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SPECIAL TO THE CJN

To succeed in today's workforce, you need to know how to multi-task across devices and learn new tech-

nology at a moment's notice.

That's why schools like Akiva School in Montreal pride themselves on staying up to date on new educational research to provide teaching strategies that will help prepare students for a workplace that per-

haps can't be envisioned yet.

"We're preparing kids for a future we have not yet lived in. What's out there now is so rapidly changing. Innovative programming promoting the skills needed in today's 21st century world are key, providing experiences where students have real life, contextual learning, collaborate in teams, communicate, and reach out to build relationships outside of the school," said Jennifer Fraenkel, head of school at Akiva School, a pluralistic elementary Jewish day school in Montreal.

This school year, they launched computer science and coding classes into their curriculum, for students from kindergarten to Grade 6. "We coined it the fourth language," said Fraenkel, in addition to the three languages the students already learn (English, French and Hebrew). Coding is one of the most sought-after skills in today's workplace, with the number of computer programming jobs expected to increase 30 per cent by 2020 (meanwhile, all other U.S. industries are only expected to grow by 14 per cent).

Other Jewish day schools are also following suit. At the Anne and Max Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto, students benefit from Smart boards in classrooms and can take technology courses with access to green-screens, soundproof rooms and recording booths.

At Associated Hebrew Schools, stu-

dents work with iPads in the classroom and they've also started a new volunteer initiative called iParent where parent volunteers introduce JK/SK children to different iPad apps related to numeracy and literacy activities.

At Akiva, they're also taking learning outside of the classroom. Their Grade 5 students work on entrepreneurial projects with local businesses, learning how to solve business challenges.

Indeed, *Forbes* reports that success in the 21st-century workplace will not be dependent on technical ability but the ability to problem solve and make decisions, something which Akiva School hopes to instil in their students from an early age.

"What kids need is to take responsibility at a young age and know they can make a difference. The only way to do this is if they know the work they're doing in school is related to work outside of school," said Fraenkel.

"It's not about sitting in a classroom and working in workbooks anymore – it's about giving them a real audience and causes and having the work they do transcend the walls of the classroom. There's lots of brain research now on what motivates students and that's doing and speaking, which we put a lot of emphasis on. That's part of the basis why Akiva was founded (in 1968) and it's pretty amazing it holds true so many years later." ■

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