



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Scientific Director and Executive Director to co-lead strategic vision for Lee Pesky Learning Center**

**A formalized dual-leadership model allows LPLC to develop a national research and training center for learning differences**

Boise, Idaho (June 5, 2017) – Israel Catz was named Lee Pesky Learning Center’s (LPLC) new Executive Director after Dr. Evelyn Johnson, the Center’s current Executive Director, assumed the newly created role of Scientific Director at LPLC. Dr. Johnson and Mr. Catz will co-lead the expansion of Lee Pesky Learning Center’s strategic vision – to create a pathway to learning for every child.

Catz, who assumes his position as LPLC’s Executive Director on July 10, 2017, is a graduate of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Middlebury College. Catz will oversee the Center’s core services—evaluation, intervention, professional development, operations, and fundraising—and work in partnership with the Scientific Director to implement research-based initiatives.

Dr. Johnson, who currently holds a dual role as Professor of Special Education at Boise State University, will develop and direct a national research and training center in partnership with the University’s College of Education that advances the field of learning disabilities by solving problems of practice through applied research. Research will initially be conducted at the Center’s Boise office and in classrooms across Idaho through partnerships with schools and school districts.

“After six wonderful years as LPLC’s Executive Director, I am excited to embrace my new role,” Dr. Johnson explains. “Building a research and training center to improve outcomes for students with learning and attention challenges is a dream come true for me professionally, and I have the esteemed pleasure of doing this work alongside a passionate and capable new Executive Director, incredible staff, and committed board of directors.”

Over the last 20 years, the Center has become a nationally recognized nonprofit for its evidence-based learning intervention models and research in the field of learning disabilities. Under Dr. Johnson’s leadership, the Center increased its range of services and trainings, grown its research capacity, and strengthened its financial sustainability. The Center’s new strategic direction builds on these successes.

### **About Dr. Evelyn Johnson**

Evelyn Johnson believes that school should be a place where every child is valued, respected, supported, and loved. Her first teaching position was at Wilcox Middle School in Arizona. There she realized the need for leadership and advocacy to better support students with disabilities, their families, and the special education teachers who served them. This prompted her to earn her Doctor of Education degree at the University of Washington in 1999. Her passion for applied research grew while studying at the UW. Her research activities include synthesizing research on the effects of early childhood education for children living in poverty (for the Center for Disease Control’s Community Guide



to Preventive Services), partnering with researchers at Qatar University to develop learning tools to support the growing population of Arabic speaking children in the Treasure Valley through a Fulbright Grant, and partnering with Dr. Lisa Gabel of Lafayette College to research the genetic basis of dyslexia.

Pursuing her goal to improve special education services in public schools, she provided technical assistance nationwide through her role at the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities and co-authored more than 50 research articles and three textbooks.

As the Center's Scientific Director, Evelyn, along with the team at LPLC and the faculty at Boise State University, will create professional development tools for special education teachers and create school-based models of [The Pesky Way](#) to support the self-regulation and reading skill development of children with learning and attention challenges. Together, they seek to develop an education system that creates a pathway to learning for every child.

### **About Israel Catz**

Israel Catz is a passionate educator who strives to create an equal playing field for all children. He is a graduate of Middlebury College and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. During his studies, he worked in Senegal with the Ministry of Education to strengthen their education management information system and worked with English teachers to strengthen classroom practices. Following Harvard, Israel received funding to strengthen the education system in Madagascar. There he worked with the Malagasy Government and private-sector partners to establish a network of interactive digital libraries that give students equitable access to learning resources.

His previous experience includes teaching at Riverstone International School in Boise and as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Madagascar. While in Madagascar he founded the Antanosy Aid Association to combat hunger and illiteracy. The organization's mission: teach those who want to learn, feed those that cannot feed themselves, and build community through social justice. "I am excited to join the team at LPLC to support children with learning and attention challenges, their families, and their teachers to overcome barriers and find their individual paths to learning through *The Pesky Way*."

### **About Lee Pesky Learning Center**

LPLC is a creative, entrepreneurial, and dedicated teaching and research organization with the vision to create a path to learning for every child. Building upon a deep specialization in learning and attention challenges, they pursue their core mission – working with students, families, schools and communities to understand and overcome obstacles to learning through individualized learning services, training and consultation, educational resources, and research. Over the past 20 years, LPLC contributed over \$30 million in specialized learning services to children, families, and teachers across Idaho through generous supporters and grant funding. For more information on LPLC and its impact, please read the Center's [annual report](#), [website](#), and recent [media coverage](#).

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