



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TCI Leads New York City Independent School Students on Jewish History Trip to Southern Spain

*Inaugural Trip Focuses on Jewish-Muslim Relations
During Muslim Spain's "Golden Age"*

New York, NY. March 12, 2007 – The Curriculum Initiative (TCI), the premier Jewish educational organization serving independent schools, is leading a group of twenty-five high school students from New York City independent schools to Southern Spain from March 24th to April 1st. The purpose of the trip is to study Jewish history during Muslim Spain's Golden Age during the 9th through 11th centuries in an effort to shed light on the strong relations between Muslims and Jews at that time.

Students from The Dalton School, Riverdale Country School, The Packer Collegiate Institute, The Hewitt School, York Prep and Horace Mann School will have the opportunity to study a time when Muslim and Jewish scholars created a society known for promoting learning and the arts, as well as for its tolerance toward diverse religions. By studying how Judaism flourished in this environment, TCI students will gain a deeper sense of their own Jewish identity and strengthen their connection to Jewish peers in independent schools.

“European medieval history too often treats Jews solely as victims while glossing over the positive aspects of the Jewish experience, particularly during the Muslim period in Spain,” said Eileen Gress, Executive Director of TCI. “Through this trip, TCI has the potential to open students’ eyes to the remarkable contributions made to medieval society by Jewish government ministers, tradesman, writers and philosophers, and the accompanying development of Hebrew philology and belles letters. It’s also an opportunity to examine a time in history when Muslims and Jews lived in relative harmony and prospered together.”

In addition to tours during the day, the trip will include informal evening learning opportunities using hevruta to explore texts – including original medieval texts and personal letters – as the basis for building relationships among students and exploring Jewish identity. The experience will also cultivate student interests in travel, history and the Spanish language and culture.

“The studies don’t just start and end in Spain,” said Adam Gaynor, TCI’s Deputy Director and the primary staff member on the trip. “The curriculum will include complementary school activities including a pre-trip visit to the Jewish Museum to learn about Islamic influences on Jewish culture and a presentation by educator Pedro Canó on Jewish History in Muslim Spain.” TCI’s overall goal of building independent school capacity for supporting Jewish students will be fostered through the Spain excursion. The trip is open to 9-12 graders, as well as teachers from the various New York independent schools. Heritage Tours, a boutique tour agency that specializes in Jewish educational trips to Spain will provide a tour escort who is fluent in both Spanish and English.

About The Curriculum Initiative

The Curriculum Initiative (TCI) is the leading Jewish educational organization serving independent schools. Through extra-curricular programming, school-wide and classroom presentations, and professional development, TCI strengthens Jewish students’ Jewish identity and nurtures school communities’ appreciation for the Jewish heritage. Major funding for TCI is provided by the S. Daniel Abraham, Edgar M. Bronfman/The Samuel Bronfman Foundation, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation, Jim Joseph Foundation, Natan, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, and the Alan B. Slifka Foundation.

About The Samuel Bronfman Foundation

The Samuel Bronfman Foundation (TSBF) focuses on projects dedicated to fostering a Jewish renaissance. TSBF is an active supporter of the Hillel: The Foundation for Campus Jewish Life, The Bronfman Youth Fellowships in Israel, The Curriculum Initiative, and MyJewishLearning.com. More information about TSBF can be found at www.thesbf.org

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