

# **A community of learning making an impact**

Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy  
Strategy 2023-2027

Strategy summary  
and background

Prepared by  
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## **HBHA: Determined to have a positive impact on our people and the world.**

### **Background to process and key discoveries**

Defining HBHA's unique identity, specific to the context of Kansas City, was the starting point for rethinking our strategy, clarifying our unique purpose, and gaining focus as a community.

In late 2021, NoTosh undertook a full community listening exercise with the help of an in-house HBHA "Design Team" of students, parents, teachers, staff and leadership:

- 172 in-depth interviews undertaken by the Design Team;
- 80 hours of analysis, with Board and leadership team meetings;
- Analysis of the local landscape and 34 leading international comparison schools.

We also worked with Leadership and Board to create a concrete picture for the future of the school.

As a result of our analysis there was a long list of 35 choices across five types of choice category, and synthesis sessions with leadership narrowed these choices down by two thirds.

**“Strategy is sacrifice.”**  
David Ogilvy,  
founder Ogilvy & Mather

We also undertook an analysis of the school's Mission Statement.

The previous Mission Statement described what we do, rather than why we do it. It assumed the newcomer knew the identity of the school and that current families agreed on it. It didn't show what differentiated us and why that mattered.

We discovered that there is indeed a distinctive purpose at HBHA. The source of that unique core was there - we've simply drawn it out and shone a bright light upon it.

The strategy that stems from this, and the concrete measures for success, were shared with the Leadership Team, Strategic Planning Committee, and Board for feedback in November 2022.

## Our mission

**We are a diverse community, united through our shared tradition, culture, and the values of the Torah.**

**We strive to cultivate a generation of Jewish independent and ethical thinkers, determined to reach their greatest potential and have a positive impact on our people and the world.**

*Some notes on the use of the mission:*

The mission can be thought of as three ‘acts’ if time is short, or the context is more conversational.

**Firstly, it explains the school’s daily heartbeat work:** to remain a diverse community, united, with shared traditions, culture and values of the Torah.

**Secondly, the mission offers a clear ‘why’ for the community:** to get every young person to a point where they reach their potential and have a positive impact on our people and the world. This is the key element to highlight at any opportunity.

**Thirdly, there’s a clear outcome:** if we get it right we’ll cultivate a generation of Jewish independent and ethical thinkers.

Depending on the audience, and the time we have with them, there’s an opportunity to start every conversation with the ‘why’ and expand from there. It can become the first thing we think about when we step into the building, and the thing we celebrate at the end of another brilliant school year.

## An overview

HBHA is a diverse community, united through our shared tradition, culture, and the values of the Torah.

We strive to cultivate a generation of Jewish independent and ethical thinkers, determined to reach their greatest potential and have a positive impact on our people and the world.

### If we do this every day, we can realize our vision:

**We see a world where every learner achieves beyond what they thought was their personal best, individuals bound through Klal Yisrael.**

### So how do we make this happen?

There are two major areas we need to focus on.

**Firstly, we want to see all of our students participate in collaborative projects that have real impact in their community.** This kind of learning is engaging and the approach will help us personalize a world-class Jewish education. That means we need to develop structures and approaches to interdisciplinary project-based learning and nurture our community partnerships.

**Secondly, we want to develop the leadership capability of everyone in our school community.** Leadership is about helping everyone develop an individual sense of Jewish identity and understanding of how being Jewish permeates every part of our life. So we need to identify and strengthen those connections to everyday life and ensure our learners make their contribution in service to others.

### Two creative habits to design every day

When we're planning learning, we have to start with the strengths of the learners in front of us at that moment in time. What's going to be engaging, joyous, creative and authentic for them? Interdisciplinary learning demands this student-centered focus.

And when we're looking for interdisciplinary connections, let's start with the connections we can make to Jewish Studies, Hebrew and

leadership. We're going to invest in bolstering our Jewish tracks and Hebrew language learning, so let's spot opportunities to bring disciplines together and make the most of our investment in young people.

### **What systems do we need to build?**

There are some systems and capabilities that we need to develop to support this work, and make today's extraordinary effort tomorrow's business-as-usual:

**We need to turn community connection into community action.** We have a great community - so let's use those community connections wherever we can. We need to find our local talent and nurture relationships with community groups, synagogues and rabbis; we want to be an equal partner at the community table and turn those connections into action with our students.

**We need to develop a system to map our interdisciplinary curriculum.** It will identify those potential partnerships ahead of time, and the interesting pathways they offer our young people. Solid, planned partnerships that benefit the partner as much as our students will help spread the word on the engaging learning programs we design at HBHA.

**We need to develop a platform to support consistent yet personalized approaches to student and staff learning.** We might start with an audit of what learning approaches are there today. But then, we need to define how we learn what we learn with these fresh ideas.

**And, finally, staff can learn over time to take on more autonomy** and be accountable for their own professional development, and their role in whole-school improvement.



# **The reasoning for each strategy choice**

## A structure for framing strategy choices

From over 30 initial options, we honed down to seven interdependent choices. These seven choices identify the work we need to do around our aspiration, the development of our systems and the key focus for the learning experience.

The seven ideas that follow are structured around five categories that work together, providing a framework for Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy's future:

- **Aspiration** or vision:  
What do we want to see in the end?
- **Where to Play:**  
One or two key areas of work which gain disproportionate attention and give us focus.
- **How to Play:**  
A distinctive approach that is pertinent to the people of the HBHA Community and distinctive from the competition;
- **Capabilities** required to realize the aspiration.  
These are largely capabilities we already possess, but can make more of, and some that need professional development to support;
- **Systems** to make the ambition feasible, over time.  
**Foundational** systems that will become business as usual.  
**Signature** systems that will require more energy and focus.

Over the pages that follow are the choices we made, why they matter, and some of the evidence from the Design Team's interviews, and from broader literature, that support them.



## The final set of choices

### ASPIRATION

#### Be a school that helps every child do their personal best

##### What is the choice?

Excellence is a personal goal, not a comparative one. HBHA will become *the* school for helping young people find their calling and develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to pursue it. Every child reaching their personal best, and carving out their personal path, is our success story.

We want to develop a whole school approach to learning that's steeped in a Jewish ethos and pedagogy, which, like many interdisciplinary discussions that occur in the Talmud, are designed to inform practice and practical application.

##### Why is this choice important?

This approach fully recognizes each child's strengths beyond a set of pre-defined options in a prescribed curriculum. This approach can be something different for Jewish education in the region. It's an aspiration that seeks to ensure everyone is given the best chance at success in their life. It is designed to attract families who want their children to realize the potential of their unique talents. By harnessing the relatively small class sizes today, and assuming they'll grow at a sustainable rate over the next few years, we can borrow the time of the next few years to turn your personalized approach into a sustainable personalized learning system.

Amazing schools are often defined by their academic programs. However, to be a really great school, HBHA needs to carefully design its approach to helping every learner do their personal best. As our Design Team's interviews showed, the word 'personal' can be understood in different ways:

*"I think that parents like that their kids get personal attention."*

## WHERE TO PLAY

### Focus on interdisciplinary project-based learning

#### What is the choice?

Select and/or develop multi-age, multi-disciplinary, meaningful projects to enhance and broaden learning beyond formalized classrooms and empower students to engage in their own learning.

#### Why is this choice important?

For learning to be joyous, creative and authentic few things beat a real world problem to solve. But more than that, these projects seek to take the learning from the theoretical and place it in the realm of the practical by answering the question:

*“How does this subject apply to the real world?”*

Be it science class, a Jewish Studies topic, a piece of literature critique in English, an exercise in math or history: *“How does what I’m learning apply to the real world?”*

Where there is a clear connection between these subject areas and Jewish Studies or Hebrew, these connections should be the first we build interdisciplinary projects around. Furthermore, taking a collaborative approach allows students to work alongside others from across the school and develop vital social skills.

This choice sees the role of school as more than just the teaching and learning of knowledge, it implies a need for students to learn process and pitfalls of putting thought into action. The need to physically respond to the challenges facing the world around us and to act authentically, ethically and innovatively is paramount to ensuring students leave school with more than just knowledge but also with a sense of how it's applied.

## Foster youth leadership

### What is the choice?

“Be an ohr la’goim”: a light unto the nations, by developing the next generation of leaders through real world exposure to and engagement with local community, national and international issues. Our mantra is, *“How can we take responsibility and positively impact the future?”*

### Why is the choice important?

Leadership, especially regional and global leadership, is an underdeveloped capacity in most schools, however HBHA is working from a solid foundation and could elevate the importance of its youth leadership program to make it one of the key identifying factors of HBHA. The benefit of this is not only to develop the students capacity to lead but also elevates HBHA’s profile as the source of great leaders.

## HOW TO PLAY

### Maximize everyone’s strengths

#### What is the choice?

By identifying each student’s individual strengths and ensuring they are catered for and built upon throughout the learning experience, HBHA can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to do their very best.

#### Why is the choice important?

For students to be successful they have to invest in something they’re good at, or something they care enough to become good at. By allowing everyone to explore their interests with the goal of identifying their strengths, HBHA can ensure students have the best chance of succeeding in whatever endeavor they choose once they leave school.

## CAPABILITIES

### Turn our community connection into community action

#### What is the choice?

HBHA has a strong sense of family between parents, students and educators. What would it take to turn a feeling into reliable structured action on the ground: mentorship for students, a talent bank that can be drawn upon to add richness to classes, or offer work placements and internships?

#### Why is this choice important?

All schools care for their learners. All schools claim a sense of family. HBHA actually has that family connection running through its veins, but doesn't yet make the most of it to expand the opportunity and options for young people, particularly those who are feeling out what they want to do with their life. HBHA can put an equal value on academic success and the learner surpassing their own expectations on the one hand, and being ready for life on the other.

## **SIGNATURE SYSTEMS**

### **Individual learning plans for all (staff, students...and parents)**

What is the choice?

Build a system of personal growth plans (PGP) for everyone in the school community.

Why is this choice important?

Schools are all about personal development. At the same time, there is no one path of development that suits everyone. Personal growth plans assist the individual in mapping their particular journey. But they also are an excellent tool for measuring the impact of the school's programs and teaching.

### **Build a world class multi-track Jewish curriculum**

What is the choice?

Design a world-class model of Jewish education that covers the spectrum of Jewish voices by embedding religious ideas from across all denominations with cultural, traditional and historical Judaism to ensure everyone's perspective is included.

Why is this choice important?

Our mission is to attract and nurture a diverse community, and we seek to develop young people as independent and ethical thinkers.

## **Increase the pathway options**

### **What is the choice?**

HBHA ensures students have opportunities and pathways to further their own individual passion and enable them to chart their own unique path through learning and life.

### **Why is the choice important?**

HBHA can offer students specific pathways that support a wider variety of student passions and aspirations. Whether it's the arts or sport or computer science, HBHA will facilitate the necessary steps and relationships to make the pathway a reality.

## **FOUNDATIONAL SYSTEMS**

### **Clear governance and responsibilities**

#### **What is the choice?**

Build a more robust committees system that has Board members taking on greater responsibility, achieving goals independently, and creating an accountability structure to show progress.

#### **Why is this choice important?**

A vibrant Board can help take on long-term thinking and projects that add value to our aspiration.



# Objectives & Key Results

These high level goals give direction for every team to design their own goals and action plans, offering a degree of direction coupled with autonomy.

## What are Objectives?

Objectives are goals, often unmeasurable, definitely ambitious, and they express the end result that is desired. Note that if we are regularly meeting our objectives, they are not ambitious enough. Let's consider 75% a good benchmark.

## What are Key Results?

Key Results are the measurable results that we expect to achieve on the way towards realizing the Objective. It's a good idea for the leadership team to identify a small number (1-3 of them) at the highest level, and from their position (e.g. High School, Elementary, Ops). By looking at the OKRs of each senior team leader, we get a picture of what the overarching key results for the whole school might be. Their key results then cascade down from that. Their middle leaders then need to do the same - how can high school teachers' key results for the year align with those of the senior leader of the high school?

And in this way, over time, those working on the delivery of ideas can start to influence and shape the goals of the whole organization, through their successful projects (and what they've learned from those that didn't work out so well).

## What are the greatest challenges with OKRs?

School leaders can create goals about three things:

### Inputs

Goals about what the leadership team, budget or Board can provide for the community. It is easy to set a goal, because relatively few permissions need to be sought. There is no guarantee that inputs will lead to any outcomes, so a school can feel they've got a great set of ambitious goals but there's no sense that any impact has been achieved.



## Process

Goals about what systems and processes we'll create, and often what teaching staff will do. These can be really important because they provide evidence that the right action is happening, and often there's a degree of confidence that they will lead to a positive outcome (e.g. research says that focus on feedback routines will lead to improved engagement and learning outcomes, so we're going to ensure that every lesson has opportunities for reflection and feedback).

## Outputs

What is the impact we expect from what we put in? These are the best objectives and key results to focus on, as they tell us how the young person and their families, or the staff, will benefit. They don't have to be about young people every time - outcomes and impact on staff can be important, too, for example.

## Objective 1:

All of our learners will be encouraged to participate in and lead collaborative projects that have real impact in their communities.

Key Result	By July 2023	By July 2024	By July 2025	By July 2026	Tracking Success - How
<b>Developing a collaborative culture and 'can do' philosophy amongst staff</b>	All staff attend one collaborative planning session per month to work with colleagues to plan lessons/projects together.	All staff attend two collaborative planning sessions per month to work with colleagues to plan lessons/projects together.	All staff are expected to be meeting regularly (at least once per week) with colleagues to plan lessons/projects together.		Report at the end of year to track this  Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to staff
<b>Interdisciplinary and project-based experiences will be integrated into the curriculum</b>	All subjects will offer at least one project-based learning experience in every grade level each semester.	Project-based learning experiences will be a regular part of students' learning (i.e. present in their scheduled lessons each week) in every grade level.	All subjects will offer at least one interdisciplinary learning experience in every grade level each semester.		Report at the end of year to track this  Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to students and staff
<b>Students are involved in community projects</b>	All students have the opportunity to try participate in projects outside class (eg. social justice project).	All students have the opportunity to participate in at least one community action project linked to the curriculum.	All students have the opportunity to participate in at least one community action project per semester linked to the curriculum.		Report at the end of year to track this  Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to students and staff

<p><b>Student leadership development</b></p>	<p>Student leadership at HBHA is defined and opportunities for how to develop it are planned.</p> <p>Student council leadership roles are clearly articulated in partnership with learners.</p> <p>Student showcases are harnessed intentionally as opportunities to lead, over and above being a chance to show off achievement in learning (e.g. using a common rubric of reflection after the showcase).</p> <p>Leading Jewish rituals / prayers / practices occurs already - initial focus on reflection on personal growth. Some students can articulate how their leadership in religious practice can transfer to other areas of their life.</p>	<p>Every grade level includes some kind of leadership opportunity for every learner. They might undertake one or some of the following opportunities:</p> <p>Leadership opportunities in the running of the school.</p> <p>Leadership opportunities in projects that benefit our community.</p> <p>Leadership opportunities in their learning (leading a project, a team activity).</p>	<p>To be decided based on the work of years 1 and 2.</p> <p>We want leadership capacity across the three key areas we've identified to show our students' influence on our people and the world (refer to our mission)</p>	<p>Report at the end of year to track this</p> <p>Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to students and staff and parents</p>
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## Objective 2:

Faculty and students in Grades 1-12 at HBHA will have personalized support and independent, unique goals so that everyone can reach their full potential.

Key Result	By July 2024	By July 2025	By July 2026	By July 2027	Tracking Success - How
<b>Teacher mentors provide personalized support</b>	A vision of how teacher mentors might provide personalized support is crafted and plans are drawn up for how this might be put into practice beginning during the 2023-2024 school year.	Set up teacher mentor system so that by the end of the year all faculty and students have access to a mentor/tutor/learning guide (school to define name/role).	Students meet with their teacher mentor at least once per week.  Faculty meet with their mentor at least twice per semester.	Students meet with their teacher mentor at least once per week.  Faculty meet with their mentor at least once per month.	Report at the end of year to track this  Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to students and staff and parents.
<b>Using ILPs/ goal-setting</b>	Faculty researches, meets, and plans for ILP systems and strategy for implementation in years 2-5.	Implementation of ILP and goals for all students with differentiated learning plans (IEPs, 504, undocumented learning support, and Launch (enrichment))	Introduce ILPs the middle and high school, for students to track and guide their own learning.	All students are actively using an individual learning plan or goal setting system to track and guide their own learning.	Report at the end of year to track this  Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to students and staff and parents
		Some faculty members have used professional goal-setting on their growth plan as an effective tool for their own professional development.	At least half of faculty members have used professional goal-setting on their growth plan as an effective tool for their own professional development.	All faculty members have used professional goal-setting on their growth plan as an effective tool for their own professional development.	Report at the end of year to track this  Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to staff

<b>Professional development budget spent on personalized training opportunities .</b>	Develop a new framework for how PD is distributed to teachers, based on a combination of personal goals (teacher led) and school goals (led by administration )	Some faculty members benefit from professional development based on their own needs and areas for growth.	At least half of faculty members benefit from professional development based on their own needs and areas for growth.	All faculty members benefit from professional development based on their own needs and areas for growth.	Report at the end of year to track this  Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to staff
<b>Increase in student achievement and/or engagement</b>	Develop a framework to understand the multiple facets of student engagement.	Develop framework and test survey / interview data / questionnaire	School's ability to respond to student self-reporting on engagement, to design or reshape existing programs.		Survey for engagement and satisfaction - to students and parents

### Objective 3:

Our students will represent the full spectrum of Judaism from a broad range of economic backgrounds. We will maintain low tuition and robust financial aid AND attract more high-SES families.

Key Result	By July 2023	By July 2024	By July 2025	By July 2026	Tracking Success - How
<b>Diversity of enrollments</b>		A 4% increase in enrollment based on increasing market share of available student enrollment (Based on 2022 JFed Jewish Census Survey results)*	A 8% increase in enrollment based on increasing market share of available student enrollment (Based on 2022 JFed Jewish Census Survey results)*	A 12% increase in enrollment based on increasing market share of available student enrollment (Based on 2022 JFed Jewish Census Survey results)*	Report at the end of year to track this
		10% higher students that pay full tuition.	20% higher students that pay full tuition.	30% higher students that pay full tuition.	Report at the end of year to track this
<b>A world-class Jewish curriculum tailored to meet the needs of our diverse learners and families.</b>	Middle and Upper school students will be able to choose electives in Jewish Studies and Hebrew.	Additional ways to provide course choice are explored in addition to electives.	Additional ways to provide course choice are explored in addition to electives.		Report at the end of year to track this  Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to students and staff and parents

	<p>Lessons and products of learning in Jewish Studies classes empower students to express their independent thinking on the topic in hand. (e.g. thinking routines that encourage learners to reframe ideas from different perspectives).</p>	<p>Student work in Jewish Studies and Hebrew shows many examples of diversity in student responses.</p>	<p>In Jewish Studies and Hebrew, students are involved in co-designing assessment tasks to show their diverse perspectives.</p>		<p>Report at the end of year to track this</p> <p>Plus survey for engagement and satisfaction - to students and staff and parents</p>
<p><b>Develop a clear and actionable communications plan that identifies the stories and channels to attract more Reform, Conservative, and Unaffiliated families, and High SES families.</b></p>	<p>Start tracking these data points so that KRs can be set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase conversion rate from inquiry to visit</li> <li>• Increase conversion rate from visit to application</li> <li>• Increase in Open House (or similar event) attendees from diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• More social media interactions from stories targeted specifically towards local families from diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• Other channels to reach High-SES families?</li> <li>• Increase traffic to website content telling community stories.</li> </ul>				

\*Targeted enrollment numbers to be based on Jewish community families identified in 2022 JFed Jewish Census Survey results. Specific goals and recruiting plans to be defined and reported on by administration annually to meet and exceed OKRs as market share will change based on our recruiting success and the growth of the Jewish community.

## Objective 4:

Build a more robust committees system that has Board members taking on greater responsibility, achieving goals independently, and creating an accountability structure to show progress.

Key Result	By July 2023	By July 2024	By July 2025	By July 2026	Tracking Success - How
<b>Committees system</b>	Committees established with participating members with oversight in areas determined by the Board.	Identified OKRs being tracked that will define the success of each committee.	The success of each committee is reviewed every half-year.	...	Survey to be created by committee on Trustees
<b>Board accountability structure</b>	Systems and processes are established for Board accountability.	Systems and processes for Board accountability are implemented.	Systems and processes for Board accountability are reviewed and improved.		Survey to be created by committee on Trustees





# **Appendix I: What's next?**

## **Executing the plan**

### **Timeframe**

The current strategy has an annualized set of high level Objectives and measurable Key Results, designed for Board scrutiny. Divisions and Departments should use these goals to create semi-annual plans for what they plan to execute.

### **An agile process**

HBHA has cleared time for collaborative working, and is considering moving from relatively sporadic annual goal-setting to more agile sprints. In a sprint model, three 10-week sprints of action take place throughout the course of the year. Each sprint is undertaken by small teams, choosing their own goals that feed into the larger OKRs. They're accountable for what they choose to do, and sharing their progress at the end of the sprint. There's a bias to action and outcomes. This increases the cadence of deliverables, and offers three times the opportunity for feedback, accountability and reflection. The agile process matches well with the Objectives and Key Results provided.

### **Accountability to the Board**

The Board need to work with the Head of School to map out a clear understanding of how the overarching Objectives and Key Results will be used to review progress and set expectations on information flow.

## **Departmental or Divisional Adjustments**

### **Finance Committee and Head of School**

Most of the activity in this strategy involves the redirection of existing resources. Dependent on the execution approach, the budgeting for the plan will likely not kick in until 2023-4 - ongoing budgeting will

be sufficient until the point where initial projects get started and teacher / leadership teams are able to scope out potential future needs.

The alternative - a full financial plan for the next three years, for example - will require significant alteration throughout such an agile approach.

## **Brand Strategy & Parent Experience**

Once the strategic direction of the school is set, our Communications - Admissions - Advancement team will have the Core Identity and metrics towards which they can plan. This team should already be conducting regular analyses of competitors, current customers and prospects. This analyses can be updated to reflect the differentiation offered by the strategy.

HBHA's communications team has started to look at the communication experience of current parents - rather than just focusing on prospective families. Project-based learning that's starting today has the potential to provide rich stories that could be captured and told to prospective families. We recommend focusing more effort on the admissions experience, the first six months after admissions and the family experience beyond that, rather than just thinking about pre-purchase communications and advertising.

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