

Common Misconceptions about Day Schools

I always thought that day schools were insular and “shtetl-like.” Doesn’t a day school segregate children from the “real world”?

Children in the 21st century are bombarded with images and values of contemporary society. Day schools provide a framework of Jewish values and living from which students engage in the larger world while possessing a strong sense of who they are. Many schools take seriously their commitment to social justice and tikkun olam, and students engage in a wide range of activities beyond the confines of the school, including sports leagues and other inter-school competitions. It is well-documented that awareness of one’s own ethnic group is critical to social development and identity formation, and to the capacity to be an active and committed citizen within the broader community.

Aren’t day schools just for the Orthodox?

That was true of the day school enterprise in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Since the 1970s and accelerating into the 1980s, 90s and the 21st century, significant growth has taken place in non-Orthodox communities as well. In the past decade, the greatest growth in day schools has been in non-Orthodox communities. Increasingly, parents recognize that day schools provide an excellent education, and more and more communities and philanthropists recognize that day schools offer the greatest hope for Jewish continuity.