

CASE
STUDY



Shalom Academy High School

A Personalized, Dual-Curriculum, College Prep Jewish High School On the Road to Financial Sustainability

Dr. Sarah Birkeland and Dr. Orit Kent

Helix Learning Partners

May 2018



■ Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3	Benefits of SAHS's Approach to Jewish Studies	27
Introduction	8	Challenges of SAHS's Approach to Jewish Studies	28
Context and History	8	Out-of-School Learning and Activities	29
An Idea Takes Shape	8	The Whole is More Than the Sum of Its Parts	29
A New Model for a School	9		
Planning for Financial Sustainability	9		
Recruiting School Leadership	9		
The School Mission and Student Body	10	Taking Stock	30
The School Mission	10	A Strong and Dedicated Faculty	30
SAHS Students	10	Systems and Structures in Place	30
		A Strong Body of Satisfied Students and Parents	30
Financial Model	11	Student Success with WiFi High and Beyond	31
The Start-Up Phase	11		
Looking Ahead: The Tuition-Sustained Phase	13		
The Structure of the School	14	Looking Ahead	31
Administration	14	Appendices	32
Jewish Studies Faculty	16	1. Research Methods	32
General Studies Faculty	16	2. Profiles of Four Shalom Academy High School Students	33
Specialists	16	3. Sample Weekly Schedules for the Girls' and Boys' Divisions	35
Interns	16	4. A Sample Advisory Lesson Plan	36
		5. Descriptions of Four Weekly Pace-Setting Meetings at the Girls' School	37
Teaching and Learning at Shalom Academy High School	17	6. Description of a Math Lab	39
The Daily Schedule	17	7. Description of Ben's Work During Flex Time	40
An Overview of WiFi High	18	8. Description of Rachel's Work During Flex Time	41
Benefits of Engaging WiFi High for the Virtual General Studies Curriculum	19	9. An Explanation of the Choice Advantage Incentive System	42
Challenges of a Virtual General Studies Curriculum	20	10. Description of a Boys' Chumash Class	43
General Studies Support at SAHS	21	11. Description of a Boys' Talmud Class	45
Virtual and In-Person Learning	24	12. Description of a Girls' Navi Class	47
Jewish Studies Curriculum	25	13. Description of a Girls' Beis Midrash Class	48
What Teaching and Learning Looks Like in SAHS Jewish Studies Classes	25		
Personalization of Jewish Studies Instruction at SAHS	26		

■ Executive Summary

There's always been a concern every time we take a family through the years of day school, only to see some of these kids fall off the face of the earth after eighth grade. They go on to public school, sometimes never to be heard from for years and years. We always had this idea in the back of our minds that we needed to do something.

—Rabbi Kleimovitz, founder of Shalom Academy High School

Introduction

This case study, commissioned by The AVI CHAI Foundation, tells the story of Shalom Academy High School (SAHS)—a small, growing Jewish high school that is distinguishing itself as a promising new model by: (1) offering a blended learning experience whereby the Judaics curriculum is taught by on-site faculty in a face-to-face, classroom-based format, and students enroll in a college-preparatory virtual high school for their general studies courses; and (2) working toward becoming a tuition-sustained, financially self-sufficient school.

Based on data collected in fall 2016 by researchers at Helix Learning Partners, the case study documents Shalom Academy High School's progression—from concept development and planning to implementation and fine-tuning—in its efforts to offer a high-quality Jewish education and college-prep secular education at a competitive price in a financially sustainable manner. Over a three-month period, the researchers—Dr. Sarah Birkeland and Dr. Orit Kent—conducted extensive interviews with the school's administrators, staff, and students. They also observed classroom activities, student advisory meetings, and other in-school encounters to deeply understand the structure and culture of Shalom Academy High School over its first three years of operation.

Local Context and First Steps

The moderately sized city surrounding SAHS has fewer than a million residents, approximately 30,000 of whom are Jewish. The community has long supported a handful of K–8 Jewish day schools and two high schools, an Orthodox high school for girls and a yeshiva high school for boys.

However, leaders in the local Jewish community had, for years, lamented the lack of an explicitly college-prep Jewish high school catering to a wide range of families. In 2011, with a promise of support from a prominent local funder, Rabbi Kleimovitz¹—a well-respected local rabbi and leader of the local Chabad organization—agreed that it was time to found a college-prep dual-curriculum high school. Rabbi Kleimovitz had a strong record of school leadership as the former Head of a K–8 Jewish day school, but had never directed a high school. His strong conviction that there was a need for such a school convinced him to take the leap.

Rabbi Kleimovitz remembered an article he'd read suggesting online learning as the future of Jewish education in small cities—and its premise that dual-curriculum schools could reduce personnel costs by enrolling students in online general studies courses. *"I thought this is what was going to be needed. This was the only way I could see us being able to afford it."* With help from other community leaders, Rabbi Kleimovitz researched online high schools and their costs. Soon the group found a general studies option that might meet their needs: WiFi High, a virtual high school with robust student enrollment, a wide variety of course offerings, strong graduation rates, and average student ACT scores higher than the state's. Importantly, the state provided this online high school as a public option, using allocated per-pupil expenditures to pay in-state students' tuition, rendering enrollment free for any high school student who resided within state boundaries.

¹ All names, including the names of the school and the names of individuals, have been changed.

A New Model for a School

Together, Rabbi Kleimovitz and a small group of interested community members hit on an unusual model of schooling: SAHS is not, technically, a high school, because the students are officially enrolled as students in WiFi High. Yet each day, the students gather in brick-and-mortar buildings to complete their online coursework and participate in additional Jewish studies courses taught by SAHS faculty.

Most of the Jewish studies courses are completely separate from the general studies curriculum; though students receive Jewish studies grades, report cards, and transcripts from SAHS, they do not receive credit toward high school graduation for those courses. (The exceptions are Hebrew language and Jewish history, which the SAHS leadership team arranged to have accredited by an established Jewish day school. WiFi High accepts each course for credit toward graduation and records them on the students' official high school transcripts—Hebrew as a World Languages course and Jewish history as a Social Studies course.)

Though SAHS hires general studies faculty to support students' successful completion of WiFi High's online curriculum, those faculty are not the teachers of record. Rather, they are known to school leaders and students as "facilitators," whose role is to help students stay on pace with their coursework and offer academic support. The faculty members of WiFi High are the students' official teachers, responsible for determining the content of each course, presenting material, and assessing students' progress. The learning goals and curricular outlines are the same as the courses offered in brick-and-mortar high schools across the state. The differences are that SAHS students interact with their teachers virtually; complete their daily general studies high school curriculum in roughly half a day; and spend the remainder of each day focused on Judaic courses, which are taught in person by SAHS faculty members

The School Mission

As one faculty member explains it, *"The mission of the school is to provide a Jewish education to Jewish high school kids from all different backgrounds and to really give them something that they can use for the rest of their lives as far as their comfort level and knowledge about their Judaism, and at the same time, to also give*

them a secular education so that they can go on to college." Head of School Rabbi Mazur elaborated that the mission of the Judaics department is to *"allow each student to come in as they are as it relates to their family background, as it relates to what they hope to achieve"* and to create *"an inspiring, relevant and challenging education"* that *"fosters questions"* and helps them grow. At the same time, the general studies component must, in his words, *"prepare students for their continued education"*—whatever it may be. The Judaics faculty works hard to create an environment that is differentiated to meet a range of student needs, welcoming and challenging to all.

SAHS Students

In the 2016–2017 school year, 33 students (14 girls and 19 boys) were enrolled in SAHS. In describing the student body, Rabbi Mazur remarked upon the diversity of their personalities, family backgrounds, and academic proficiency. Not all come from observant Jewish homes. He expects that just as students enter with varying Jewish and academic backgrounds, they will graduate ready to pursue a variety of different religious and academic paths. *"It is very personalized, very individualized—an extremely accepting environment, a really embracing environment, very nonjudgmental. That is who and what we are."*

While the current students describe a high level of overall satisfaction with the school, not every student has found SAHS to be a good fit. Two or three students have chosen to leave the school each year, either because the online learning environment was not a good fit or for family reasons.

Planning for Financial Sustainability

As the school's hybrid structure began taking shape, community leaders considered the finances. In 2012–2013, with guidance from The AVI CHAI Foundation, Rabbi Kleimovitz projected a series of financial models that would, if and when enrollment goals were reached, ultimately allow the school to be sustained by tuition.

The vision of offering a rich Jewish education and college-prep secular education at a competitively low sticker-price appears within reach only because the state in which SAHS is located has designated WiFi High as one of its public school options, rendering enrollment in the online high school free for students who reside in the state. This keeps operating costs

much lower than in most dual-curriculum schools because the school can offer its general studies curriculum without having to hire a full general studies faculty, buy textbooks, or purchase curriculum. In addition, the school founders budgeted modestly for personnel, planning to hire a combination of young, relatively inexperienced full-time faculty who were willing to work very hard and part-time teachers from the local community paid an hourly wage to round out the Jewish studies faculty. Rabbi Kleimovitz knew that they could also rely on low-cost interns recruited through the Chabad network to help with administrative duties.

Shalom Academy High School was, from its inception, designed to become a primarily tuition-supported school—in which tuition revenue would reach a level roughly equivalent to operating costs, minimizing the school’s need for ongoing philanthropic support. Cognizant that getting to this point would take time, the SAHS leadership team conceptualized the financial model in two phases: start-up and the tuition-sustained phase, as summarized below.

The Start-up Phase

In the first six years of operation, SAHS’s leadership anticipated that costs would outpace revenue, leading to a significant shortfall. In this phase, the school would focus on building its reputation, positioning itself to steadily increase its enrollment and tuition. The projected model predicted that, over time, tuition revenue would grow faster than average costs, closing the gap between income and outflow a little more each year.

Full tuition was initially set at \$14,000 (the projected actual cost of educating each student in the school’s initial phase)—significantly less than local families would pay to send their children to the nearby Orthodox girls’ high school or boys’ yeshiva, with a full tuition of approximately \$21,000.² This is also less than families typically pay to send their children to Jewish high schools outside of their home cities, which Rabbi Mazur estimates at \$15,000–\$25,000, excluding room and board. The SAHS leadership team hoped the competitive

tuition would entice families to consider SAHS as a viable alternative to Jewish high schools in other cities. They also hoped the reasonable sticker-price would draw some of the many local Jewish families who would normally choose to send their children to public high schools.

The Tuition-sustained Phase

Rabbi Kleimovitz’s early projections proved largely accurate: in the first three years of operation, the actual tuition revenue and costs remained close to the original projections (outlined in full within the case study). However, the actual numbers differed slightly from the projections in two important ways (1) enrollment grew more slowly than originally projected (resulting in lower amounts of collected tuition than anticipated) and (2) personnel costs were higher than projected (in order to hire facilitators and other staff to support students’ learning via WiFi High—a need that did not become apparent until the school was up-and-running).

Lower-than-predicted tuition revenues and higher-than-predicted costs resulted in a larger revenue-cost gap, and a slower process of closing the gap than originally projected. The gap is continuing to close a little bit each year, and the leaders are confident that the trend will continue as the school’s reputation grows and enrollment builds. Rabbi Kleimovitz now predicts that it may take ten or more years, rather than six, for the school to become financially self-sufficient, but remains optimistic that it will happen. In the meantime, he will continue to draw on funds from the Chabad budget to help close the gap.

Looking Ahead to Long-term Sustainability

SAHS’s leadership team predicts that the school will be primarily tuition-supported when it reaches an enrollment of 80 students at an average collected tuition of \$7,500 per student. Families able to pay the full published tuition of \$14,000 will generate financial aid for those who are less able to pay the \$7,500 leaders project it will cost to educate each student.

This plan will only work if the school carefully balances admission of those students who can pay full tuition with those who cannot. Theoretically, this could mean turning away qualified low-income applicants to accept applicants whose families can pay more in tuition and balance the budget. Even while pursuing the goal of creating a solely tuition-funded model, Rabbi Kleimovitz expressed some discomfort at the

² According to the crowd-sourced spreadsheet linked to the article, “Jewish Day School Parents Reveal Tuitions in Crowd-Sourced Spreadsheet,” by Josh Nathan-Kazis, published by Forward on September 7, 2016: <http://forward.com/news/349337/jewish-day-school-parents-reveal-tuitions-in-crowdsourced-spreadsheet/>

prospect of considering students' financial means as a criterion for admission: "*Ideally, the decision-making for admissions is based exclusively on who fits our profile, who belongs, who can benefit most from this school, who is motivated to be here.*" Rabbi Kleimovitz hopes to eventually raise an endowment that will support need-blind admissions in the future.

Teaching and Learning at Shalom Academy High School

Teaching and learning at SAHS resembles other Jewish high schools in several ways: the school day is long and divided between Jewish and general studies, with substantially separate faculties, curricula and pedagogies; Jewish studies classes are primarily text-based, encouraging close reading and discussion of a range of Jewish texts; every student receives instruction in Hebrew language as a stand-alone class or as part of the Chumash curriculum; and each student is assigned a faculty advisor who is responsible for supporting the student's academic progress.

Teaching and Learning at SAHS is also unusual in notable ways. General studies classes look very different than in a typical high school. During time designated for general studies, students sit at their Chromebooks and work independently on their online curriculum as a small team of facilitators offers guidance. There is substantial overlap in the courses that students are taking by grade level, as they must meet state high school curricular requirements in core subjects. But students complete those courses at different paces and may work on different assignments at any given time. At designated times each week, groups of students gather for structured activities (e.g., pace-setting meetings, facilitator-directed math and science labs) that support their general studies. Jewish studies courses, which meet face-to-face, are highly differentiated to accommodate the wide range of prior knowledge and Hebrew language proficiency with which students enter the school.

Taking Stock

In its first three years of operation, Shalom Academy High School has accomplished a great deal. The school has a dedicated faculty that has built systems and structures to support student learning. The school has recruited a body of students who are—by and large—very happy to be there.

Students have done well in their WiFi High coursework overall, and most graduates are doing just what the administrators had predicted, matriculating to a mix of yeshivas, seminaries, and four-year colleges. Looking back on the school's growth so far, Rabbi Mazur reflected, "*We have had three years that we have been able to blossom and grow, and I think our roots are strong.*"

Postscript

When Shalom Academy High School launched, online learning was in its infancy. Through experience and growth, and as the online learning space has matured, the school encountered limitations with the WiFi High model. The online learning school was designed for home-schooling and did not provide a natural integration point for in-classroom instructors. Online classes did not fully utilize the potential of technology to gather data and generate insight into student performance that would make the support offered more effective and targeted. The model had created a perception, most pronounced for Shalom's local market, that despite having dedicated on-site faculty, they were "just an online school," greatly minimizing their ability to recruit and retain students.

Summit Learning Platform is an innovative, free curriculum and learning management system (LMS) that is currently being used by hundreds of schools across the country. After learning about Summit, Shalom's administration believed that it offered many advantages for a better model. The platform:

- empowers students to work at their own pace (an element of personalized learning that Shalom Academy valued)
- helps students acquire lifelong cognitive and learning skills through project-based curriculum
- provides a natural integration point for teachers to lead the classroom, removing the perception of being "just an online school"
- facilitates the use of data to track progress and personalize instruction
- is an open source platform used by over 1300 educators utilizing its curriculum and resources, providing continuous updates, enhancements, and improvements.

Shalom Academy transferred its ninth and tenth grade students to this new platform in September 2017. AVI CHAI hopes to provide an update on the school next year.



It is 2 p.m. on a sunny autumn afternoon. In a large, airy classroom converted from a library, eight teenage boys are scattered at a handful of tables, each with a Chromebook open before him. One is wearing earbuds, intently watching a chemistry tutorial on his screen. One reads a history textbook, occasionally pausing to jot down notes on a piece of lined paper. Several others are typing in Google Docs or PowerPoint, completing assignments for their English courses. A sophomore boy sits next to the one adult in the room. Together they read the directions for his next course assignment from the screen of his laptop, and she helps him plan the steps for completing it. In a smaller classroom next door, three boys are crowded around an open Chromebook, watching and listening as their biology teacher responds to another student's question about osmosis in a previously recorded "live" teaching session.

A half-mile away, in three small classrooms with warm, orange walls, rolling whiteboards, and clusters of small tables, groups of three to six teenage girls meet with their teachers to continue studying the theme of friendship through the texts of Mishlei (Proverbs). In one classroom, a young teacher who speaks at a fast clip shares the focus of today's lesson, "Whom to choose as a friend." She asks for a volunteer to read the text in Hebrew. Nina reads in Hebrew, "*Holech et chachamim yechkam v'roeh ch'silim yairo'a* [He who keeps company with the wise becomes wise, but he who befriends the fools comes to grief]." She begins to translate the verse into English, pausing at times for help from the teacher. When she finishes, Rebecca raises her hand and shares, "This makes me think of my friend who is working so hard academically that she makes me want to be more on my game." Other girls offer their own reflections on the text before moving on, with the teacher's guidance, to underline key vocabulary and begin reading the commentaries. In two adjacent classrooms, small groups are gathered with a teacher, each studying friendship through Mishlei, but with more or less responsibility for reading and translating the Hebrew on their own.

This is Shalom Academy High School. ³

³ All names, including the name of the school and the names of individuals, have been changed.

■ Introduction

Shalom Academy High School (SAHS) is a small, growing Jewish high school in a moderately-sized American city.⁴ In its fourth year of operation (2016–2017) SAHS serves 33 students in grades nine through 12. It is unusual among American Jewish high schools in two important ways. First, the school offers a blended learning experience: the Judaics curriculum is taught by on-site faculty in a face-to-face, classroom-based format, and students enroll in a college-preparatory virtual high school (“WiFi High”) for their general studies courses. Second, SAHS is working toward becoming a tuition-sustained school, with the goal of financial self-sufficiency an explicit part of its model.

The SAHS campus straddles two separate buildings—a boys’ division and a girls’ division—a half-mile apart in a leafy suburb of the city. The boys’ division occupies a handful of classrooms and offices in a school building that the local district no longer uses, sharing the rented space with several other small businesses. The girls’ division occupies a cluster of offices in a nearby office park that the school has renovated for classroom use.

The student body at SAHS includes a mix of local and out-of-town students. Boys who attend from out of town board with local families, while girls from other communities live in the school’s dormitory. Though the school leaders and Judaics faculty draw largely from the local Lubavitch community, and the Judaics curriculum includes Chassidic teachings, students represent various Jewish denominations and communities, and bring a wide range of Jewish knowledge, experience, and practice. They come from a variety of educational settings as well, including Jewish day schools, public schools, and homeschooling.

Context and History

The city that surrounds SAHS has fewer than one million residents, an estimated 30,000 of whom are Jewish. The community has long supported a handful of K–8 Jewish day schools and two high schools, an Orthodox high school for

girls, and a yeshiva high school for boys. However, leaders in the local Jewish community had, for years, lamented the lack of an explicitly college-prep Jewish high school catering to a wide range of families. They believed that students’ religious identities take shape in high school and that graduates of Jewish high schools are much more likely to be engaged in the Jewish community as adults. As a prominent local rabbi and the leader of the local Chabad organization, Rabbi Kleimovitz, explained, *“There’s always been a concern every time we take a family through the years of day school, only to see some of these kids fall off the face of the earth after eighth grade. They go on to public school, sometimes never to be heard from for years and years. We always had this idea in the back of our minds that we needed to do something.”* He and other leaders in the local Jewish community saw a need for a viable high school option for the Jewish students who would otherwise go to the local public school.

An Idea Takes Shape

In 2011, with a promise of support from a prominent local funder, Rabbi Kleimovitz agreed that it was time to found a college-prep dual-curriculum high school. He had a strong record of school leadership as the former Head of a K–8 Jewish day school, but had never directed a high school. His strong conviction that there was a need for such a school and his confidence in the backing of the local Chabad organization convinced him to take the leap, *“without really any knowledge of how, what, when, or where—only that somehow or another we’re going to start this.”*



“I thought this is what was going to be needed. This was the only way I could see us being able to afford it.”

Rabbi Kleimovitz remembered an article he had read several years earlier suggesting online learning as the future of Jewish education in small cities. He thought the article’s core idea—that dual-curriculum schools could reduce personnel costs by enrolling students in online general studies courses—was a

⁴ A description of the research methods used to gather data for this case appears in Appendix One.

good one. *“I thought this is what was going to be needed. This was the only way I could see us being able to afford it.”* With help from other leaders in the community, he began to research online high schools and their costs. Soon the group found a general studies option that might meet their needs: WiFi High, a virtual high school with robust student enrollment, a wide variety of course offerings, strong graduation rates, and average student ACT scores higher than the state’s. Importantly, the state provided this online high school as a public option, using allocated per-pupil expenditures to pay in-state students’ tuition, rendering enrollment free for any high school student who resided within state boundaries.

A New Model for a School

Together Rabbi Kleimovitz and a small group of interested community members hit on an unusual model of schooling: SAHS is not, technically, a high school, because the students are officially enrolled as students in WiFi High. Yet each day, the students gather in brick-and-mortar buildings to complete their online coursework and participate in additional Jewish studies courses taught by SAHS faculty. Most of the Jewish studies courses are completely separate from the general studies curriculum; though students receive Jewish studies grades, report cards, and transcripts from SAHS, they do not receive credit toward high school graduation for those courses. The two exceptions are Hebrew language and Jewish history. The SAHS leadership team arranged to have those face-to-face Judaic courses accredited by an established Jewish day school. WiFi High accepts each course for credit toward graduation and records them on the students’ official high school transcripts—Hebrew as a World Language course and Jewish History as a Social Studies course.

Though SAHS hires general studies faculty to support students’ successful completion of WiFi High’s online curriculum, those faculty are not the teachers of record. Rather, they are known to school leaders and students as “facilitators,” whose role is to help students stay on pace with their coursework and offer academic support when needed. The faculty members of WiFi High are the students’ official teachers, responsible for determining the content of each course, presenting material, and assessing students’ progress. The learning goals and curricular outlines are the same as the courses offered in

brick-and-mortar high schools across the state. The differences are that SAHS students interact with their teachers virtually; complete their daily general studies high school curriculum in roughly half a day; and spend the remainder of each day focused on Judaic courses, which are taught in person by SAHS faculty members hired from the local community.

Planning for Financial Sustainability

As this hybrid structure for the high school began to take shape, community leaders considered the finances. In 2012–2013, with guidance from The AVI CHAI Foundation, Rabbi Kleimovitz projected a series of financial models that would ultimately, if and when enrollment goals were reached, allow the school to be sustained by tuition. Figuring out what this could look like was not easy. *“We went back to the drawing board five, six, seven times to scrape together the numbers and to work them.”* Meanwhile he commissioned publicity materials describing the mission and structure of the nascent school, including a polished brochure, and reached out to local families in hopes of securing their commitments to enroll.

Recruiting School Leadership

Through the Chabad network Rabbi Kleimovitz recruited a young couple, Rabbi and Mrs. Mazur, to help open the school and assume responsibility for leading it. The Mazurs had limited experience working formally in education beyond Rabbi Mazur’s experience directing a high school’s yeshiva summer program. But they were well-educated themselves, very hard working, and excited about the idea of building a school. In March 2013, the Mazurs moved to town and worked with Rabbi Kleimovitz to hire faculty, find building space, recruit families, and develop the systems and routines that make a school function. They soon hired a third colleague, Rabbi Cohen, as a full-time Judaics faculty member. In September 2013, SAHS opened its doors to 18 students—ten boys and eight girls, in grades nine through 12. Rabbi Mazur led the boys’ division with support from Rabbi Cohen, and Mrs. Mazur led the girls’ division. Part-time teachers from the local Lubavitch community rounded out the Judaics faculty. Within two weeks of opening the school, the leaders realized that students needed additional support in navigating their WiFi High courses and hired two part-time facilitators to serve in that role.

■ The School Mission and Student Body

The School Mission

SAHS faculty and administrators share a clear and coherent understanding of the school's mission. As one faculty member explained it, *"The mission of the school is to provide a Jewish education to Jewish high school kids from all different backgrounds and to really give them something that they can use for the rest of their lives as far as their comfort level and knowledge about their Judaism, and at the same time, to also give them a secular education so that they can go on to college."* Head of School Rabbi Mazur elaborated that the mission of the Judaics department is to *"allow each student to come in as they are as it relates to their family background, as it relates to what they hope to achieve"* and to create *"an inspiring, relevant and challenging education"* that *"fosters questions"* and helps them grow. At the same time, the general studies component must, in his words, *"prepare students for their continued education"*—whatever it may be. Students' enrollment in WiFi High allows them access to a much wider range of courses than SAHS would be able to afford with a traditional, face-to-face model of general studies instruction. Though the school remains small, with 33 students enrolled in 2016–2017, Rabbi Mazur claimed, *"We offer more AP courses and electives than any other Jewish high school in the country."*

The Judaics faculty works hard to create an environment that is differentiated to meet a range of student needs, welcoming and challenging to all. An important part of the admission process is ensuring that the prospective students are serious about wanting a Jewish education and willing to engage in the Judaics curriculum. Students must also be open to completing their general studies courses virtually and interested in a rigorous college-prep curriculum. Ideally such a student is self-motivated, organized, and good at time-management.

SAHS Students

In fall 2016, the student body includes 14 girls and 19 boys. Only four of those 33 are seniors, with the vast majority being sophomores and juniors. In describing the current student body, Rabbi Mazur remarked upon the diversity of their personalities,

family backgrounds, and academic proficiency. Some come from observant Jewish homes and others do not. *"I would say half of them come from Shabbos observant homes, half of them don't. All of them here are growing in their Judaism. We are striving to create an environment that's inclusive, that's welcoming."* He expects that just as students enter with varying Jewish and academic backgrounds, they will graduate ready to pursue a variety of different religious and academic paths. Because the school strives to take each student where he or she is and foster growth, *"there are a lot of very good answers to what a [SAHS] graduate can look like."* He continued, *"It is very personalized, very individualized—an extremely accepting environment, a really embracing environment, very nonjudgmental. That is who and what we are."*

The students describe wanting to come to SAHS for a variety of reasons. Primary among them is the opportunity to get a balanced Jewish and general studies education. As Ben, a sophomore, described the school, *"It is not a yeshiva, but it's not a public school. I would say it is 55% secular studies and 45% Jewish studies. It is the perfect mix, really. It is not too much and not too little."* Some students were also attracted by the opportunity to work independently and at their own pace in the general studies curriculum, though others saw that prospect as daunting. Nearly all students commented that it was the friendly, close-knit environment that ultimately drew them in. Students described the school variously as *"cozy,"* *"very homey"* and *"like a family,"* noting how much they like the warmth of the environment and the possibility of personal connections among students and teachers. Brief profiles of four SAHS students appear in Appendix Two.

While the current students describe a high level of overall satisfaction with the school, not every student has found SAHS to be a good fit. Two or three students have chosen to leave the school each year, either because the online learning environment was not a good fit or for family reasons.

Eventually, the school hopes to balance its enrollment between recruits from out-of-town and those from the local community. The majority of the 33 current students moved from other states to attend SAHS. By recruiting through a strong national network of Chabad communities that offer youth outreach programs, the school has drawn students from all over the U.S. and even abroad, modestly increasing enrollment every

year. As the school continues to strengthen its programs and reputation, leaders hope that more local families will see it as an attractive, financially feasible alternative to the high-quality public schools in the area.

■ Financial Model

Since its inception, Shalom Academy High School was intended to become a primarily tuition-supported school. School leaders predict that ultimately the tuition revenue can be roughly equal to operating costs, minimizing the school’s ongoing need for philanthropic support. They designed the school’s financial model with this goal in mind and with the knowledge that it would take years to come to fruition. Therefore, they envisioned the financial model in two phases: the start-up phase and the tuition-sustained phase.

The Start-Up Phase

Before SAHS opened its doors, Rabbi Kleimovitz had prepared six years of financial projections for the school, including projected enrollment, projected average tuition per student, and projected costs. In each of those first six years of operation, he predicted that costs would far outpace revenue, leading to a significant shortfall. He explained, *“We always anticipated that being a start-up, not having a name, people not knowing that we are out there, we were going to have to take losses at the beginning in a serious way.”* However, Rabbi Kleimovitz anticipated that

as the school gained its footing, student enrollment would grow steadily, as would the average tuition that students’ families are willing and able to contribute. Therefore, he predicted that tuition revenue would grow faster than average costs, closing the gap between income and outflow a little more each year.

The table below shows these original projections, including:

- projected enrollment numbers
- projected average tuition collected per student (less than the published tuition, due to financial aid)
- projected tuition revenue (total enrollment times average tuition collected)
- projected total costs
- projected shortfall

In these models, the projected shortfall of nearly \$300,000 in the school’s first year of operation (2013–2014) shrinks to a projected shortfall of less than \$20,000 in Year Six (2018–2019).

To have a hope of meeting these financial projections, the school founders had to think carefully about what to charge for tuition, how to handle financial aid packages, and how to reach the enrollment goals. They set full tuition at \$14,000, which is roughly what they predicted it would cost to educate each student if they enrolled 24 students (projected enrollment for Year Two). This is significantly less than local families would pay to send their children to the nearby Orthodox girls’ high school or boys’ yeshiva, with a full tuition of approximately

Table 1: Projected SAHS Enrollment, Tuition Revenue, and Costs by Year During the Start-Up Phase

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Projected Total Enrollment	18	24	33	45	60	80
Projected Average Tuition Collected per Student	\$2,300	\$4,800	\$5,400	\$6,200	\$6,900	\$7,500
Projected Total Tuition Revenue	\$41,400	\$115,200	\$178,200	\$279,000	\$414,000	\$600,000
Projected Total Costs	\$333,800	\$348,600	\$401,000	\$479,600	\$547,000	\$619,000
Projected Shortfall [Tuition Revenue Minus Total Costs]	\$292,400	\$233,400	\$223,000	\$200,000	\$131,000	\$19,000

\$21,000.⁵ It is also less than families typically pay to send their children to Jewish high schools outside of their home cities, which Rabbi Mazur estimates at \$15,000–\$25,000, excluding room and board. The SAHS leadership team hoped the competitive tuition would entice families to consider SAHS as a viable alternative to Jewish high schools in other cities. They also hoped the reasonable sticker-price would draw some of the many local Jewish families who would normally choose to send their children to public high schools.

The vision of offering a rich Jewish education and college-prep secular education at a competitively low sticker-price appears within reach only because the state in which SAHS is located has designated WiFi High as one of its public school options, rendering enrollment in the online high school free for students who reside in the state. This keeps operating costs much lower than in most dual-curriculum schools because the school can offer its general studies curriculum without having to hire a full general studies faculty, buy textbooks, or purchase curriculum. In addition, the school founders budgeted modestly for personnel, planning to hire a combination of young, relatively inexperienced full-time faculty who were willing to work very hard and part-time teachers from the local community paid an hourly wage to round out the Jewish studies faculty. Rabbi Kleimovitz knew that they could also rely on low-cost interns recruited through the Chabad network to help with administrative duties.

Making Up the Difference between Revenue and Costs in the Start-Up Phase

Even as they set Shalom Academy High School's full tuition at \$14,000, its leaders knew that very few families would be able to afford it and that the school would have to offer significant financial aid to increase enrollment. In its first few years of operation, the school accepted eligible students at whatever tuition their families could pay, including some who were able to pay only a few thousand dollars. They prioritized growing the student body over maximizing tuition revenue, knowing that as enrollment grew, the average cost

of educating each student would decrease. Kleimovitz's original financial models predict that the average cost of educating each student will drop to just \$7,500 per year when enrollment reaches 80 students. If approximately half of students continue to be enrolled at the full tuition of \$14,000, this projected average cost of educating each student would allow school leaders to provide significant financial aid to those who need it without additional fundraising. This scenario is projected to occur in 2018–2019.

Financial Aid from Other Sources

In order to supplement tuition revenue, SAHS leaders have pursued grants and scholarships. This means raising money from the communities where out-of-town students live. Rabbi Kleimovitz explained, *"Because many of these kids are coming through the Chabad network, very often we'll go back to them [our contacts in the student's home community], and say, 'Look, it's great that you're sending us a kid. We have to be able to provide an education. We want you to raise money in your community and send it along with them when they are in need.' Many of them have done so."* In addition, a local philanthropy provides grants directly to in-town families who are enrolling their children in Jewish schools for the first time, and a different philanthropy provides small grants to out-of-town families whose children are newly enrolling in Jewish schools. These sources of aid have provided tuition relief for many of the current families, lessening the financial aid that the school ultimately has to provide.

Significant In-Kind Support from Philanthropies and Local Chabad

Meanwhile, Rabbis Kleimovitz and Mazur have pursued opportunities to bring additional money into the school while they work on building enrollment. Some of that money has come from charitable foundations. First, a local philanthropy provides grants directly to the city's Jewish day schools; these grants are allocated based on the percentage of local students who qualify for financial aid and the extent of those students' need. In addition, The AVI CHAI Foundation has provided substantial financial support during the start-up phase in the form of yearly grants to help offset the difference between tuition revenues and costs. In the first three years, these grants cut that difference by nearly 50%. The grant amounts are

⁵ According to the crowd-sourced spreadsheet linked to the article, "Jewish Day School Parents Reveal Tuitions in Crowd-Sourced Spreadsheet," by Josh Nathan-Kazis, published by Forward on September 7, 2016: <http://forward.com/news/349337/jewish-day-school-parents-reveal-tuitions-in-crowdsourced-spreadsheet/>

decreasing slowly, and are scheduled to end after 2017 in keeping with the original projections of financial self-sufficiency by 2018 (see Table 1, p. 11).

After tuition revenue and foundation grants have been accounted for, the local Chabad organization has closed whatever gap remains between income and expenses. This gap was more than \$100,000 for each of the school’s first three years of operation. Such generous financial support is possible because the local Chabad is particularly strong, and its leadership is committed to investing in the school. Rabbi Kleimovitz, who, in addition to being the School Director, is leader of the local Chabad, views investing in SAHS as an investment in the future. He remarked that the community Chabad leaders understand that it takes time to build a good school with a solid reputation, and only when the school has a solid reputation will students begin to enroll in large numbers. *“That is part of the understanding—the big picture—that we are going to invest a million dollars into this school before it is fully sustainable. We know that.”* He continues, *“There is no way that we could have done this [built this school] without the backing of an organization like our local Chabad organization. It is a mature organization with a large annual budget. The roots in the community are extremely deep.”* Indeed the Head of School, Rabbi Mazur, remarked that the local Chabad organization has been extremely generous and responsive to his requests for financing. *“I have never yet asked for something financially and*

been turned down. We have always had the resources to do what we needed. I could never imagine doing what I am doing now while needing to count pennies.”

Looking Ahead: The Tuition-Sustained Phase

Rabbi Kleimovitz’s projections have proved largely accurate: in the first three years of operation, the actual tuition revenue and costs have remained close to those original projections listed in Table 1. However, the actual numbers differed slightly from the projections in two important ways. First, enrollment has grown more slowly than originally projected, as local families have been slower to send their children than he had originally hoped. In school year 2016–2017, the projected enrollment was 45 students, but only 33 were actually enrolled. This means the collected tuition is lower than originally projected for the 2016–2017 school year. Table 2 shows SAHS’s projected versus actual enrollment, tuition revenue and cost by year.

Second, personnel costs have been higher than projected. In the first weeks after opening the school, Rabbi and Mrs. Mazur realized they would need to hire facilitators to support students’ learning via WiFi High, and in 2016–2017 they hired a full-time faculty member to oversee support for online learning and supervise the facilitators. These costs were not included in the original budget projections. Lower-than-predicted tuition revenues and higher-than-predicted costs

Table 2: Projected vs Actual SAHS Enrollment, Tuition Revenue and Costs by Year, Years 1-4

Year	2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17	
	Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual	Projected	Actual
Total Enrollment	18	18	24	25	33	29	45	33
Average Tuition Collected per Student	\$2,300	\$3,800	\$4,800	\$5,040	\$5,400	\$6,100	\$6,200	\$6,400
Total Tuition Revenue	\$41,400	\$68,400	\$115,200	\$126,000	\$178,200	\$176,900	\$279,000	\$211,300
Total Costs	\$333,800	\$393,000	\$348,600	\$404,860	\$401,000	\$442,000	\$479,600	\$468,000
Shortfall [Tuition Revenue minus Total Costs]	\$292,400	\$324,600	\$233,400	\$278,860	\$223,000	\$265,100	\$200,600	\$256,700

resulted in a larger revenue-cost gap, and a slower process of closing the gap than originally projected. The gap does, however, continue to close a little bit each year, and the leaders are confident that the trend will continue as the school's reputation grows and enrollment builds. Rabbi Kleimovitz now predicts that it may take ten or more years, rather than six, for the school to become financially self-sufficient, but he remains optimistic that it will happen. In the meantime, he will continue to draw on funds from the Chabad budget to help close the gap.

Sustainability

SAHS's leadership team predicts that the school will be primarily tuition-supported when it reaches an enrollment of 80 students at an average collected tuition of \$7,500 per student. Families able to pay the full published tuition of \$14,000 will generate financial aid for those who are less able to pay the \$7,500 leaders project it will cost to educate each student. However, this will only work if the school carefully balances admission of those students who can pay full tuition with those who cannot. Theoretically, this could mean turning away qualified low-income applicants to accept applicants whose families can pay more in tuition and balance the budget. Even while pursuing the goal of creating a solely tuition-funded model, Rabbi Kleimovitz expressed some discomfort at the prospect of considering students' financial means as a criterion for admission: *"Ideally, the decision-making for admissions is based exclusively on who fits our profile, who belongs, who can benefit most from this school, who is motivated to be here."* Rabbi Kleimovitz hopes to eventually raise an endowment that will support need-blind admissions in the future.

■ The Structure of the School

Shalom Academy High School girls' division and boys' division share a mission, a basic structure, and some faculty, with the main difference between the two being the content of the Judaics curriculum.⁶ The faculty includes an administrative team, Jewish studies teachers, general studies facilitators, specialists and interns. Each is described below.

⁶ The content of the girls' and boys' Judaics curricula is further explained in the Teaching and Learning section of this case.

Administration

Rabbi Kleimovitz holds the title of School Director. In that role he serves as a liaison to the local Chabad community and the national network. He is not on campus every day, but serves as a public voice and face of the school in his other roles in the community. An experienced school administrator, Rabbi Kleimovitz also provides advice to the SAHS leadership team and helps problem-solve thorny issues when they arise.

Rabbi Mazur is the Head of School at SAHS, and has been since several months before the school opened its doors. He takes on a vast array of responsibilities, representing the school in the community, recruiting students, hiring faculty, teaching Judaics in the boys' and girls' divisions, overseeing interns, facility maintenance, and everything in between. He is involved in all discussions about the school's mission, vision, and direction, yet, in his words, *"I have cleaned the floor many times, thrown out the garbage. Late nights, early mornings."*

Rabbi Miller and Mrs. Mazur support him as principals and supervisors of the Judaics curriculum of the boys' and girls' divisions, respectively. As the only full-time staff member assigned exclusively to the girls' division, Mrs. Mazur also provides spiritual guidance to the girls and takes responsibility for their overall well-being. By all accounts, the Mazurs have worked tirelessly to help open the school. Rabbi Mazur describes their role as *"our life's calling,"* noting, *"I even dream about SAHS."* Mrs. Mazur refers to SAHS as *"our baby."*

Mrs. Lee oversees the general studies program in both divisions in a position created in 2016–2017. She is responsible for creating structures and routines to support students' successful use of the online curriculum, tracking their progress, supervising the three facilitators that support students in their coursework, and communicating with WiFi High staff. She explains, *"I am finding that there's a lot of communication involved. I communicate with students, mostly face-to-face, and with other staff members on the SAHS team as well as communicating with WiFi High personnel. I receive communications directly about every student—every week I get a WiFi High update."* She also communicates with parents about students' progress, which she carefully tracks week to week to ensure

Table 3: SAHS Employees and their Roles and Responsibilities

Name	Area of School	Role	Division	Main Responsibilities	Part- or Full-Time
Rabbi Kleimovitz	Administration	Leader of Local Chabad & School Director	Both	Liaison to local and national Chabad network; visionary; trouble-shooter; fundraiser	As Needed
Rabbi Mazur		Head of School	Both	All aspects of school administration; admissions; parent relations; fundraising; strategic planning; teaching	Full-Time
Rabbi Miller		Principal Director of Jewish Studies Jewish Studies Teacher	Boys	Oversight of boys' division; supervision of Jewish studies faculty and curriculum; teaching	Full-Time
Mrs. Mazur		Principal Director of Jewish Studies Jewish Studies Teacher	Girls	Oversight of girls' division; supervision of Jewish studies faculty and curriculum; teaching	Full-Time
Mrs. Lee		Director of General Studies	Both	Oversight of everything related to WiFi High; creating structures to support students' success in WiFi High; supervising facilitators; providing general support to students doing WiFi High coursework	Full-Time
Rabbi Friedman	Jewish Studies	Jewish Studies Teacher	Boys	Teaching; out-of-school programming for boys who board; spiritual guidance	Full-Time
Rabbi Semanski		Jewish Studies Teacher	Boys	Teaching advanced Talmud	Part-Time
Rabbi Klein		Jewish Studies Teacher	Boys	Teaching Chumash	Part-Time
Mrs. Levin		Jewish Studies Teacher	Girls	Teaching Hebrew and Jewish history	Part-Time
Mrs. Finkelstein		Jewish Studies Teacher	Girls	Teaching Navi and Chassidus; some out-of-school programming for girls who board	Part-Time
Mrs. Cohen		Jewish Studies Teacher	Girls and Boys	Teaching Chumash	Part-Time
Mr. Thomas		General Studies	WiFi High Facilitator	Both	Helping students with math
Mr. Clewley	WiFi High Facilitator		Both	Helping students with science	Part-Time
Mrs. O'Leary	WiFi High Facilitator		Both	Helping students with humanities	Part-Time
Mrs. Swensen	Specialists and Interns	Counselor	Both	Post-secondary planning; counseling; liaison to WiFi High	Part-Time
Rafi		Intern	Boys	Myriad administrative duties; one-on-one Jewish enrichment; help with out-of-school programming for boarding students	Full-Time
Matan		Intern	Boys		Full-Time
Nachum		Intern	Boys		Full-Time
Tali		Intern	Girls		Full-Time
Orly		Intern	Girls		Full-Time
Paola		Intern	Girls		Live-in dorm supervisor

that students keep up with their coursework to complete their courses by the end of each semester.⁷

Jewish Studies Faculty

Rabbi Miller carries a full teaching load. As he explains, “*I actually teach the most of any faculty in the school. I teach Talmud. I teach Chumash. I teach three quarters of the Jewish history between both schools. I teach Chumash in the girls’ school also.*” He teaches one period in the girls’ school every day. He also facilitates a weekly Friday question and answer session, which alternates between the boys’ and girls’ divisions, in which students can ask for his rabbinic perspective on any Jewish question on their minds.

Another full-time Jewish studies faculty member in the boys’ division, Rabbi Friedman, coordinates support and programming for out-of-town male students who board with local Lubavitch families. He explains that part of his role this way: “*They are not around the comforts of their mom and dad and the comforts of home, so I am the one responsible for making doctor’s appointments if they need, making sure that they are put together and paying attention to their overall well-being. I also coordinate the programming both in school and out-of-school. We periodically do different programs in school. Then we do night programs and weekend programs, out-of-school, that I coordinate as well.*” Two part-time instructors teach additional Jewish studies classes in the boys’ division, and Rabbi Mazur teaches two classes as well.

Mrs. Mazur teaches three courses, and a small cadre of part-time female instructors teaches additional courses under her supervision. One of those female instructors, a member of the Lubavitch community, also serves as a “dorm mother” to the girls’ dormitory. The dorm, which is housed in a home owned by the local Chabad chapter, is near her home. She stops by regularly to check in with the girls and holds weekly baking sessions in the kitchen. Rabbi Mazur also travels to the girls’ school at least twice a week to teach one class.

⁷ To fulfill graduation requirements and receive a WiFi High School diploma, students must acquire 22 credits in the following areas: English: 4 credits; Math: 3 credits; Science: 3 credits (1 Biology, 1 Physical Science, and 1 Elective); Social Studies: 3.5 credits (1 Human Geography, 0.5 World History, 1 US History, 0.5 American Government, 0.5 Economics); Health/PE: 1 credit (0.5 Health, 0.5 PE); Service Learning: 1 credit; Electives: 6.5 credits. Two of the SAHS Jewish Studies courses—Jewish History and *Ivrit* (Hebrew)—are accredited courses and count toward the 22 credit requirement.

General Studies Faculty

Students’ engagement with WiFi High is supported by three facilitators focused on math, science, and humanities. Facilitators provide side-by-side support to students and bring specialized expertise to their work at SAHS. Mr. Thomas, who has taught ACT preparation courses for many years, helps students with math. Mr. Clewley, a retired science teacher, comes to the school one day per week to help students with science. Mrs. O’Leary, a former public school teacher who taught all subjects, comes to the school two days per week to work with students on their English and social studies coursework. Mrs. Lee serves as an additional facilitator, providing support in humanities, her area of expertise, as well as science and math as needed. Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Lee are at the school full-time, with the other two facilitators available on a more limited weekly basis. The general studies team has developed an array of structures to support students’ successful navigation of the online curriculum. Those are detailed in the Teaching and Learning section below.

Specialists

In a new position for 2016–2017, Mrs. Swensen, a school counselor, joins the SAHS faculty one day per week to help students plan for post-secondary education and offer students emotional and practical support. She also assists students in choosing, registering for, switching and dropping classes. A former WiFi High employee, she is deeply familiar with the curriculum, faculty, and online platform, and has become an informal liaison to WiFi High. She calls on her WiFi High contacts when problems or confusions arise. Though this particular brand of support is not an explicit part of the school design, students and faculty are deeply grateful for it. SAHS also employs a part-time art teacher who visits each division once a week and a PE teacher who visits the girls’ division once or twice a week.

Interns

SAHS hires a group of interns, or *shluchim*, each year. These *shluchim* are typically in their late teens or early twenties, and are taking a gap year from their education to serve as emissaries for the Chabad organization. There were six of them at Shalom Academy High School in 2016–2017. According to

Rabbi Mazur, these interns cost the school very little beyond food and housing, and bring a great deal of commitment and youthful energy to the school, which he described as valuable in a school full of teenagers. *“Their job is to add ruach,”* or spirit, he said. They also fill critical gaps in school operations, performing duties such as making photocopies, driving students to and from school, delivering lunch, and leading holiday-related activities. In addition, the interns prepare and facilitate weekly one-on-one Jewish enrichment sessions about Judaic topics the students choose. One intern does not work at the school during the day but is the adult in charge of the girls’ dormitory during out-of-school hours.

Table 3 summarizing the SAHSS employees and their roles appears on p. 15.

■ Teaching and Learning at Shalom Academy High School

Teaching and Learning at Shalom Academy High School looks similar to that of other Jewish high schools in several ways: the school day is long and divided between Jewish and general studies, with substantially separate faculties, curricula and pedagogies; Jewish studies classes are primarily text-based, encouraging close reading and discussion of a range of Jewish texts; every student receives instruction in Hebrew language as a stand-alone class or as part of the Chumash curriculum; and each student is assigned a faculty advisor who is responsible for keeping an eye on the student’s academic progress and overall well-being.

Teaching and Learning at SAHS is also unusual in notable ways. General studies classes look very different than in a typical high school. During time designated for general studies, students sit at their Chromebooks and work independently on their online curriculum as a small team of facilitators offers support and guidance. There is substantial overlap in the courses that students are taking by grade level, as they must meet state high school curricular requirements in the core subjects. However, students complete those courses at different paces and may be working on different assignments at any given time. At designated times each week, groups of students gather for structured activities designed to support them in their general studies, including pace-setting meetings

and facilitator-directed math and science labs. Jewish studies courses, which meet face-to-face, are highly differentiated to accommodate the wide range of prior knowledge and Hebrew language proficiency with which students enter.



During time designated for general studies, students sit at their Chromebooks and work independently on their online curriculum as a small team of facilitators offers support and guidance.

More detail about Teaching and Learning at Shalom Academy High School appears below, including a description of the daily schedule, an overview of WiFi High, a description of key benefits and challenges of an online curriculum, and the ways in which SAHS has organized to support student success in general studies. This is followed by a description of the school’s Jewish studies program, the Jewish studies curriculum, SAHS’s approach to teaching Jewish studies, personalization of Jewish studies, and the benefits and challenges of the SAHS’s Jewish studies approach. The section concludes with a description of out-of-school learning—an important part of the SAHS experience.

The Daily Schedule

The SAHS school day runs from 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m.–12:45 p.m. on Fridays. Roughly half of the students’ day is devoted to general studies, and the rest of the day focuses on Jewish studies. In each division, the day begins with prayer services. The daily schedule includes long blocks of time for general studies, in which students work on their WiFi High courses. Within these blocks, students spend their time either in Flex Time (when they can focus on any coursework of their choosing) or in math and science labs.

Jewish studies classes have shorter blocks of time—40 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes each—although most of the Judaic classes are consecutive, allowing students to focus on

their Jewish studies material for a sustained period each day.⁸ General studies in the boys' division are generally scheduled during Jewish studies in the girls' division, and vice versa, so shared faculty can travel back and forth between the campuses.

Students break once in the morning and again around noon to share lunch that is brought in from the kitchen of a local day school. The boys break again in the mid-afternoon for Mincha. All students take art once a week and the girls have one or two sessions of physical education. In addition, each student is assigned to a small advisory group that meets with a teacher once a week for 10–15 minutes.

Sample weekly schedules for the girls' and boys' divisions appear in Appendix Three.

An Overview of WiFi High

The students at Shalom Academy High School are all students of the accredited, comprehensive, online high school WiFi High, from which they will earn their high school diplomas. The high school, which caters largely to home-schooled children, actors, and athletes, is a public school option for the state in which SAHS is located but accepts paying students from all over the world. It offers a core academic curriculum to meet high school graduation requirements and a wide range of AP and elective courses such as architectural drafting, music in film, and Chinese. The courses are designed and taught by certified high school teachers and accredited by the state. One of the SAHS facilitators explained, *“Every class the students take is written and taught by a certified teacher. It has the same learning targets that their peers in face-to-face education have. Everything is identical.”* The content and assignments for WiFi High courses are quite similar to the content and assignments of courses in any affluent suburban high school. Courses follow a traditional structure in which content is broken up into units, conveyed largely through teacher lectures, PowerPoint presentations, or written materials, and assessed via worksheets, essays, presentations, or problem sets. Online learning preceded the most recent wave of adaptive learning technologies, in which students learn on software

⁸ The one exception is that the boys have a stand-alone Judaics block at the end of the day. This was a scheduling necessity because the two divisions share some Judaics faculty.

that continually assesses their proficiency and adjusts content accordingly. WiFi High is essentially a traditional high school model that leverages technology as a delivery system.



WiFi High is essentially a traditional high school model that leverages technology as a delivery system.

WiFi High students enroll in a range of courses each semester, including required courses in core subjects such as algebra and freshman composition, and electives as their schedule allows. The courses follow the same semester-long timeline as regular high school courses, with content-themed units punctuated by written assessments or quizzes leading toward final projects or exams. Teachers post all the content online, including narrated PowerPoint presentations that explain key concepts; links to required and optional reading; links to supplemental videos that further explain or demonstrate content; ungraded practice assignments; graded homework assignments and assessments. In addition, each teacher offers a weekly “live” session during which s/he explains concepts, facilitates virtual group discussions or takes questions. The “live” sessions are recorded and posted so that students who missed them can view them later. Many courses supplement these online sessions with moderated discussion boards on which students can post questions or comments and reply to one another’s posts. Students can email their teachers at any time with specific questions.

All this happens within the WiFi High website. To access their coursework, students log in with a unique username and password. Once in the system, a student can see a list of the courses she is taking. For each course, she can view the entire semester’s content, assignments completed, assignments still needing to be completed, grades earned and feedback from the teacher. Students submit assignments and communicate with teachers through the same website. Though the course material is generally organized by week to help students manage the workload and stay on track to finish each course by semester’s end, students can submit any assignment at any

time during the semester. The only formal deadline is the end of the semester, by which time every required assignment must be turned in. Unlike many brick-and-mortar high schools, there are no due dates for assignments and no penalties for submitting them before or after the corresponding week on the course syllabus.

Benefits of Engaging WiFi High for the Virtual General Studies Curriculum

While offering a virtual general studies curriculum is an unusual choice for a Jewish high school, Rabbi Mazur sees students' enrollment in WiFi High as *"a wonderful opportunity."* It allows them access to a much wider array of courses than SAHS could possibly offer on its own, taught by more experienced and qualified teachers than the school could likely afford to hire. WiFi High has a proven record of student achievement that parents can count on. It offers students a degree of personalization that is difficult to find in any brick-and-mortar high school. Rabbi Mazur and his faculty believe that students' engagement in the online curriculum helps them develop important life skills that are in keeping with the school's mission and will support their success in college and beyond. Each of these benefits is discussed briefly below.

A Record of Success

Compared to six other virtual high schools serving the state in which SAHS is located, WiFi High boasts a long history and a track record of success. In 2014, WiFi High students exceeded the national ACT composite score by nearly two points and the state composite score by more than half a point, on average. Similarly, in the past, WiFi High students have consistently outperformed state averages on the state-wide standards-based performance assessment.⁹ The school has been open for more than a decade and has far more graduates than any other online high school serving the state. The students who graduate from WiFi High have a strong track record of academic success. Student persistence is generally a challenge for online high schools, as students tend to drop out at a higher rate overall than from brick-and-mortar schools. Accordingly, WiFi High's four-year graduation rate was 64%

⁹ Source: the state's public information online dashboard for education-related data.

in 2015, 20 percentage points lower than the state average for brick-and-mortar schools. However, it is stronger than that of any other online high school serving the state. WiFi High has not solved the problem of student persistence in online courses, but it is doing better than its peers.

Personalized Learning

Student learning within WiFi High is more personalized than in traditional high school models in two important ways. First, students can work through their course material at their own pace. Teachers divide the course content by week so that students know how many assignments they must complete each week in order to stay "on pace" to finish the course on time. Those who are confident in their knowledge of a concept after watching a videotaped lecture can move right to the assessment, and students who want to watch the video again or work through a practice assignment can take the time to do that. In addition, students can choose what to work on, whether moving between subjects to do a bit of work each day or working through a week or more's assignments in one course before moving on to the next. SAHS students describe the opportunity to control the pace of their work as the greatest benefit of WiFi High. In Ben's words, *"WiFi High is good because you can go at your own pace. It leaves a lot of space. As long as you get the assignment done, it doesn't really matter how long it took you. If you do it quickly, you'll have free time."*

The opportunity for students to self-pace within WiFi High does have limits. Because each course's content is posted at the beginning of the semester, students must wait until the next semester officially begins to log into the course and access the content. They cannot finish one semester of a course in a few weeks and immediately move on to the next semester's work. Students hoping to graduate in fewer than four years must take more than the required course-load each semester.

WiFi High courses are also designed to provide students options in how they learn. Mrs. Swensen explains that teachers embed links to a wide variety of resources that students can use to understand course content: *"There are online textbooks. You can read it. You can listen to it. There is actually even a video presentation of the material. All of those things are available. I think depending on the kind of learner you are, that is a really important piece."* Students described supplemental materials

that teachers have linked to their course assignments, such as Kahn Academy videos that effectively explain math concepts or NOVA videos presenting science concepts. In addition, teachers embed practice assignments that allow students opportunities to check their understanding before moving on to assessments. Some teachers have begun building those assignments with responsive software that offers immediate feedback so students can self-correct.

The personalization of student learning experiences—or targeting instruction to individual students’ skills, interests, and learning needs—is a key tenet of the modern definition of good instruction. Yet it is very difficult to achieve this in traditional classroom settings—especially in high schools. WiFi High’s structure and content lends itself to a personalized learning experience, and the SAHS community widely regards that as a benefit of using it.



To successfully navigate the online, self-paced curriculum of WiFi High, students must develop the ability to manage their time, set short- and long-term goals, and problem-solve independently.

Developing Important Life Skills

To successfully navigate the online, self-paced curriculum of WiFi High, students must develop the ability to manage their time, set short- and long-term goals, and problem-solve independently. Students’ skills in these areas vary greatly upon enrollment in SAHS, and administrators and faculty believe that practicing these skills is a valuable endeavor that will serve students well in the future. As Mr. Thomas, the math facilitator, explained: *“I like to think that [our] students would actually become better prepared for college [than students in traditional schools]. Think about the level of independence that you need to be successful in college—I needed to be able to budget my time. I needed to be able to be self-motivated and self-paced. I get the feeling that WiFi High really prepares them for whatever learning environment after high school that they endeavor towards.”*

Several students noted their satisfaction in learning independently. In a student named Nili’s words, *“Here [at SAHS] it is a lot of self-teaching, being self-taught in your classes. I really like that because I feel like, even in life, you have to learn stuff on your own. There isn’t always going to be somebody that you can consult with and get an exact answer.”* The leaders at SAHS see this opportunity to develop important life skills as another benefit of WiFi High. They also see it as an area in which the general studies faculty can provide deliberate, targeted support, as explained further below.

Challenges of a Virtual General Studies Curriculum

There are challenges to adopting a virtual general studies curriculum like WiFi High. By all accounts, the biggest challenge has been ensuring that students stay on or ahead of pace instead of falling behind. The SAHS staff has worked hard to create structures and systems to support students’ time management. In addition, getting used to learning virtually takes time, and some students never quite adjust. Finally, for an online curriculum to work, the technology has to work. Each of these challenges is outlined in further detail below. A subsequent section describing how SAHS currently structures student engagement with WiFi High includes the school’s strategies for addressing each challenge.

The Challenge of Pacing

While SAHS students widely report valuing the freedom to work at their own pace, they are not universally skilled at managing that freedom. Budgeting time and energy to steadily work through coursework—especially when the accountability for completing that coursework comes all at the end, rather than in stages—does not come easily to most teenagers. According to Rabbi Mazur, students’ difficulty in pacing their work has been a challenge since the school opened its doors. The timing of the Jewish High Holidays does not help: just as school gets underway, the students begin a series of breaks for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah. This puts many students behind, and they struggle all semester to catch up. In addition, the compressed nature of a dual-curriculum school day allows SAHS students 18 hours per week for general studies, but WiFi High estimates that students should spend between 20 and 30, depending

on course-load. This means that students must do significant homework to keep up, in addition to whatever household responsibilities they face in the afternoons and evenings. In reality, students' attention to homework varies, and the faculty members have little means of holding them accountable for working on WiFi High outside of school hours.

Online Learning Can Feel Impersonal

Without the physical presence of a teacher in the room and the company of peers engaged in the same learning, working through the assignments alone can be challenging. A handful of students—more girls than boys—say that all else being equal, they would prefer a brick-and-mortar setting. A junior in her first year at SAHS, Susan observed, *“I would prefer to be in a teacher-classroom setup. I’m not really digging this whole online thing so much.”* Students' comments indicate that in the courses they find more difficult, they would prefer to learn from a live teacher. For one student, named Ariella, this applies to pre-calculus: *“It is hard for me to do the pre-calculus by myself and actually learn it by myself if I don’t have a teacher next to me. If I have a question, I can’t answer my own question.”* Her time with Mr. Thomas, the Math Facilitator, is helpful but she wishes there were more of it. For Ruth, the most challenging course to learn virtually is U.S. History. *“I just don’t like history. I’m not good at it, and it is a little bit harder to do online just because there is so much reading you have to do and so much information you need to know. We have a hard copy of the textbook but the textbook doesn’t work for me.”* When asked what would make it easier, her response was quick: *“A teacher, just having a teacher talking about what we are learning. I like to see what she’s talking about. Even though you can watch a video or she can give you this link to look at, it’s hard for me to understand if it is not in person.”* Rabbi Mazur and Mrs. Lee agree that online learning is not a good fit for everyone. However, it can be hard to know if the virtual curriculum is a fit until a student tries it. The primary reason for student attrition at SAHS has been students' difficulty adjusting to the online learning environment and/or keeping pace with courses.

Technology Issues

Ensuring that technology works smoothly and does not pose an inappropriate distraction is another challenge of running a high school. When SAHS opened its doors in 2013, every student brought his or her laptop to school

to connect to WiFi High and complete the coursework. *“Computers would constantly need to go into the shop for repair,”* Rabbi Mazur recollected. Meanwhile, students were easily distracted by other content on their laptops. Figuring out how to manage these technology issues became a key challenge for SAHS administrators.

General Studies Support at SAHS

Given the above-described challenges to acculturating students to working independently on the WiFi High general studies curriculum, the SAHS administrators and faculty quickly realized that formal structures were needed to support students' success. What began in 2013 as two part-time tutors who circulated to answer questions while students worked independently on their WiFi High courses has evolved over three years to a more robust system of support. The following description of what general studies support at SAHS looks like in the school's fourth year of operation include a brief account of each supportive structure.

School-Issued Chromebooks

As SAHS opened in the fall of its second year, to address the technology issues, the administration issued each student a school-owned Chromebook to use for the duration of his or her enrollment. Students are no longer allowed to bring their personal devices (including phones) into the classrooms. Everyone uses a Chromebook to complete schoolwork and homework for WiFi High and Jewish Studies. To access the Chromebooks, students must log in via the SAHS platform, which activates filters that limit the range of their internet browsing and allows administrators to monitor their online activity. If a student is struggling to keep up, the administrators now can sit down with him to review information about how he has been spending his time online. This small change has made a huge difference in relegating technology-related headaches to the background. Rabbi Mazur noted with relief, *“We just don’t have any IT problems anymore. If any computer breaks we buy a new computer. Maybe one or two break a year.”*

Orientation

Administrators have realized that students are unlikely to fully utilize the resources provided by WiFi High without an in-depth, structured orientation on what is available to them and how to use it. This includes everything from procedures

(how to log in, how to submit assignments, etc.) to an overview of the different learning resources and where they are located in the system. This orientation is now a formal part of the SAHS school year, scheduled during the first week of school.

A Staff of Content-Specific Facilitators

Given that the content of high-level high school courses such as AP calculus or chemistry can be quite sophisticated, the SAHS leaders have realized that subject-matter expertise makes a difference in facilitators' abilities to point students in the right direction. The subject-specialization of facilitators does not mean that they refuse to respond to questions about different subjects (indeed, they field all kinds of questions from students each day), but the students know that for each course they are taking, there is a facilitator with relevant content expertise to whom they can bring their questions.

The SAHS leadership and facilitators understand that an important part of the facilitators' job is teaching students how to use the resources available to them through WiFi High in the service of their own learning. Rabbi Mazur explains, *"That was something which, in our second year, was clearly identified—we needed to get much more involved in our students' learning, how they are learning, versus just the pace [at which they complete assignments]."* The facilitators made a shared commitment to cultivating student agency, helping them learn how to learn from the available resources. Mrs. O'Leary said that this requires that she continually turns students back toward WiFi High when they say that they don't know what to do. *"Instead of writing curriculum, I'm helping them interpret curriculum. I'm helping them get a better understanding and dig deeper in to curriculum. At the same time, part of my role is helping them on a larger scale understand: How do you work with different kinds of systems? How do you figure things out? How do you advocate for yourself when things need to be done?"* She notes that enacting this role requires patience and restraint. *"I want to give them the skills to be able to do their work, but I don't want to do their work for them. And I don't want to answer questions they should be asking their teachers. As much as I want to be nice and I want make everybody happy, that is not what's best for them. They need to learn how to do it themselves."* For example, when a student came to her wondering how to complete a literature assignment, she responded, *"Did you read the resources? How do you think you can talk about the mood or the setting of a piece*

of literature if you don't even understand the definition of mood or setting in literature?" Pointing the student to the teacher-generated resources for the unit she noted, *"Isn't that cool? The teacher has a tutorial on mood and setting right there. Why don't you click on that and view that?"* With those prompts, the student was able to continue to work independently.

Advisory

Rabbi Mazur described SAHS's structure of situating students' independent engagement with WiFi High in a staffed, brick-and-mortar building as an opportunity—not just to help them get the work done, but to leverage the experience to develop important life skills. SAHS administrators realized that this would happen most effectively if each student was assigned to one adult who would be responsible for tracking that student's academic progress and well-being. The school recently split the students into advisory groups, assigning each to a general studies faculty member or Mrs. Mazur. Faculty advisors meet one-on-one with their advisees once a week in pace-setting meetings (described below) and with their entire advisory groups once a week for 10–15 minutes.



The SAHS faculty articulated three guiding principles: Learn How to Learn; Delve Deeper; and Track Your Growth.

Advisory meetings also provide an opportunity for building a culture of care and support. Each meeting begins with the facilitator asking everyone to share compliments and appreciations. The facilitators use this time to offer positive feedback and encouragement to students, while creating an expectation that students offer positive feedback to one another.

Three Principles

In considering how to best support students' growth through advisory and other structures, the SAHS faculty articulated three guiding principles: Learn How to Learn; Delve Deeper; and Track Your Growth. They define "learning how to learn" in terms of managing impulsivity, questioning and posing problems, striving for accuracy, and persisting. They

describe “delving deeper” as responding with wonderment and awe, thinking interdependently, creating, imagining, and innovating. Finally, the faculty at SAHS characterizes “tracking growth” as a process of thinking about thinking, monitoring plans as they are employed, and making mid-course corrections as needed.¹⁰

Rabbi Mazur described these principles as “*key skills and key habits that a student needs to in order to be effective on their eLearning platform. Those are also skills which are critical for life.*” Mrs. Lee and Mrs. O’Leary created a curriculum around the three principles to guide the faculty members’ facilitation of advisory meetings. A sample advisory curriculum appears in Appendix Four.

Rabbi Mazur explained that while the principles are useful for anchoring the advisory curriculum, he is working to embed them more broadly in the school culture. Articulating the guiding principles “*has given us a vocabulary to use when we’re talking about interventions with students. These terms are used in advisory, but also as they relate to interventions and one-on-one conversations with students.*” Indeed, in talking about their work with students the SAHS faculty members frequently refer to these terms, characterizing students’ use of supplemental resources as “*an opportunity to delve deeper*” (Mr. Thomas) or pace-setting meetings as a time to “*track growth*” (Mrs. Swensen). Faculty members are working to define the skills associated with each of the principles so that over time, they can more specifically target support to those skill areas.

Weekly Pace-Setting Meetings

To help address the ongoing challenges students face in appropriately pacing their general studies work, and in keeping up through the Jewish High Holidays, Mrs. Lee created a pacing guide that outlines what week’s assignment students should be on each week in each course. The guide suggests a timeline that would allow students get ahead in each course before Rosh Hashanah so that they will be back on pace after taking a holiday break.

Mrs. Lee also instituted weekly pace-setting meetings in which each student sits down with a faculty advisor (typically

on Monday) to review progress in each WiFi High course and plan what to work on each day that week. Students plan which assignments to complete and which “live” teaching sessions and labs to attend. The faculty advisors point them toward students who have recently completed the assignments they are slated to work on and therefore may be able to offer help, and toward extra resources within WiFi High that may prove helpful given the student’s learning style. These meetings are personalized to student needs and look different for different students, taking anywhere from one minute to 20. Students who are not on pace may need more help from their advisor identifying all the assignments due and prioritizing what to work on when in order to catch up. Other students, like Joshua, need less help. He explained, “*I am super good at making my own schedule, so when I pace-set with Mrs. Lee, it’s usually more like me showing her the schedule I made, and her saying, ‘Oh yeah, that looks fine.’*” Descriptions of several pace-setting meetings appear as Appendix Five.

Math and Science Labs

Mr. Thomas, the Math Facilitator, and Mr. Clewley, the Science Facilitator, lead scheduled lab periods every week to provide students with support and guidance. These two subjects are, overall, most difficult for the students, and the scheduled labs provide them with clear and predictable times when they know that they can get help. Mrs. Lee did her best to schedule labs so that students who are taking the same courses attend at the same time. When they happen to be working on the same week’s assignments, the facilitator may offer a mini-lecture on the current topic followed by collaborative work on an assignment, or help working through challenging problems. When students are not working on the same course or assignment, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Clewley circulate to answer questions as students work independently. In addition, sometimes Mr. Clewley—or Mrs. Lee when Mr. Clewley is not on campus—helps students set up and complete science experiments relevant to their course content. A description of a Math Lab appears as Appendix Six.

Shared Viewing of Recorded “Live” Sessions

Because the SAHS students spend half of their school day in Jewish studies classes, they are sometimes not available to participate in the “live” teaching sessions during which WiFi

¹⁰ Source: an internal document created by the general studies faculty entitled “Shalom Academy High School 2016-2017 School Year Habits of Mind”

High teachers broadcast interactive lectures, facilitate discussions, or answer student questions. The SAHS staff determined that these sessions provide important content, so under Mrs. Lee's direction, they have strongly encouraged students to watch the recordings after the fact. To make this more palatable, each week Mrs. Lee schedules designated times when students taking the same course can watch the recorded sessions together, discussing content with one another that they might have discussed virtually with their far-flung classmates. Not all of the students see the value in watching those sessions—in late fall Ben remarked that he had not yet attended one for his English course—but other students see them as indispensable. Rebecca, a junior, explained, *“I feel like those [live sessions] are crucial to watch because that's literally your class. Imagine you were in a class, and your teacher just gave you the sheet and she didn't teach you anything and all you had was the textbook for your resource. That is kind of how it is if you don't watch the sessions. I always go to those. They also provide enough information for you that you can do it without watching the live session, but it is very useful.”*

Flex Time

When SAHS opened its doors, all of the time that students spent working on general studies was Flex Time that students could choose to spend working on whatever subjects and assignments they wished. As faculty saw that students could benefit from more robust supports, that time became more structured and scheduled.

Every student now has some Flex Time each week. When a student is not in a pace-setting or advisory meeting, attending a math or science Lab, or meeting with others to watch a previously recorded “live” teaching session, he or she has Flex Time. Facilitators circulate to answer questions, troubleshoot, or redirect students who have gotten off task. Sometimes students ask one another questions or collaborate on assignments. Students are guided in their use of Flex Time by individualized schedules that Mrs. Lee creates for each of them at the beginning of the semester, which allocates times for working on each course. These schedules are fine-tuned in pace-setting meetings to best meet the needs of each student. Descriptions of two students' work during Flex Time appear in Appendices Seven and Eight.

An Incentive System that Rewards with Choice

Some students chafe at the restrictions these support structures place on their freedom, especially those who have been at SAHS since the beginning. To address their frustration and offer additional motivation to get work done, Mrs. Lee created an incentive system that ties the use of support and staying on pace to freedom of choice during Flex Time. Students who are fulfilling weekly expectations of attending scheduled labs, “live” sessions, pace-setting and advisory meetings can choose which subjects to work on during Flex Time. Students who also stay on their “SAHS pace”—that which they agreed upon with their advisors—have some flexibility about not only what to work on but also where in the building to work during one of their Flex Time blocks each week. (Both school buildings—housing the boys' division and the girls' division, respectively—have several different classrooms as well as informal spaces where students might choose to work during the blocks of time set aside for general studies.) Students who are not fulfilling weekly expectations, are behind their “SAHS pace,” or are failing one or more course do not get such choices. They must sit and work where Mrs. Lee or another administrator directs them and follow the schedule that Mrs. Lee developed for them. A document outlining the incentive system, named “The Choice Advantage,” appears as Appendix Nine. SAHS began piloting the system in the fall of 2016.



“There is more to the SAHS general studies program than simply WiFi High. It is the whole organization and what has been set up for secular learning.”

Virtual and In-Person Learning

Shalom Academy High School's general studies structure gives students what Mrs. Swensen describes as *“the best of both worlds.”* They have access to a robust college-prep high school curriculum with an extensive course selection and content presented through different media and formats. But rather than engaging the virtual curriculum at home alone, as the typical home-schooled WiFi High student might, they engage it in the company of their peers

and supportive adults. As Mrs. O’Leary put it, *“There is more to the SAHS general studies program than simply WiFi High. It is the whole organization and what has been set up for secular learning. I think that is a huge benefit for the students, because they are getting more than simply learning through WiFi High. Much, much more.”* Mrs. Lee and her staff of facilitators are there exclusively to support the students. They cultivate personal relationships that go beyond the content of the academics, knowing that learning is, in part, a social endeavor. They encourage students to help one another by explaining difficult concepts or pointing each other toward helpful resources. And they provide information, feedback and prompting when students are stuck. SAHS students consistently reported valuing the guidance and support they get from facilitators and their peers.

Jewish Studies Curriculum

The Jewish studies curriculum at SAHS is designed to give students the skills and content knowledge to become independent and lifelong Jewish learners, and, as Mrs. Mazur further explained, to help students *“grow and develop in their spirituality and connection to Judaism”* and become *“inspired and knowledgeable”* Jewish adults. The school aims to prepare students to be able to study at yeshivot and seminaries for a gap year after high school should they so choose.

At both the girls’ and boys’ divisions, students take many of the same courses, which include Chumash (Bible with commentaries), Halacha (Jewish law), Jewish history and the weekly Parsha (Bible portion of the week). Students in both divisions also study Chassidus focused on the writings of Lubavitcher Rebbes, such as the Tanya and the Kuntres Uma’ayon.

In the boys’ division, students also study a tractate from Talmud. In 2016–2017, the focus was on Masechet Ketubot, the tractate that deals with issues pertaining to marriage relationships as well as a broad spectrum of other issues. Students in the most advanced Talmud class have an extra Talmud class to focus on bekius (learning for breadth versus depth).

In the girls’ division, students study Navi (including books from the Prophets and Writings). In 2016–2017, they focused specifically on Mishlei (Proverbs). The girls also take Hebrew as a separate class, rather than integrating it into their Chumash class, as the boys do. Also, the girls’ division teachers

created a class called *“Beis Medrash”* built around the Jewish holidays. Mrs. Mazur explained that they saw a need to help students understand Jewish traditions and rituals that was not met in any of the other courses.

For most of the Jewish studies subjects, teachers create their own lesson plans and materials, drawing from a host of online resources. Rabbi Miller has done extensive work to create a sourcebook for Jewish history and to develop a system for teaching Talmud, described in more detail below. The school also purchases curricular materials for teaching Chumash vocabulary and grammar that supplements students’ study of specific Biblical books. This curriculum was originally created for elementary school students, but SAHS teachers have successfully adapted it to high school and find that it meets their goal of helping their students move towards greater independence understanding texts in Hebrew.

What Teaching and Learning Looks Like in SAHS Jewish Studies Classes

If one were to walk into any Jewish studies class at SAHS, one would see teachers using a range of teaching structures to bring their subject matter to life, similar to many other day schools. These approaches include lectures, guided reading and discussion, havruta and hands-on group projects. Teachers provide visual aids, such as charts and outlines. The teachers give little written homework in Judaics, with the exception of Jewish history, but do ask that students participate in class, review material, and take responsibility for studying for quizzes and tests.

While there is no one sanctioned approach to teaching, Jewish studies teachers in both divisions operate with a number of shared goals in mind: helping students increase their capacity to access Hebrew texts independently, learn to think more deeply, and find relevance in what they are learning so that it can inform their Jewish growth and commitment.

Access to Hebrew Texts

To help students increase their proficiency in accessing Jewish texts, teachers emphasize vocabulary-building and foundational knowledge. Rabbi Friedman explained, *“What I spend my time thinking about is building the students’ skills in reading Hebrew, building a Hebrew vocabulary, getting acquainted*

with what we call yedios klalios, which means just the general knowledge of Jewish things, the Jewish holidays, Jewish terminologies and things like that.”

Beginner Chumash classes emphasize rapid language development through the purchased Chumash vocabulary curriculum. At the same time, students in intermediate and more advanced classes of Chumash in both divisions study the Biblical commentaries. In the boys’ division, students in the intermediate and advanced Talmud classes learn how to use a system Rabbi Miller developed to help students annotate a page of Talmud and improve their understanding of Talmudic vocabulary, concepts and logic. Some of the boys in the most advanced Talmud group only began to learn Talmud when they entered SAHS. Their teacher has seen vast improvement and believes that they are well on their way to understanding how Talmud works and being able to learn with increasing independence.

Encouraging Deep Thinking

In addition to building knowledge and skills, teachers are focused on developing students’ ability to think more deeply. Rabbi Miller expressed this idea in the following example: *“So they are learning this piece of Talmud and it’s not the easiest piece of Talmud. They have never seen it before. These guys are trying to figure it out. So they figured it out, and then we’ve gone over it to make sure that they actually know it, but do they really understand it?”* Rabbi Miller recalls asking them to apply the principle outlined in the text to a completely different situation. *“That threw some of them, but eventually, they were able to piece it together.”* Rabbi Miller sees the goal of supporting students to synthesize information and apply it in other contexts as relevant to the entire Jewish studies curriculum. *“Whatever subject it is, there is an overarching idea which is to try to get people to think. I don’t want to teach something and just have the kids give it back to me. They should be independent thinkers.”*

Making Learning Relevant

Furthermore, teachers stress the importance of helping students connect what they are learning in Jewish studies courses to their lives. Mrs. Mazur emphasized that these connections must be internalized, and that this goal shapes how the teachers focus the curriculum. For example, she

intentionally chose to focus on Mishlei and the theme of friendship this year because of its potential for connecting to students’ lives. Rather than reading the texts in the order of its chapters, students study verses that are grouped by themes such as *“How to choose a friend?”* and *“What is the value of a good friend?”* They also explore additional Jewish texts related to the theme and then have personal conversations where they discuss examples of events from their own lives that connect to the text’s focus. The subsequent test requires them to link real life examples that students have provided to the verses that these examples connect to, further emphasizing the idea that the text is related to their lives. Mrs. Mazur explained, *“I think it blows their mind that Shlomo Hamelech spoke about friendship. It is something that relates to their personal lives.”*

Descriptions of several different Jewish studies classes appear as Appendices Ten, Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen.

Personalization of Jewish Studies Instruction at SAHS

Jewish studies instruction at SAHS stands out in its level of personalization. Given the wide range of Judaics backgrounds represented in the student body, it is very important to the Judaics faculty to meet each student where he or she is in terms of skill and knowledge in order to foster growth. To do this, teachers differentiate instruction in three ways. First, the faculty divides most courses into two or more sections, often grouping students by proficiency. Second, within each section teachers strive to target instruction to specific student needs and interests. Finally, the interns offer each student a one-on-one Jewish enrichment experience in which they can explore any topic or question the student chooses.

Proficiency-Based Student Groupings

All courses at SAHS that prioritize text skills and vocabulary, such as Talmud, Chumash, Navi and Hebrew, are divided into three sections. Beis Medrash in the girls’ division is likewise split into three sections. Teachers divide the students based on their prior experience, skill and knowledge. These are assessed via a combination of information that faculty gathers during the admissions process and teachers’ ongoing assessments, and the groupings may change over the course of the year. Each section of a given course studies the same general content;

the differences lie in pacing, how much text students are responsible for learning in the original Hebrew, the degree to which they engage with commentaries, and—in some classes—the extent to which teachers spend time on core concepts, vocabulary or facts before exploring the text. For example, the beginner Chumash class in the boys' school focuses on vocabulary through excerpts of the Biblical text and other materials, while the other two Chumash classes learn the Book of Numbers and commentaries directly in the Hebrew text.

Personalized Instruction within the Classroom

SAHS Jewish studies teachers often further personalize the pacing and content for students within each classroom, particularly in the beginner-level sections. Rabbi Miller explained that *“I give pieces [of content] and vocabulary according to the students' level, where I feel they need it.”* Similarly, Mrs. Cohen described her beginner Chumash class, which is divided into three groups. *“We have one group that literally began with their letters and vowels. The second group is doing introductory words and vocabulary, and group number three is doing more advanced words and vocabulary and actually studying the text.”* And Mrs. Finkelstein explained that *“because these girls come from such different backgrounds, we really have to create a plan for each girl.”*

As students move into intermediate and advanced classes, instruction is less personalized as students are expected to work on the same materials at the same pace within a particular class. However, teachers still consider different students' strengths and weaknesses and plan accordingly. For example, Rabbi Miller will pair students who have different strengths so that each can affect the other's learning. In explaining what he does in his advanced Talmud class, he said, *“I try to make everybody feel good about what they're good at. I try to get them to improve on some of the things that they're not good at. When it comes to, let's say chavrusas, I pair them up in such a way so that somebody who's good with words is working with somebody who's good with concepts, so each one can use the other person's strength.”*

Overall, Judaics teachers aspire to be responsive to each individual student and to be able to teach anyone who comes to them, regardless of prior knowledge and experience, as long as they want to grow. Mrs. Mazur has even created two morning prayer groups, one for students who are not yet able to read Hebrew and who need to use a transliterated text and

learn about the meaning of the prayers and one for students who are experienced with prayer.



Overall, Judaics teachers aspire to be responsive to each individual student and to be able to teach anyone who comes to them, regardless of prior knowledge and experience, as long as they want to grow.

Individualized Jewish Enrichment

In one more effort to target Jewish studies instruction to individual students' needs and interests and in the interest of cultivating personal connections for each student, SAHS has arranged for each student to spend up to an hour per week in one-on-one study with an intern. The students choose the focus of the study according to their own interests. Topics range from deep examination of specific Jewish texts and issues, to research about historic events, to extra practice reading Hebrew prayers. The interns are responsible for planning and facilitating these sessions, which are ungraded and informal.

Benefits of SAHS's Approach to Jewish Studies

Shalom Academy High School teachers and students identify a number of specific benefits of their Jewish studies program. The division of each course into small skill- and knowledge-based groups allows them to be highly flexible and responsive to students from a range of backgrounds. The small class sizes and personalized instruction allow teachers to cultivate a supportive, accepting culture. Amidst this highly supportive atmosphere, students are challenged to expand their competencies and are able to develop real mastery in particular areas.

Flexibility to meet students where they are

SAHS administrators and staff believe deeply in meeting students where they are and helping them grow from there. Dividing students into proficiency groups has helped them cater to both beginners and more advanced students. These

groups have worked well in part because faculty has created a system where students can move up at any time in the year and the overall school culture prioritizes growth over levels and grades. Students themselves appreciate the groupings. Ben commented, *“I would definitely keep the classes as they are. It is by levels, not by grades, which makes it a lot easier to learn because instead of waiting for the slowest person in your class, who doesn’t really know much, it is much easier to have four guys who are all at the same level and can go as fast or slow as they want.”* Within these small groups, teachers can be responsive to students’ needs to go slower and faster and really take time to answer questions and fill in gaps in knowledge that they may identify. Mrs. Finkelstein, the girls’ Navi and Chassidus teacher, explained, *“I see where they are holding [what they understand and what they are able to do] and if I have to veer, I veer and if I have to tweak to individualize, I do because I want every girl to be challenged and every girl to be excited about learning.”* Her student, Ariella, noted, *“If you don’t get it, she’ll explain it in ten different ways until you get it.”*

A Supportive Culture

Students at SAHS say that they feel connected to their Judaics teachers, many of whom are not only supporting their growth in Jewish learning and practice, but praying with them in the mornings, answering general studies and spiritual questions and making sure their basic needs are met. This is true in both the boys’ and the girls’ divisions. In the boys’ division, David reported that *“since they [the Rabbis] are always here, I can talk to them whenever I need about personal things and school things.”* And Zachary tied the closeness between students and faculty to the small size of the school and the Jewish faculty’s involvement in students’ lives outside of school: *“Since we are a small school and the teachers live so close by it is easier to connect with them. We hang out with them on Shabbat. We go to their houses. It is easier to connect with them. In big schools teachers go there to teach and then they go home. Here, teachers are involved with everything in student life.”* Rebecca described a similar sense of closeness and care in the girls’ division, explaining, *“I feel like Mrs. Mazur just wants each one of her students to grow and wants the best for all of us. That’s how I feel.”*

The faculty has worked hard to cultivate this sense of closeness and connection as part of its effort to engage students with

a range of Jewish backgrounds. As Mrs. Mazur explained, *“The message should come across that I care about you. Not just whether you’re getting an A or B in English or math or that you’re passing your Judaic studies but that it is a whole picture. You are a person. You are a human. You are going to be a valuable member to society, to continuing Judaism, to establishing your own home and establishing your own imprint on the world.”* This sense of support that the teachers have fostered extends beyond teacher to student relationships to students’ peer relationships as well, particularly in the girls’ division. Mrs. Cohen described a scene in her class that demonstrated the girls’ commitment to one another’s growth: *“Sometimes I tear up just watching it. Today, one student passed out of level one because she can now read independently after being here a month and just the excitement in the room and everybody cheering for her—they are really a team.”*

Balancing Care with Rigor

Jewish studies teachers at SAHS strive to balance the culture of support with productive challenging of students at their growing edge. Cynthia explained her experience in Chumash, calling attention to the way in which her teacher balances challenge and support: *“Each time there are more words [to learn], and it is remembering them and getting to know them that is the challenging part, but I am always up for the challenge because she makes you up for the challenge. She wants you to do it independently, but if you need something, she is there in a snap.”* David described his Talmud class experience, highlighting the importance of both being challenged in the right way and teaching students how to learn. *“Rabbi Miller pushes us but he does not push us too far, and he is teaching us how to learn by ourselves rather than just teaching us content.”* Because each class is small and teachers know the students well, they are able to gauge how to motivate individual students and how far is too far to push.

Challenges of SAHS’s Approach to Jewish Studies

The main drawback to the current approach to teaching Jewish studies at SAHS is that it is extremely labor intensive. At this very young school, teachers are creating much of their curriculum and materials from scratch. This is hard work, and the quality of the lessons varies. Rabbi Mazur acknowledged

that the curriculum will solidify as teachers gain experience and begin to document what they are doing. Eventually, the teachers will not need to reinvent the wheel each year, and can refine lessons created in the past. Rabbi Mazur noted that the need to develop a formal Judaics curriculum is currently “an area of growth” for the school.

Planning highly individualized lessons takes a lot of time and energy. Teachers are not always successful at meeting everyone’s needs simultaneously, leaving some students frustrated. As Ariella described her Chumash class, “*There are a lot of levels in that class. I know my Hebrew alphabet and the vowels and stuff and the prefixes, but some other students in the class are not up to that level, so the teacher needs to give more attention to those students. The teacher tries running around and doing the best she can. But it is hard.*” Rabbi Miller noted that the small size of each course section (two to eight students) makes such personalization possible. As the school grows, it will become more and more challenging for teachers to cater to individual needs and interests unless more formal systems and structures for personalization in Jewish studies are put in place.

Out-of-School Learning and Activities

SAHS offers a range of after school and weekend activities, primarily aimed at their students who board, but open to all students at the school. Activities for the boys and girls are similar but occur separately. These activities provide extra social opportunities for students, as well as opportunities for students to spend time with their Judaics teachers and families in the larger Jewish community. Rabbi Friedman explained that students have the opportunity to go to the gym twice a week, go shopping once a week, have a weekly mishmar (after school learning) program and often have Sunday trips. Furthermore, “*on weekends many times we have Shabbatons. I do big meals for all the students at my house. We host everybody or we host small groups. Then on Shabbos, throughout the day, we have different things. We’ll have a farbrengen (a gathering characterized by singing and words of Torah) or we’ll sit together and just sing some Jewish songs. We have a good time.*” Mrs. Mazur adds that “*it’s just nice for them [the students] to get to bond with their teachers in an out-of-school setting [like a Shabbat meal]. Students appreciate that.*”

The living arrangements for out-of-town students offer further social and emotional support, as well as opportunities to extend students’ Jewish learning in practical terms. There is a small dormitory for girls who come from other states or cities, overseen by an intern with support from Mrs. Finkelstein, a Judaics faculty member. Mrs. Mazur sees these living situations as providing a means for students to “*see how a Jewish home works, which for some of our students is new,*” as well as offering students much-needed “TLC” on evenings and weekends.



To balance the impersonal nature of an online curriculum, the faculty strives to create a culture of warmth and connectedness.

The Whole is More Than the Sum of its Parts

Though the general studies instruction, the Judaics instruction and out-of-school activities at SAHS could each be regarded separately, administrators and faculty see them as part of a complementary whole. To balance the impersonal nature of an online curriculum, the faculty strives to create a culture of warmth and connectedness. To counter the isolation students may experience when completing WiFi High courses independently, teachers build in opportunities for personal connection and ongoing interaction during advisory and Judaics courses. Key Jewish studies faculty members are in the building during general studies time, offering students support and guidance. And faculty members in the boys’ division and the girls’ division, in Judaics and general studies, aspire to help students develop the habits of mind that SAHS has identified as goals: learning to learn, delving deeper, and tracking growth. More so than in many day schools, the SAHS staff members see themselves as part of a coherent whole rather than two separate faculties responsible for Jewish studies and general studies, respectively.

■ Taking Stock

In its first three years of operation, Shalom Academy High School has been able to accomplish a great deal. The Mazurs have hired a strong and dedicated faculty that has built systems and structures to support student learning. The school has recruited a body of students who are—by and large—very happy to be there. Students have done well in their WiFi High coursework overall, and most graduates are doing just what the administrators had predicted, matriculating to a mix of yeshivas, seminaries and four-year colleges. Looking back on the school’s growth so far, Rabbi Mazur reflected, *“We have had three years that we have been able to blossom and grow, and I think our roots are strong.”*

A Strong and Dedicated Faculty

Rabbi Mazur is proud of the expertise and dedication of the staff. *“I think we have the right people on the bus. We have some incredible, incredible staff.”* This includes a more robust general studies faculty than ever before and greater distribution of responsibility to allow Rabbi Mazur to concentrate more fully on growing the school.

The SAHS faculty members consistently report being very happy in their jobs. They love the school, they love the students, and they love working for the Mazurs. The faculty members describe the school leaders as hardworking, accommodating and kind. Teachers describe the culture of the school as unusually warm and accepting of everyone, including both teachers and students. For example, Mrs. Cohen remarked, *“It is a very homey atmosphere. I always notice as soon as I walk in here. It is a school and there is definitely an atmosphere of learning here, but it is very casual and it is really comfortable. There is no fear of making a mistake. Everybody is really supportive.”* The teachers’ dedication to SAHS and its students is apparent in the long hours they work and their commitment to meeting each student’s academic, social and emotional needs.

Systems and Structures in Place

In 2016–2017, the faculty created a system for pooling information about student progress and concerns across subjects, so that the Jewish studies and general studies teachers could more easily see a whole picture of student progress. They

instituted biweekly conference calls to discuss the trends in the pooled information and its implications for how they approach individual students or whole classes and subjects. SAHS continues to build, test and refine such structures with the overarching goal of creating a consistent, engaging and supportive environment for students.

A Strong Body of Satisfied Students and Parents

Enrollment at SAHS has grown each year. Faculty expressed pride in the students, and Rabbi Mazur noted that though current enrollment is lower than the original projections SAHS is attracting just *“the students that the school is made for.”* Students overwhelmingly expressed satisfaction with the school, citing the warm and welcoming environment as a key factor in their happiness. In Max’s words, *“I love that the school is so accepting of all people and that goes for the students and the teachers. Everyone is very accepting of everyone’s different personalities and different views on Judaism and life. I love that I can come to this school and be in an accepting and loving Jewish environment.”* Students consistently reported that it is an easy environment in which to make friends, describing the environment as *“cozy,” “inclusive”* and *“like a family.”* This closeness is in part because of its size—as Joshua noted, each division of SAHS *“is so small that it forces everyone to be friends with each other”*—and in part because of the teachers’ extraordinary efforts to create an environment in which every person feels valued. As Rebecca explained of her experience in the girls’ division, *“The environment that Mrs. Mazur creates for us affects how we interact, and the environment that she has created is really good.”*

Students also cite satisfaction in their learning at SAHS, both in Judaics and in general studies. For example, a senior named Cynthia reflected on her experience at the school, *“I like the fact that, for one, that I’m getting my Jewish education I’ve always wanted, and two, that because of the way general studies is taught, this school teaches you a lot. It has taught me independence. It has taught me motivation. It has taught me a lot of things.”*

A subgroup of parents interviewed for this case echoed the students’ satisfaction with the quality of the dual curriculum and overall academic experience. David’s mother remarked of SAHS, *“I think it is a great model, and I think it is a great alternative for a Jewish high school. I love that David is having the*

Judaic studies, and I love that the quality of the curriculum from WiFi High is so good.” Rebecca’s mother, who knew that the culture would be a good fit for Rebecca but worried initially about how she would transition to online learning remarked, *“She has flourished there like she has never flourished in any school she has ever been in.”* She believes that the personalization available in both general studies and Judaics support Rebecca’s ability to learn successfully.

Overall student satisfaction is reflected in student retention. In its first two years of operation, the school lost several students who did not successfully adapt to WiFi High. In the school’s third year, the three students who did not return had to leave due to changes to their family situations. Year Four (2016–2017) saw the largest intake of new students thus far, with ten new recruits in the boys’ division and ten in the girls’.

Student Success with WiFi High and Beyond

The current crop of SAHS students is doing well in their WiFi High coursework. According to Rabbi Mazur, in 2015–2016, 70% of the student body made WiFi High’s honor roll or high honor roll, achieving a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or above. They are also taking advantage of WiFi High’s advanced courses. In 2016–2017, five students are enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and five are enrolled in pre-AP American Literature.

All 14 of the school’s graduates have gone on to post-secondary education. Five students matriculated directly to four-year universities, while nine went on to study advanced Judaics in yeshivas and seminaries in the U.S. and Israel. Of those nine, seven had finished their advanced Judaics training at the time of writing this case, and all but one had subsequently enrolled in a college or university. The administrators and faculty are proud that all of their graduates have gone on to further study, in keeping with the school’s mission and the expectation of the parents who send their children to SAHS.

■ Looking Ahead

School leaders acknowledge that they must continue to refine the new structures and consider how to best enact the school’s guiding principles in daily interactions with students. With few similar models of schooling to draw on, the general studies

faculty members are learning as they go, solving problems as they arise, and offering one another support and guidance. An external coach provided by Better Lesson and funded by The AVI CHAI Foundation, provides additional feedback and perspective on how to enhance support and guidance for the students. Meanwhile, Rabbi Mazur is considering introducing new initiatives such as student-led conferences, another strategy for cultivating student agency and allowing students to track their growth. He is also considering renovating a classroom to make a science lab to allow students more experiential learning in their WiFi High science classes.

Like all schools, SAHS is a work in progress, doing its best to build upon the successes it has already achieved and improve upon its weaknesses. Leaders and faculty have worked very hard to get the school up and running, and to create a healthy learning environment for students. Starting a high school with no previous administrative experience, noted Rabbi Mazur, *“is not for the faint of heart.”* Then again, Rabbi Kleimovitz noted, *“we did opt for the highest possible degree of difficulty”* by opening two divisions serving all four grades simultaneously. *“You have to be a little crazy to do that.”* He confided that *“a more sane approach”* might have been to begin with just one division, or to build the school grade by grade, beginning with a class of freshman in Year One, freshman and sophomores in Year Two and so on. They simply did not have sufficient early enrollment to roll out the school grade by grade and opted to take applicants in all grades for Year One. The result was a great deal of learning in the doing as the SAHS faculty created a model of schooling unlike any they had seen before. Rabbi Kleimovitz noted, *“We learned a lot very, very quickly, and we are going to be better for it in the long run. I don’t look back at it and regret it because it would never have happened the other way. We would never have gotten any critical mass, and we would still be sitting in a basement somewhere [dreaming of a new Jewish high school for this community]”.*

Rabbi Kleimovitz, Rabbi Mazur and the SAHS faculty have embraced the challenge of learning by doing. They are committed to their larger goal of making SAHS a tuition-sustained school and providing a model of schooling that they believe combines the best of online and face-to-face learning. Mrs. Mazur reflected a widely held sentiment that she believes fuels their resolve to keep growing and improving: *“There’s a higher ideal here because there is a real value in the work, and we can really impact our students’ lives.”*

■ Appendix One

Research Methods

This case study is based on data collected in the fall of 2016 by two researchers at Helix Learning Partners in Newton, Massachusetts: Dr. Sarah Birkeland and Dr. Orit Kent. In seeking to deeply understand the structure and culture of Shalom Academy High School, the researchers engaged in the following data collection activities over the span of three months, including four days spent at the school site and additional contact by phone and email:

- Gathered and studied a host of background documents related to the school’s founding, history, structures, and current enrollment
- Explored the WiFi High website using the log-in information of current students
- Conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with:
 - the School Director (three times)
 - the Head of School (six times)
 - the Principal of the girls’ division (three times)
 - the Principal of the boys’ division (twice)
 - the Director of General Studies (once)
 - the full-time Jewish Studies faculty member (once)
 - the school counselor (twice)
 - the three general studies facilitators (once each)
 - four of the five part-time Jewish studies faculty members (once each)
 - two of the five school interns (one in the boys’ division and one in the girls’ division)
 - 11 students, including three of the four current seniors
 - four of the students’ legal guardians

- Conducted close observations of the following:
 - three separate student advisory meetings
 - approximately five cumulative hours of general studies Flex Time
 - two math labs
 - students’ scheduled viewing of a previously recorded “live” teaching session (in biology)
 - eight pace-setting meetings (three at the boys’ division and five at the girls’ division)
 - the following Jewish studies classes in the boy’s division:
 - Talmud 2 and 3
 - Chumash 1 and 3
 - Jewish history
 - the following Jewish studies classes in the girls division:
 - Beis Midrash (two different class meetings)
 - Navi 1 and 2
 - Ivrit 2
 - Chumash 2

The researchers recorded and transcribed all interviews with the exception of two, during which they took written notes. The researchers carefully scripted all observations and captured photographic images of spaces and documents.

The case synthesizes a wealth of information. In writing it, the researchers assigned pseudonyms to the school and every person who works there, taking pains to remove information that might make them identifiable. All quotes were “cleansed” of verbal tics, false starts, repeated phrases, contractions and pauses to make them easier to read and understand. In some cases, off-topic sentences or phrases were removed.



■ Appendix Two

Profiles of Four Shalom Academy High School Students Fall 2016

Ariella

Ariella is a senior in her second year at Shalom Academy High School. She first heard about the school from a counselor in a Chabad-affiliated youth program. She explains, *“I have always wanted to go to Jewish school and experience it to get a better understanding of my background, of where I come from.”* Her parents were supportive of her decision to leave public school and go to SAHS in the middle of high school.

Ariella would rather learn directly from a teacher in the room than from an online course. At the same time, she likes the fact that online learning lets you *“go at your own pace.”* She explains that she is a bit behind in her classes, but is not worried because *“I am taking my time [to do my assignments thoroughly] and trying to do the best work I can.”* She expects she will catch up without a problem before the end of the semester. Her favorite class this year is a general studies course, Composition, *“because it is helping me with real life situations like a job application, a resume, [and] it is helping me format and have structure in my writing.”* She hopes to go to a four-year college when she graduates.

Ariella likes SAHS a lot because *“I like learning about my Judaism, where we come from and just having an experience to bond with other Jewish girls. I like that nobody judges anyone, and it is a welcoming environment and community. Even though I don't like [taking classes] online that much, I still see myself growing in my education and growing in my writing and my Judaism, so I feel like that is a big impact.”*

Ben

Ben is a sophomore in his second year at Shalom Academy High School. Before coming to SAHS, he was homeschooled in another state. He and his family were looking for a Jewish high school for him to be able to grow in his Jewish learning and practice. As is true for many students at SAHS, his family first learned about the school through their connection to

Chabad. They visited the school and Ben decided it was a good fit. He explains, *“I decided to go. It was my choice.”* He describes the school as being 45% Judaic and 55% secular studies. *“It's not a yeshiva, but it's not a public school. It's kind of the perfect mix, really. It's not too much and not too little.”* Like other out-of-town boys, he boards with a family and spends afterschool time going to organized activities, such as mishmar (additional Jewish learning), trips to the gym, and field trips in addition to doing homework.

Ben describes his Talmud teacher as *“amazing. He's very good at explaining Gemara; he makes it really easy to understand. I don't know what the class would be without [him].”* He appreciates that his Jewish studies classes are divided by proficiency levels and not by grade because *“it is much easier to have [people] who are all at the same level and you can go as fast or as slow as you want.”* Similarly, he explains that WiFi High is *“a lot better than normal class [because] you can work at your own pace, and if you don't get something, you can always go to the teacher and ask.”* His only complaint is that he doesn't like the schedules recently put in place to encourage students to work on particular WiFi High subjects at certain times of day. He wants the independence to choose what he will work on when and where.

Ben is happy with his school choice, feeling like he is learning a lot and has been able to connect with both peers and teachers. He really appreciates the *“personal aspect”* of the school and its *“closeness.”* As he explains, *“Even in a [small] school, you can always go to one of the rabbis. You can always talk to one of your friends.”* He does not know yet what he wants to do after graduation, saying, *“I have not thought about it yet.”*

Ruth

Ruth is a junior at Shalom Academy High School. She attended a Jewish middle school and decided she wanted to continue on to a Jewish high school. She didn't think the local high school in her area was the right fit. She heard about SAHS from her Chabad rabbi. She explained that an important part of her decision to attend SAHS was hearing from Mrs. Mazur that *“no matter what level you are in, you can just come here and start where you are starting from. Everybody is always [working] at their own pace. You don't really have to be worried that you are too advanced or not too advanced.”*

Ruth likes her Judaic classes. She likes some of her WiFi High classes and feels very challenged by others. In her favorite class, psychology, she finds the content interesting and enjoys the discussion boards because *“we are able to talk with other kids from the same grade. You get into really deep conversations.”* She has found it challenging to learn more advanced math online and appreciates the in-person support she gets from the math facilitator. She wishes that she had more time with him.

In reflecting on her overall school experience, she sees herself as having *“grown a lot,”* both in Judaism and through her WiFi High classes. *“I have found a new way of learning material than just depending on a teacher. Sometimes I do wish there was a teacher [physically present for all classes] but you get this new perspective of finding out your own information and being a little more independent when working.”* She explains that the school is more *“chill”* than others schools she knows about and this has had a positive impact on her Jewish growth. *“[Jewishly,] I have grown a lot, and I like it because it was my choice. It feels much better when it is your choice.”* She thinks SAHS the *“perfect school”* for students who are self-motivated and want to grow their Jewish practice. When she graduates, she hopes to attend seminary and then go to a four-year college.

Max

Max, a freshman, is new to Shalom Academy High School, having attended public school his whole life. Like many students at SAHS, his family is connected to Chabad and

heard about the school from their Chabad rabbi. Max explains, *“When it was time to start looking for high school, I was seeking out, on my own, a Jewish high school because I wanted to come to a Jewish high school where I would be inspired and would be able to take Judaism with me throughout my whole life, while also keeping the secular studies that are important in our society.”* He came to the school with some Hebrew background from Hebrew school, *“but after coming to this school, it has improved a lot and I am starting to be able to read and interpret Biblical Hebrew from the Torah.”*

Max’s favorite classes are Algebra 1 and Chassidus, which he says is taught in a way that makes it very applicable to his life. He likes learning general studies online because *“the learning is much more catered to you instead of a classroom. It’s very individual to you instead of a normal classroom where everybody’s expected to be on the same pace.”*

Max didn’t know anyone at the school when he decided to attend but he *“love[d] that the school is so accepting of all people, and that goes for the students and teachers. Everyone is very accepting of everyone’s different personalities and different views on Judaism and life. We have debates sometimes, and everyone wants to hear everyone else’s arguments. It’s a very good place to share ideas and learn from others.”* He hopes that when he finishes high school, he will go on to study at yeshiva and then a four-year college to learn computer science.



Appendix Three

Sample Weekly Schedules for the Girls' and Boys' Divisions, Fall 2016

Sample SAHS Girls' Division Weekly Schedule^{†‡}

	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday				
7:50-8:00	Arrival			Arrival			Arrival			Arrival			Arrival				
8:00-8:45	Davening and Discussion			Davening and Discussion			Davening and Discussion			Davening and Discussion			Davening and Discussion				
8:45-10:00	WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High				
10:00-10:15	Break			Break			Break			Break			Break				
10:15-11:30	WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High			10:15-11:05	WiFi High			
11:30-12:15	Navi 1	Ivrit 2	Navi 3	Navi 1	Ivrit 2	Navi 3	Halacha 1	Chassidus 2		Halacha 2	Chassidus 1		11:05-11:45	Parsha 1	Parsha 2		
12:15-1:00	Lunch			Lunch			Lunch			Lunch (ends at 12:45)			11:45-12:30	Q & A with a Rabbi			
1:00-1:50	Beis Medrash			Beis Medrash			Ivrit 1	Navi 2	Ivrit 3	12:45-1:30	Ivrit 1	Navi 2	Ivrit 3	12:30-12:45	Assembly		
1:50-2:40	Chumash 1	Chumash 2	Chumash 3	Chumash 1	Chumash 2	Chumash 3	Jewish History 1	Jewish History 2		1:30-2:15	Chumash 1	Chumash 2	Chumash 3				
2:40-3:45	WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High			2:15-3:15	Art						
3:45-4:30	PE									3:15-4:30	WiFi High						

Sample SAHS Boys' Division Weekly Schedule^{†‡}

	Monday			Tuesday			Wednesday			Thursday			Friday			
7:50-8:00	Arrival			Arrival			Arrival			Arrival			Arrival			
8:00-9:15	Davening and Breakfast			Davening and Breakfast			Davening and Breakfast			Davening and Breakfast			Davening and Breakfast			
9:15-10:00	Chumash 1	Chumash 2	Chumash 3	Chassidus 1	Chassidus 2		Chumash 1	Chumash 2	Chumash 3	Chassidus 1	Chassidus 2		Chumash 1	Chumash 2	Chumash 3	
10:00-11:00	Talmud 1	Talmud 2	Talmud 3	Talmud 1	Talmud 2	Talmud 3	Talmud 1	Talmud 2	Talmud 3	Talmud 1	Talmud 2	Talmud 3	10:00-10:45	Talmud 1	Talmud 2	Talmud 3
11:00-11:15	Break			Break			Break			Break			10:45-10:55	Break		
11:15-12:40	WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High			10:55-12:15	WiFi High		
12:40-1:15	Lunch			Lunch			Lunch			Lunch			12:15-12:45	Q & A with a Rabbi		
1:15-3:30	WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High			WiFi High						
3:30-3:45	Mincha			Mincha			Mincha			Mincha						
3:45-4:30	Halacha 1	Jewish History 2		Halacha 1	Halacha 2		Halacha 2	Jewish History 1		Art						

† SAHS administrators periodically make small revisions to the schedule to best meet students' and teachers' needs, so the schedule may differ from this at any given time.

‡ Every student meets in a small advisory once a week for 10-15 minutes during WiFi High time, as scheduled by the advisor.

■ Appendix Four

A Sample Advisory Lesson Plan Fall 2016

(Courtesy of Mrs. Lee at Shalom Academy High School)

Teaching Habits of Mind: Persisting

Advisory Meetings for the weeks of November 14–18, November 21–23, and November 29–December 3, 2016 will cover this lesson.

Lesson Objective: The students will define persistence, use persistence to deal with a challenge that doesn't have an easy or obvious answer, and articulate how persisting is important to learning.

Week One (November 14–21)

1. Read/post the quote: “Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance” by Samuel Johnson.

2. Activity

Penny Balance—Distribute ten pennies to each student.

Instruct them to balance the pennies on edge in a line on their desk/table. Time them and have them count the number of attempts before they are successful.

3. Each meeting participant writes his or her own definition of persisting on a Post-it note or on the meeting agenda document.

Week Two (November 21–23)

1. Make a word splash or wordle with words related to persisting that students contribute.

2. Compare dictionary definition and the word splash students created on persisting.

Instructor Note: Webster's II New College Dictionary defines persisting as “to hold steadfastly and firmly to a purpose . . . or undertaking . . . despite obstacles . . . or setbacks.”

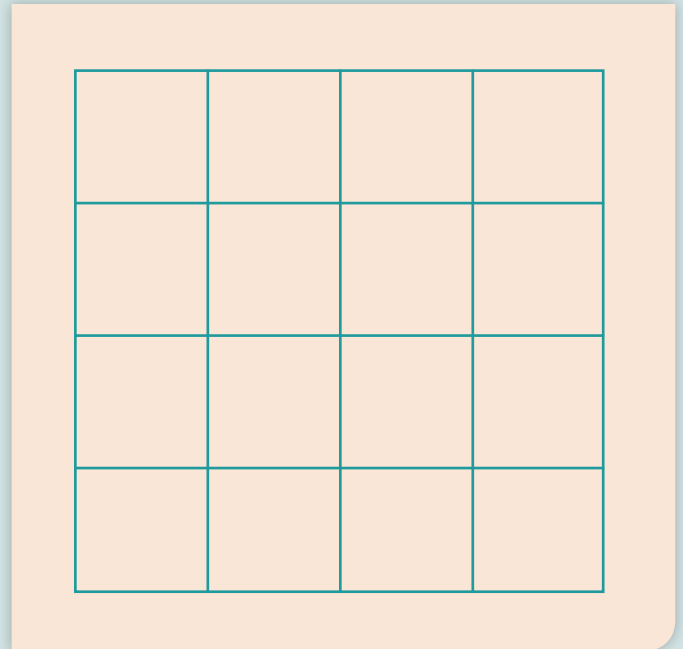
Week Three (November 29–December 3)

1. Activity: Hidden Squares (see separate worksheet) Students count the squares on the page and compare results (ANSWER: 30).

2. Have students brainstorm from personal experience things they have accomplished where they were successful because they were persistent. For example, times when they accomplished something because they refused to give up or let go; times when they outlasted someone else; times when they endured an individual physical challenge. Ask about WiFi High assessments. What difficulties have students encountered?

Persisting Puzzle: Hidden Squares

Instructions: Count the total number of squares you see in this drawing.



■ Appendix Five

Descriptions of Four Weekly Pace-Setting Meetings at the Girls' School Fall 2016, Girls' Division

It is just after nine on a Monday morning in the Girls' Division at Shalom Academy High School. The 14 female students are gathered in the main classroom, a spacious rectangular room with big windows along one wall and small clusters of tables scattered throughout. Each girl has an assigned seat in this room, a home base in which she can leave her belongings as she travels to other classrooms throughout the day. The girls are in their seats with their Chromebooks open. Mrs. Mazur and Mrs. Lee are circulating, sitting down next to the girls one-by-one for brief, individualized pace-setting meetings. It is Week Eleven on the WiFi High calendar.

1. Mrs. Lee and Jennifer

Mrs. Lee approaches Jennifer, who is reading something from the screen of her Chromebook. She says, *"Pace-setting for you—I feel like you generally set your own pace. Is there anything you need from me?"*

Jennifer: *"No, not really."*

Mrs. Lee: *"Just keep track of your discussion boards."*

Jennifer: *"Yep."* Mrs. Lee moves on.

2. Mrs. Mazur and Elana

Meanwhile, Mrs. Mazur has called another girl, Elana, over to a table. Elana comes with her Chromebook and sits across from Mrs. Mazur, who is looking down at a sheet of paper she has printed from the WiFi High website. The paper details this student's progress in each course and assignment. Mrs. Mazur says, *"We are on Week Eleven now. Are you working on Human Geography for this week?"*

Elana: *"I am still working on something from last week because I needed to reply to something from a discussion board. Then I am going to work on English because I am in Week Seven."*

Mrs. Mazur: *"Where are you in Intro to Fitness?"*

Elana: *"Week Three. I am really behind."*

Mrs. Mazur: *"But you are catching up in Human Geography, which is great and a huge feat. In Biology you are on pace right?"*

Elana: *"Yes."*

Mrs. Mazur: *"Okay. Great job in catching up on Human Geography. Will you work on English this week?"*

Elana: *"Yes. I have this assessment to do and then [I will start the next] assignment."*

Mrs. Mazur: *"Okay, so in English you will keep on trucking. If you need anyone to help you—like read over your essay—that might be helpful. For Intro to Fitness, I would reach out to your teacher and tell her that you are working to catch up on English this week and that you will come back to her next week. So it does not stay as a red flag for her. In English, what are you reading?"*

Elana: *"This week just short stories. And part of the Odyssey, and maybe Animal Farm?"*

Mrs. Mazur: *"Have you heard of Animal Farm?"*

Elana: *"Well, a little bit. I know a little bit about it."*

Mrs. Mazur: *"There is a creative writing speech at the end of that. I think you might enjoy that assignment."*

Elana: *"Okay."* Elana gathers her things and walks away.

Mrs. Lee and Rachel

Mrs. Lee sits down next to a junior named Rachel, who is seated at her Chromebook facing the window, her back to the classroom. She says, *"Earlier you were mentioning to me a big assignment you had finished. Tell me about that. What subject was that in?"*

Rachel: *"Science."*

Mrs. Lee: *"Hmm. When I logged in I did not see that. Did you submit it?"*

Rachel: *"I did not submit it."*

Mrs. Lee: *"Let's go right into Science and get that assignment in."* Rachel begins clicking through screens on her Chromebook to get into her Science class and the appropriate week. She electronically submits her completed assignment while Mrs. Lee waits, leafing through her papers. Mrs. Lee asks, *"You also worked on that Scientist presentation didn't you? That was a big one."* Rachel nods and clicks on her presentation, which is in PowerPoint. Mrs. Lee looks over her shoulder at the screen. *"I like your first slide. If that is finished, that needs to be submitted as well."*

Rachel: *"But which format?"* A note of frustration has crept into her voice. She points at her screen.

Mrs. Lee: (gently) *"You want Microsoft PowerPoint."* Rachel begins clicking and typing to submit the assignment while Mrs. Lee sits with her hands in her lap and waits. When she

finishes, Rachel closes her Chromebook and looks expectantly at Mrs. Lee, who says, “*We need to go over your grade book and make a plan that is realistic for this week. How much work do you think you submitted last week? Did you count it up at all?*”

Rachel: “*No.*”

Mrs. Lee: “*You submitted three Geometry assignments, one ACT Prep assignment, and now those two Science assignments. We need to bump that up. The work you do is usually really good. You’ll see Mr. Thomas this week. Last week you were able to submit three Math assignments with him. That is good. You can keep that up. It looks like if you do two this week that will keep you up to pace.*” Rachel begins to cry. Mrs. Lee looks startled; then her face softens. She speaks softly to Rachel. “*I know you are not happy with this [pace-setting meeting] but this is what we do on Mondays. You can’t just go work by yourself without checking with us because we need to help you get more work done.*” Rachel remains silent, tears streaming down her face. Mrs. Lee regards her quietly for a moment then says, “*I can tell that this is not a good time for you. I will do what I have done for some students. I will go through and give you what I think is a realistic list and you can say, ‘I don’t think this is reasonable’ or ‘I can do more.’ A couple of students are making their own lists. There is a lot of variety in how we do that.*”

Rachel looks at her silently, sniffing. Mrs. Lee continues, “*Would you like to work alone in the lunchroom for a while?*”

Rachel nods and begins to pack up her things. Mrs. Lee picks up the pencil that she left on the desk and holds it in the air. “*Do you need your pencil?*” Rachel shakes her head and together they walk out of the classroom toward the lunchroom, Mrs. Lee’s hand draped softly on Rachel’s shoulder.

Mrs. Mazur and Jana

Jana has brought her Chromebook over to Mrs. Mazur’s desk and is sitting across from her. Mrs. Mazur greets her and asks briefly about her weekend before turning to the business at hand. “*Okay, so last week.*”

Jana: “*I was disappointed because I did not do as well as I wanted to. I did finish Week Ten for ACT Prep, though. I was actually going to finish all of Week 11 for English and Math yesterday but I ended up reorganizing my closet.*”

Mrs. Mazur: “*Next week, because of Thanksgiving, WiFi High is off for the whole week. But we have school Monday and Tuesday. So you can think of this week as seven days long instead of five. If you treat this week like a regular week, then next week you will have two days to clean up loose ends.*”

Jana: “*Today I am working on just Week 11 all day on ACT Prep and Economics and Chemistry and Literature. That is it. Four of my classes.*”

Mrs. Mazur: “*That is after school also? Is that do-able?*”

Jana: “*Yes. Last week I was able to. Those classes don’t take long at all. Tuesday I just want to finish History. I am currently on Week Seven in that class.*”

Mrs. Mazur: “*Week Seven?*”

Jana: “*Yes.*”

Mrs. Mazur: “*And along the way we know that you are working on Math. Group building is going to be on Wednesday evening this week. It is very important that everybody goes. So don’t plan to do any homework. You were going to get in touch with your teacher. Did you do that?*”

Jana: “*My chemistry teacher. I did email her and she kind of got back to me.*”

Mrs. Mazur: “*Do you need to follow up with her?*”

Jana: “*I don’t think so.*”

Mrs. Mazur: “*Okay. Good luck.*” Jana stands up and walks away.



■ Appendix Six

Description of a Math Lab

Fall 2016, Boys' Division

It is late morning on a Tuesday in fall. In the boys' division of Shalom Academy High School, six teenage boys of different grades and ages are gathered in a large classroom with windows along the length of one side. The front of the room is divided into three work areas by two large whiteboards on wheels. Students sit in all three areas, each with a Chromebook open in front of him. Each is working on a math assignment as part of his WiFi High coursework. They are in a Math Lab with Mr. Thomas, the Math Facilitator.

Each student uses a whiteboard and dry erase marker to work the math problems in his assignment. Because the students span all four grades and a range of different math courses, each is working on a different topic. Mr. Thomas paces the room, looking carefully at what is written on each whiteboard to see who might need help. One student uses a small whiteboard propped on his desk to solve the math problems, explaining to an observer that he prefers it to writing on the larger whiteboard.

A student, Roy, turns to Mr. Thomas as he passes and asks, "What is a prime number?" He points to a math problem on his screen, which reads as follows:

Which conjecture is true?

An even number plus 3 is always even

An even number plus 3 is always prime

An even number plus 3 is always odd

A prime number plus 3 is always even

Roy has read option B, "An even number plus three is always prime," and needs to understand what a prime number is in order to know whether or not this conjecture is true.

Mr. Thomas: (responding with a question) "What is a resource you have to help you figure this out?"

Roy: "The internet." He begins searching online for the definition of a prime number. Soon he reports to Mr. Thomas that a prime number is a number that is only divisible by one and itself.

Mr. Thomas prompts Roy to work with the definition he found of prime numbers by suggesting that he "try to list out numbers divisible by one and itself." With this prompt, Mr. Thomas is able to check that Roy understands the definition and support the further development of his understanding of prime numbers.

Roy writes on his whiteboard, "1, 2, 3, 5, 7" and hesitates.

Mr. Thomas: "Why is nine not a prime number?" Roy points to the number three, apparently indicating that nine is divisible by three. Mr. Thomas looks at the list that he has generated so far and observes, "except for two, there are no even numbers."

Roy lists 13 as the next prime number. Mr. Thomas prompts him to go back, noting that he skipped a prime number.

Roy: "11 and 13," adding 11 to the list on the whiteboard.

Mr. Thomas: "Would 15 be prime?"

Roy: (firmly) "No."

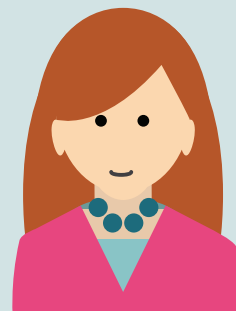
Mr. Thomas: "What prime number comes after 15?"

Roy: "17."

Mr. Thomas: "Does this help you with your equation?"

Roy: "Yes." He looks back at the computer with the list of conjectures and says, "Two plus three is prime."

Mr. Thomas proposes that he try a few other examples of adding an even number to a prime number to see what he gets. Then he turns his attention to another student who has been waiting patiently.



■ Appendix Seven

Description of Ben's Work During Flex Time Fall 2016, Boys' Division

It is 1:45 on a Wednesday afternoon and a sophomore named Ben is seated alone at a round table placed in the middle of a large, airy classroom that looks like it was once a library. Five other boys are in the room, two each at two other tables. Three have Chromebooks open in front of them and are wearing earbuds. One is writing on a whiteboard. Another is writing on a piece of lined notebook paper and drinking tea. The room is quiet.

Ben is working on his Physical Sciences course, a textbook in front of him open to a two-page spread of the periodic table. Though it is the eleventh week of the semester, he is working in Week Seven. He explains that in this course the units don't correspond directly to the weeks, but he is behind where the class is supposed to be.

There is an assignment open on Ben's laptop screen. It instructs him to choose four elements from four different sections of the periodic table and show how they combine into compounds. Ben observes that he knows how to do that, but he does not understand the assignment's next step. He briefly considers asking Mrs. Lee what to do, but instead decides to watch the previously recorded "live" teaching session in which the teacher reviews the concepts. He clicks the link to the video and begins to watch it, listening to the audio on his earbuds. He occasionally glances down at the periodic table spread out on the table before him. In the live session, the teacher discusses PowerPoint slides describing chemical compounds and the formation of molecules, which appear on Ben's screen one at a time. Ben spends several minutes looking at a slide about ionic compounds, presumably listening to the teacher talk. He yawns.

Ben pauses the slideshow, takes out his earbuds and addresses the boy who is working on the whiteboard, who is

also taking Physical Sciences this semester. *"Joshua what are you working on?"*

Joshua replies, *"Assignment 2.7, way back from Week Three. I never submitted it because I could not figure out the last problem. But I did just figure it out."* He points to what he has written on the whiteboard.

Ben says, *"I am watching the live session on compounds, and I think there is a lot of information."* Then he sits back down, re-inserts his earbuds, and goes back to watching the slideshow. A few minutes later he pauses it and summons Mrs. Lee, saying, *"I am looking at the live session about molecular bonds."* He points at his screen as Mrs. Lee looks at it over his shoulder. *"I understand what the numbers are, but why does he go back to the zero?"*

Mrs. Lee pauses, considering. *"What is the narration that goes with this?"*

Ben does not respond directly to her question but points again at the screen: *"So this should be two hydrogen and one oxygen?"* Mrs. Lee peers at the screen. Ami, a senior, comes over and stands next to her. *"What are you looking for? Valence electrons? That would have 6."*

Ben says, *"But Ami, look at this. Why does it say negative?"* Ami responds confidently, *"That is the ionic charge. Not the number of valence electrons."*

Ben shrugs. *"I don't get it."*

Mrs. Lee turns to Ami and says, *"Thank you, Ami, for helping him."*

Ami replies, *"I don't mind. I need a marker."* Ami steps away for a moment and returns with a dry erase marker in his hand. He writes on the opposite side of the whiteboard that Joshua had been using, as Joshua is now seated at his computer typing. Ami explains to Ben how valence electrons work, drawing illustrations on the board. Ben asks several follow up questions and Ami responds to each, drawing more illustrations on the board. Both boys appear to be enjoying the exchange, smiling and laughing but also very focused on ensuring that Ben learns what he needs to know. After several minutes of this exchange, Ben declares, *"I get it now! Thank you!"* As Ami walks back to his seat, Ben muses aloud, *"Always ask Ami."*

■ Appendix Eight

Description of Rachel's Work During Flex Time Fall 2016, Girls' Division

It is 9:05 on a Tuesday morning. Having just left an advisory meeting, Rachel sits down at her desk and opens her Chromebook to begin working on her WiFi High coursework. She decides that this morning she is going to work on American Literature. She is behind; it is Week 11 and she is working on Week 7. This unit is about the writings of our Founding Fathers, and Week 7 focuses on Thomas Paine. She logs into the Chromebook and onto the WiFi High platform and navigates to her American Literature course. She scrolls down through a page that says "Week 1," "Week 2," "Week 3," etc. and clicks on "Week 7." There are three different activities listed with links to the relevant resources:

1. Read the Declaration of Independence
2. Watch a video tutorial about logical reasoning and do the practice assignment
3. Read Thomas Paine's "The Crisis" and analyze his argument, including what types of persuasive appeal he is using to convince his fellow citizens to revolt against the British

Rachel skips #1 and #2 and clicks on #3, reasoning that it is the only graded assignment for the week and therefore the only one that she really has to do. On the screen appears what looks like an outline of Thomas Paine's essay "The Crisis" and instructions about labeling different kinds of claims that he makes in different parts of the essay. She reads through the assignment briefly before determining that she does not know what to do. She asks Mrs. Lee, who is standing nearby, "What am I supposed to do?"

Mrs. Lee walks over and looks at Rachel's screen. "What are you working on? Are you working on the Thomas Paine assignment? You have to watch the tutorial or you won't know how to do this."

Rachel clicks on the tutorial (#2 on the list) at 9:10 a.m. It is a narrated slideshow about Logical Fallacies. One of the first slides is titled, "Logical or Faulty reasoning?" It says, "Remember that logical reasoning uses good reasons and strong evidence; faulty reasoning uses poor reasons, weak evidence or fallacies." On the next slide there are some examples that Rachel must identify as either logical or faulty reasoning via multiple choice. If she

clicks on the wrong response, nothing happens, but if she clicks on the correct response, a green check mark appears next to it. The tutorial next includes slides that describe types of faulty reasoning like "hasty generalizations," "false cause and effect" and "either/or fallacies." After every explanatory slide there is a formative assessment slide in which the student must try to apply the concept to two examples. Again, green check marks appear when she selects the correct responses. Finally a series of summary slides appear. Rachel watches the tutorial on her Chromebook screen and listens to the audio on her earbuds. She appears to be paying attention and is taking notes on a piece of notebook paper.

A 9:34 a.m., Rachel finishes watching the tutorial. A "practice" tab appears on her screen, but she does not click on it. She looks at Mrs. Lee and says, "Okay, I am finished."

Mrs. Lee walks over. "Now you know what different kinds of logical fallacies are and you can look at the list you created and see what fits [with what Thomas Paine argued in "The Crisis"]."

Rachel asks, "Do I need to read it?"

Mrs. Lee responds, "If it were me, I would want to see the text. Why don't you put the assignment up on the laptop screen so that you can read the Thomas Paine text while you work on the assignment?" Mrs. Lee walks to the bookshelf, picks up the school's one copy of the American History text book, opens to the right page, and gives it to Rachel. "You really should read this piece before you try to do the assignment. It is not too long."

Rachel sits quietly and reads the Thomas Paine piece, "The Crisis," in her textbook. She reads steadily, dragging her right finger along underneath the text. After 17 minutes of silent reading, she looks up and clicks on the assignment. The assignment is an outline of Thomas Paine's argument. In blue, it lists his thesis statement, "The Americans should go to war against the British." Then it lists his supporting statements, one by one. For example, "The British are being tyrants and treating the Americans like slaves!" For each statement, the assignment is to write, "What types of persuasive appeal [or logical fallacies] he is using and explain why you think so."

Rachel turns to Mrs. Lee. "Mrs. Lee, so I am supposed to just figure out which one of these each statement is?" She points to her notes. Mrs. Lee nods. Rachel copies her assignment into a Google Doc and begins to type. At 10:00 a.m., a friend approaches and reminds her that it is time to take a break.

■ Appendix Nine

An Explanation of the Choice Advantage Incentive System Fall 2016

(Courtesy of Mrs. Lee at Shalom Academy High School)

Level	Benefit(s)	Expectations
Blue	Choose among resources to use for Hillel High courses. Choose which subject to work on during Flex Time.	1. Attend all labs and live teaching sessions as assigned. 2. Participate with advisor in a weekly pacesetting conversation. 3. Attend the weekly advisory meeting.
Bronze	As above + Choose where to work during one (1) Flex Time per week including access to couch area.	As above + 4. Write (or type) goals for the week. 5. Complete all assessments on your SAHS pace (as discussed in pace setting meeting).
Silver	As above + Choose where to work during one (1) Flex Times per day including access to the couch area.	As above + 6. No assessments are graded as "Not Meeting Expectations" or "Incomplete." 7. Contribute on topic to advisory meeting conversation.
Gold	As above + Choose where to work during all of your Flex Times. Full access to the couch area and conference room.	As above + 8. On or beyond WiFi High pace in all courses.



■ Appendix Ten

Description of a Boys' Chumash Class Fall 2016

It is 2:05 on a Wednesday afternoon. There are six boys ranging in age from 14–17 gathered for Chumash. They are in a large room with orange and yellow walls and lots of light coming in through the windows. On the back wall hangs a multicolored poster that lists the volumes in the Tanach and the Mishnah. The boys sit around black tables clustered in a u-shape. They are listening attentively as Mrs. Cohen, one of the two teachers in the room, reviews a group of Hebrew prefixes, using a chart hanging at the front of the room.

This is a beginner class. The focus is on learning key prefixes, suffixes and vocabulary from Chumash, so that students will be able to access the Chumash text on their own. There are two teachers in the classroom, Rabbi Mazur and Mrs. Cohen, who joins once a week and is teaching a similar class at the girls' division. Both teachers attended special training to learn this particular method and the school uses specially purchased materials for students' usage.¹¹ For the majority of the hour of class time, students work on their own, going through the units at their own pace.

Mrs. Cohen finishes reviewing the prefixes and points to a list on the board, which identifies the steps students are to follow as they work individually to learn sets of vocabulary words at their own pace. The list tells them to follow the following steps: *"1. Learn and write the words. 2. Do at least 2 documented activities.¹² 3. Do exercises in the written packet. 4. Take quiz."* Mrs. Cohen tells them, *"Guys, you are on your own."* This is a protocol that they were taught at the beginning of the year and use regularly; they know what is expected of them.

¹¹ The approach was developed by Rabbi Jonathan Rietti and the curriculum is called "Climbing *Har Sinai*."

¹² Documented activities are activities chosen from a set group of activities that the teacher provides. In addition to completing two documented activities per set of words, students complete exercises in a written packet on the same set of words. The packet contains activities such as drawing lines connecting words to their translation, finding the word in the original pasuk and finding the meaning of words in a word-find and linking it to the word.

Students approach the teacher's desk at the front of the room, which is filled with the materials that they will need. Everything is grouped and sorted clearly by unit (aleph, beis, gimmel, etc.) so that students can find what they need on their own for the unit they are working on. Most of these are purchased materials. Mrs. Cohen has added a few additional activities of her own to give students more options. The table contains the choices for the "documented activity": cards with words from Chumash written out in different groupings; pictures of the words; and various games for reinforcing the meaning of words, including a domino game, a dice games and a game using paper fortune tellers with flaps that contain words and definitions. There are also folders with packets of written exercises that correspond to each unit. All students must complete the full packet corresponding to the unit they are working on.

Students take the materials back to their seats and quickly get to work, while the two teachers circulate among the students. A few students are repeating vocabulary words aloud, in an effort to help themselves remember their meanings. Everyone else is working quietly on their activities. Saul, a thin freshman with messy brown hair, is sitting at the table with his materials and looking a bit confused. Mrs. Cohen asks him: *"Saul, what do you need? What are we working on today?"* Saul responds, *"I don't know. I'm used to people just saying 'do this.'"* Mrs. Cohen explains, *"I don't do that. You are in Chumash class. Today we are working on words. You are up to bes."* She prompts him to look at the material he has so that he can figure out where he is relative to the steps outlined on the board. Saul finally gets to work, and Mrs. Cohen walks away. A few minutes later, Mrs. Cohen looks at Saul and says, *"I have noticed you have been on the word-find in your written packet for more than five minutes. Don't spend more than five minutes on the word-find. If you can't find it, just write the translation."* Saul is working on the packet of activities—step #3 on the board—that includes a word-find of the words he's been learning.

Mrs. Cohen moves off to circulate to the different students to check what they are doing and prompts them when necessary. Bernie, a tall student wearing different shades of brown, tells Mrs. Cohen that he's ready to take a quiz. Mrs. Cohen tells him to take out a piece of paper. She reads off the words one by one—*"Yavasha, Esev, Yam..."*—and Bernie writes their

meaning on the paper. In the background, one can hear Rabbi Mazur's voice, a bit softer than Mrs. Cohen's, giving Mark a quiz on a different set of words. Mrs. Cohen scans Saul's paper and sees that there are no errors. Saul then gets the new list of words and begins to read about them in a book, as part of learning their meaning, step #1 in the process.

While Mrs. Cohen is quizzing Saul, Greg, a student sitting perpendicular to Saul, is doing a documented activity, matching words to cards with pictures of the words and to other cards that have verses from the Bible that contain the word. Then, he starts to write down the word, its translation and the format in which it appears in the Biblical verse in a ready-made chart that he has. As he is doing this, Rabbi Mazur finishes quizzing Mark and approaches Greg to help him review the words in his unit.

There is a serious and focused energy in the room. The students are working hard, staying on task and asking the

teachers questions if there's something they are unsure about. For 45 minutes, every student is focused on completing his work. The teachers keep an eye on each student, sometimes proactively approaching one of them and other times waiting to be called. There is almost no chatting, although it is never completely silent in the room either. The teachers are interacting with students to help them stay on track and giving quizzes, and many students saying words out-loud as part of their learning process.

With two minutes left in the class, Mrs. Cohen prompts students to put their materials away and to go to the chart to the left of the teacher's desk. The chart contains each student's name and a list of the different units. Mrs. Cohen tells her students with a smile on her face, *"Mark your progress. If you want, I can give you stars and you can choose your color."* When they return to this class on Friday, they will be able to look at this chart to remember where they are in their work.



■ Appendix Eleven

Description of a Boys' Talmud Class

Fall 2016

It is 10 a.m. and the students have just finished Chumash. They get their Talmuds and Talmud notebooks from the bookcase in the back of the room and take their seats at individual desks with their knapsacks at their feet. Each student opens his Vilna Shas Talmud to page 18A in Masechet Ketubot, looks up and waits for the teacher to begin.

These four students in advanced Talmud are seated in a large classroom with green walls and a blue carpet. There is a wall of windows that runs the length of the room with a row of bookcases below. The room is divided into five learning spaces. The back of the room is used for breakfast and lunch, and there are still a few breakfast bowls out on the tables. The Talmud class meets towards the front of the room, where there is a whiteboard on the wall and a desk for the teacher, Rabbi Miller.

Rabbi Miller finishes writing on the board two phrases “1. Witnesses are not necessary 2. Jewish *chutzpah*” and draws a funny face above, which indicates to students that these are some of the ideas they will learn about today. Sometimes, these phrases are riddles for students to figure out as they read through the Talmud text and sometimes they are straightforward. He turns to the class and explains with a twinkle in his eyes, “One of these is straightforward but I’m not sure we will get to the other one today.”

He then instructs students to take out their colored pencils so they can begin to add punctuation marks to the next segment of Talmud in black and annotate it, marking questions, answers and statements in different colors. Rabbi Miller reads the segment aloud in Aramaic, giving instructions on where to put punctuation and place the different colors. All four boys follow along. As Rabbi Miller reads, he prompts the students to translate familiar words and they eagerly respond, sometimes correctly and sometimes not. He reads further and asks, “*What is v’haichaltiv?*” No one knows, so he directs them to make a note next to a Rashi that they will need to read later to help them understand this word. Rabbi Miller keeps reading in Hebrew and then asks, “*What is maishiv avaidah?*”

The students all jump in to translate correctly—“*returns a lost object*”—having recently learned the term in another class. Eitan says to no one in particular, “*But this isn’t the right masechet (tractate) [for dealing with returning lost objects].*” Rabbi Miller responds, “*You are right that this issue is taken up in depth in Bava Metzia.*”

Once they are done with hearing the Talmud passage read and marking it up, Rabbi Miller starts writing vocabulary words on the board, noting that, “*There aren’t too many today.*” The first word is “*laviti.*” David starts to yawn, and Rabbi Miller asks, “*David, did you get enough sleep?*” Rabbi Miller turns back to the word and asks the class, “*What is malveh?*”

Ben quickly responds, “*The lender.*” Rabbi Miller asks for him to explain further and Ben clarifies, “*The guy who is lending.*”

Rabbi Miller then asks, “*What is loveh?*”

Ben explains, “*The borrower.*”

David says, “*Wait a minute. We learned this in Makot.*”

Rabbi Miller then asks, “*And what is liviti?*”

David responds, “*I borrowed.*” Rabbi Miller repeats David’s response to make sure everyone has heard, while David smiles broadly and exclaims, “*Oh yeah, I’m the awesomest.*”

Rabbi Miller looks at David and says in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear, “*David, we need you. You are important.*” They continue on with just a few more words. As the words are defined, Rabbi Miller writes the definitions on the board and the boys write them in the vocabulary section of their notebooks.

Rabbi Miller tells them they will now move on to concepts. He writes three Hebrew terms on the board along with English explanations of two, “1. *Shvuot Hashomrim/Guardian Oaths*, 2. *Eid Echad/One witness is enough to make you take an oath*, and 3. *Modeh Bimiktzat.*” All the boys copy the terms into the concepts section of their notebook. Ami tries to explain the first concept, but he’s not being clear. Rabbi Miller stops him and asks him and Eitan to get out of their seats so they can role-play a scene that explains the concept. Rabbi Miller explains, “*I’m a shomer chinam (one who watches an*

object without being paid for doing so) watching David's hat. Eitan then steals the hat." They all act this out. Rabbi Miller then turns to Ami and says, "What do you do now?" As David explains, Rabbi Miller nods his head and repeats the main ideas for everyone to hear.

They continue to discuss the first two terms on the board for the next ten minutes. Rabbi Miller leads the discussion and refines and checks students' understanding of the concepts by providing them with different scenarios and asking them to explain how the concepts apply. Rabbi Miller then explains that, "Number three is the most famous and is in our gemara and you won't know it. I'm putting it down and let's see if you can figure it out."

It is now time for the students to study the Talmud in pairs and try to work it out on their own. Students know that when they gather back together as a class, Rabbi Miller will expect them to be able to read through the Talmud and explain it. Throughout their time in havruta, they stay engaged and work hard, trying to make sense of a complex piece of Talmud. Rabbi Miller listens in on their conversations as they work through the text and is available to answer questions.

In another room down the hall and around the corner, a different Talmud class is meeting. A group of six boys gather in a large, well-lit space used for prayer services, for their intermediate Talmud class. They are working on an earlier page of Ketubot, also using the Vilna Shas. They too punctuate and notate the text according to their teacher's guidance. Different from Rabbi Miller's Talmud class, the teacher works with them to understand all the concepts they will encounter in the Talmud before they start learning it inside. They have a worksheet that their teacher helps them fill in, which gives them background to the gemara they will encounter, identifying the issues at hand and the different opinions. As their teacher tells them about issues and prompts them to write them down on the worksheet, students ask clarifying questions and their teacher prompts them to draw on what they have already learned to answer their own questions when possible. Rather than breaking into pairs to study the new piece of text, they will work on it as a full group in a discussion led by their teacher. Not until they have learned this section of Talmud will their teacher send them into pairs to review what they have learned.



■ Appendix Twelve

Description of a Girls' Navi Class Fall 2016

It is 1:00 p.m. Four girls trickle into a small classroom from lunch, talking to each other as they find their seats at the cluster of small tables. Their teacher, Mrs. Finkelstein, stands at the front of the room in front of a whiteboard, smiling at her students as she beckons them to take their seats so they can begin class. This is their Navi class, which this year is focused on the theme of friendship through the texts of Mishlei (Proverbs).

Mrs. Finkelstein tells students to take out their Nach overview booklets. *“Can you sing it in your sleep yet?”* The girls shake their heads from side to side. *“No?”* she asks. *“You need more practice.”* She leads them in singing a song in Hebrew that lists the books in Nach. They sing a second time without her, making no mistakes as they sing the upbeat melody.

Next, Mrs. Finkelstein directs them to their summaries of the books of Nach. *“Go to page four. We will put up the timeline so you can see later. Let’s start by reviewing Yehoshua.”* She prompts Dena to describe a cycle of events. Other students fill in details that Dena leaves out. Next she moves to Shmuel Aleph and asks Rebecca where Shmuel was raised. Rebecca does not know but another girl answers. At a fast clip, Mrs. Finkelstein highlights some of the main parts of Shmuel Aleph, while the girls listen intently and jot down some notes. She wraps up the overview segment of the class and passes out the texts from Mishlei that will be the focus of the rest of the class.

Mrs. Finkelstein calls on Natalie to read and translate a verse from Mishlei. *“Laiv yodaia marat nafsho u’vsimchato lo yitavev zar [The heart alone knows its bitterness and no outsider can share in its joy].”* Natalie gets stuck translating the word *“marat,”* and Mrs. Finkelstein prompts her to identify the root—*mar*—which she knows from other contexts. Mrs. Finkelstein then explains the phrase *“marat nefesh”* and tells students to underline it, along with the word *“yitavev.”* She writes both words on the board and reminds students to add these words to their vocabulary lists in their notebooks.

Mrs. Finkelstein elaborates on the meaning of the verse, *“We cannot count someone else’s blessings. We cannot judge others because we don’t really know what someone else is going through, even if we think we know them really well. We don’t have her*

parents, her family; we have not experienced her life.” Rebecca chimes in, *“I really don’t like it when other kids make assumptions about me because of where I grew up and say things like, ‘You must be so spoiled.’ I really hate it.”* Mrs. Finkelstein responds with an empathetic nod, *“I’m sure you do. They can’t know about your life.”* The other girls nod their heads in agreement.

Mrs. Finkelstein asks Elana to read and translate the next verse. Elana reads, *“B’chol ait ohev haraia, v’ach l’tzarah yivalaid [A friend is devoted at all times; a brother is born to share adversity].”* Elana needs help translating some of the words and her classmates chime in with assistance. Mrs. Finkelstein asks them to underline *“yivalaid”* and add it to their vocabulary list.

Natalie raises her hand and asks, *“What is this talking about?”* Mrs. Finkelstein turns to the other students and opens the floor to their comments. Dena shakes her head to show she’s not sure, while Rebecca puts her head on the desk, as if to lie down for a moment. Mrs. Finkelstein suggests that they look at the commentary on their sheet from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, which provides further insight into both of the verses they have just read. She calls on Rebecca to read this commentary, which is translated into English.

When she finishes reading, Rebecca restates the last line of the commentary, *“Friendship is beneficial in good and bad days but it is in times of trouble that we can best appreciate the ‘brother’ that we have gained”* and comments *“Oh! That is so true.”* All at once the three other girls are alert and raising their hands to share their personal stories of having friends who have both stood by them and abandoned them during hard times. Mrs. Finkelstein lets them share these experiences with each other, occasionally prompting them to elaborate and drawing connections to the texts they have studied when appropriate. After a few minutes, she asks the students to each write in their notes on this verse one example that they came up with about how this text relates to their real lives. She asks them each to share their example out-loud, before moving them forward to study the remaining verses in the lesson.

Before Mrs. Finkelstein ends class, she hands students typed out scenarios of interactions between peers that are connected to the verses they have just studied. She breaks them into pairs to read the scenarios and practice acting them out. The girls are excited for this activity and start making hushed plans with their partners about how they will act out their parts. Class ends before they are able to do their skits but Mrs. Finkelstein promises that they will start with the skits at their next class.

■ Appendix Thirteen

Description of a Girls' Beis Midresh Class Fall 2016

It is 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon at Shalom Academy High School. The girls are in Beis Medrash, where they study the Jewish holidays. The girls are divided into three groups, with each group studying a different element of Hanukah. Group A is studying the story of Hanukah, Group B is studying the laws of Hanukah and Group C is studying the mystical elements of Hanukah. The groups are divided based on Judaic and Hebrew knowledge. Students focus on each element for a few classes, before rotating to the next element. The pace and presentation of content is adapted to each group, as are the Hebrew expectations.

Group C, the most advanced group, is seated in a small, dark room with yellow walls and a light wood floor, desks and a moveable whiteboard. There are usually four girls in this group but today two are sick. The other two sit at the front of the class, looking at the text and waiting for their teacher, Mrs. Mazur, to begin. Mrs. Mazur is passing out photocopies of the texts for them to read. The text is a discourse (maamar) from the Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Lubavitch) with Hebrew commentary explaining it. It is completely in Hebrew, with no vowels. The larger issue under discussion in the text is the significance of where to place the menorah. The part of the text that students are reading today is focused on the hiddenness of God in this world.

Mrs. Mazur directs the girls to the left column on the first page. *“What needed to happen for the world to be?”*

Ruth calls out, *“Hashem needed to contract.”*

Mrs. Mazur nods her head in agreement. *“Right, even before contracting, Hashem is all and the world couldn't exist so Hashem had to hide midat malchut. What's malchut?”*

Mairav raises her hand and then says: *“Kingship.”*

Mrs. Mazur continues in an excited tone, *“Exactly. It had to be hidden first for there to be a thought of the world. Imagine a super long paper—you can't contract an infinite thing into something. First you have to cut the paper. Hiding the attribute of kingship created finiteness so we can 'crumple it up' and hide it into physical world.”* The girls listen intently, nodding their heads as

if to indicate understanding. Mrs. Mazur asks Mairav to read. Mairav reads slowly, making no mistakes. *“Sh'l'eainai basar shelanu nireh k'ilu anu kayamim m'chutz l'elkuto yitbarach [It appears to our human eyes as if we exist outside of Hashem, may He be blessed].”* As she's reading, Ruth and Mrs. Mazur follow along inside the text.

When Mairav stops, Mrs. Mazur begins to explain what Mairav just read. *“All the parameters of hiddenness are in relation to us, to our physical eyes. What does 'nireh' mean?”*

Mairav answers, *“Appears.”*

Mrs. Mazur responds, *“Right, so this means, 'It appears to our human eyes as if we are existing—' What does the next phrase mean?”*

This time Ruth answers, *“Outside of Hashem.”*

Mrs. Mazur reiterates, *“Outside of Hashem. It only appears to us that we are existing outside of Hashem.”*

Mairav continues to read in Hebrew as Mrs. Mazur prompts the students to translate phrases and then offers an explanation of the full sentence.

Mrs. Mazur explains, *“This is saying that to Hashem, the realms above and below are the same and Hashem is in both.”*

Ruth looks puzzled and blurts out, *“This doesn't make sense.”*

Mrs. Mazur turns to her and asks in a neutral tone, *“Why?”*

Ruth explains herself, *“It seems that above should be more spiritual since Hashem is hidden here below.”*

Mrs. Mazur responds with a big smile on her face, *“That's the key! The potency is the same in both, but it's hidden here.”*

They continue to read and translate. Sometimes Mrs. Mazur offers a way to understand the text through a contemporary example or the girls ask a question that they discuss. They are all focused and engaged for the full fifty minutes.

When Mrs. Mazur meets with the intermediate group, she will start the unit by doing an exercise filling and emptying cups in order to illustrate some big ideas about the purpose of the world. She will provide students with the same text she gave to the advanced students. However, she will excerpt a portion of it, enlarge it and add punctuation. She will also provide the students with a list of vocabulary words and concepts. She will discuss this list before they start reading the text so they will have background knowledge that will enable them to understand what they are reading.

All names are pseudonyms.



USA

The AVI CHAI Foundation

1015 Park Avenue

New York, NY 10028

Phone: 212-396-8850

Fax: 212-396-8833

E-mail: info@avichaina.org

Israel

Keren AVI CHAI

44 King George Street

94262 Jerusalem

Phone: 02-621-5330

Fax: 02-621-5331

E-mail: office@avichai.org.il

www.avichai.org