

Stakeholders' Report

AN ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF VANCOUVER TALMUD TORAH

FALL 2010

Dear Stakeholder,

Prior to the start of the 2009-10 school year, the Board of Directors, together with the administration of Vancouver Talmud Torah, approved a new five-year strategic plan. While the plan looks at almost every detail of the school's operations, its overall objective is to ensure that the school is focused on 3 core values: Educational Excellence; Financial Stability and Sustainability; and Community.

In our first year of operation under this new strategic plan, these core values were evident: from the strengthening of our Judaics curriculum, to the incredible performances starring our talented students; from the expansion of our development team, to the record-setting attendance at our Gentlemen's Dinner, the spirit at our school has never been better.

We are fortunate to have a talented and dedicated group of teachers, staff and administrators running the school. We are also fortunate to have so many amazing volunteers who help with so many things (some of which are well noticed and some of which are less high-profile but no less important).

What follows is a summary of the year from the perspective of several of the volunteer members of the Board of Directors and the various committees that report back to the board.

If you have any questions about the activities of the board or want to know how you can help by donating your time or in other ways, please feel free to contact any of the board members.

We look forward to an exciting year ahead with many key initiatives to drive continued excellence at VTT. Whether it be integrating technology further into our programming, continued roll out of Tal Am, or preparing for a capital campaign, the year ahead promises more progress through the hard work of so many.

Shana tovah and best wishes for a happy and healthy 5771,

Alan Shuster, Board President



The above display greeted all our families on the first day of school to mark the new Jewish year.

The Campaign Organizing Committee

Ari Shiff, Chair

The role of the COC is to organize and coordinate the many pieces related to the upcoming capital campaign for a prospective expansion of the school to accommodate increased enrolment and enhance VTT's educational offerings. The COC works with the development office and several other Board committees and sub-committees to determine the needs, feasibility, and timetable for constructing the new wing, and to coordinate all aspects of the expansion, including fundraising and design.

Last year was extremely active for the COC. KCI Ketchum Canada delivered a Planning Study that solicited input from our

stakeholders on a variety of issues related to the planned expansion. A broad swath of the community responded, and KCI concluded that a majority of our stakeholders enthusiastically support the project. KCI also had specific recommendations for VTT on how to prepare for the launch of the campaign, and we spent the rest of the year putting in place key components, including the creation of a professionally-staffed development office.

As we move towards the April 3rd, 2011 VTT Gala that will kick off the campaign, the COC continues to spawn additional sub-committees, including committees more specifically focused on fundraising, finance, marketing, PR, and policies and procedures. If you would like to get involved in any aspect of the expansion, please feel free to contact me.

The April 3rd VTT Gala will connect our latest expansion with the three previous building campaigns on the Oak Street site by honouring the current and past members of the VTT Foundation. It is these distinguished gentlemen, among others, who are to be thanked for having the foresight to have created our current facilities. Now it is our turn to prepare for the next generation, as well as to continue to improve the school for our own children and grandchildren.

A project of this magnitude will require the marshalling of all of the resources of VTT. We hope that every one of our stakeholders will find a way to contribute their talents to this epochal project.





Finance

Eran Elizur, Chair

Members of the Finance Committee include Eran Elizur (Treasurer), Alan Beron, Ruth Buckwold, Rick Cohen, Joel Guralnick, Neville Israel, Jeff Klein, Ari Shiff, Alan Shuster and Perry Teperson.

The day-to-day financial operations of the school are handled by the administration (Cathy Lowenstein, Mark Maibauer and others) and the finance committee's role is to oversee all aspects of this activity and support the administration in the following areas:

- Financial policies;
- Budget planning and approval by the board;
- Monthly financial statement review;
- Annual audit review and approval by the board;
- Tuition review and reform (including policies, assessments and scales);
- Oversee Tuition Assessment Committee
- Investment management.

This year we successfully maintained our robust financial position while continually improving the quality of the education that we offer our children as we have done in recent years.

The coming years will be challenging from a financial perspective. While we move forward in our capital campaign and building project, and plan for their associated costs, we are committed to continuing to allocate resources towards educational quality and program enhancements.

We are fortunate to have a wonderful community that continues to support us along this path.



Admission

Sue Hector, Chair

The Admission committee consists of the Director of Admission, Susan Hector (the board of directors' Admission chair), Ari Shiff, Ruth Buckwold, Jennifer Shecter and Tammy Kalvari.

Over the past two years the Admission committee, working in cooperation with the school administration, streamlined and professionalized the admission process. This process, currently implemented for Grades 1-7, includes a review of a student's academic record to ensure the school can adequately support the applicant and a meeting with senior administrators, and his or her family when applying to the school. Additionally, the annual re-enrollment process now includes an enrollment contract between the school and family and occurs earlier in the school year.

The committee worked very closely with the Director of Admission, and launched and redefined many activities that cater to new and prospective families to VTT. Last year's inaugural preschool pancake breakfast was a wonderful opportunity for our new families to meet and to connect as well as giving the school's most senior students leadership opportunities through flipping flapjacks, organizing activities and schmoozing with families. The Early Years Open House, always a well-attended event, has been moved to November to allow families to make informed decisions earlier in the year. Finally, the committee initiated an Intermediate Open House in the spring to showcase the many academic and leadership opportunities offered in sixth and seventh grade. Though primarily attended by existing parents in grades 3-5, moving the date earlier for the 2010-11 school year will allow families unfamiliar with Talmud Torah to consider VTT beyond



the early and primary grades.

The committee is always looking for new members who have a passion for VTT. Please contact the committee chair, Sue Hector, suehector@telus.net, if you would like to join.

Governance

Sorel Leinburd, Chair

The Governance Committee is chaired by Sorel Leinburd. Committee members include Joel Guralnick, Gary Lyons, Alan Shuster, and Dan Shugarman.

The role of governance is broad and covers the following areas:

- Board orientation, leadership and development;
- Succession planning and recruitment of new board members;
- Providing background information to the board on school structure and policies;
- Review of board effectiveness;
- Policy & by-law review and implementation;
- Ensuring that all board & committee activities are aligned with the current strategic plan;
- Assisting with any legal issues that arise;
- Ensuring that the school is structured to comply with existing and future legal requirements.

This year the committee worked on several initiatives which included: preparation of several new school policies; continuing the process of modernizing the school's bylaws; reviewing the board's structure and addressing board succession issues; and assisting various committees in their initiatives.



Strategic Planning

Gary Lyons, Chair

"If you want to predict the future, create it"
--Roland Barth

VTT's administration and faculty have accepted the five year (2009 – 2014) strategic plan. This has made the strategic plan monitoring committee's job very straightforward. Michelle Gerber, Alan Beron, Joel Guralnick and Gary Lyons have been working with the administration team to measure VTT's performance relative to the plan. I am pleased to report that VTT's achievements to date have been on target or even a little ahead of target.

The plan established 3 core values for VTT and I am pleased to highlight some of the accomplishments for this first full year of the plan:

Educational Excellence:

- The Judaics department is on track with its Hebrew language programming. Tal Am is now in place for grades 1 – 5 and the upper grades Hebrew language curriculum project is underway. The intermediate grades Judaic studies curriculum's scope & sequence is fully implemented and getting positive feedback from faculty, students, and parents;
- Intermediate faculty have been working all year in "Standards and Benchmarks in Tanach" with Rabbi Bellas and our consultant from Toronto, Aviva Silverman;
- The professional development initiatives for excellence in teaching and learning are on track and have been linked to the plan's strategic initiatives for growth;
- Our curriculum has been enriched with expansion of our inter-school sports teams for intermediate grades. Our



performing arts program is continually improving as evidenced by our spring musical, Bye Bye Birdie, and the expansion of the school wide Chanukkah concert;

- Our technology initiatives are also on track with increased training for teachers and the enhanced use of technology in the classrooms;
- We have established two full-day kindergarten classes for the 2010/2011 school year in anticipation of the province moving to full-day kindergarten in 2011/2012;
- The special education department has established increased support in both resource and enriched learning for some grades in both general and Judaic studies.

Financial Stability & Sustainability:

- VTT is operating at capacity and over capacity in some grades. This bodes well for the school's financial strength and long-term sustainability;
- The newly refined admission process and policy has now been established and has supported the administration team and Director of Admission as we continue to build on best practice;
- VTT has continued to support families in need of tuition assistance without compromising the delivery of educational excellence.

Community:

- In addition to our inter-school athletics programs, we have strengthened our relationship with Vancouver Jewish institutions and are participating in some community-wide endeavours with the other Jewish day schools and community organizations. A highlight was the newly established relationship with the community day school in Seattle, where our grade six students travelled for a Shabbaton. This was the



beginning of a close-knit relationship for many of our students;

- We had several dancers participate in Festival Ha'Rikud (Israeli dance festival), and had JCC youth staff participate in our Lag Ba'Omer programming;
- We continue to strengthen our relationship with various religious institutions as well. For example, Chabad conducts a Shofar workshop for grade 5 and our students visit their Matzoh factory every Passover.

The steady implementation of this plan over the next five years will ensure a robust school community dedicated to educational excellence and committed to financial stability.

Building Committee

Stanley Yasin, Chair

The role of the building committee is to ensure our current building is properly maintained and to deal with the City of Vancouver and the various stakeholders as we move forward with our plans to expand our school. The committee also meets with our neighbouring properties, including Congregation Beth Israel, to explore building and land issues that are of mutual concern or interest.

We were fortunate to have a year in which the issues with the current building were few and our energy was devoted to the initial explanatory phase of new construction. Much work has been completed—from parking studies to feasibility studies to rezoning applications to holding our public open house. All is moving forward. The process is well advanced and we are optimistic that we will have all the necessary approvals required when we decide the time is right to expand the school facilities.

Alumni Committee

David Bogoch, Chair



One of the major objectives of the alumni committee is to identify, locate and communicate with alumni, those who attended and/or graduated from Vancouver Talmud Torah since 1918, and to strengthen the

bonds between the alumni and the school.

Accomplishments this school year include:

- Historical photos and alumni memorabilia have been on display throughout the year in the alumni display case and on the school website. Displays have been focused on classes of the past, as well as on special occasions and Jewish holidays;
- Zichronot, the alumni newsletter, was distributed to over 2,000 alumni;
- The alumni committee presented a VTT class pin to each 2010 graduate;
- A successful 50th reunion Sunday brunch was held for the Class of 1960;
- A BBQ reunion was held for the Classes of 1979, 1980, 1981;
- Alumni raised over \$11,000 for VTT;
- Hundreds of new photos have been scanned, archived and added to the website for permanent display;
- An alumni video was produced for fundraising and friendraising purposes;
- Notices were placed in the school newsletter, Hadashot, to try to locate missing alumni yielding many leads.

Human Resources

Michelle Gerber, Chair

The HR committee's role is to guide and support the administration with regards to the administration of the collective agreement and other HR issues. We also negotiate the terms of employment of the Principal and other administrators. Doug Pulver and Michelle Gerber led this portfolio in the past year.



This past year we embarked on a new initiative, the creation of the Principal Support and Evaluation Committee (PSEC). The purpose of the PSEC is to give our Principal a supportive group which serves as a sounding board to help her think and reflect about job performance and to develop as a professional. This committee worked with the Principal to help define three mutually agreed upon annual strategic goals that are not itemized in her job description. For each goal, a set of measures was also defined. The PSEC is comprised of Cathy Lowenstein (Principal), Doug Pulver (HR Chair, Board Member), Joel Guralnick (Past Board President, Board Member), Leah Levitt (Board Member), and Michelle Gerber (PSEC Chair, Board Member). The PSEC proved to be a successful initiative and will continue in the coming year.

Technology Committee

Stan Shaw, Chair



Thanks to the ongoing generosity of families, local foundations, members of our community, and the hard work of our IT committee, we continue to make great strides in our goal of technology integration.

For the last several years, consultants have worked closely with our faculty to enhance learning through the best use of technology in the classroom. At the same time, several teachers have received assistance to pursue diploma coursework in educational technology and have now been earmarked as teacher-leaders. This year, two of our teachers will be working as half-time Technology Resource Specialists to help their colleagues enhance their lesson plans with tech tools. And for the last two summers, VTT has offered teachers an intensive technology cohort, led by Apple

Distinguished Educators, to take their learning to the next level. Overseeing the hardware, software and infrastructure is our full-time IT Manager.

All of this is transforming the way technology is being used to support learning within VTT. In recognition of these sweeping changes, Talmud Torah invited Alan November, one of the world's leading experts in educational technology integration, to address our teachers and community partners to make a compelling case for changing the way we teach and learn to reflect the realities of the digital age.

The results of the community-wide financial and logistical support have been remarkable. Many of our faculty members now have on-line journals and classroom web sites to communicate with students and parents. It has become apparent that these online tools have seamlessly extended the learning outside the conventional classroom. Students have taken advantage of these resources themselves, creating work through digital presentations, videos, and Podcasts. Some teacher-student collaborative blogs have garnered attention from around the world, and inspired a sense of pride and accomplishment.

An immediate objective this year is to place technology tools in the hands of our intermediate students, full-time, within the classroom.

Parent Committees

Heather Sirlin-Kenney, Chair

The purpose of the "PPP" (Parent Participation Program) is to provide all the "extras" to the school community, in particular with regard to Jewish holidays (e.g. Shabbat challahs, apples and honey for Rosh Hashanah, Passover seder food, Lag Ba'Omer picnics, Shavuot ice cream, etc.) and the contribute to the school's ruach. The PPP is responsible for administering the 12 volunteer hours required by each VTT family.

Additional events administered by the PPP include the Scholastics Book Fair, the Welcome Back reception and Bingo night. PPP also coordinates year-end staff gifts, Sports Day snacks, school supply group purchases and earthquake kit organization and storage.

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