



Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School

A Message From Our **Head of School**

Dear Parents,

The Return to Learn Guide is a dynamic and fluid document which reflects our dual goals to: 1) Facilitate in-person instruction in our spacious campus and generate collaborative learning opportunities for our students; 2) Maintain our commitment to the safety of our community and mitigate the risks in every aspect of our school program.

I am writing to inform you of important supplemental information to the Return To Learn Guide.

Early Childhood/Lower School Student Technology: I am pleased to share that JKHA will provide iPads for students in Nursery through Grade Two for their use in school and at home during the upcoming school year. By putting iPads in the hands of each of our Early Childhood and Early Elementary school children from the first day of school, we will enable our children to familiarize themselves with the educational and instructional apps that will be uploaded on each iPad. Furthermore, teachers will have the opportunity to create routines of learning using technology which students could seamlessly integrate into their home learning routines in the event it becomes necessary to transition to remote learning. Students in grades three and four will each receive chrome books for the 2020-2021 academic year that will facilitate technology-based instruction in their classes, and also help ready them for possible future remote learning. In-person technology based instruction will also enable teachers to hone those skills and be better prepared if we transition to a remote platform.

Early Education Remote Learning Tuition Rebate, N3-2nd: We are excited to have our students back in school, and optimistic that the measures we have implemented will be effective. However, we acknowledge the uncertainty of this year, and the possibility that we may be required to revert to remote learning. In light of the impact that would have, we have decided to offer parents in our Early Education (N3-K) program a 30% rebate on their tuition effective in the event we are compelled to close school for more than 30 consecutive school days. Such rebate would remain in effect thereafter for the duration of any such sustained closure. Our dedicated and devoted faculty will continue to engage students with the same energy and commitment whether they are teaching in-person or remotely. This rebate is a way for us to acknowledge that our younger students need parental support while they are learning remotely, and, despite the high quality of remote instruction offered to our younger students, still are not capable of independent, autonomous learning. A similar rebate at the rate of 20% would be applied for students in first and second grades in the event of such a prolonged closure, reflecting the degree of parent dependence present for this age in remote learning.

Our experience and parent feedback have confirmed that students in higher grades are better equipped to manage remote learning on an independent basis, and accordingly no comparable rebate would be provided.

It is important for our community to understand that even in the event that we are forced to pivot to a remote learning platform, school expenses would not decrease. To maintain our educational program we must continue to employ our teachers and staff whether we are instructing in-person or remotely. Fixed costs are about 85% of our budget. Covid-related expenses to prepare the school building for opening are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars beyond our original budget. Additional expenses were necessary to increase our technology infrastructure. Revenue from rentals and development decreased and our financial aid costs increased. With a decrease in revenue and an increase in expenses, even if in-person learning is canceled we must be fiscally responsible to ensure that we can continue to offer our quality educational program in the present and into the future. This rebate structure enables us to address these financial realities while also acknowledging the increased effort that would be required by parents and caregivers to support their children's learning under such circumstances.

Judaic Studies Grades 7 to 12: As explained in the Return To Learn Guide, students must remain in cohorts while they are in the building. Cohorts are determined by grades in the middle and high schools. The tradition of our school is to offer a Judaic Studies program that is gender separate and is facilitated by combining grades to form classes. Since we cannot mix grades in order to operate a cohort-based program in these divisions, Judaic Studies classes for the 2020-21 school year will be coed. This change is part of our COVID-19 safety protocols and is not intended to be a long term change to the design of our Judaic Studies program. This adjustment will enable us to provide differentiated learning within each cohort.

JKHA MS and RKYHS Schedules: JKHA Middle School will dismiss at 3:35 each day, which is a change from our traditional 4:20 dismissal for our 7th and 8th graders. Dismissing students at this time will mitigate risks and give our students some much-needed relief from fully-masked days. Additionally, the uniform dismissal with JKHA Lower School will allow families to streamline their own pickup procedures at the end of the school day.

To limit the number of hours RKYHS students will be in school, we arranged our program so that Monday-Thursday RKYHS students will dismiss at 4:30.

Furthermore, we recognize that our separate cohort program of learning limits our ability to run many of our clubs that have enriched our student experience. AIPAC, SADD, newspaper, yearbook, and many other clubs are populated by students from different grades. Our signature SEED program, which brings thoughtful, interesting and relevant speakers to our students' attention, cannot be scheduled in-person while we cohort in separate grades. We, therefore, are introducing a remote Friday for RKYHS students. The remote Friday schedule will include all regularly scheduled classes with windows for speakers or clubs. We will continue our tradition of a Friday Dvar Torah delivered by either Rabbi Chamudot or me. We are optimistic that this approach will enrich the high school educational experience beyond the classroom that has come to be known as a hallmark of an RKYHS education.

We know that there is a great deal of uncertainty and about the coming academic year but we are poised to respond thoughtfully while keeping our students', faculty's, and community's health a priority. We will be flexible, creative, and innovative to assure that your children will benefit from the high standards of the JKHA/RKYHS educational experience and that learning will continue unabated, no matter the circumstance.

We will be in touch with you in the near future with more updates as we finalize our plans. In the interim, please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions. I look forward to seeing you at the Townhall meetings.

Eliezer E. Rubin