



Day Schools Exploring Online Learning

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Los Angeles – Jewish day schools may soon be making more use of students taking online courses in secular subjects as a means of reducing tuition costs while accessing a wide range of academic topics for students.

In an effort to address the educational and financial concerns among the day schools they help support, the Avi Chai Foundation has endorsed eLearning – taking courses online – as providing increased access, motivation and flexibility for students, as well as developing digital literacy skills required for the 21st century.

Addressing the North American Jewish Day Schools Leadership Conference here Sunday night, Rachel Abrahams of Avi Chai, a leading supporter of day schools, also emphasized the financial benefits of an approach being used in more and more schools around the country.

“Day school students could potentially enroll” in charter schools “and have parts of their general studies education funded by the government, while their Judaic studies would be offered in a bricks and mortar learning center (perhaps incorporating some online Jewish studies courses as well).

“Clearly,” she said, “this model would provide a major cost-savings to day school families.”

The conference, with more than 600 educators in attendance, is a collaborative effort, bringing together Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and community day school educators under one banner.

Other savings could come from using online courses instead of hiring a teacher, and retaining students who might otherwise go to public school to take advanced or special courses a day school might not be able to offer, according to Abrahams.

Avi Chai also announced the creation of a website, digitaljlearning.org, developed by the Jewish Education Project and JESNA (Jewish Education Services of North America). “The site is designed to serve as a portal for Jewish day schools to access information and research about the world of online education,” Abrahams said.

The annual conference is a joint effort of Pardes, the Reform day school association; The Solomon Schechter day school association, Yeshiva University; and Ravsak: the Jewish community day school network.