

 **The Schmooze**
Stories with a Yiddish Twist

BACK TO SCHOOL, 2015 - 2016

by
Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe



Syosset, New York

School's OPEN. A young mother was sitting at Dunkin' Donuts in Plainview, New York, and said to her friend, "I'm worried that my 'tokhter's' linguistic development is being neglected. Could you suggest a good set of phonic flash cards?"

Friend: "How old is she?"

Mother: "Three months."

This is obviously a "gourmet parent," one who would have toddlers studying Russian, claim their children would rather be at the National Gallery of Art than Disneyworld, and would opt for a good nutritious lentil soup over a Whopper and fries.

The late comedian, Sam Levenson, wrote, "From the poorest student students often come the richest answers; answer that are on the surface unquestionably wrong, but undeniably right in the deepest sense of the world. Ex.

Teacher: "Where are elephants found?"

Student: "How can you lose an elephant?"

Teacher: "Whom did Robin Hood steal from and why?"

Student: "From the rich. What could he steal from the poor?"

Source: ("You Don't Have to Be in Who's Who to Know What's What")
by Sam Levenson.

And now for some disturbing news: Fifty-two people--former yeshiva students, parents of current yeshiva students and former teachers from schools--reportedly signed a letter sent to N. Y. C. education officials expressing concern about “the poor quality and scant amount of secular education” at the 39 schools with which they say they are affiliated.

The letter, sent to seven district superintendents in Queens and Brooklyn and New York City Schools Chancellor Carmen Farina, allege that the yeshivas are failing to meet New York state law requiring all nonpublic schools to provide an education that is “substantially equivalent” (‘glaykh’) to what is offered in public schools. The letter urges the superintendents to “investigate the quality of secular education” and, in particular English instruction, at the listed Yeshivas and to take steps to ensure that pupils at these Yeshivas receive the essential (‘ikerdik’) and substantially equivalent education to which they are entitled.”

The Associated Press said “There was no science, no geography and no math past multiplication at the ultra-Orthodox Jewish school Chaim Weber attended. And the only reason he ever heard of the American Revolution was when a seventh-grade teacher introduced it as “story time.”

Naftuli Moster said he never learned the words “cell” or “molecule” at the ultra-Orthodox schools he attended, where secular subjects were considered “unimportant or downright against Judaism.”

As a result, some graduates complain that they are unprepared for careers and unable to support themselves financially.

Sources: www.jta.org/2015/07/27
New York Post, 8/23/15

Shown below are some “interesant” (interesting) back-to-school facts/trivia.

1. 25% of students apply to 9 or more colleges.
2. A “wikipedia kid” is a student who has poor research skills and lacks the ability to think critically.
3. The University of Florida opened a campus food pantry in June 2015 for students and staff who might not have enough food to feed themselves.
4. UT Austin and Ohio State researchers found that kids who ate a lot

of fast food have lower test scores. (Source: NY Magazine, 12/29 - 1/11, 2015)

5. Utah Valley University (31,000 students) is giving its students glued to their “tseularer telefon” (cellphone) their own: a designated lane for texting while talking.

The bright green lane painted on the stairs to the gym was intended as a lighthearted way to brighten up the pace and get students’ attention. And property managers in the Chinese city of Chongqing last year (2014) designated a sidewalk for smart phone users!

6. Wait-learning is learning that takes place while a person is awaiting the completion of some other task.
7. Summer slide/summer lag is defined as the academic setback that some children suffer after being off from school for the summer. They forget key academic concepts over the summer break.
8. A “dropout factory” is defined as a school or educational system with a high dropout rate.
9. The New York City school system won’t close for any additional cultural or religious holidays, Mayor Bill de Blasio said in announcing an annual day off for the Asian lunar new year.
10. Under state law, schools must be in session for at least 180 days.
11. A New York high-school student has filed a lawsuit after a printing error forced parts of the June 6, 2015 SAT to be thrown out.
12. Cornell University offers a course titled, “The Ethics of Eating.” This is one of 403 courses Cornell has put under the rubric of “Sustainability.” Another course is titled, “Magnifying Small Spaces,” which teaches students how to live in mini-spaces and answers the question, “In reducing one’s carbon footprint, how small is too small?”
Source: New York Post, 3/31/15
13. Wright State University in Fairborn, OH, offers a new class titled, “Zombies & Gender in Pop Culture.” The course involves serious academic analysis on what the popularity of zombies means to

greater culture.

14. A “highlighter abuser” is a student who tends to highlight almost every part of an academic text he or she is reading, thus defeating the purpose of highlighting in the first place.
15. Mallard Fillmore’s cartoon, Sept. 6, 2002:
Mallory’s Back-to-School Prediction #52: At any given time some “at risk” children somewhere...will be painting a mural to help their “self-esteem”...instead of learning to read.
16. Reading, writing, arithmetic...and PE? The prestigious Institute of Medicine is recommending that schools provide opportunities for at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day for students, and that physical education become a core subject. (Only half of the nation’s youngsters are getting at least an hour of vigorous or moderate physical activity daily.)
17. About 17% of children ages 2 through 19 are obese (“zaftik” or “fet”).
18. Some students suffer from “Chalktrauma”--the body’s reaction to someone running his fingernails down the chalkboard.
19. The “B+ Stampeded” Sniglet is the attempt by half “der klastsimer” (the classroom) to claim the paper with no name on it.”
Source: Rich Hall & Friends
20. Students who sit near “der fornt” (the front) of a 300-seat lecture hall are less likely to fall asleep.
21. The young man/woman who is able to work his/her way through college is a pretty good bet to be able to work his/her way through life.
22. Learn how to interpret course titles. Ex. “Making It With Mademoiselle” is a sewing course for Home Eco. majors.
23. Montessoria is a Flowers & Schwartz term for the disease (“krankayt”) wherein a child is smarter than either parent and grows more so each day.
24. The “Penalty Area” (borrowed from the ice hockey teams) is a place

where children sit quietly for a few minutes because they've been "shtiferish" (naughty).

25. Enrolled in Conversational Latin? Remember these 3 terms:

"Nunc Titus Exitus Computarus."
(It's now safe to turn off your computer.)

"Domino vobiscum."
(The pizza guy's here.)

"Bodicus Mutilatimus, unemployi forevercus."
(Better take the nose ring out before the job interview.)
Source: Morelatin.txt, www.webenglishteacher.com

26. Ted Merwin of Dickinson College gave a lecture titled, "Where Harry Met Sally: The Jewish Deli in Pop Culture."

27. Teachers are beginning to use Minecraft to teach concepts in math, science and the humanities. But Minecraft wasn't designed for the classroom. It was designed for fun! BTW, Minecraft brought in about \$326 million in revenue in 2013!

28. Back-to-school is a multi-billion dollar business. Experts told Yahoo parents that the cost of kids' back-to-school supplies are \$1,402 for high school students. The average elementary schooler's must-haves this year total \$649 for middle school students.
Source: Backpack Index Survey

29. Check with your school to find out whether they offer bulk purchases through the district.

30. According to Charles Simmons, in 1942, Columbia University charged \$190 a semester plus a gym fee; textbooks cost about \$10.

31. The Princeton Review's annual list of top US party schools [2016 edition] says that the University of Illinois is the #1 party school. The University has about 31,00 undergraduate students.

32. Rounding out the top 5 party schools, they are in order:

The Univ. of Iowa

The Univ. of Wisconsin - Madison
Bucknell University
Syracuse University in New York

33. The top stone-cold “nikhter” (sober) school is Brigham Young University.
34. Eleanor “Jean” Kops graduated this summer from the Univ. of Nebraska - at the age of 87. She dropped out in 1947 to get married. After her husband died in 2011 she re-enrolled and earned her degree.
35. A college counselor suggests that if you’re a Freshman or a Sophomore in high school, read a ton (it helps with your vocabulary).
36. Guidance counselors suggest that Juniors get to know their guidance counselors at the start of the year. They also suggest that instead of throwing yourself into EVERY activity at school, choose what you’ve liked best so far and find way to make a splash. And, finally, speak up in class so your teachers know who you are.
37. A former college admissions officer said, “When applying to a college, follow instructions. If an application asks for TWO letters of recommendation, DON’T send in a stack as thick as the script for The Hunger Games.
Source: Seventeen.com
38. Watch out for “Apple picking”--n. The snatching of a person’s iPhone or iPad or iPod.
39. California now bans taking race into consideration in its university admissions. No surprise that Asians are now 42 percent of the students at Cal Tech, up from 25 percent two decades ago.
40. When writing the college essay, don’t use too many fancy SAT-type words. One student wrote, “After my trip to Europe, I knew I wanted to absquatulate my hometown and move there.”
41. One in six admission officers has found something online that hurt an applicant’s chances of getting accepted.
Source: Kaplan Test Prep.

42. A White House report highlights a stunning prevalence of rape on college campuses, with 1 in 5 females assaulted while only 1 in 8 student victims report it. Campus sexual assaults are fueled by drinking and drug use that can incapacitate victims, often at student parties at the hands of someone they know.

And, finally, parents, JOIN THE PTA. PTA meetings are generally not well attended unless you can get a hot speaker on a hot subject. Sam Levenson discussed a furor that took place at one New York school. A parent stood up and said [about teaching sex education]: "Let 'em teach it! If the schools teach sex the way they teach everything else, the kids'll lose interest anyhow." :-)

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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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