

May 18, 2007 / Sivan 1 5767

Education News

Making Contact

Rochelle Eisenberg, Staff Reporter

The Curriculum Initiative – a non-profit organization that partners with independent schools to foster a positive identity among its Jewish students while providing a greater appreciation of Jewish culture among the student body – has established a Mid-Atlantic presence.

Opening a Baltimore office, the organization recently began developing relationships with the independent schools in this city and in Washington, D.C.

“[Baltimore] is an important community for us. So many Jewish families are affiliated with independent high schools and, anecdotally, there are a much higher percentage of Jewish students who attend independent high schools in Baltimore than in most other large Jewish communities,” said Jason Benkendorf, TCI’s Mid-Atlantic regional director.

In its efforts to provide meaningful connections to Judaism, the organization supports Jewish clubs at independent schools. As part of that effort, it provides program grants for creative student-designed and -led projects promoting Jewish culture and heritage.

In addition, TCI works closely with schools to establish extracurricular Jewish clubs. Recently, TCI worked with the school administrators at the Boys’ Latin School of Maryland to establish a Jewish Awareness Club at that school. This spring, the Jewish Awareness Club facilitated a Passover assembly with the upper school, showcasing Passover traditions and rituals.

TCI also helps arrange guest speakers to supplement assemblies and programs at private schools.

Working in conjunction with private schools, the non-profit, which currently operates in New York, New England and California, has led students on Jewish service learning projects to New Orleans and educational travel programs exploring Jewish history in Spain. Eventually, the organization hopes to expand some of these programs at private schools in this area.