

## School visits Israel without leaving neighborhood

**T**he Lower East Side and the Middle East are now just a few keystrokes away at PS 20, a school tucked way down in District 1 on Essex Street.

You can hear the excitement in Chapter Leader Adam Baskin's voice as he talks about the new teleconferencing program that is linking the school with an Israeli school, and "later, hopefully, with a Palestinian one," he said.

"We're communicating with our colleagues in Israel about how we can deal with the threat of terrorism and engage in activities that promote tolerance and peace," Baskin continued. A computer teacher, he's also excited about the video conferencing capabilities hooked up on two computers in the school's multi-media library.

Eventually students will be joining in on the conference. For now, just the staff is involved. Part of the training, provided on site by Teachers College of Columbia University, is learning how to engage students in the project.

"PS 20 is a ground zero school," Baskin said. "The kids were traumatized on 9/11 and 14 of them lost family members, mostly at Windows On The World. We've seen signs of anxiety and insecurity. During our second training we did relaxation and biofeedback exercises to learn how to work with children to help alleviate their anxiety and help them feel safe."

According to Principal Leonard Golubchick, the *Daily News* and *The Villager* ran articles on how the school was handling grief. "Columbia picked up on the stories and contacted us. We're the pilot school and we're involving JHS 76 in the project, which is being funded by The New York Times Foundation.

"We thought it would be a great project," Golubchick continued. "On the adult level we're handling bereavement counseling; eventually we'll deal with handling conflict and with conflict resolution. That's about a year away. We hope to have some conversation with Palestinian educators soon, but because



On a mission to link their school with schools in the Middle East, the staff at PS 20 in Manhattan learn the ABCs of teleconferencing. Standing from left are librarian Maryann Yeeder, Chapter Leader Adam Baskin, guidance counselor Sara Rivera, 1st-grade teacher April Yee and Principal Leonard Golubchick. Seated are social worker Mikki Pedrayes (left) and 6th-grade teacher Debbie Capic, who co-chairs the chapter with Baskin.

of the turmoil it's not coming across at this point."

Golubchick praised the staff members involved in the project and the staff's dedication in general — the school topped District 1 in reading and math scores this year.

Chapter Leader Baskin credited the school's success in part with the strong cooperation between the union and administration. "Dr. Golubchick is on board with the union and honors every line of the UFT contract," he said.

"What do you expect?" said Golubchick, a former chapter leader and now CSA chair for District 1. "My father was an organizer for the Retail & Wholesale Department Store Workers Union and my grandfather helped found the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. I haven't escaped the union," he laughed.



Before bringing students into the project, the staff has been conferencing with school psychiatrists, psychologists and teachers in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

"Trade unionism is in my blood."

So while the staff and students get ready to address peace and tolerance on a global scale, there's peace and tolerance at home at PS 20.