



רמב"ם Maimonides School

**Annual
Operating
Plan**

2009–10 / 5770

August 2009 / Elul 5769

Created by the All-School Administrative Team (ASAT)

2009–10 Annual Operating Plan

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Dear Members of the Maimonides School Extended Family:

As we continue each year to implement the many aspects of our program that have been successful, we consider regularly which need to be revised or superseded; and, of course, we are always eager to introduce innovations. We are gratified to be able to present you now with our fourth annual **AOP** (Annual Operating Plan). The AOP does not focus on the established dimensions of our educational program; it highlights only initiatives that have been undertaken for the coming school year.

While planning for this year (5770; 2009–10) we have identified six particular areas of emphasis:

- (1) Communication and Responsiveness
- (2) Religious Life
- (3) Social Issues
- (4) Meeting the Needs of Individual Students
- (5) Curriculum and Program Review
- (6) Supervision and Evaluation


Goal: Improve Communication and Responsiveness

We are taking this opportunity to examine and update our system of communication across all channels to strengthen the school/family partnership. Our primary goal is to foster productive, healthy dialogue between our teachers and parents in order to maximize student growth and learning. To this end, we will be restructuring our weekly email communications to parents to make them clearer, cut down on redundancy, and enhance visibility of important information. We will establish protocols for teacher/parent communication and set new guidelines for teacher responsiveness to parent inquiries. We plan to revamp our website to make it more interactive, useful, and user-friendly for current parents and families.

The ASAT team has already instituted a new <boardfeedback@maimonides.org> electronic mailbox where all community members can express their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions regarding school policy directly to the Board of Directors and receive prompt and thorough replies. We are engaging faculty members and parent volunteers in our efforts. We have established milestones for the communications upgrades we are planning, and we will survey our parent community in the spring to evaluate the success of this year's initiatives.

Goal: Make the Religious Dimension Central

Our school's "Mission Statement" includes: "The School must provide an all-encompassing religious atmosphere in which the observance of *Halachah* in the totality of its ethical and ritual components is central." A total commitment to halachic



observance presupposes an abiding awareness of God’s devoted immanence and immediacy in our lives. We shall, therefore, enhance our ongoing efforts to help students achieve this awareness by nurturing the self-awareness that prompts each member of our school community to ask repeatedly throughout the day: “Will the *Ribbono shel Olam*—whom I love and want to please—be gratified by what I am about to do?”

This question should influence how I dress for the day; the time of my arrival in *shul* for *Shacharit*, and the degree of my *kavannah* during the *tefillah*; how I talk to, and about, my schoolmate during breakfast; whether I present my work in class with integrity; what I eat for a mid-morning snack and whether I recite *berachot* before and after; whether I am inclusive of the new or shy student in the lunchroom; and on through each hour of the day.


Since we are each “in the presence of God” after school hours and on non-school days as well, our goal is to create awareness that will accompany a student after hours and on weekends. How am I spending my free time? How do I dress on Sundays? Where and what do I choose to eat during non-school hours? How sensitive am I to the needs of others during informal social activities outside of school?

In short, our ambitious goal is no less than to create a thoughtful Jew—one who tries always to do what is right rather than what is convenient or satisfying. Our criteria for “right” or “appropriate” are derived, of course, from our traditional halachic sources. Western societal norms for what is “right” or “appropriate” in behavior, in dress and in speech are often antithetical to the standards of purposeful living that our religious tradition has espoused consistently for over 3,000 years. Faculty and administration will work together with the student body to foster pride in our distinctive religious-cultural values, and to help students develop the fortitude and the determination to assert these values throughout each day of their lives, so that they will realize *Shlomo HaMelech’s* (King Solomon’s) vision of “*Bechol Derachecha Da’eihu*,” “Know Him through each of your activities” (*Mishlei* [Proverbs] 3:6).

Goal: Address Critical Social Issues

Our goal at Maimonides School is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all of our students and to foster healthy emotional and social development. Unfortunately behaviors such as bullying, social exclusion, and teasing jeopardize our efforts.

This year in the Middle School we are very excited to begin a multi-year initiative in Grade 6 called BRAVE (developed in the adolescent psychology department at Yeshiva University). BRAVE is an evidence-based bully prevention program that has been widely implemented in both public and Jewish schools throughout the country and abroad. The overall aim of the program is to create and sustain a positive social culture that supports all children, and provide an environment that is free of harassment, exclusion, and bullying. The program provides education on bullying and its consequences for students, teachers and families, and focuses on the critical role of bystanders in the “bully-victim” interaction. Tackling social issues is both complex and time-consuming. Research suggests that it takes a concerted



all-school effort over a multi-year period to create the kind of change that we should expect at Maimonides.

During the 2009–10 school year in the Elementary School, all elementary classrooms at Maimonides will be working on social and communication skills by participating in the Open Circle program. Open Circle is a widely used curriculum designed to create a cooperative classroom environment, build positive relationships, and solve interpersonal problems among students. All classroom teachers will be trained in Open Circle before school begins. Teachers will also be supported in the use of the program during the year. We are confident that Open Circle will help to create a social/emotional atmosphere that is inclusive, respectful, and proactive in addressing social issues in a constructive manner. Grades K–2 will concentrate on basic social and communication skills such as good listening, cooperation, sharing, and calming down. In Grades 3–5, the emphasis will shift to include respect, friendship, bullying, and problem-solving.

Goal: Better Meet the Needs of the Individual Student

Maimonides School continues to examine the way in which we understand and educate our students. We look not only at the academic goals for our students but also at the social, emotional and religious aspects of their development. Our goal for the 2009–10 school year is to begin a multi-year process of improving each teacher’s ability to understand individual student needs, and to broaden each teacher’s repertoire to meet these needs.

Using the English and Hebrew Literacy initiatives in grades K–2, our goal is to pay particular attention to how our youngest students are learning. In addition to our focus on literacy, we will expand two ongoing programs to enhance teacher understanding of individual needs:


- **“Hidden Sparks”** engages teachers in analyzing cognitive profiles of students in order to understand each student.
- **“Differentiated Instruction”** gives teachers the tools to modify and accommodate the curriculum to meet the needs of the students in their classroom.

These programs involve Judaic and General studies teachers working in collaboration with our learning specialists to foster a better understanding of individual student needs.

Goal: Create a More Robust Curriculum and Program Review Process

Every school needs a thoughtfully chosen, unified curriculum for all students as they progress through the grades. Each curriculum must include learning outcomes at every grade level, as well as formative assessments with a focus on “big ideas” and “critical questions” to be used to measure student progress. Maimonides, as a K–12 school, has a special responsibility to see that its students are prepared as they move from one grade to the next and from one division of the school to the next.

With direction from our K–12 Curriculum Director, a curriculum review committee is being formed that includes teachers, administrators and parents. The commit-



tee's charge is to create a system of program evaluation that carefully focuses on curriculum, instruction, materials, and facilities that will be replicated in every one of the school's subject areas. For the 2009–10 school year, the committee will model this process by spending the year reviewing the K–12 mathematics program at Maimonides. This will include a visiting team made up of experts at the elementary, middle and upper school level, which will review the current program and make recommendations on what to maintain, remove, add, and strengthen in this important curriculum area.

Goal: Create a More Productive Supervision and Evaluation Program

Every high-functioning school demands a thoughtful supervision and evaluation system in order to help every staff member, every teacher, and every administrator grow in his or her job. The Maimonides Board of Directors has determined that a more thoughtful and better-implemented supervisory system is a critical component to improving the quality of our school at all levels. As such, a Board committee will be created to supervise the senior administrators of the school. Further, the administrative team is being asked to focus on clarifying the effectiveness of our current supervision program for teachers and staff. Our goal for the 2009–10 school year is to better utilize the systems that are already in place, and to improve the systems that we are using. This will be the first of a multi-year initiative to develop a more workable system that encourages growth and improvement at all levels with better oversight.

It is our pleasure to discuss the scope of this plan with interested students, faculty, and parents at any time. We plan to report periodically to our community on the progress we are making in each of the above six initiatives. In the meantime, we wish you each a *ketivah va-chatimah tovah* (may you be inscribed and sealed for a good year).

Sincerely,

The All-School Administrative Team

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