

# *Destination* GESHER!

Gesher Jewish Day School

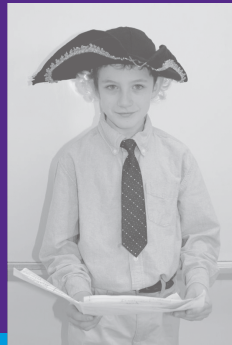
Five • Year Strategic Plan

2009 • 2014 | 5769 • 5774

Gesher is a  
Destination School  
for K-8 Educational  
Excellence

Our Vision

Gesher is a  
Destination Home  
for Jewish Learning  
and Community



*Make your house a meeting place for sages;  
sit eagerly at their feet and drink their words thirstily*

יהי ביתך בית ועד לחכמים והוי מתאבק בעפר  
רגליהם והוי שותה בצמא את דבריהם

\*Pirke Avot 1:4



## Our Mission

*At Gesher Jewish Day School we inspire our students to*

Be passionate about learning

Practice justice, kindness, and respect

Aspire to a life guided by Jewish values, Torah, and community

## Statement of Philosophy

Gesher is dedicated to educational excellence, an individualized approach to learning, and providing a nurturing and exciting educational environment.

Our students are challenged to think critically and creatively and to acquire the skills they will need for tomorrow.

Our integrated curriculum of general and Jewish studies prepares students to be knowledgeable and committed Jews, dedicated to the State of Israel, and informed and responsible American citizens.

Gesher is a welcoming, pluralistic community where children of varied practices and approaches to Judaism come together to learn and where responsibility for self, caring for others, and stewardship of the environment are common values.

Gesher is a ready partner and educational resource for the wider Northern Virginia community.

## Strategy Map

The *Destination* GESHER! Committee employed the Balanced Scorecard approach to develop the strategic plan. Under this approach, extensive stakeholder feedback is incorporated into Strategic Objectives. For each Strategic Objective, several initiatives are identified and carefully defined. The Balanced Scorecard then provides a framework for integrating measures and tracking each initiative over the next five years.

The Strategy Map serves as a foundation for the plan and provides a visual depiction of how Gesher aligns its resources to achieve common goals and links Strategic Objectives to collectively further the school's mission. Objectives are organized on the Map according to four key perspectives: Organizational Capacity, Process, Financial, and Stakeholders. All of these are directed at achieving the two-fold Vision, as shown.



*If you will it, it is no dream*

אם תרצו, אין זו אגדה

•Theodore Herzl

**Gesher is a Destination School for K-8 Educational Excellence**

**Our Vision**

**Gesher is a Destination Home for Jewish Learning and Community**

**Attract & Retain Quality Faculty & Staff** *Gesher is able to attract and retain the highest quality instructors and administrative staff with its competitive compensation and benefits plan and by providing ongoing professional development opportunities.*

- Develop faculty recruitment strategy
- Improve faculty/staff compensation plan
- Expand professional development opportunities
- Ensure proper supervisory structure

**Provide Effective Governance & Leadership** *Gesher's Governing Board maintains its ability to provide effective governance through training, development and succession planning and serves as a leader in the Jewish community in Northern Virginia.*

- Develop succession plan for Governing Board
- Provide governance & leadership training

**Plan for Community Use of Campus** *Gesher is committed to planning for and managing the use and development of the entire 57-acre Gesher campus for the benefit of the Jewish community in Northern Virginia.*

- Establish Advisory Panel
- Develop property master plan
- Develop Jewish summer camp programs
- Plan for development of Jewish senior home
- Facilitate Jewish learning and enrichment for all ages

**Provide Academic Excellence** *Gesher provides the highest level of academic excellence in both general and Judaic studies through a rigorous dual curriculum that features low student-teacher ratios, experiential learning, differentiated instruction, integrated use of technology, foreign language instruction, an environmental science focus, and enrichment opportunities.*

- Expand science, Judaism & environment curriculum ("Gesher Green")
- Develop high impact science program
- Expand extracurricular / enrichment / performing arts offerings
- Expand use of technology in instruction

**Grow Enrollment** *Gesher works to increase student enrollment by being accessible and attractive to the Northern Virginia Jewish population. Gesher promotes itself through a wide range of activities and media in order to expose young children, families, and other community members to the opportunities and benefits available at the school and campus.*

- Develop full marketing plan
- Reach out to Jewish families new to the region
- Analyze feasibility of expanding ages served
- Establish robust ambassador program

**Leverage Partnerships** *Gesher develops and capitalizes on mutually strengthening relationships with other Jewish organizations, educational and religious institutions and community service providers in the region.*

- Cultivate relationships with preschool directors
- Strengthen relationship with JCC of Northern Virginia
- Strengthen relationships with synagogues and rabbis
- Partner with Jewish day schools
- Partner with Jewish Federation of Greater Washington

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**Achieve Sustainable Operating Model** *Gesher is focused on eliminating all debts and maintaining a balanced operating budget in order to sustain a level of excellence, accommodate growth and stabilize annual tuition increases.*

- Balance annual operating budget
- Develop property maintenance plan, buildings and grounds
- Expand annual giving program

**Expand Funding Sources** *Gesher works to expand its donor base, explore property rental arrangements and introduce new revenue-generating initiatives that align with the school's vision.*

- Create robust development plan
- Develop property rental plan
- Attract new donors
- Increase grant funding

**Raise Capital Funds** *Gesher is focused on eliminating all capital debts through sound fiscal management and targeted fundraising. Once all debt is cleared, Gesher can build an endowment in order to become a self-sustaining organization able to enhance programming and provide scholarships.*

- Re-launch Capital Campaign
- Pay off capital debt
- Develop endowment plan

**Serve Broad Student Population** *Gesher is the educational home for Jewish students having a diversity of religious observance, educational needs, and socioeconomic backgrounds from across Northern Virginia and the Washington, DC region.*

- Mandate differentiated instruction
- Articulate and clarify expectations for special education
- Study and implement Jewish pluralistic practices
- Set goals for financial assistance
- Establish scholarship program

**Partner with Parents** *Gesher partners with parents to promote Jewish values, achieve academic excellence, support faculty and staff, ensure the health and well-being of all students, and foster a warm and welcoming atmosphere.*

- Increase family Jewish education and social activities
- Improve parent-teacher-staff communications

**Engage Alumni, Donors & Community** *Gesher's alumni, donors and community members are enthusiastic supporters who provide their time, money and other resources to promote and advance the school's mission and vision.*

- Package "Gesher Green"
- Invite community to attend school and community events
- Create alumni tracking and development plan

## Strategic Themes

Five themes emerged from the Strategic Planning process and, along with the new Mission and Statement of Philosophy, guided the evaluation, analysis, and selection of the key initiatives in the Plan. These five themes are:

Academic Excellence  
Effective Marketing  
Financial Stability  
Strategic Partnering  
Leadership

The strategic themes resonate throughout every aspect of the plan, and give meaning to the Strategic Objectives as they guide Gesher in determining our most effective path to success.

## Acknowledgements

The Strategic Planning Committee would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that participated in focus group discussions, interviews, and meetings. These included representatives from the parent body, faculty and staff, preschool parents, Board of Directors, congregational rabbis, and representatives from various organizations throughout the Greater Washington Jewish community. In addition, the Strategic Planning process benefited from valuable market data, including trend reports and demographic studies from the National Association of Independent Schools, the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.



*It is not up to you to finish the work;  
neither are you free to desist from it.*

לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין להיבטל ממנה

•Pirkei Avot 2:16

### *Destination* GESHER! Committee:

Michelle Stravitz, Chair • Ann Bennett, President • Dr. Zvi Schoenburg, Head of School • Stewart Bromberg, Director of Development • Catherine Cotton, At-Large Board Member • Andrea Dorlester, Gesher Parent • Melanie Eisen, Faculty Member • Joel Goldhammer, Community Member • Debra Mendelson, Director of Admissions • David Shurberg, Treasurer