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## Supporting school choice



By Randall P. Lieberman

Rabbi Yossie Denburg, dean of Hebrew Academy Community School in Margate, is extremely passionate about school choice.

"Choosing which school to send your child to should be every parent's right and obligation," Denburg said. "Choosing where their children get educated is the most important decision Jewish parents make about their children. We want Jewish children to be able to be educated in Jewish Day Schools where Jewish traditions and Jewish values are passed on to the next generation of Jews."

To highlight his commitment to school choice, Denburg participated in two events recently to show his support of the cause.

On Friday, Jan. 31, Hebrew Academy hosted a National School Choice Week Rally, as one of 5,500+ independent nationwide rallies in support of National School Choice Week (Jan. 27-31). National School Choice Week is designed to shine a positive spotlight on all education options for children, including traditional public schools, public charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, online academies and homeschooling.

Said Jim Home, former State Senator and former Florida Commissioner of Education, in a statement: "National School Choice Week is an incredible event that allows Florida families to join their collective voices in highlighting educational choices that work best for their children. Policy-makers get to see the real passion, dedication and commitment that these families have and will go to in order to make sure their children get the best possible education."

NSCW officials were thrilled that Hebrew Academy got to participate in National School Choice Week.

Said Andrew Campanella, NSCW president, in a statement. "We hear a lot about education in the news, but the students, teachers and school leaders at Hebrew Academy remind us that every single day, there are great things happening in schools of choice across America."

During the rally, Hebrew Academy hosted Doug Tuthill, president of Step Up For Students, a nonprofit that administers tax-credit scholarships to low-income students in Florida. The rally capped a week's worth of

activities at the school where students from Kindergarten through 8th grade drew posters, wrote essays and wore signature yellow NSCW scarves to celebrate school choice.

"It was great to see the enthusiasm of the students and parents at Hebrew Academy for school choice," Tuthill said. "Step Up For Students is proud to be a Florida Alliance for Choices in Education member, a National School Choice Week supporter, and one of many school options available in Florida, a state where 1.5 million children attend schools other than their assigned neighborhood school."

Denburg, who said a large portion of Hebrew Academy students benefit from scholarships, was glad that Hebrew Academy, which includes more than 400 boys and girls from infancy through the 8th grade, got to show its support of the cause.

Denburg said: "National School Choice Week reminds us to be cognizant and thankful to those who make that a reality. Hebrew Academy's success depends directly on the continued accomplishments of the school choice movement."

On Wednesday, Feb. 19, Denburg was part of a 30-member group from South Florida representing the Jewish Leadership Coalition (JLC) — Jewish lay leaders, business professionals, rabbis and day school administrators from the Orthodox, Modern Orthodox and Conservative Jewish communities — who took a trip to the State Capital in Tallahassee to meet with state legislators.

The JLC wanted to show its support of legislation which was in the process of being drafted which would expand the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program — including raising the scholarship amount, limiting barriers to enrollment and extending the scholarship to middle-class families. The JLC is a not-for-profit, social-welfare organization formed to represent the interest of the Florida Jewish Day School community.

Denburg said: "It made an impression on the legislators that we were not paid lobbyists, but advocates that are involved with the children every day."

The State House did draft a bill on Feb. 19, while the State Senate is expected to draft a similar bill soon (as of Feb. 21). For more information about the status of these legislations, click the "Legislative Updates for Tax Credit Scholarships" link on the home page of the Step Up for Students website ([www.stepupforstudents.org](http://www.stepupforstudents.org)).