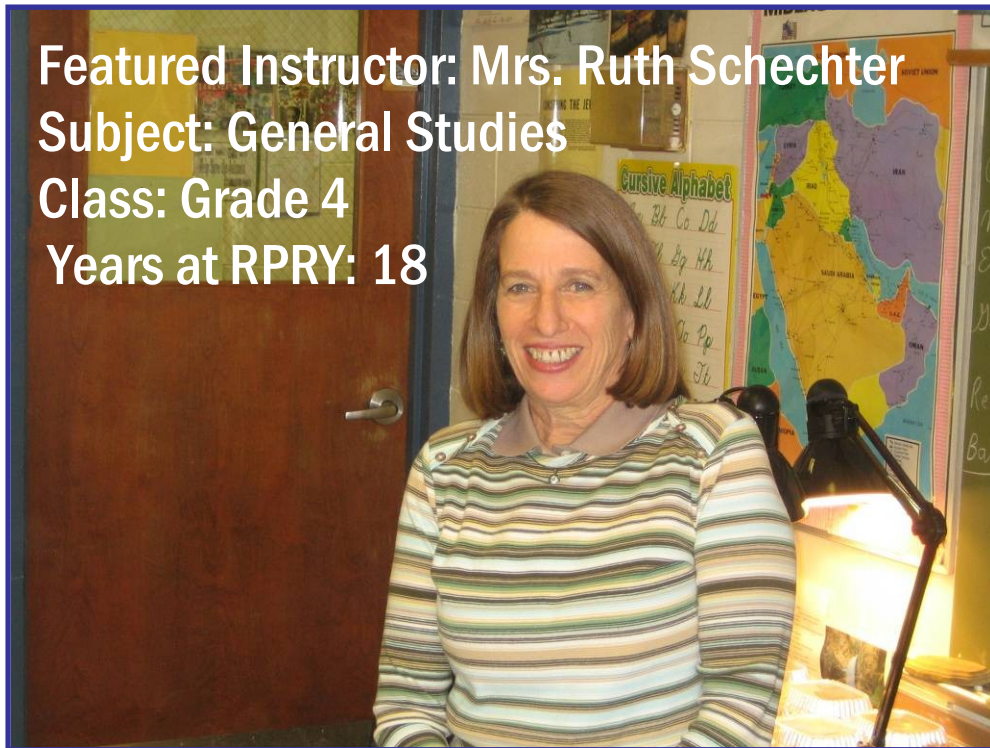


RPRYconnect

YOUR LINK TO THE STUDENTS & FACULTY OF RPRY

Volume 1, Issue 6



Featured Instructor: Mrs. Ruth Schechter
Subject: General Studies
Class: Grade 4
Years at RPRY: 18

Welcome to the stimulating classroom of Mrs. Ruth Schechter, fourth grade instructor and nurturer of creativity. Every vertical surface is covered with maps and posters and students' writing and artwork. In one corner, terrariums growing clover and alfalfa glow under heat lamps.

Tables are piled high with the books of creative writing the class publishes each week. In the rear, a button-making machine invites students to make a permanent memento of their days in Mrs. Schechter's class.

Mrs. Schechter has been teaching for 28 years, the last

18 at RPRY. She majored in Hebraic Studies at Rutgers University, graduating Phi Beta Kappa, and considers herself, “fortunate to teach what I love in a Jewish environment.” She is proud that her class is “excited, enthusiastic, and having fun all the time while we are learning.” Her lessons change constantly from year-to-year, as she incorporates new material and ideas and scours the web for interesting new approaches.



The classification may be “General Studies,” but Mrs. Schechter integrates Jewish subject matter into every lesson. Reading a current events article out loud, she asks the class, “What’s the Hebrew word for that?” Her love of Israel comes through in discussing politics, elections, and history, and she encourages her students to express their feelings for Israel on paper.

Let us explore what her fourth graders are learning this year in each subject area:

Science

All RPRY grades are using a new science curriculum this year from Delta Science Modules. The terrariums the students created are part of their unit on the Water Cycle, in which the concepts of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation are brought to life before the students’ eyes within these mini-biospheres.

Other units covered in the fourth grade are Magnets, Endangered Species, Biodiversity, and Food Chains and Webs.

Language Arts

Mrs. Schechter’s students wear out their pencils writing on all topics and in many styles. Each student utilizes a personal journal – a classroom diary, of sorts – in which their personal observations are recorded weekly. Each student also keeps a personal vocabulary

book, listing and defining new words that interest them, and new concepts Mrs. Schechter teaches them (such as “idioms” or “literal vs. figurative”).

Writing takes on various forms, sometimes poems or haikus, or even the narrative of their own life. This year-long autobiographical creation is presented orally each May to parents and grandparents at a special school gathering.

The class produces a Class Book every week, consisting of each student’s writing contribution. There is a different theme each week, from “Yiddish” (in which students had to write a composition using ten Yiddish words) to “Dear Mr. President” (requests to President Obama upon his inauguration).

Papers are edited by the students themselves frequently, and revisions are a daily occurrence. Mrs. Schechter believes mistakes are learning opportunities. She welcomes

them, but cautions her students to “never make the same mistake twice.” And in our computer age, in which keyboarding has all but replaced handwriting, Mrs. Schechter ensures that handwriting is stressed and constantly improving.



This year, Mrs. Schechter’s students will be reading a wide variety of authors and themes. They will enjoy the words of Robert Frost,

Langston Hughes, and Robert Louis Stevenson. They will also read *The Trumpet of the Swan* by E.B. White, *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, and *Letters from Rivka*, the tale of a Russian girl’s immigrant experience.

Each year, Mrs. Schechter hosts a “Read-In,” when students bring sleeping bags and satchels of books to class to enjoy a day of reading. This activity has grown so popular that it has been adopted by other classes as well.

Social Studies

The fourth grade curriculum focuses heavily on New Jersey, its history and government and geography. But Mrs. Schechter's love for history does not end at the state line. She places a special emphasis on maps and map skills. Her students get to know the United States intimately, and memorize all the states and their capitals. And they become acquainted with many of our presidents, and even get to memorize the Gettysburg Address. Current events are discussed frequently, and Mrs. Schechter stresses how important this year has been, with elections in the U.S. and Israel.

Mathematics

Each student is currently using an enrichment workbook, *Extend Your Math Thinking*. In fourth grade, students are

expected to master double-digit multiplication, long division, geometry, and graphing.

Creativity

Mrs. Schechter is sensitive to different learning modalities. She teaches her students how to draw, and each Friday they get to spend time with their own sketch pad. Mrs. Schechter sees this as a valuable method of expression and opportunity to unwind. To bring the education full circle, the students will sometimes be asked to draw a picture that conveys the Parshat Hashavuah. A well-rounded experience, indeed.

It is no wonder, then, that former students - in high school and beyond - constantly return to visit a teacher who made a big difference in their lives.

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