

Netivot HaTorah Day School

Mission, Vision and Strategy

Background to process

Emerging from a challenging pandemic, the Board and senior leadership team at Netivot HaTorah Day School recognised the need for a second look at the unique purpose of the school, its wider community and its strategy for the future.

In late 2021, into 2022, NoTosh undertook a full community listening exercise with the help of an in-house Netivot HaTorah Day School “Design Team” of students, parents, teachers, staff and leadership.

We established a position of Leadership and Board for the future vision of the school and consolidated this with the needs and desires expressed by the community.

As a result of our analysis there was a long list of 22 choices across five types of choice category, and synthesis sessions with leadership narrowed these choices down to a focussed handful. This is the strategy that has been chosen.

We also undertook an analysis of the Mission and Core Values of the school.

The previous mission statement was a description of ‘services offered’, rather than expressing the unique, differentiating purpose of the school that became clear during our analysis. We’ve created a mission, with a vision of what the world will look like when you live that mission every day, that positions Netivot HaTorah Day School in a unique way, both locally and internationally.

- 173 in-depth interviews (47 students, 36 staff, 91 parents);
- 253 students, 53 staff and 150 parents surveyed;
- Parents consulted in person at an evening event;
- 62 hours of analysis and leadership team meetings
- Analysis of local schools and leading international comparison schools

An overview

The Story of Our School

Netivot HaTorah is a co-educational Pre-Nursery through Grade 8 school that supports the diversity of the Orthodox community in Toronto. At Netivot HaTorah personalities emerge, individuality develops, friendships form, and your child thrives.

We are inspired by three guiding pillars: **Torah, Israel** and **Derech Eretz**.

Our mission

Netivot is dedicated to the development of the whole child. Through powerful religious and academic learning experiences we cultivate in our children connections between Torah and everyday life, a love for and support of Medinat Yisrael, and their growth as respectful individuals and positive contributors to Am Yisrael and society at large.

In order to accomplish our mission, we:

- Guide every child to create the vital habits of heart, mind and neshama (soul) that make a fulfilling and meaningful Torah life;
- Recognize that each student is an individual, and seek to ignite their unique potential;
- Nurture each student to be confident, and feel loved and respected; and
- Help each student advance towards a mastery of Judaic and General studies using a child-centered learning approach. We aim towards proficiency in Hebrew language as the means to most fully access Jewish culture and texts.

Our vision is that each of our students is uniquely prepared and proud to live a life guided by and committed to Torah values and Halacha, integrated with knowledge of the sciences and humanities and a deep connection to Israel. This will enrich each child, their home, and the world around them.

So how do we make this happen?

There are two major areas we need to focus on.

Firstly, making learning memories is as important as memorizing to learn. So wherever we can, we need to design active, experiential learning that goes deep. We need more 'learning by doing' so that our young people secure a depth of knowledge about the subject, and have fun doing it.

Secondly, our curriculum design starts with where the learner is. Getting our students passionate and excited about their own Religious Zionist identity as well as their academic learning requires them making personal connections with what they are learning. But it also requires them to put their inquiries and their Torah values into practice. Learners will do this through collaborative projects focused on making a positive impact in the community in Canada and Israel.

A common approach based on Torah values

We have a shared approach to doing this work based on everyone in our community building:

Habits of mind;
Habits of heart;
Habits of neshama.

Every step of our work should be guided by our Torah values and *halacha*.

Whether reviewing the curriculum, choosing a new IT platform or hosting a community meeting, every decision we make and action we take has to be guided by the principle of “connecting the principles of Torah to everyday life.”

Our approach to learning design is not just for students.

We all need to share a crystal clear awareness of the current strengths, skills, needs and passions of each child. That might be, for example, through a system of up-to-date goal-setting or formative assessment routines. But the same philosophy of starting with the learner applies to professional development: an approach to learning design that always starts with who’s where, right now.

Development of Capabilities and Systems

Finally, we need to make this easy in the long term, by building on our strengths and supporting people with the right systems.

We need to share approaches to learning across our school, between campuses, as a habit. Sometimes pockets of great practice sit in one grade level or on one campus. We will make sure that all Netivot teachers are sharing what works, in order to build the capacities of the whole team and consistency across the school.

And we will sharpen our focus on the social and emotional needs and midot of our students as much as their academic ones. We know that this will end up in more well-rounded students able to collaborate and relate well with others, a stronger community as well as better academic outcomes. So we have to show through our curriculum, support system and relationships that we take it seriously.

Three systems make our work possible:

1. **Individual goal-setting is for everyone.** Personal growth is everyone's business, so let's build visible learning habits that make it easier to share success and spot opportunities for development.
2. **Development of our people:** We need to design the onboarding and development processes that help everyone become the best educator they can be at Netivot.
3. **Consistency and clarity:** We have shared and consistent expectations to learning across each grade, and take great care on the bridge from one grade to the next.