



HANNAH SENESH
STRATEGIC PLAN:
2015–2020

SEEK MEANING. BUILD COMMUNITY. LEARN JOYFULLY.



The Hannah Senesh Community Day School Administration and Board of Trustees have engaged in a comprehensive and in-depth strategic planning process. Our mandate: to ensure that Senesh is on a course for excellence and strength by focusing our efforts on the highest priorities to shape the future of our school.

The year-long strategic planning process consulted a wide range of stakeholders, including current parents and students, alumni and their parents, prospective families, faculty, Board of Trustees, and community members. We sought to understand what our stakeholders believe must not change and what should change, and to dream about what Senesh could be—all to inform the most critical and important work the School should undertake in the upcoming years.

Through this process, our greatest attributes to build upon became clear: our commitment to an excellent secular and Jewish education, our wonderful community with deep bonds across grades and between families, and our diverse expressions of Jewish life. Our strategic plan is designed to nurture these strengths while we respond to challenges and embrace new opportunities.



TO THIS END, THE STRATEGIC PLAN HAS FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. Academic and Program Excellence
2. Faculty and Administration Excellence
3. Relationships and Communication
4. Managed Growth and Financial Sustainability & Accessibility

The Senesh Administration and Board expect these priorities to guide ongoing learning and implementation for the next 5 years, from 2015–2020. It is a “rolling” strategic plan which means that, as changes occur out in the world and within the School, leadership will adapt the priorities, strategies, and tactics so they remain relevant and continue to address our most important aspirations and needs. It is not a “fixed” strategic plan that will sit on a shelf and become outdated over time. We are committed to keep you, our stakeholders, informed on our progress and learnings through a bi-annual update. We invite every member of the Senesh community to join us as we work together to realize the strategies articulated in the following pages through your ongoing contribution of ideas and efforts.

MISSION AND VALUES

We believe that a compelling and current Mission and explicit shared Values are a necessary precondition to a successful strategic plan as they form the “North Star” for our School and the activities to sustain it. The Administration and Board submit the following new Mission and Values statements, having confidence that they accurately reflect the unique and wonderful Senesh experience and our aspirations:

MISSION: Hannah Senesh Community Day School is a progressive, independent, K-8 Jewish school in Brownstone Brooklyn. We teach our students to:

SEEK MEANING. Drawing from the rich traditions of Jewish inquiry and secular scholarship, our students learn to think deeply and realize their highest academic, intellectual, and ethical potential.

BUILD COMMUNITY. Our students and families cultivate meaningful connections within the school, with Israel, and in the wider world. We share a commitment to global citizenship and social responsibility.

LEARN JOYFULLY. We approach every day with creativity, passion, and joy, and celebrate Jewish learning and life.

VALUES: Our values, which are deeply rooted in Jewish teachings, guide us in all that we do and establish expectations for how we act to which we hold ourselves accountable.

KINDNESS | *Chesed* | חסד

We treat each other with respect and strive to demonstrate compassion and empathy.

OPENNESS | *Elu v'Elu* | אלו ואלו

We seek to understand diverse perspectives and accept those with different ideas.

RESPONSIBILITY | *Areivut* | ערבות

We take responsibility to support the well-being of others in our community and the world around us.

PERSEVERANCE | *Hatmadah* | התמדה

We apply ourselves in all we do and earn the satisfaction of seeing things through, especially when the challenge is great.

JOURNEY | *Mas* | מסע

We embrace life as a continuous journey of learning and growing.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY I: ACADEMIC AND PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

AGENDA: We will methodically continue to develop our academics and programs so that they enrich our students today while preparing them to excel in high school and beyond.

BACKGROUND: The School's academic and extra-curricular programs are the cornerstones of our K-8 program and are under continuous review. We routinely examine our program to identify areas for change and growth. We leverage research in pedagogy, curriculum, and child development to inform our decisions and drive our priorities. As a result, we have targeted certain academic and non-academic areas to ensure all of our students are appropriately challenged and engaged at Senesh and well prepared for high school.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

- Informed by our new statements of Mission and Values, we will develop and implement a plan to further infuse Senesh's values and core Jewish values in a more systematic and systemic way in the classroom and beyond. We will assess the impact of this important work.

We will upgrade our technology program to meet our goals of faculty and student proficiency in a tech-enabled world.

- We will continue to refine our goals, benchmarks, and content in the context of an explicit educational pedagogy across all academic subject areas and tailor our education to varied stages, paces, and styles of learning in a way that is consistent with our educational philosophy.

- We will embark on the next developmental phase of the middle school by enhancing and expanding curricular and extra-curricular programs to address our students' academic and social development. The initial priorities include increasing our arts, music, and performing arts programs; developing an advisory program to support additional guidance; expanding after-school offerings; and revising our science goals and benchmarks, adjusting the curriculum accordingly.

- We will upgrade our technology program to meet our goals of faculty and student proficiency in a tech-enabled world. We will integrate technology skill development into our curriculum and strategically upgrade technology hardware and software.

- We will strengthen Hebrew language education in the classroom and beyond. We will teach students according to proficiency level, including by having a heritage learner track. We will articulate proficiency level benchmarks and assessments to guide instruction. We will implement ongoing professional development along with an expanded use of Hebrew outside of the classroom.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION EXCELLENCE

AGENDA: We will implement a system of attracting, retaining, and developing Senesh professionals to further Senesh's Mission.

BACKGROUND: To achieve our Mission, Senesh relies on a talented and engaged faculty to design, implement, and continuously refine our educational program. Year after year, inspired by the Senesh Mission, Values, and community, our faculty has demonstrated their commitment to our program and their love of Senesh by working long hours and taking on additional responsibilities, while recognizing our constraints on compensation.

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As our school continues to mature, we need to target further support of our faculty and administration to the most critical gaps while also ensuring an overall model that maintains excellence throughout Senesh. This will require us to adjust compensation and enhance opportunities for professional development and growth in order to optimally attract and retain talent.



SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

- We will match personnel with the needs and enrollment of the School by defining our ideal faculty profile and using it to make ongoing personnel decisions and additions.
- We will upgrade the School's total compensation package in light of the competitive set: public schools, Brooklyn independent schools, and other nearby Jewish day schools. While we cannot achieve parity given our financial realities, we commit to making our compensation more competitive, equitable, and clear, targeting our adjustments to the most critical gaps.
- We will systematize professional development and increase opportunities for career growth in alignment with the School's needs. Initial priorities include developing a faculty mentorship program and increasing opportunities for collaboration and communication among faculty across grades and departments, and encouraging faculty to take leadership roles to advance the school program.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

AGENDA: We will enhance communications and strengthen relationships between the Administration, faculty and staff, parents, alumni, and the broader community.

BACKGROUND: Our current and alumni families cherish the strong Senesh bonds they formed during their years at the School. The fact that many deep and enduring friendships emerge amongst Senesh stakeholders truly distinguishes us from other excellent independent schools in Brownstone Brooklyn. We must be mindful and proactive about protecting and nurturing these bonds.

Our intent is to continue to improve communications and develop relationships among the Administration, faculty and staff, parents, and the community. This will take a commitment to ever-better two-way communication: clear, consistent, and transparent messages from the School as well as mechanisms that encourage parents to voice their ideas. Further, we recognize the need to increase awareness, within Senesh and beyond, of the wonderful things taking place at the School and its impact on students in order to attract and retain families and supporters.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

- We will foster genuine, open, two-way communication with parents.
- We will continue to nourish our beloved community by enabling and encouraging families to connect through Senesh.
- We will enhance family involvement and programming to engage parents in their children's learning and to leverage parent interest and expertise to advance our educational goals.
- We will use multiple media platforms and efficient and effective communication with parents and the wider community.
- We will ensure effective communication of our curricular and programmatic choices.
- We will deepen our relationships with alumni to advance the strength and connection of the network in order to strengthen our marketing and fundraising and to nurture future leadership.
- We will build upon Senesh's external connections, such as SmallCity@Senesh, to reach different segments of the Jewish community in order to provide new opportunities to foster Jewish engagement.





STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: MANAGED GROWTH AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

AGENDA: We will continually monitor, assess, and selectively develop growth options for Senesh, and strengthen our financial position to ensure the School's long-term viability while increasing the accessibility of a Senesh education.

BACKGROUND: The School is in strong financial health today with a balanced budget. But it comes at a cost: our parents are stretched and we cannot invest in all of the things that we would like to strengthen the School. In addition, nearly 50% of our students receive financial aid, totaling more than \$1.5 million per year. Further, our efforts to grow enrollment are constrained in two ways. First, tuition is a significant barrier, and we cannot afford to offer more financial aid. Second, we are outgrowing our current space, but do not have sufficient resources to build. Given these dynamics, we need a significant increase in income to grow enrollment to our goal of 30 children per grade.

SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

- We will analyze our various and potential income streams, and research and review tuition models, in order to select and implement the options that will likely best achieve our goals of generating sufficient income while easing the burden on our parents.
- We will finalize the refinancing of our outstanding debt and, in light of the savings from the refinancing, we will use formerly earmarked dollars for debt repayment to invest in long-term sustainability and program enrichment.
- In light of financial realities and market factors such as demand, we will chart a course for growth that is achievable and sustainable.
- We will study admissions data and expand both our parent ambassador program and marketing outreach to target key audiences for admissions and development.
- We will assess our space constraints and develop and/or utilize the two 5th Street properties according to our growth plans.
- We will proactively explore new fundraising strategies and tactics.
- We will re-double the development efforts of our leadership to expand opportunities for giving and cultivate a pipeline of board leadership and donors.
- We will expand our Legacy campaign.



This strategic plan was approved by the Board of Trustees in Spring 2015. The Board thanks the committee members and strategic priorities team members for leading the effort on behalf of the Board and the entire Senesh community. And, on behalf of the Board, the committee and team members, we thank all of the parents and faculty who contributed effort and thinking to this plan.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

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