

Schechter's

Year in Review 2024

DISCOVER. CONNECT. CREATE.





Welcome to the 2023-2024 Annual Report, our first such publication in recent memory! We are excited to share with you—donors, community leaders, and members of the Jewish community of Greater Hartford—a record of our work this past year.

We take pride in our accomplishments, contributions to the community, and consistent enrollment growth. Before the school year even began, we adopted a new mission and revised our Core Values (see p. 2), and on opening day, we welcomed 137 students, representing five straight years of growth. (Our growth has continued into the 2024-2025 year. See our enrollment trends graph below). Among our many new educational initiatives this year, we invested in a new approach to reading in our elementary school, and our middle school students traveled to Alabama, Washington DC, and Italy for unforgettable trips that brought their learning to life.

Israel has always been deeply important to us. In August 2023, our teachers learned to infuse Israel education into our classrooms in new and exciting ways. Following the tragic events of October 7th, our connection only strengthened. Our students reached out to Israelis, marched to support Israel, and most importantly, welcomed 11 students who arrived from Israel, seeking refuge in a time of war.

These successes would never have been possible without the generous support of our community. Current and former parents and grandparents, members of the Board of Trustees, faculty and staff, and other donors collectively helped us raise over \$1 million towards our Annual Campaign and our most pressing capital need—a new roof. We are also grateful to the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford and the Jewish Community Foundation for their ongoing support. See p. 7 for more information on our financial position, fundraising efforts, and a listing of our sponsors.

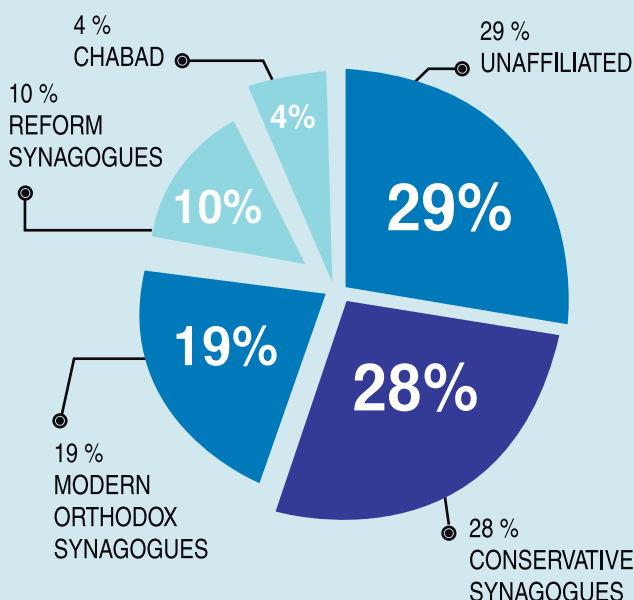
Your contributions enable us to give our students an unparalleled education and a strong, joyful Jewish identity; thank you for all of your support!

With gratitude,

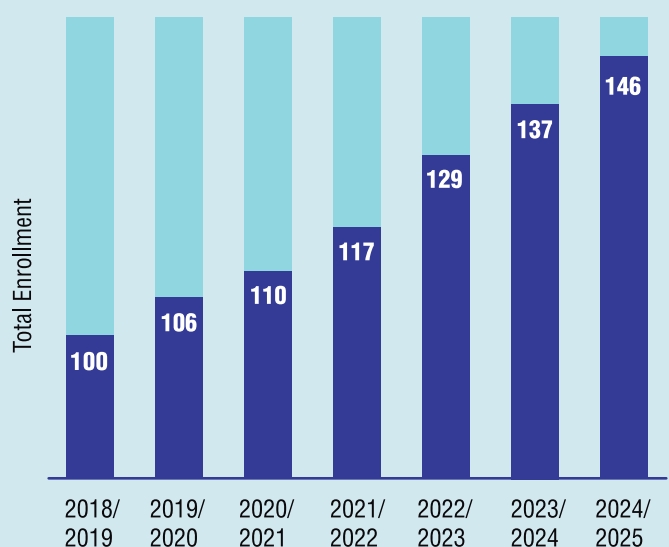
Rabbi Jonathan Berger
Head of School

Riva Lewinter
President, Board of Trustees

WHO ARE OUR FAMILIES ?



ENROLLMENT TRENDS



Our Mission

Schechter, a Jewish community day school, offers an exceptional, forward-thinking, student-centered education from early childhood through eighth grade.

We inspire students to love learning, celebrate Jewish life, connect to each other, and build a vibrant future for themselves and their community in a joyful, challenging, and creative environment.

CORE VALUES

1) *Chochmah*—חכמה—*Wisdom*

We believe true wisdom comes when we ask complex questions, consider multiple perspectives with empathy, grapple with original texts and primary sources, study the world around us, and discover personal meaning.

2) *Lev Tov*—לב טוב—*Good Heart*

We believe that by learning to love kindness, pursue justice, treat all human beings with respect, and care for our natural world, our students develop a good heart and a strong moral compass.

3) *Kehillah*—קהילה—*Community*

We believe in the power and beauty of our inclusive, diverse community, where students build friendships across grades, families connect to one another, and everyone can find a home.

4) *Mitzvot*—מצוות—*Jewish Practice*

We believe in the power of mindful, meaningful, joyful Jewish practice. Some *mitzvot* can connect us to our fellow human beings; others can connect us to the divine. All offer opportunities to add holiness to our lives.

5) *K'lal Yisrael*—כלל ישראל—*Unity of the Jewish People*

We believe in the unity of the Jewish people and celebrate the variety of beliefs, ethnicities, and traditions that exist at Schechter and in Jewish communities worldwide. We treasure Israel and the Hebrew language as threads that connect the Jewish people to each other, to our past, and to our future.

Schechter at a Glance 2023/2024



137

STUDENTS IN
2023/2024



32

NEW STUDENTS
ENROLLED



5:1

STUDENT TO
FACULTY RATIO



21

NEW FAMILIES



OVER **50%**

STUDENTS RECEIVED
TUITION ASSISTANCE



100%

8TH GRADERS ENROLLED
IN ACCELERATED MATH
CLASS FOR HIGH SCHOOL



75%

EC STUDENTS
MATRICULATED INTO
KINDERGARTEN



ALL 6TH, 7TH AND 8TH
GRADE STUDENTS
TRAVELED TO ALABAMA,
WASHINGTON, D.C.,
AND ITALY.

Schechter Launches Exciting *New Makerspace*

In March, Schechter was thrilled to dedicate the new Scott Shoham z”l Makerspace/Design Studio. Students draw upon their creativity and ingenuity to complete design challenges in Makerspace class and implement interdisciplinary projects. Thanks to a generous donation from the Shoham family in memory of their beloved husband and father, **Schechter students will use this phenomenal space for learning, innovation, and exploration.**

Teacher Laurie Stanfield has been helping students develop skills and inquisitiveness so they will thrive in the new Makerspace. **“I am excited to watch the students’ pure joy as they make and create.”** The curriculum includes age-appropriate design challenges like building Rube Goldberg machines and designing towers with KEVA blocks (a generous donation from the Leshem family), noting the energy transformations that help power their machines. Students practice coding skills by guiding tiny Ozobots at varying speeds and color patterns through a series of mazes. There are stations for robotics, textiles, cardboard engineering, and video production. In future years, Schechter will add equipment including laser cutters, tools for light carpentry, new 3D printers, and much more!

The Makerspace is a great way for students to demonstrate the knowledge they gain in other classes, like constructing displays representing a time period they are studying in Social Studies, designing Purim costumes, or cultivating native plants in the greenhouse.

The students’ enthusiasm is contagious. This tribute to Scott Shoham will impact students for years to come. Many thanks to GN Construction for their meticulous work transforming the space into the Shohams’ vision.



Early Childhood: Inspired by *Reggio Emilia*

The Early Childhood (EC) Program at Schechter celebrates the uniqueness of each child. We respect individual differences in learning styles and growth patterns, and we understand that children thrive socially, emotionally and intellectually when provided with a developmentally - appropriate environment.

Schechter's EC Program is inspired by the *Reggio Emilia* approach, incorporating hands-on learning to stimulate thoughtful questions and rich problem solving. This philosophy complements Schechter's commitment to Jewish values while prioritizing a differentiated general studies curriculum to create new opportunities and challenges for each student.



Each year, the Early Childhood classes select a culmination project that reflects the interests of their students. **They do research about the topic, embrace hands-on learning projects, and let their imaginations flow!** This spring, the Shorashim Bet students (ages 3-4) were fascinated by the solar system. Their teachers helped them to dig deep into the composition of planets, what makes black holes, sun and shadows, and so much more. Armed with a wealth of information, students then worked collaboratively to produce a culminating project that displays the unique qualities of each planet!



Interdisciplinary Learning in Elementary School

What is involved in an interdisciplinary unit? When Anafim students (grades 1-2) investigate the guiding question: "*Mi Ani?*" ("Who Am I?"), they get to explore the topic in depth, from multiple perspectives.

To learn the process of writing non-fiction, students composed autobiographies. **They took notes, sorted them into sub-topics, and wrote passages based on those facts.** In Social Studies, where geography and map skills are the primary focus, students created a map of the neighborhood where they currently reside, or they dreamed big and created a map of their ideal neighborhood.

Judaic Studies presented different opportunities for students to delve into the meaning or significance of their name and to make connections to their names in the Torah.



The Hebrew dimension of this unit focused on vocabulary: first graders learned words for the things they keep in their backpacks, while second graders learned adjectives and nouns that describe themselves, then wrote about those traits using complete Hebrew sentences.

In the end, **students used the tools of Hebrew, Judaic studies, Social Studies, Language Arts, and studio art to engage in powerful learning, and to produce meaningful projects!**

Schechter's *Well-Rounded* Students

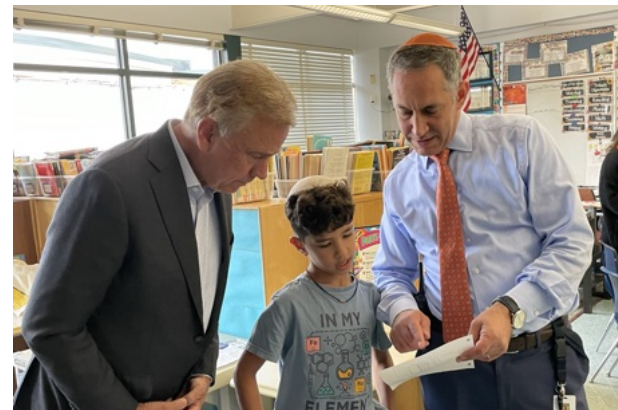
are Passionate about Athletics, Drama, and Music



Focus on *Israel 2023-2024*

The events of October 7, 2023 have impacted the entire Jewish community, and Schechter is no exception. Our students immediately sprung into action, creating posters to encourage donations to the Federation's emergency fund, writing letters to elected officials, welcoming Israeli students and their families to our community—and most of all, sending heartfelt letters to alumni, family, and friends in Israel. *"You are not alone,"* they wrote; *"We are with you, we pray that you are safe, we remember you."* Their words created a world of support in a time of fear. Governor Ned Lamont came to Schechter to hear students' concerns, get a sense of what the Jewish community is going through, and show solidarity for Israel.

The Schechter community has shown support for Israel at rallies in Connecticut and in Washington, DC, and organized a collection of supplies for the troops. Our Ner Tamid Annual Gala focused on Schechter's connections with Israel as we honored five women instrumental in forging and strengthening those ties. **Schechter students feel linked to Israel on a daily basis, through our curriculum, special programs, and our work with the iCenter. Our joyous celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut is something that students look forward to each year.**





Middle School Trips Bring *Learning to Life*

Our Middle Students learn with both their minds and hearts when they experience lessons through travel! Student groups study Civil Rights before traveling to Alabama; they explore the museums and experience advocacy in Washington, DC, and in 8th grade they have a trip to Israel that marks the culmination of their Schechter education. **These travels build on their academic learning and help bring their lessons to life.**



Outreach into *the Community*

Schechter takes an active role in the Greater Hartford community, both within our halls and in other locations.

JEWISH OUTREACH

Each week, Schechter holds our joyful Friday ReLiSh program (*Ruach Likhvod Shabbat*), when students, teachers, and family members gather to sing and dance in preparation for Shabbat. At Hanukkah time, hundreds of parents, students and community members join together for our annual Latkes and ReLiSh program where they display pride in our Jewish traditions. Rabbis from congregations around the community come to ReLiSh as special guests, and they also lead monthly *parashah* discussions for middle school students.



EDUCATIONAL FOCUS

Schechter opens our doors for families with young children throughout the year, allowing them to experience a taste of the Early Childhood's *Reggio Emilia* inspiration. At Shalom Reggio programs, topics focus on a holiday and allow families to explore through art, music, science, books, and play.



TIKKUN OLAM

Is a big part of what we do at Schechter. Whether serving meals at the House of Bread, preparing tote bags filled with toiletries for Dignity Grows, or lovingly decorating and packing care packages for The Bridge, Schechter students have a deep understanding of the importance of giving to others.



Schechter Alumni Shine



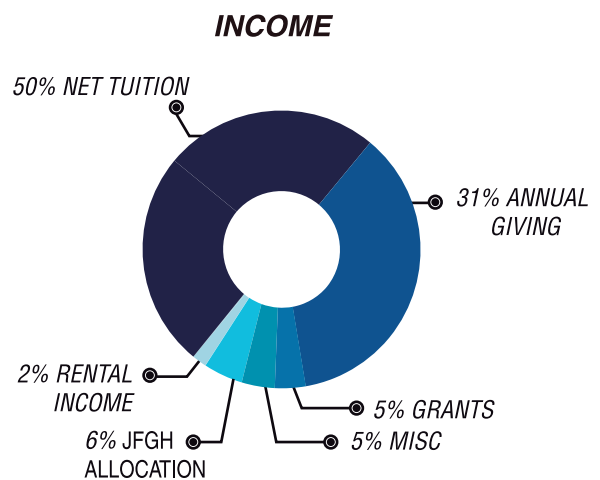
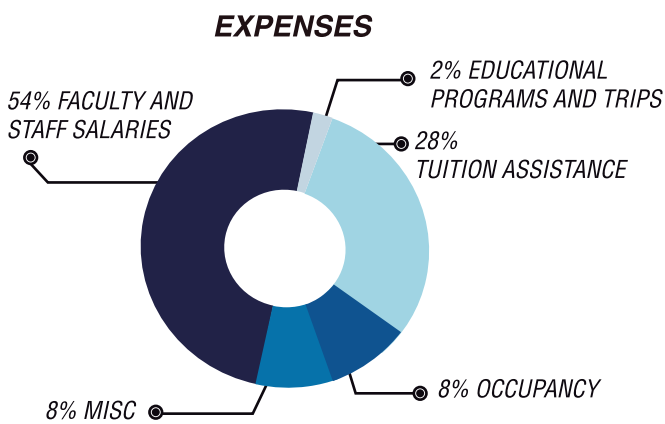
Sarah (Gerrol) Laskowski (1995) is Director of Institutional Communications for a global nonprofit biomedical research institution. She is also involved in the UConn Indoor Air Quality Initiative and serves on the Emanuel Synagogue's board of education. Her most treasured role is being a parent to two daughters who are both students at Schechter—a true example of *dor ledor*, from one generation to the next!

Matthew Baram (2000), Executive Director of Hillel 818, was recently named one of the 15 outstanding Jewish professionals from North America selected for Class 8 of the prestigious Wexner Field Fellowship. Over the course of three years, he and his peers will receive leadership training, professional development, and Jewish learning.



Isabella Epstein (2012) is working to solve the loneliness epidemic. She is creating a startup company called Kndrd (pronounced "Kindred"), aimed at helping people find activities that interest them, connect with people who share similar interests, and coordinate plans to meet in person.

Fiscal Year 2023/2024



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

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