



Gratz Insider, Summer 2016 - Story Continuation

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Doron Vergun: From NEXT Student to Mid-Career Fellow

The student, Doron Vergun, is a young mother who lives in the Detroit suburb of Farmington Hills. Vergun teaches religious school at a local Conservative synagogue, does private tutoring in Hebrew and Jewish studies, writes a [blog](#) for Hebrew school teachers and develops curricula, some of which she sells online. In other words, Vergun has found her passion.

Although she has a master's degree in higher education student affairs, it is Jewish education that runs through her bloodline and her upbringing. Her father is a cantor; her mother, a transplanted Israeli, was a day school and a religious school teacher; and her grandmother was a day school founding member. Vergun was raised in a religious home, and Hebrew was her first language.

She discovered Gratz's [NEXT](#) program as a result of the partnership between NEXT and the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. Unlike most of the local programs, NEXT courses enabled her to fulfill her professional development requirements online and to learn important pedagogical skills, not just Jewish content.

Last fall, Vergun took a NEXT class on teaching Hebrew reading with Dina Maiben, who realized early on that Vergun was a very high-caliber student and was the perfect candidate for a master's degree program. Soon afterwards, as if he had read her mind, Professor Saul Wachs contacted Maiben about openings in the [Gratz Mid-Career Fellowship](#) program. The Mid-Career Fellowship provides a 65% scholarship toward particular Gratz master's programs, including the Master of Arts in Jewish Education.

At Maiben's suggestion, Vergun applied for the fellowship. She has since been accepted as a Mid-Career Fellow in Jewish education and has completed her first semester. She is taking additional NEXT classes this summer and will continue with her master's courses in the fall. Vergun is pursuing a dream that would not have been attainable for her right now without the scholarship or the online programming.

Maiben is almost equally excited. She is thrilled that Gratz has the range of options and support available to meet Vergun's needs and talents. As she explains, "Every time you encounter a new student of that caliber, you just know that these are the people who are going to shape the field."