal to do in Israel, so much so that the academic tradeoffs were acceptable. It is interesting to note that while there were academic tradeoffs, that the academic program here is seen by some as being more intense than the academic program in the former exchange program.

One of the clear successes of the program has to do with the ties made to Israel. This theme is repeated throughout this interview segment and all those people interviewed felt that the knowledge about Israel, its land, and its people are the best parts of the program. This might be expected as, after all, the students were living in Israel for four months. One student recalled that the experience "taught me about my priorities." One parent reports this success as creating a program of Israel advocacy, which was a stated goal of the program. The idea that the students lived in Israel for a long period and that the student is "more in tune" with Israel and its society is an important and recurrent theme. One parent in the 2007-2008 cohort makes the remark that the students wants to make "aliyah," the journey of a Jew to live in the historical homeland. "I have a connection to the land and to the language." is again a recurrent theme.

This connection to Israel manifests itself in a variety of way. Academically, the students gained an historical perspective of Israel, something that "no other program could have offered." Another student remarks that having a classroom "on a hill in Jerusalem" is the perfect integration of the classroom and the setting. There can be no better awareness program than when the program makes trips to the sites discussed in the classroom.

Again, the theme that this "was a big step for the school" manifests itself in a variety of ways. While some of the participants make points about improvements by saying that there are "small things to fix" or that "the academics were compromised," they all agree that doing the program was the best thing for the students and for the school.

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# Video Results Question 3

Prompt #3: In what ways did the program meet its defined mission statement?

Interview Results for 2006-2007

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Interview Results for 2007-2008

[Download Video](#)

### Commentary and Discussion

It is clear that the parents and students understood the overriding statement of the mission which had to do with the connection to Israel. It must be remembered, always, that many contemporary Jews live in the Diaspora, in fact more Jews live outside Israel than inside the the country. For this reason and for the understood goal inherent in all Jewish education concerning the continuance of the people, the mission statement in the program is very important as it relates to Israel. Throughout this part of the interview process, person after person reported that the program met its stated goal of building a closer relationship to Israel, its people, history, and culture. The importance of Israel and a connection to Israel is very much a part of the consciousness of the parent and the



student body. This statement reflects a condition that lies within the Milken culture at large – that concerns with Israel are a part of daily life at Milken, and therefore the Tiferet program goes from that condition in an organic way.

One of the successes of the program is developed through the Alexander Muss pedagogy of teaching Israeli and Jewish history and then visiting the actual sites involved with the history. One mother remarked on her son's observation that the classroom was in fact the Western Wall of the Temple in Jerusalem, mentioning that there could be no better integration of history and culture. It is clear from the remarks made in this interview that the connection to Israel was important to the parents, the students, and the community. An exposure to different aspects of Judaism is also an important part of the anticipated and defined mission of the program.

Concurrently, some parents and some students record that while the connection to the country was a positive aspect of the program, the program would improve again by a more concerted connection to the people of the country. The Los Angeles – Tel Aviv Forum is mentioned twice in this interview as a good program, but one not held frequently enough. While the quality of an "immersion" program is mentioned, the same parents remark that by living in a family their child could have had an even more intense and connected experience. One parent mentions that the students lived in a "microcosm" of Milken students and as such they did not have a chance to make deep connections to other students or other people in the country. It was also parent that the students repeat over and over again the role of learning a sense of independence. "It changed the way I look at my identity," is a statement from the 2007-2008 cohort which supports the contention that the program is a transformative experience.

Several parents mention the creation of "blogs." Blogs were one of the ways that the students stayed in touch with parents and friends in America. The blogs are featured as a part of this web site and as such also provides another insight into the culture experienced by the children in Israel. The mention of the blog is interesting as it represents the way in which the children in the program clearly live in the technology of the 21'st century. In a bizarre sort of way, the parent words, "It clicked" were about a great deal more than the program itself.

One parent did speak about the way in which this program had more on-site control of student actions than the previous exchange program. His description of the adolescent freedom seeking behaviors of the exchange program were part of the philosophical thinking behind the change to a more residential immersion program. At the same time, the same parents wishes that his son had a deeper experience with Israel youth. This then represents a central tension in the program implementation.

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# Video Results Question 4

Prompt #4: Can you share a time with me that you feel created a profound memory for you?

Results for 2006-2007

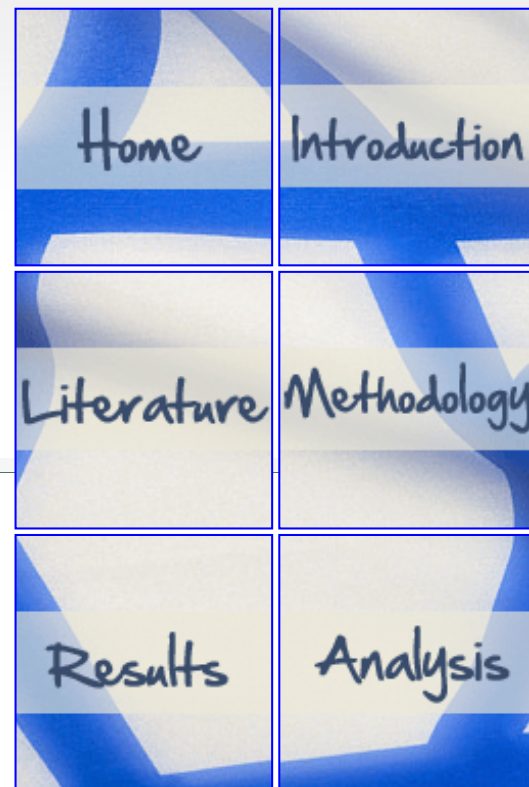
[Download Video](#)

Results for 2007-2008

[Download Video](#)

### Commentary and Discussion

This interview segment is rich with emotional memory. There are two separate themes which emerge from the segment. One of these themes has to do with the connection to the Western Wall. This is mentioned frequently here and in the other segments of the video interviews. The Western Wall is the remaining wall after the destruction of the Temple in classic times. Please click "[The Western Wall](#)" for additional information. This wall serves to link several religious and historical themes in Judaism and is a symbol for Jewish connectedness.





Each of the students visited the wall at least two times during their stay in Jerusalem and these visits had a demonstrable effect on the children – and by extension their parents. When two sets of families mention the way in which they and their children had an emotional response to the wall, then we have a clear indicator of an important learning for those involved in the program. One student mentioned the impact of Yom Ha'Zikaron and Yom Ha'Atzmaout, the Israeli equivalent of the American Memorial Day and the American Independence Day. These two days follow each other within a twenty-four hour period, and create for the Israeli culture a significant emotional moment. The narrative of the Israeli Independence movement is framed by these two days.

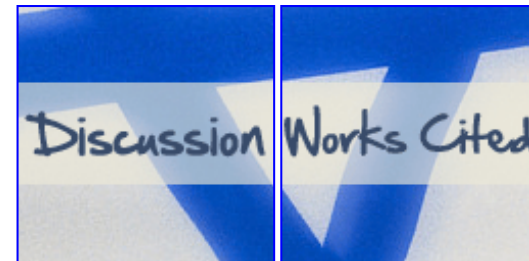
The second major theme developed in these interview segments has to do with connection. That connection manifested itself in a variety of ways – whether it was the connection to Jewish tradition via visits to the wall, whether it was being inspired to write music after an exposure to Israeli music, whether it is the personal connection to Rabbi Harwitz, or whether it was a connection to the students through the online email process of First Class. It is clear that the connection to one another, the program, and to Israel is an important memory for these participants. The issue of enlisting in the Israeli Army, known as the IDF, is mentioned and discussed by a parent in the 2007-2008 cohort, and this reflects a cultural change for the parent – the recognition that life is different is different in different cultures.

A third theme, but not overly stated, concerns the role of the Persian culture at Milken and the involvements of Persians in the program. One mother from the 2006-2007 cohort makes the oblique reference that this was a challenge “especially for a Persian family.” This concern is not directly stated or questioned in any of the survey questions or in the interview questions, yet the concern is part and parcel of many families’ reactions to the program. The Persian population at Milken represents approximately 35% of the total population and as such represents a significant minority. Within the cultural contexts of the Persian families, separation from the family and individual independence is a serious consideration. Many Persian families want their children to remain close to home, and this parent represents an exception to the rule. I must point out that the student who did the interviewing is of Persian descent and asked two sets of parents follow up questions about what it meant to be Persian and have young people leave the home. These questions were as much for her own information as she had asked to go on the program and was not allowed to participate. It is also interesting to note the number of Persian families in the second cohort as the number of Persian families has increased. To trace that development is outside the main purview of this study and yet it provides rich fodder for subsequent studies.

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# Video Results Question 5

Prompt #5: What does this time say about you, or about your involvement with others? or about your involvement with the program?

Results from 2006-2007

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Results from 2007-2008

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## Commentary and Discussion

Of all the questions and of all the interviews, this particular question has been the most problematic. It is difficult to say if the question was unclear or if the responses were unclear, but it is clear that this question is a challenge. The intent of the question was to see if the participants had reflected on the meaning behind their involvement with the program. The question has remained problematic for the duration of the study and we considered leaving it out of the report.

Nonetheless, the participants reveal that they have considered what it meant to be involved with the program, and in particular what it meant to be involved in



that critical first year. This 2006-2007 cohort felt that there was a "pioneer" sense of the program and they were aware that they were making history for the school. It is not clear however if they considered the ways in which the program was making history in education – the focus seems to remain on their individual roles and their individual participation – not on the impact of that participation. It is very apparent from this first cohort that they are thankful for the program and that they appreciate having been given the chance to participate. The parents reveal that the program accomplished its goals in the process and that they feel valued for this involvement.

Participants in the 2007-2008 cohort felt much the same way, but it was noticeable they did not refer to the program or their participation as "pioneering." This indicates that by the second year, the program had already been more accepted into the culture of the school and the culture of the community. The members of this cohort recognized the "challenge" of being away from home for four months of time. This is often discussed in both cohorts, and the parents recognized the challenge and the opportunities. The range of responses here indicate the ambiguity of the question itself – as the responses within the question range from reflections about learning Hebrew, or in making connections to the people of Israel, or to training in a military camp. Parents in this cohort seem more informed about the intentions of the program, but like the other participants, did not seem able to reflect on the bigger pictures of the program implications. Clearly this is an area requiring further study – what does the program mean for that larger context?

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# Video Results Question 6

Prompt #6 : Can you share a time that you were challenged and may have had to make a serious decision? What was that like?

Results from 2006-2007

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Results from 2007-2008

[Download Video](#)

### Commentary and Discussion

Within this video segment are two primary themes regarding difficult decisions. The first difficult or challenging decision was the decision to go to Israel. Israel is necessarily a place where safety is an issue. This is always the first concern of parents and children, however, once the students were there, these issues did not seem paramount.

Perhaps a second component relating to this decision to go concerns the role of school and academia given the study abroad nature of the program. It must always be remembered that Milken is a competitive college preparatory high school. A third component of this decision making process involved the changes to



family structure. Again the concerns about the Persian family nature can create difficulties in deciding. On the other hand, given all these factors, once the decision was made there were few other related difficulties.

The second major theme within this segment concerns the behaviors of students once there. These are essentially adolescent decision making issues and it is important to note that Milken had very stringent rules regarding behaviors in Israel. One of the rules was rather simple: There are no second chances. This construct of rules reinforces the notion of a culture within a culture. Even though the students are living in Israel, a foreign country, they are expected to follow the rules of Milken.

Given the pressures of a first and second year program and the need to provide for success, the students clearly understood the role of proper behavior. The on-site difficult decisions also concerned health issues, and it was important for the student in this case to make the real decision to seek medical aid. It's clearly understandable why this would be a concern for his parents. Academically, there was a clear challenge for the students as so much of their time is scheduled and organized. For the 2007-2008 cohort, the challenge presented by the Gadnai was so very important.

Many of these issues of "challenge" are unique to the program in its first and second year of development. They are essentially concerns about roles and goals – who shall do what to/for/with whom and when? One of the challenges concerned the way in which the students would relate to each other and then to other students in Israel. It is important to remember that the Alexander Muss Institute might have many schools all in simultaneous attendance. Many of the parents felt the challenge of separating from their child for four months, but once that decision was made, then the issues of separation seemed to disappear. In both cohorts, the major challenge concerned the personal challenges presented by the four month study abroad program. That there is a culture within a culture is clearly seen as the students and parents discuss and differentiate "what happens in America" and "what happens in Israel."

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# Video Results Question 7

Prompt #7: If you had a chance to make a change in the Tiferet program which could help others, what change would you suggest?

Interview Results for 2006-2007

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Interview Results for 2007-2008

[Download Video](#)

### Commentary and Discussion

Two themes arise through these video segments. The over-riding response here has to do with the pacing of the program, and second, with the decisions about curriculum-free time which derived from that pacing. The participants mention that the program had a desire to "hit the ground" running, and yet that desire also disallowed any concept of free time. There are several occasions when the participants mention the lengthy study day from 8:00 AM until 5:30 PM, and that this did not include homework which had to be completed later. This conflict between moving to Israel and starting an academic program is a recurrent theme.

There is of course a cultural connection here – students in American high schools attend classes for 6-7 hours a day for five days a week; at Alexander Muss,





students attend classes for 8 hours a day for six days a week. This is a given, and part of the initial culture shock of the program has to do with these extended time expectations.

The program clearly influenced the development of the children's sense of independence. Over and over again they mention the degree to which they feel more independent and adult. In some ways this was a trial by fire as the program began so suddenly with "no time to decompress" after the initial trip. Clearly the issue here is the need for the program to meet Milken standards while also observing the mandates of their own "Zionist" program in Israel. This theme is elaborated in the reporting of the 2007-2008 cohort, and this is an important cultural norm of the program that the students like the change and recommend this change for others.

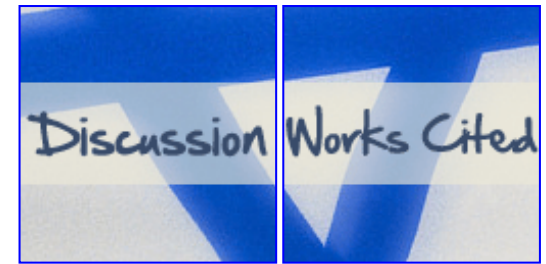
Having established the academic program as being most important, the program then necessarily had to "dis-allow" other interactions with Israeli students and or Israeli leaders and or the culture itself. This "cultural" interaction – in whatever form it may have taken – was simply not possible in both years given the kinds of restraints of the program goals. This central tension runs throughout almost every aspect of the Muss experience. Life is lived intensely and in the moment – there are just many moments.

It's interesting to note that several participants could support the more rigorous "academic" program when held in contrast with the previous "exchange" programs; however, the participants almost simultaneously express the idea that the academic program prevented other Israel-based interactions. The two concepts seem to exist independent of one another, and yet they are clearly linked. One parent recommended a change for Shabbat observance.

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# Video Results Question 8

Prompt # 8: How will having been involved in the Tiferet program influence your role as a student or as a student leader here at Milken?

Results for 2006-2007

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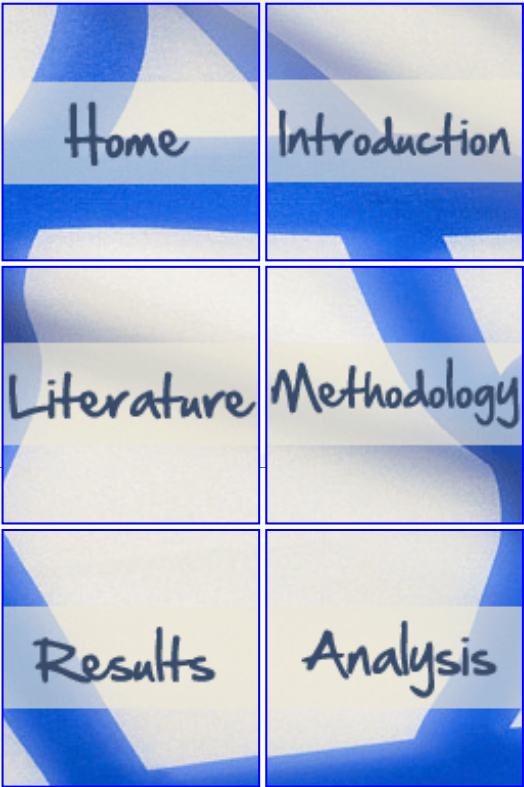
Results for 2007-2008

[Download Video](#)

## Commentary and Discussion

Even though the question prompt does not mention Israel advocacy as such, almost all of the video participants mention Israel advocacy as the prime way they wish to be involved as leaders here at Milken. Clearly, if one of the goals was to improve support for Israel, then that goal was accomplished as reflected in these video clips and in the other sources of information.

This idea is important, and one of the touchstones of the program. If the goal is to produce students who are advocates for Israel, then the best way is to send



from there. While that may be an obvious statement at this time, having just finished the first two years of the program, such a statement was not obvious in the development and history of the program at Milken.

In other words, it simply took some time and some experiences to settle on this methodology to develop Israel advocacy.

One of the parents, Ruth Ickowitz, has in fact lived up to her promise to become more involved in the program. Ruth now works as the program administrator, staying in contact with the parents and with all the students who will be new to the program. She has in fact alerted them about "what to bring" and what this means. Over the two year process of this study, Ruth's interactions with the program have developed and expanded.

Additionally, Ruth works with each cohort of students as they begin to "advocate for Israel" during the year of their return. They have participated in a "speakers workshop" and have traveled to Washington, DC to advocate for Israeli issues.

A recurrent theme also concerns the social independence of the participants. Multiple times during the video segment, participants mention their own personal independence, whether that came from "doing the wash" or "making decisions."

In this way, it is also clear that an ancillary program benefit comes from being independent in a foreign country. There is a great deal more than just visiting a country or engaging in an exchange program as the students had to learn to be self-sufficient in a way they had not known before the program. At some point in the program the students stop being tourists, adjust to the culture and then become citizens. Yet, it is always important to be reminded that these students are only just finishing grade 10, and that at the time of the interview they have participated in what may be a life-defining program.

In many ways, this is the essential crux of the program – to develop young leaders who can then advocate for Israel related issues. The students and parents report the connection that is formed with "Israel," and unpacking this narrative alone will be a time consuming endeavor. The connection to "Israel" is a connection to Israeli statehood, Israeli culture, Israeli values, and the people hood of the Jewish religion. It is a value laden concept. The development of this leadership for Israel paradigm is perhaps underplayed and subtle, yet it is the very nexus of the program's purpose.

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# Video Results Question 9

Prompt # 9: What other comments would you make about the Tiferet Program?

Results for 2006-2007

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Results for 2007-2008

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## Commentary and Discussion

As the last interview question for this portion of the study, one could expect positive comments. On the other hand, it needs to be pointed out that the range of positive comments is really quite impressive. The video participants universally felt that the program was a huge success in the first and second years – despite the need to “tweak” and improve.

It is so clear that several of the parents support the school’s effort in creating the Tiferet program and then making it happen. One of the parents mentioned benefit was the unique combination of academics and experiential learning such that the students did engage academically while also learning about life in Israel. The complexity of the program impressed most people who commented.



Clearly one of the dominant topics of discussion was the relationship to Israel, and this is a recurrent and predominate theme in both years of the study. When one student reflects that this was an opportunity to return to a place that his ancestors had not seen in 2000 years, there is a clear appreciation of the historical need for Jews to return to Israel. At the same time, there was a great interest in modern Israel and the opportunity for students to interact on modern day issues. Two parents record that their children are continuing in their advocacy for Israel in Grade 11 and 12. The support for Milken in making this part of the school's mission statement a reality was palpable in the interviews. These statements reflect the existance of that framing culture question. Clearly, by creating the time and space and funding for the program, the institution itself benefits – or at least the students and parents and institutional leadership think so.

Two parents stated their appreciation for the school's role in developing, organizing, and implementing this program. While two stated this explicitly, there is an underlying assumption and gratitude for the work that Rabbi Harwitz put into developing a semester abroad program for students in Grade 10. When one parent says that the program was “an incredibly complex thing to do,” she reveals an understanding of the planning and logistics that go into such a program. The degree to which the students learned about responsibility and “self-responsibility” was also discussed by several participants. One student stated, “This has made me a better person – a stronger person.” This indicates that the community has bought into the program in a very substantial way.

The appreciation for the program – even in the concluding question of the interview process – seems to be an important part of the program review. Participants also seem willing to accept minor program flaws – and would gladly repeat the process. One student recorded, “It was revolutionary.”

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# Program Resource Materials

The purpose of this page is to present some of the background information on the Tiferet Program. The resources here permit an "institutional" level of engagement. These materials then represent the "big picture" of what the program attempts to do and produce.

**Materials from Alexander Muss** - The Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education is a program designed by the Alexander Muss Institute to provide a variety of programming options for Jews living in the Diaspora to experience first-hand the life of Israel. The programs being offered can be tailored to the individual student or to a group of students, as in the case of Milken Community High School. The following links provide the reader with the official Alexander Muss website.

[Alexander Muss Home Page](#)

**Stephen S. Wise Promotional Video:** As a part of its own evaluation and promotion of the program, Milken Community and Stephen S. Wise compiled a video from a series of interviews done on site during April of 2007. This video footage was recombined by a professional videographer as a promotional tool for use with prospective Tiferet families.

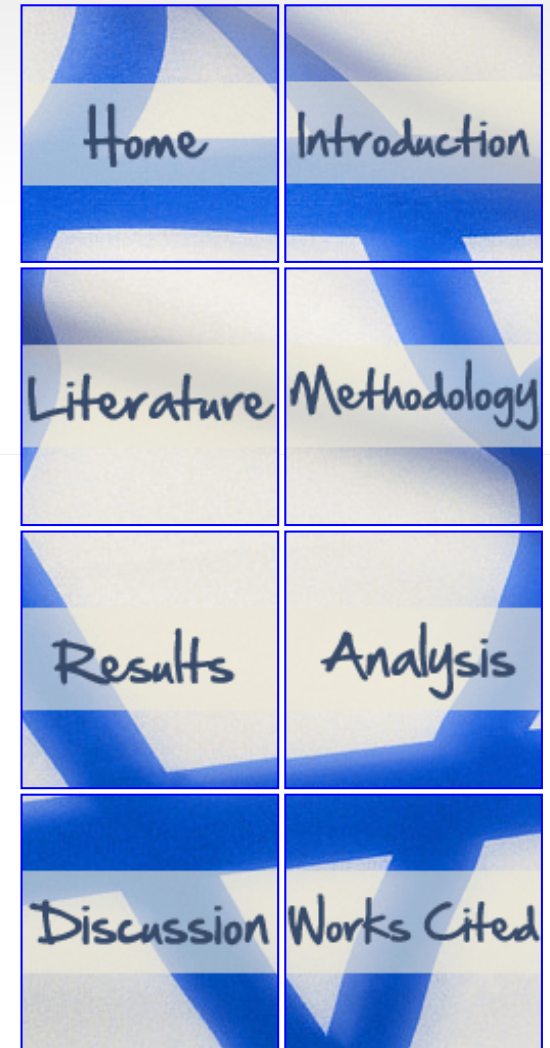
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## Commentary and Discussion

These links and this movie represent an institutional view of the program, and as such are still data about understanding the total cultural picture of the program. Stephen S. Wise and Milken, and Alexander Muss are clearly in an institutional relationship. On the one hand, Milken is a consumer of services provided by Alexander Muss, and yet Alexander Muss has its own particular stamp and unique culture by itself. Muss has a clear mission statement to produce a curriculum related to advocacy for the state of Israel, its role is to produce young Zionists for the state of Israel.

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