



Four Los Angeles Educators Honored with \$15,000 Jewish Educator Awards

Milken Family Foundation celebrates the teaching profession by honoring excellence in BJE-affiliated Jewish day schools

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (October 11, 2018) – Four exemplary Los Angeles Jewish day school educators got the surprise of a lifetime this week when the Milken Family Foundation honored them with the prestigious [Jewish Educator Award](#) (JEA)—and a \$15,000 unrestricted financial prize. The Foundation presented the Awards to this year’s unsuspecting recipients in front of their cheering students and colleagues. The 2018 JEA recipients are:

- **Rabbi Shimon Abramczik**, Yeshiva University of Los Angeles (YULA) Boys High School, Los Angeles
- **Florette Benhamou**, Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy, Beverly Hills
- **Fanny Koyman**, Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School, Northridge
- **Patty Tanner**, Wise School, Los Angeles

Recipients responded with emotion as Milken Family Foundation Executive Vice President Richard Sandler and BJE: Builders of Jewish Education Executive Director Dr. Gil Graff celebrated their dedication and accomplishments during four unique whole-school assemblies.

“Jewish day schools play a vital part in nurturing and supporting the next generation of leaders for our community,” said Sandler, who has been involved with JEA since the Milken Family Foundation presented the first Awards in 1990. “The outstanding educators we recognize this year with Jewish Educator Awards ensure that our youth achieve their academic potential, embrace their Jewish heritage and live a life devoted to *tikkun olam*, making our world a better place.”

About the 2018 JEA Recipients

- **Rabbi Shimon Abramczik** teaches Judaic Studies and serves as 11th and 12th grade student activities director and director of Israel Guidance at YULA Boys High School in Los Angeles. He shares his infectious enthusiasm for Torah and Talmud with his students, who often spend Shabbat at his family table. Nearly 80% of YULA’s students spend a gap year in Israel before their post-secondary studies. Rabbi Abramczik helps the seniors plan their Israeli studies, including taking a group overseas the winter before graduation to visit *yeshivot* and giving them a firsthand look at what their gap year will include.
- **Florette Benhamou** teaches first grade at Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy in Beverly Hills. Her classroom is a place of transition, growth, exploration and discovery as students move up from the play-focused atmosphere of kindergarten. Her young students are immersed in math, reading,

writing, science, history, educational technology and even coding. Benhamou has helmed the school's character and *middot* education and led Hillel's accreditation process with CAIS (California Association of Independent Schools). Hillel is a family tradition for Benhamou, whose father served as an educator and administrator for more than three decades; her three eldest children are Hillel graduates, with her youngest son still in attendance.

- **Fanny Koyman** is the lead Hebrew and Judaic studies teacher for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten at Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School in Northridge. She sets Heschel's youngest students on their educational journey with excitement, confidence, fun, achievement, and pride in the joy of learning. A few years ago, Koyman brought a 3-D printer into her classroom; now *mezzuzot* designed and created by students adorn the kindergarten classroom and playhouse doorways. Her pupils participate in the worldwide Hour of Code—in Hebrew!
- **Patty Tanner** is the K-6 math coordinator for Wise School in Los Angeles. She mentors new teachers, works with the school's math faculty on math scope and sequence, and attends national math conferences to keep Wise's math curriculum on the cutting edge. Tanner challenges her students and holds them to high standards, making deep connections with each and every pupil. She was one of the school's first mentors for DeLeT, a program dedicated to fostering teaching excellence in Jewish day schools across North America; several of her mentees have gone on to careers in education.

These four educators will be celebrated, together with their families and community leaders, during an awards luncheon at the Luxe Sunset Boulevard Hotel on December 13, 2018. The inclusive event brings together leaders across LA's Jewish community, from the most secular to the most Orthodox.

The Jewish Educator Awards initiative was established by the [Milken Family Foundation](#), in cooperation with BJE: Builders of Jewish Education, to provide public recognition and unrestricted \$15,000 cash awards to teachers, administrators and other education professionals in the Greater Los Angeles area who have made significant contributions to excellence in BJE-affiliated day schools.

Award recipients are selected by a committee of educators, professional and lay leaders from the Jewish community, according to the following criteria:

- Exceptional educational talent and promise, as demonstrated by outstanding practices in the classroom, school and community.
- Evidence of originality, dedication and capacity for leadership and self-direction.
- Commitment to influencing policies that affect children, their families and schools.
- Strong long-range potential for even greater contribution to children, the profession and society.
- Distinguished achievement in developing innovative educational curricula, programs and/or teaching methods.
- Outstanding ability to instill in students character and self-confidence.
- Outstanding ability to develop Jewish children's understanding of the connections between their religion, their classroom activities, and their activities beyond the classroom.
- Commitment to professional development and excellence and the continuing Judaic and/or secular study necessary for it.
- Personal involvement in responding to the needs of the Jewish and secular communities.

- Criteria for administrators also include outstanding ability to attract, support and motivate committed education professionals.

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