



A Vision of

2020

San Diego Jewish Academy Strategic Plan



Fresh from a very successful accreditation process and from a position of significant institutional strength, San Diego Jewish Academy is now ready to move to the next, exciting stage in its development, one which is focused upon ensuring that our graduates are equipped to participate and thrive in a future that we can be sure will be very different from the present.

This Strategic Plan, A Vision of 2020, outlines an ambitious program to build on the San Diego Jewish Academy's historic strengths in order to meet the needs of the 21st century San Diego Jewish community and to prepare our students for the challenges they will face in this rapidly changing world.

Our sixth grade students have just completed their education at the Golda Meir Lower School and entered our Maimonides Upper School this fall. They will graduate from college in the year 2020 and enter a world that we know will be different than today, but in ways we can't imagine. This plan is designed to give those students the skills, habits of learning, and passion for living lives of meaning that will help them navigate their future.

Historically, San Diego Jewish Academy has always reinvented itself to meet the needs of the Jewish community. Founded in 1979, SDJA began in the San Carlos neighborhood of San Diego, opened a second campus in La Jolla, and in 2000 built a state-of-the art campus on 52 acres in Carmel Valley. As our Jewish community has grown, shifted geographically to different parts of the county, and become stronger and more diverse, so have we. Serving children from preschool through high school, SDJA is the largest Jewish day school in San Diego.

To develop this plan we brought together hundreds of parents, community members, teachers, students, trustees, and supporters in a series of structured conversations, board retreats, focus groups, online surveys, and strategic exercises. We worked for eight months in teams and sub-committees, and the plan you have in front of you was approved, unanimously, by the SDJA Board of Trustees in October, 2013.

Our plan was guided by a reframing of the school's mission to more sharply focus on the core of what we do, and how we do it.

Mission

A pluralistic preschool – 12th grade school serving the Jewish community, our mission is to further academic excellence, social responsibility, and active Jewish living.

At San Diego Jewish Academy we:

- *Inspire* our students to embrace creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial thinking in their learning
- *Instill* in our students a deep understanding and respect for the values and insights of Jewish tradition and a love of Israel that will lead them to live lives of Jewish meaning
- *Prepare* our graduates to be leaders of integrity, social responsibility, and architects of change

Vision

Our Vision guided us in the operational details of the plan. What would be the outcomes that would give evidence of success?

The vision of San Diego Jewish Academy is to be recognized for the development of leaders in academic, Jewish, and community endeavors, in technology, athletics, and the arts. Our school program encourages each student to find joy and meaning through his/her lifelong pursuit of learning and growth. Our graduates will be builders of vibrant and inclusive communities based on Jewish texts and teachings.

Core Values

Our core values are the path we take to achieve our mission and vision. They are essential to our endeavor and accompany us in all areas of the plan. Our seven values are:

- Menschlichkeit – Doing the right thing, having integrity
- Klal Yisrael – Being part of the Jewish community and people
- Torah - Study and learning for life
- Avodah - Prayer and spirituality
- Gemilut Hasadim – Kindness to others
- Ahavat Adonai - Love of God, knowing we are never alone
- Israel - Love for and connection to Israel

SDJA is well positioned to meet the needs of its changing and growing educational community. The school has strong financial and human resources. Our faculty is highly skilled and dedicated and our students are taught the habits and qualities of learning that help them reach their highest potential. Our graduates do well in their respective universities, gap years, and beyond. Jewish teachings are ever-present, permeating our school culture in ways that leave a lasting impression on our graduates.

Guided by our belief in our mission, we look to a bright future for our students, their teachers, and our community.



Ryan Stone

Co-Chair
Strategic Planning
Committee



Ingram Losner

Co-Chair
Strategic Planning Committee
President, Board of Trustees



Chaim Heller

Head of School



THREE THINGS

על שלשה דברים העולם עומד

TORAH

על התורה

SERVICE TO GOD

זעל העבודה

DEEDS OF LOVING KINDNESS

מעל חסדים

San Diego Jewish Academy Strategic Plan

AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

1. Educational Program

SDJA will ensure an outstanding and rigorous educational program focused on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial thinking, nurturing those skills and habits of mind and body that students will need to succeed in school and in life.

2. Jewish Knowledge, Literacy and Culture

SDJA will provide an exemplary environment in which the joy of Jewish traditions, teachings, and values – and the love of Israel – will foster a strong sense of Jewish commitment, literacy, and ethical practice that will guide students' life choices and kindle a passion for a life of Jewish meaning.

3. Our Students

SDJA will attract, enroll, and retain a high-achieving, intellectually curious, and compassionate student body that thrives in our school and its program and playgrounds.

4. Our Community

Our adult community will model the concept of *kehillah achat*, representing one community in which all are welcomed so that our children follow our example and become builders of a more inclusive future.

5. Faculty and Staff

SDJA will attract, retain, and support the best possible professionals to work with students and their families in order to provide an educational program of distinction and meaning.

6. Facilities and Campus

SDJA will ensure that our facilities and technology enable and support our educational programs in all endeavors and shall do so in the most environmentally sustainable manner possible.

7. School Resources and Advancement

SDJA will ensure that the school is efficiently run, thoughtful, and predictable in its tuition increases and innovative in building non-tuition revenue sources.

Educational Program

SDJA will ensure an outstanding and rigorous educational program focused on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial thinking, nurturing those skills and habits of mind and body that students will need to succeed in school and in life.



CONTEXT

San Diego Jewish Academy is one of the country's premier Jewish day schools. Our core program blends a comprehensive academic curriculum with the values and insights of Jewish tradition, all in a supportive and nurturing atmosphere of high expectations from all students. Our graduates are regularly accepted into the universities of their choice and excel in their chosen fields - while also committing themselves to tikkun olam - in college and in life.

As part of our commitment to continuous school growth and improvement, we have identified the skills and disciplines that we believe will make for success in the year 2020 and beyond, in addition to ensuring that our students continue to thrive in a rigorous academic environment. Our plan calls for us to integrate creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial thinking into our academic offerings so that future SDJA graduates will anticipate, embrace, and be the force for the changes that are ever-present in our world.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure and implement a high-achieving and rigorous K-12 curriculum
2. Ensure a curriculum that brings creativity, innovation, and the culture of entrepreneurial thinking alive within the school
3. Infuse 21st-century learning methods and objectives into the classroom, with a focus on critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills in each grade
4. Increase the diversity of course offerings
5. Further develop our focus on athletics and healthy living
6. Expand our programs for performing, visual, and expressive arts

ACTION ITEMS

1. Ensure and implement a high-achieving and rigorous K-12 curriculum

- Review K-5 for academic rigor
 - Align K-12 curriculum to ensure discipline-specific high outcomes
 - Ensure expertise on student assessment
 - Develop additional approaches to classroom groupings
 - Increase faculty training and support for differentiation
 - Explore opportunities for competitions, internal and external
- Review middle school program for best practices
 - Review approaches to learning and social/emotional support in middle school for maximum effectiveness with young adolescents
 - Explore middle school, including 5th – 8th grade, and organize accordingly
- Increase support for all students
 - Increase academic support through a school-based learning center
 - Increase social and emotional support through appropriate programming: Responsive Classroom, Developmental Design, homerooms and advisories
- Expand STEM Program
 - Increase capacity of STEM to support more students
 - Integrate humanities into the STEM Program
- Offer several world languages in grades 9-12
 - Offer modern world languages that include in-school Hebrew and Spanish, with Mandarin, Russian, French and others through online and blended learning

2. Ensure a curriculum that brings creativity, innovation, and the culture of entrepreneurial thinking alive within the school

- Creativity
 - Implement Design Thinking throughout the school
 - Enhance the integration of performing arts into the life of the school through expansion of performing arts, digital media, mixed media and more
 - Enhance programming in each grade to actively encourage imagination and the creative process
- Innovation
 - Incorporate formal coursework for hands-on innovation in middle school
 - Further our global focus on instruction incorporating BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) as a model of exploring new ideas and approaches, including BRIC languages and studies in high school
 - Re-envision middle school field trips to focus on innovation
 - Explore an innovation award prize for each grade level in middle school
 - Expand after-school Advanced Enrichment programs (extracurricular): Robotics, Biotechnology, Study of the Future and Green Technologies
 - Expand K-12 use of educational technologies as a means of enhancing student learning and expanding horizons
- Entrepreneurial thinking
 - Offer our high school students yearlong internships, ranging from Jewish community, business, industry, science, technology, and non-profit placements
 - Further develop SDJA-community partnerships that encourage learning and working opportunities beyond the campus
 - Develop our bar/bat mitzvah year “7th Grade Fund” as an incubator of social innovation and entrepreneurship in upper school
 - Explore breaking away from standardized usage of time to increase entrepreneurial learning opportunities and programs

3. Infuse 21st- century learning methods and objectives into the classroom, with a focus on critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills in each grade

- Incorporate a next-practice school-wide 1:1 technology program and ensure the educational and technical infrastructure to support it
- Review and refine school-wide learning expectations, with critical thinking, collaboration and communication components for each grade level
- Utilize multiple performance measures to help better understand student learning styles
- Pilot the design and implementation of a “genius”-focused library/information center

4. Increase diversity of course offerings

- Increase online and blended learning options for upper school students across the curriculum
 - Increase world languages in core academic offerings
 - Connect with independent and Jewish day schools, nationally and internationally, to share/teach common academics

5. Athletics and health

- Expand opportunities for students to experience growth and accomplishment through an excellent athletics program, systematically designed for grades K-12
- Incorporate a comprehensive health education focus into the daily experience of students

6. The Arts

- Expand opportunities for students to experience growth and personal expression through a focus on the visual and performing arts



“Ensure a curriculum that brings creativity, innovation, and the culture of entrepreneurial thinking alive within the school”

Jewish Knowledge, Literacy and Culture

SDJA will provide an exemplary environment in which the joy of Jewish traditions, teachings, and values – and the love of Israel – will foster a strong sense of Jewish commitment, literacy, and ethical practice that will guide students' life choices and kindle a passion for a life of Jewish meaning.



CONTEXT

We are proud to be a pluralistic school. This can be increasingly challenging, as the Jewish community moves toward increased segmentation, with more and more people remaining within their smaller communities. We believe that the future needs young men and women who embrace being Jewish in all environments, familiar or not. Our school program emphasizes literacy and knowledge as the best possible way to increase Jewish identity.

The core of the SDJA experience is Jewish learning in an inviting and meaningful school-wide culture. Our students attend our school knowing they will become literate and knowledgeable in Jewish texts and teachings. They will develop a strong foundation in Hebrew language skills that will enable them to address Israel and Jewish texts through first-hand experiences rather than relying on translations.

SDJA is known for a deep commitment to Tikkun Olam, (repairing the world). Our students care about the Jewish and global communities and are extremely active in their charitable and philanthropic activities. We look to increase our focus on tikkun olam and will strengthen our engagement with the San Diego Jewish community in order to make a difference.

Our students will graduate into a world in which support and love for Israel will be more important than ever, and their active engagement with Israel's people and land will provide them with a full and rich Jewish identity.

OBJECTIVES

1. Permeate the school with the language, meaning and actions of Jewish culture and values
2. Increase engagement with Israel and other Jewish communities and institute an integrated K-12 Israel studies curriculum
3. Deepen engagement and excellence in Judaic studies throughout the K-12 program
4. Continue to provide an excellent Hebrew language program, with an option in grades 9-12 to continue study as one of the school's modern world languages

ACTION ITEMS

1. Permeate the school with the language, meaning and actions of Jewish culture and values
 - Increase creative and innovative ways to celebrate the Jewish calendar, including holidays and Shabbat
 - Enrich a school culture in which phrases, terms and programs have Hebrew names and Jewish cultural connotations
 - Emphasize and incorporate the teaching of SDJA's character values through an integrated program connecting to the social curriculum
 - Develop a Hebrew speakers chug (club) for different grades
 - Use more Hebrew in everyday conversation and Hebrew classes for parents and staff
2. Increase engagement with Israel and other Jewish communities and refine our integrated K-12 Israel studies curriculum
 - Deepen our comprehensive Israel studies curriculum with cross-connections throughout the school's program, including increased connections to the regional council in Sha'ar HaNegev
 - Increase Sha'ar HaNegev teacher and student exchanges, K-12
 - Create a program for emissaries from Israel (shlichim) in the school to increase informal Israel orientation
 - Develop connections with other Jewish communities around the world, in several grades
3. Deepen engagement and excellence in Judaic studies throughout the K-12 program
 - Uniformly achieve benchmarks in each grade for Jewish content knowledge and skills which include primary source study of traditional and modern Jewish texts
 - Ensure K-12 benchmarks in tefillah consistent with our pluralistic approach
 - Have weekly Torah portion study as part of the curriculum for all K-12 students
 - Set high school graduation requirements at six years of Judaic Studies
 - Develop and teach American Jewish Community and Identity as part of the three-year middle school Jewish studies curriculum
 - Increase engagement with community rabbis and scholars through a mutually beneficial process that makes creative use of time and space
4. Continue to provide an excellent Hebrew language program, with an option in grades 9-12 to continue study as one of the school's modern world languages
 - Ensure a comprehensive and cohesive K-12 Hebrew curriculum which includes standards and benchmarks for all grades and levels
 - Explore alternative, parallel options for Hebrew language study from 9th - 12th grade (conversation, text-based/Hebrew for credit approach)
 - Develop an active community of Hebrew speakers and culture surrounding Hebrew
 - Include modern Hebrew in the upper school's Modern World Language Department and as an option from 9th - 12th grade

Our Students

SDJA will attract, enroll and retain a high achieving, intellectually curious, compassionate, and socially responsible student body that thrives in our school.



CONTEXT

San Diego Jewish Academy provides a supportive educational environment in which students can feel free to take educational risks, learn about themselves, and feel valued and safe. To accomplish this requires constant attention to the social and emotional climate of the school, and we have placed a great emphasis on building community among our students. One third of our students speak Spanish at home and émigré families from South Africa, Israel, Iran and other countries comprise another large segment, making ours one of the most diverse Jewish day schools in the country. Consequently, a focus on community building among our students enables us to use our school as a laboratory for teaching values of inclusion, respect and appreciation for others, which leads to a better education and more students.

We continue to draw students from a wide geographic area, with buses bringing students from Chula Vista, La Jolla, Carlsbad, Poway, Old Town, and all points between.

We have added a preschool to our program and now have 550 students in preschool – 12th grade. Notwithstanding this success, enrollment throughout the school has not kept pace with projections. The decline in kindergarten enrollment is particularly challenging due to the significant increase in private, independent, and charter school enrollment throughout San Diego. We have carefully examined the factors involved and believe we can grow the school to a revised capacity of approximately 700 students in K-12 and use our well-equipped and spacious facility to provide for those students.

OBJECTIVES

1. Fill the classrooms with mission-appropriate students who will thrive in our program and school
2. Reduce attrition rates every year, with no more than 5% after 3 years
3. Determine and establish a maximum and minimum class size for each division as educationally appropriate
4. Achieve increased enrollment in all three divisions

ACTION ITEMS

1. Fill the classrooms with mission-appropriate students who will thrive in our program and school
 - Develop admissions standards for all incoming students and use screening tools and entrance examinations to further our ability to provide for our students' needs
 - Design events and programs to involve SDJA preschool families in the life of the school
 - Develop programming for younger siblings of our students so that they are part of the SDJA family
 - Explore avenues for recruiting academically capable international students who will enhance our student body and overall school experience
2. Increase retention rates annually, with a goal of 95 percent retention year to year
 - Engage a comprehensive one-school branding initiative which emphasizes a continuous program, with interdivisional activities and quarterly all-school activities
 - Expand faculty, parent and student education and engagement regarding their role in student recruitment, retention and re-enrollment
 - Increase parents' home communication by adding "intake conferences" and grade-level coffees, with faculty and administration teaching parents about topics of interest in the school
3. Determine and establish a maximum and minimum class size for each division as educationally appropriate
 - Explore educational modeling that determines financially sustainable class sizes in each division which promote social interaction and maximize learning
4. Achieve increased enrollment in all three divisions
 - Increase outreach to and cooperation with other Jewish organizations, synagogues, preschools and summer camps
 - Emphasize the vision and unity of being "One Academy, One Educational Program"
 - Integrate a plan for presenting public events that increase the stature of SDJA within the broader community
 - Create marketing materials with empirical data to support the value and outcome of a Jewish day school education

Our Community

Our adult community will model the concept of Kehillah Achat, being one community in which all are welcomed so that our children follow our example and become builders of a more inclusive community.



CONTEXT

San Diego Jewish Academy prides itself on the strong sense of community that exists within the school. SDJA has many opportunities throughout the year for our parents and families to engage and enrich the school through their volunteerism and school pride.

The Jaffe Campus serves the larger community as a hub for events, hosting activities and programs that enhance the greater community. Our shared facility with the Ken Jewish Community has strengthened the connection between our overlapping communities and has been a source of pride for both organizations. We plan and work with many San Diego-area Jewish organizations and see ourselves as a pivotal community partner.

We have noticed a weakening of ties, however. Cultural and societal changes have had an impact on community building that needs to be addressed. The shift to more electronic communications and the building of more virtual communities has led to a lessening of ties among and between families. We look to increase connections in face-to-face interactions at schools and in homes as a key to building an ever-vibrant community.

OBJECTIVES

1. SDJA families will be committed to raising children together in the Jewish community
2. Continue to ensure an understanding of how diversity benefits our community and the SDJA educational philosophy
3. Support and add programs to achieve diversity in the broadest sense and to be inclusive of the multiplicity of backgrounds and views that shape our community

ACTION ITEMS

1. SDJA families will be committed to raising children together in the Jewish community
 - Establish systems and relationships within the school that develop our community and support our values
 - Review and introduce new parent and family educational programming for each grade
2. Continue to ensure an understanding of how diversity benefits our community and the SDJA educational philosophy
 - Use the kehillah theme/value concepts to define the kinds of diversity at SDJA and perpetuate a caring school community
 - Continue parent breakfasts for each grade level, with more education
3. Support and add programs to achieve diversity in the broadest sense and to be inclusive of the multiplicity of backgrounds and views that shape our community
 - Expand and support the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) so that it continues to provide a communal friendship-building infrastructure for the adult community

“We plan and work with many San Diego-area Jewish organizations and see ourselves as a pivotal community partner.”



Faculty and Staff

SDJA will attract, retain and support the best possible professionals to work with students and their families to provide an educational program of distinction and meaning.



CONTEXT

Faculty, staff, and administration are at the heart of our success. We realize that only by attracting, supporting, and retaining the highest quality individuals can we achieve our goals for our students.

We foster a supportive workplace environment for all, providing added and increasing opportunities for faculty and staff professional studies, learning, and growth. We are committed to providing the most competitive compensation and benefits packages in order to create alignment between the standards of excellence to which we aspire in all of our programs, and the very best faculty and professional staff we'll need to attract in order to create them.

OBJECTIVES

1. Continue the school's long tradition of attracting and retaining exceptional faculty, staff, and administration
2. Provide compensation packages that are increasingly competitive with other independent schools
3. Strengthen the school community as a supportive environment for all faculty and staff

ACTION ITEMS

1. Continue the school's long tradition of attracting and retaining exceptional faculty, staff and administration
 - Ensure a faculty support and evaluation system that values and rewards excellence in teaching through a process that engages and energizes teachers
 - Institute monthly all-school faculty gatherings to create an institutional culture and experience that is school-wide, with professional development opportunities designed to connect lower and upper school teachers
 - Increase our support for professional growth opportunities
2. Provide compensation packages that are increasingly competitive with other independent schools
 - Develop a long-term compensation plan that approaches the median for independent schools in San Diego
3. Strengthen the school community as a supportive environment for all faculty and staff
 - Increase in-school support for learning needs by creating a department of student services as part of the school program
 - Support teachers as they migrate to blended and online learning as part of their students' daily experience

“Faculty, staff, and administration are at the heart of our success. We realize that only by attracting, supporting, and retaining the highest quality individuals can we achieve our goals for our students.”



Facilities and Campus

SDJA will attract, retain and support the best possible professionals to work with students and their families to provide an educational program of distinction and meaning.



CONTEXT

San Diego Jewish Academy resides on a magnificent 56-acre site in Carmel Valley, designed to be an expansive and technologically advanced school that serves our students and community. Named the Jaffe Campus, our site includes spacious classrooms, music rehearsal and seminar rooms and group meeting spaces, faculty offices and a beautiful gym, designated athletic fields for football, baseball and more. The center of the school is made up of Levana's Garden, a spacious organic garden where our students work and learn about sustainable farming and plant life and whose namesake - Levana Estline z"l - was a beloved kindergarten teacher who worked at San Diego Jewish Academy for 18 years. She instilled a love of learning into an entire generation of children.

With the completion of athletic facilities and additional classrooms, the school has several urgent facility needs. We need a performing arts auditorium to support our growing performing, instrumental, and vocal arts program and to provide space for students to gather in celebration of the arts. We will need to add to our current STEM research lab facilities to support a planned expansion of the program and an increase in students. Our library facility needs a new vision that takes into account middle and high school students' usage of electronic research sources and provides workplaces for collaboration and their technology needs.

In a planned manner, we have upgraded our technology capability to meet the needs of the school's educational goals. Ongoing improvements to our technology infrastructure and programmatic delivery are top priorities for us moving forward.

OBJECTIVES

1. Provide for the facility needs of the SDJA educational program and community
2. Establish facility protocols and procedures that are environmentally responsible and sustainable

ACTION ITEMS

1. Provide for the facility needs of the SDJA educational program and community
 - Ensure that our STEM research lab facilities have the capacity to support an expansion of the program
 - Enhance and refine full integration of technology into the classroom and educational program
 - Explore an expansion of the library facility for middle and high school students to provide indoor gathering space for research and individual and group study
 - Review classroom furnishings in light of increased emphasis on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial thinking
 - Review and upgrade campus security infrastructure as needed
2. Establish facility protocols and procedures that are environmentally responsible and sustainable
 - Establish school facility protocols and procedures that reduce waste and maximize sustainable practices

"...our site includes spacious classrooms, music rehearsal and seminar rooms, group meeting spaces, faculty offices, and a beautiful gym, as well as designated athletic fields for football, baseball, and more."



School Resources and Advancement

SDJA will secure the school's financial sustainability, improve access and affordability, and maintain sound fiscal management to ensure the school's long-term financial sustainability.



CONTEXT

Financial equilibrium is necessary to sustain the resources required to support SDJA's educational mission and program. With the success of the debt elimination fundraising campaign, SDJA's current finances are sound; however, ongoing nationwide economic challenges require the school to develop a financial paradigm and approach for tuition pricing and fundraising. Tuition alone cannot cover the financial needs of any independent school; therefore, it is crucial that we develop robust long-term financial strategies to fund the initiatives included in this plan.

OBJECTIVES

1. Review and update our long-term, multi-year financial plan reflecting the SDJA mission and educational philosophy
2. Ensure that the financial plan supports the priorities of the Strategic Plan
3. Develop new sources and sustain current sources of non-tuition funding to support the school's financial sustainability

ACTION ITEMS

1. Review and update our long-term, multi-year financial plan reflecting the SDJA mission and educational philosophy
 - Continue the commitment to eliminate SDJA's outstanding debt by 2018 via SDJA operating contributions to debt reserves and collection of donor contributions
 - Provide ongoing opportunities to educate our families and the community about the budgeting process and tuition revenue
 - Provide ongoing opportunities to educate our families and the community about the importance of growing our endowment to help support our school and program
2. Ensure that the financial plan supports the priorities of the Strategic Plan
 - Develop a Strategic Financial Plan which incorporates Advancement to ensure long-term financial sustainability
 - Explore, prioritize and increase earned revenues by focusing on facility rentals, food services and other revenue-generating activities
3. Develop new sources and sustain current sources of non-tuition funding to support the school's financial sustainability
 - Develop volunteer and faculty leadership to build awareness and year-over-year increased participation in SDJA's annual giving program
 - Develop a robust and engaging alumni program
 - Cultivate a culture of philanthropy among our Parents of Alumni Students (PALS)

With the success of the debt elimination fundraising campaign, SDJA's current finances are sound; however, ongoing nationwide economic challenges require the school to develop a financial paradigm and approach for tuition pricing and fundraising.



San Diego Jewish Academy Board of Trustees

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