

# VTT STAKEHOLDERS REPORT



2015-2016



We are a leader in adopting the principles of 21<sup>st</sup> century education and strive to deliver knowledge, values, programs and experiences that will prepare our students to live rich, Jewish lives and succeed in a rapidly changing world.



## ABOUT VTT

Founded in 1934, Vancouver Talmud Torah is a traditional, pluralistic Jewish day school serving a diverse population of more than 300 families from across Greater Vancouver and nearly 500 students in preschool to Grade 7.

VTT is dedicated to producing well-rounded, well-prepared and spiritually grounded students with a firm commitment to Jewish traditions and values.

We are proud to be the largest Jewish day school west of Toronto, and committed to delivering educational excellence in general and Judaic studies. We are a leader in adopting the principles of 21st century education and strive to deliver knowledge, values, programs and experiences that will prepare our students to live rich, Jewish lives and succeed in a rapidly changing world.

We are proud of our academic performance, but that is only a small part of what makes VTT special. We strive to offer a safe and nurturing learning environment, encourage a lifelong love of learning, instill knowledge of Jewish history, traditions and Hebrew language; promote the joyous celebration of Jewish identity, heritage and practices; teach the values of tikkun olam, chesed and derech eretz, and be a source of pride and ruach to our community.

We cherish our role in the community and the trust you place in us as we work every day to support our students as they grow into successful, connected, ethical young people ready for whatever challenges and opportunities the world presents.



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### LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Dear VTT Community,

These are exciting and pivotal times for VTT.

We enter the 2015/2016 school year with a clear sense of purpose, freshly renovated spaces and enrolment of approximately 485 students – including three full Kindergarten classes – and plans to further expand enrolment and provide a sorely needed community service when we open a Licensed Early Years After Care Program in 2016.

Through the remarkable generosity of our donors, VTT’s new campus is rapidly taking shape and we are hard at work planning for VTT’s future as a 21<sup>st</sup> century Jewish day school that will continue to be the pride and lifeblood of our community for future generations.

We are fortunate to have an outstanding leadership team that cares deeply about our mission, and is remarkably adept at managing the daily demands of the very special and highly complex organism that is VTT.

And with a new three-year Strategic Plan in place, VTT remains firmly committed to our mission, and more focused than ever on our three core pillars of Educational Excellence, Financial Stability & Sustainability, and Community.

The Board wishes to thank Cathy Lowenstein and her leadership team, as well as our exceptional faculty and staff, for all of their work, and to extend a further heartfelt thanks to VTT’s many parent volunteers and community supporters who are ever present to ensure that programs and initiatives – big or small – come to fruition for the benefit of our students and our school.

In particular, we want to thank the following directors who will be leaving the Board this year: Belinda Gutman, Megan Laskin, Allan Beron and two-time Board President and VTT Campus Campaign Fundraising Co-Chair, Sue Hector. Each of these individuals has given many years and countless hours in service of VTT. We thank them for their tireless dedication and everything they have done for the school.

We also wish to extend special thanks to Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver for its financial support, as well as the spirit of partnership we enjoy with Federation, as we do with King David High School and others, in our shared mission of educating our community’s children.

What follows in this Stakeholder Report is a summary of key developments at VTT over the past year, and a window into some of the exciting key initiatives for the years to come.

On behalf of VTT’s Board and leadership, Shana Tovah and our very best wishes for a sweet, happy and healthy 5776.

Sincerely,

**Josh Pekarsky**  
Board President

**Bill Schonbrun**  
Past President





VTT's Board has the duty and privilege of providing strategic oversight to ensure the school is fulfilling its mission and will be sustainable for future generations.



## 2014/2015 BOARD ACTIVITIES & HIGHLIGHTS

VTT's Board has the duty and privilege of providing strategic oversight to ensure the school is fulfilling its mission and will be sustainable for future generations. In fulfillment of its duties, the Board has the following formal Committees, in addition to numerous ad hoc working groups: Strategic Planning, Campaign Organizing Committee, Strategic Development, Finance, Community and Head of School Support and Evaluation Committee. A brief summary of key initiatives and activities for each follows.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING: Board Responsibility

VTT's board and leadership team have been active partners in developing a new strategic plan that affirms VTT's mission. This plan has been approved by the Board and sets the priorities that will guide our activities as we move into our new and improved facilities and lay the foundation for VTT's long-term success and sustainability.

As it has been for many years, VTT's strategic plan is built on three pillars:

- **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE.** *We will provide our students with the very best in 21st century education through a balanced dual curriculum of general and Judaic studies.*
- **COMMUNITY.** *We will preserve, strengthen and grow our vibrant VTT community.*
- **FINANCIAL STABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY.** *Our school will remain fiscally responsible and financially sustainable for current and future generations.*

As part of the strategic plan, and to help achieve the school's mission, the Board has approved the establishment of two new or reformulated committees: **Human Resources; and Community & Communications.** The Human Resources Committee will provide oversight and support of key functions for a growing and increasingly complex organization. It will have broad responsibility for overseeing professional development; leadership development and succession planning; wage, benefit and related policies; and collective bargaining, among other things.

The Community & Communications Committee is a reformulation of the Community Committee that has served VTT so well in recent years. Chiefly, we have moved responsibility for the **Jewish Pages** directory, which remains a vital source of funds for VTT and a valued community resource, to the Strategic Development portfolio, and formalized oversight and support of VTT's Communications efforts. In both cases, we are reallocating and formalizing existing work and responsibilities to achieve greater clarity, consistency and effectiveness.





## CAIS ACCREDITATION

The aim of accreditation is to encourage the highest educational standards while also respecting the individual mission of each CAIS school.

The essence of this process is that the school examines all aspects of its programs and operations, seeking to discover its strengths, weaknesses, and future strategic plans, examining how well its program fulfills its mission, and measuring itself against CAIS's National Standards.

CAIS measures performance across national standards in the following areas: Vision, Mission, Values and Strategy; Curriculum and Learning Environment; Academic Program; School Leadership; Human Resources; School & Community; Enrolment Management; Governance; Finance; Physical Plant, Health & Safety; and Commitment to School Improvement.

### CAIS Accreditation:

- Promotes a reflective and collaborative school improvement process
- Provides school leaders with validation of current programs and services and suggested planning for future growth and development
- Provides educators with valuable professional development and information about effective practices in other schools through participation on peer review teams;
- Provides a school's Board of Directors with an independent, non-governmental validation that the school they oversee is effectively delivering a quality educational experience to its students
- Provides education leaders at all levels with deserved recognition for going above and beyond the minimum to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to quality
- Assures parents and the community that the school is focused on providing a safe and enriching learning environment while maintaining an efficient and effective operation.

For more information about CAIS and the accreditation process, please visit [www.cais.ca](http://www.cais.ca).

A review of key developments and initiatives for the years ahead are addressed under the Committee headings in the coming pages. One major initiative, however, doesn't fit a single committee mandate and warrants a brief discussion.

## CANADIAN ACCREDITED INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (CAIS)

Last year, VTT embarked on a rigorous three-year process of national accreditation through the Canadian Accredited Independent Schools (CAIS).

VTT is one of several of Canada's leading Jewish day schools to participate in the CAIS accreditation process. Others include: King David High School in Vancouver; Akiva School in Westmount, Quebec; Calgary Jewish Academy; Gray Academy of Jewish Education in Winnipeg; JPPS – Bialik in Montreal; and Robbins Hebrew Academy in Toronto.

The accreditation process includes internal and external evaluations of all aspects of VTT's governance, curriculum planning, programs and operations, measured against how well VTT is meeting its mission and against standards adopted by CAIS.

CAIS accreditation will ensure that VTT is on par with Canada's leading independent and Jewish day schools. But here, as with many things, the journey really is the destination. That is because the very process of seeking and attaining CAIS accreditation imposes a strong measure of accountability and will make VTT a better, stronger and more sustainable school in nearly every respect. Earning CAIS accreditation will be further validation of VTT's quality and strength.





We have made enormous progress on construction of the expanded and revitalized VTT. The progress really has to be seen to be appreciated.



## CAMPAIGN ORGANIZING COMMITTEE (COC)

ALAN SHUSTER AND DAN PEKARSKY, CO-CHAIRS

In June 2014, the COC, VTT's Board and leadership team were delighted to welcome our extraordinary lead donors, the Gordon and Leslie Diamond family, as well as school faculty, staff, donors, alumni, parents and students for a historic groundbreaking to mark commencement of construction on the new and revitalized VTT. This followed substantial completion of the new and vitally important VTT/Congregation Beth Israel joint underground parkade.

None of this would have been possible without the support of our donors – from the Diamond family's extraordinary lead gift of \$5 million to the \$2.2 million raised from then current VTT parents and even Hannukah gelt from students. With the support of our community, we were able to surpass our initial fundraising goal of \$20 million and gain the confidence to proceed with construction – first on the parkade, and then the main building – at a time and in a manner that saved considerable money and spared undue disruption to teaching and learning at VTT.

In the year and three months since that sunny June Sunday, we have made enormous progress on construction of the expanded and revitalized VTT. The progress really has to be seen to be appreciated – and we encourage all VTT stakeholders to come see for yourselves.

In addition, we have completed phase 1 of the renovations to the existing 26th Avenue (1984) building. VTT today is a much brighter, fresher and more spacious school than it was when we bid our students farewell at the end of June. With new floors, ceiling tiles, doors, lockers, bathrooms and fresh paint, the school has more life, more natural light and more joy in the hallways than it has in years. More renovations to this building will take place next year as we revitalize

more hallways and public spaces and re-tool the administrative offices. Moreover, we are on track to be in the new building, as planned, when school commences in September 2016, and we remain within the budget approved before commencement of construction. We thank the co-Chairs of our Building Committee, Andrew Abramowich and Geoff Glotman, for their exemplary stewardship of the project thus far.

Jewish community and day school leaders from around North America are marveling at what our community has done, but as we all know, the work isn't done yet. As we said at the June 2014 groundbreaking, the next phase of the campaign will require raising more money to complete the task – and we expect to soon have a dynamic new fundraising committee to help us achieve that goal.

We expect to formally launch the next phase of the campaign in the spring of 2016 with the goal of celebrating its completion at a major VTT gala in the spring of 2017. Before then, we will be inviting current and potential major donors to tour the school to see our new facilities coming to life. We are confident that the capacity exists in our community to fund this project and believe that with the support of new and existing donors, including the many new families who have come to VTT over the past few years, we can bring the campaign to a very successful conclusion. The Board wishes to thank Campaign Co-Chairs Alan Shuster and Dan Pekarsky, and members of the COC, for their extraordinary service, dedication, commitment and leadership.

**VTT CAMPUS CAMPAIGN**  
*Building on Tradition. Securing the Future.*



The Gentlemen's Dinner and other annual fundraising initiatives enhance our ability to invest in technology, equipment, programming and other initiatives to support, deliver and enrich our educational program, school security and other needs.



## STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

### JONATHAN LEIPSIC, CHAIR



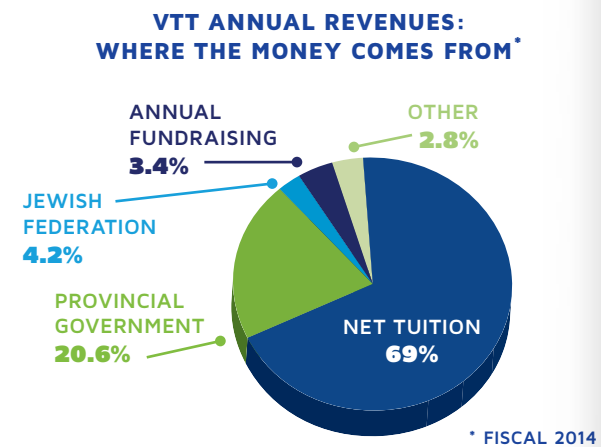
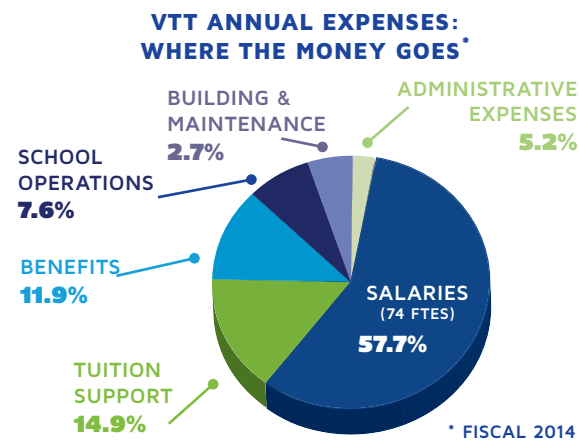
Strategic development is a key element of VTT's strategy for achieving academic excellence and serving our community while maintain financial stability and sustainability. VTT relies on tuition payments, allocations from Federation, funding from the BC Ministry of education and individual donations to support its operations.

One of the Board's long-term strategic objectives is to build a culture of philanthropy at VTT. This means: a culture where the Vancouver Jewish community understands, expects and wants to make regular donations to help sustain the community's largest Jewish day school and its ability to invest in our children.

The VTT Campus Campaign is a capital campaign designed to secure VTT's future as an excellent, vibrant and competitive Jewish day school that can meet the needs of our community.

The Gentlemen's Dinner and other annual fundraising initiatives enhance our ability to invest in technology, equipment, programming and other initiatives to support, deliver and enrich our educational program, school security and other needs. Hosted every two years since 2006, the Gentlemen's Dinners have raised over \$730,000 for VTT. This past year, which was a non-Gentlemen's Dinner year, we introduced a very light and inclusive, non-event-based spring fundraising campaign that raised over \$40,000 to fund security enhancements. We look forward to hosting another Gentlemen's dinner this March at the Four Seasons. Our goal will be to raise money to fund investments to enrich the VTT experience for our students and the value of a Jewish education for our community.

We are also beginning the vital and long overdue work of establishing an endowment to help ensure the long-term access and affordability to a VTT education for all families in our community.



The Campus Campaign, annual fundraising initiatives and raising an endowment go hand in hand to ensure VTT's long-term success and sustainability as a financially sound, academically excellent, Jewish community day school.

We wish to thank all of our donors past, present and future, for their support. We also want to thank our many fundraising volunteers for their passion and dedication to VTT.

## FINANCE

### BRIAN CHELIN, TREASURER

One of VTT's three strategic pillars is ensuring the school is financially stable and sustainable for current and future generations. Over the past three years, the Board and leadership team have devoted an enormous amount of time to reviewing, revising, evaluating and enhancing the policies, procedures and systems that govern the school's finances. The result is that the Board and leadership team have much greater insight and clarity on the School's financial operations than ever before. We are also pleased to have a finance team that is performing well and assisting in making sound financial decisions. VTT maintained Group 1 Provincial funding and delivered a break-even budget for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2015. However, we face several significant challenges when it comes to achieving long-term financial stability and sustainability.

Affordability. The first is finding a way to maintain the affordability of tuition. There is no greater challenge – at VTT, and throughout the North American Jewish day school system – than maintaining the affordability of a Jewish day school education for all who want it. Indeed, with

Vancouver's housing market becoming one of the most expensive in North America, the pressure on many VTT families has become particularly acute over the past few years.

VTT's Board and leadership work extremely hard to balance the competing goals of providing outstanding academic programs and activities, maintaining VTT's financial stability and sustainability and staying true to our mission as a community school with a warm, welcome and accessible place for a diverse array of student learning styles and families, including an increasing percentage of families that are unable to pay the full cost of tuition.

For this reason, we are working closely with the leadership team to ensure that the two gyms, rooftop playground and kosher kitchen of our new building are fully utilized to generate additional revenue for the school through after-hours and other use. Our goal is for these assets to be a meaningful source of income as soon as the new building opens in September 2016, and we expect to have positive news on this front shortly and over the year ahead.

Rebuilding VTT's contingency fund. VTT's contingency fund has been depleted by, among other things, the need to purchase portable classrooms and construct temporary parking during construction of Congregation Beth Israel, at a combined cost of approximately \$600,000. This summer, we needed to replace a portion of the roof on the 1984 wing (along W. 26th street) at a cost of approximately \$260,000. We used borrowing capacity under the school's bank lines to fund this expense, with the intention of using proceeds of the sales of the portable classrooms to repay this debt in the next year or so. By any definition, these were the very sort of contingencies for which the fund was created and the money has been well and necessarily spent. The challenge now is to rebuild our cash

reserves and replenish the Contingency Fund, which had a balance at year-end of \$32,000 and which will no longer benefit from the anticipated proceeds of the sale of the portables (for the reason above).

### BUILDING A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY

As discussed elsewhere in this report, we have also begun the work of creating a culture of philanthropy at VTT. This effort is aimed at reducing pressure on tuition by supporting meaningful annual giving campaigns and building an endowment – because an endowment is the only way our community can truly ensure the long-term sustainability and affordability of a Jewish Day school education. The alternative – putting the burden on operating funds and/or current VTT parents – is neither fair nor sustainable.

## GOVERNANCE

### SHAWN LEWIS & SHANE BROWN, CO-CHAIRS

VTT is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors with a responsibility to oversee the fulfillment of VTT's mission and the long-term sustainability of this vital institution.

We believe that good governance is critical – it focuses on our activities, behaviours and policies in ways that best support our core values and provides a solid foundation upon which our organization can thrive and fulfill its mission.

Among its responsibilities, the Governance Committee administers the director nominations process. We were very fortunate this year to have many more interested candidates than vacant board seats. We greatly appreciate everyone's interest and are very excited about the five new directors being proposed for election to the Board at the October AGM. We believe this slate of Brian Bressler, Roy Hessel, Tamara Howarth, Matthew Ross and Annie Simpson will bring fresh energy and perspective to our work, and help strengthen the Board in key areas, including HR, strategy, fundraising, community outreach, communications, property management, finance, developmental psychology and leadership capacity.

The proposed election of these individuals follows the election of five new directors last year. This marks a significant amount of Board renewal and fresh perspective to complement the exceptional experience and institutional knowledge of our longer-serving directors.

The Governance Committee has also undertaken a review of VTT's policies and bylaws, and the design and implementation of a Board skills and composition matrix to guide board recruitment.





## HEAD OF SCHOOL SUPPORT AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE (HSEC) MICHELLE GERBER, CHAIR

HSEC is comprised of one Past President who is a current VTT director, one Past President who no longer serves on the Board and one former Director who retired from the Board several years ago. This is an experienced and informed group that, like the Board President, serves as an important confidential sounding board and resource for the Head of School. HSEC also provides, in conjunction with the Board President, ongoing evaluation and feedback to the Head of School on the performance of her duties.

HSEC measures Head of School performance against, among other things, a predetermined set of goals and objectives. For the 2014/2015 year, these were to:

- Ensure we continue to operate a school of excellence while planning the transition to a new campus and minimizing disruption to current operations;
- Expand enrolment and strengthen the school's financial position while continuing to operate and build a school of educational excellence across VTT's dual curriculum; and
- Obtaining CAIS accreditation as a means for strengthening VTT's overall quality, governance, strategic planning and competitiveness.

Embedded in these goals are specific objectives for maximizing rental revenues from our new facilities, ensuring a smooth transition for staff, students and families, continuing to enhance academic programming in Judaics and general studies and opening a Licensed Early Years After Care Program to meet the needs of VTT families with young children and support increased enrolment at VTT.



## COMMUNITY BELINDA GUTMAN & MEGAN LASKIN, CO-CHAIRS

The Community Committee devoted untold time last year to organizing, selling ad space for, compiling and producing the Jewish Pages community directory. This is a labour of love and a vital community resource, as well as an important source of funds for VTT. The committee also worked to support the Spring Fundraising campaign and put on numerous events to welcome, engage and thank our parents, families and volunteers.

The function of the Community Portfolio is really to liaise between the community at large and the professional community at VTT. This portfolio works hard to help communication between all facets of the school by being a good resource for parents to come to when they have questions and they can help direct them to the open doors of the professional team and/or leadership team to respond to these questions. They also help to bring the thoughts and questions of the parents to the Board - as the Board recognizes the importance of staying connected with the feelings of the community.

Also, a small but important function was the acknowledgement and thanking of our numerous parent volunteers who are the lifeblood of our school. So, the Community Portfolio started the Kudos Korner part of the Hadashot that Jenn Shecter fills every week with the names of the parents and alumni who give of their time to help in and around VTT. In addition, hand written thank you notes are sent out by Belinda and Megan on behalf of the board to those volunteers who go above and beyond by taking on extra responsibilities, such as chairing a committee for a holiday. They are also responsible for



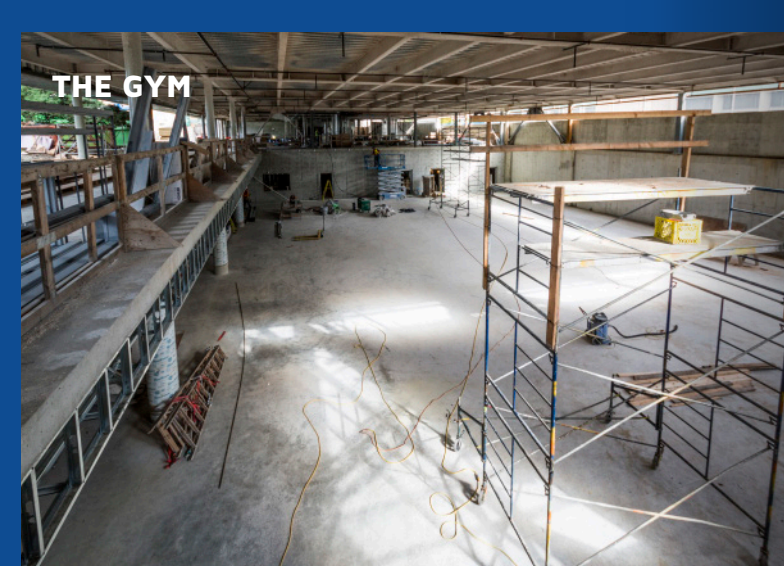
gifts for the Admin and support staff at the end of the year - an important way that the Board recognizes the hard work and dedication of our professional staff.

In addition, as an extension of this on going role as liaison every year before school starts Belinda and Megan divide the list of every new family joining VTT and call on behalf of the Board to welcome them and answer questions/offer any assistance. The feedback is always extremely positive and it is yet another way to make our community stronger and more connected.

Given the close ties this portfolio found itself having with both the community of parents and the professional community of the school administration, the idea of forming a PAC was born from this Portfolio. It was this group that began discussions with parents and the leadership team to flush out the idea and we are very proud that VTT now has a fully formed PAC.



A NEW VIEW



THE GYM



PROGRESS & PLAY

### FEATURE UPDATE EXPANDED AND REVITALIZED VTT

The new VTT is rapidly taking shape – and it’s going to be simply incredible!

With the expanded and revitalized VTT, we are making an investment in our children – and our community. The VTT Campus Campaign is the largest capital initiative our community has ever undertaken. And to date, with over \$21.2 million pledged to date and construction proceeding on budget and on schedule, it’s been a resounding success. This is a community investment that will repay itself exponentially as we increase our capacity to meet current demand, provide a superior educational experience to our children, expand our enrolment pipeline and increase accessibility through the introduction of a Licensed Early Years After Care Program, and develop future generations of community leaders.

With this campaign, we are re-tracing the work of earlier generations and doing for our children and our children’s children what our parents and grandparents did for us.

We include the following update in our Stakeholder Report so all our parents, families, faculty, donors and community partners can see what we are building and why it is so important to our community’s long-term health and vitality.



MARCH 2015



JUNE 2015



OCTOBER 2015



ROOFTOP PLAYGROUND

**DESIGN PRINCIPLES**  
NEW BC EDUCATION PLAN

The province of BC is implementing a new educational plan based on the Principles of 21st Century Education. VTT has been a leader in incorporating these principles to better engage students in their own learning and foster the skills and competencies they will need in order to succeed. More personalized learning, quality teaching and learning, flexibility, and high standards are the hallmark of our programming.

The new campus and renovations of the existing school are designed to support the guiding principles of 21st century education and the three types of skills that contribute to success for all students.

In recent years, our curriculum development, programs, technology investments, hiring practices and professional development strategies have all been directed at furthering the adoption of these principles. The expanded and revitalized campus is another key part of this strategy.

The expanded and revitalized VTT is designed to facilitate new modes and methods of teaching and learning, and to deliver improved educational experiences, as well as better academic, social and personal outcomes for students.



The new VTT will feature 42,000 square feet of newly built space, in addition to a revitalized current space of 48,400 square feet, plus new and vastly improved outdoor play spaces and facilities. Some of the highlights for the expanded and revitalized VTT include:

- A richer student experience with collaborative workspaces, bright hallways and lots of natural light
- Revitalized early years wing including a new Licensed Early Years After Care Program to open in September 2016
- 12 modern, new classrooms with collaborative work spaces to facilitate 21st century teaching and learning
- More comprehensive, flexible and varied spaces for extracurricular activities
- Two new fully purposed gyms and large multi purpose rooms
- Revamped outdoor playground with the addition of a rooftop playfield the size of an NHL hockey rink with high-grade artificial turf and an 18-foot security fence
- Significantly more flex space to support music, art and drama
- New Learning Commons for all students K-7
- Seamless technology integration across all grade levels
- Flexible learning environments to support new programs for STEM learning (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)
- Retrofit of Early Years classrooms, improving the physical space to better support teaching and learning
- New fully operational Parkade with direct covered access to VTT
- A robust network backbone for current and future technologies
- Enhanced safety and security program



The New BC Education Plan encourages “capable young students who thrive in a rapidly changing world.”



## VTT EDUCATIONAL MISSION

VTT offers an academically rigorous day school education through a thoughtful and balanced curriculum of general studies and a comprehensive Judaic studies and Hebrew language program.

VTT students begin their educational journey as early as preschool and through play-based and thematic learning, develop an understanding of Jewish values and knowledge.

Through our primary and intermediate grades, VTT students develop the skills to become critical thinkers and 21st century learners. They are knowledgeable in Jewish history, values, culture and religion, are developing confidence in conversing in modern Hebrew, and are active participants in community and beyond. VTT instills in its students Ahavat Yisrael - love of Israel and the Jewish people.

In the coming year, VTT will have an enhanced facility and learning environment for our community of future leaders with improved space for collaborative learning environments, play space and physical activity.

Vancouver Talmud Torah is a traditional Jewish community day school dedicated to excellence in an engaging and respectful learning environment in which Jewish children can become proud, caring, responsible and dedicated members of the Jewish people and Canadian society.

## LICENSED EARLY YEARS AFTER CARE PROGRAM

To support our families, VTT will open its first Licensed Early Years After Care Program in September 2016.

The purpose built facility will operate in the early years wing of the school and will be able to accommodate up to 24 students in the first year, with capacity for an additional 24 students in subsequent years. The program will have an outstanding faculty, renovated classrooms, dedicated play structures, optional kosher food service, and extended hours throughout the school year.

The new facility will be available to currently enrolled preschool families and will offer a range of options for parents who are seeking part or full day programs.

More information, including registration details, will be available this fall.



VTT's faculty is committed to creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment for each of our students.



## FACULTY COMPOSITION

VTT is proud of the diverse and competent team of educators who comprise our teaching faculty and who are committed to creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment for our students.

Some members of the faculty who have been teaching at VTT for over 20 years as well as teachers who are new to the profession. Some members of the faculty have earned Masters degrees and/or have specialized in specific areas, further enhancing the academics at VTT. Together, the faculty members across general and Judaic studies create partnerships and work collaboratively to support all learners.

VTT recognizes the critical importance of ongoing professional development for faculty members and invests in the enhancement of teachers' skills and expertise. By investing in faculty growth, VTT continues to demonstrate a commitment to increasing student outcomes and achievement.

Faculty members participate in professional development throughout the course of the year that is aligned with the BC Ministry of Education's curriculum and VTT's strategic plan.



## DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

At VTT, a central priority is to provide support to our diverse community of learners, which is in keeping with our pillars of community and academic excellence. We strive to ensure all of our students have access to the resources and tools they need to help them grow cognitively, emotionally, socially and physically. As a community school, we do not screen applicants on the basis of their academic ability, but rather ensure that we have programs and resources in place to support their development. The programs offered are always evolving – based on the needs of our students.





We strive to impart not just information, but a spirit of community and what it means to be joyful and Jewish in the modern world.



## JEWISH LIFE AT VTT

VTT teaches Jewish history, traditions, knowledge and values. We strive to impart not just information, but a spirit of community and what it means to be joyful and Jewish in the modern world.

Over the course of the 2014-15 school year, we celebrated the holidays with our students with the support and facilitation of our outstanding faculty.

- For Rosh Hashanah, classrooms worked to create life-sized collages of images representing the themes of the new year
- For Sukkot, classrooms decorated large panels of fabric using Jewish holiday symbols to decorate Beth Israel's Sukkah
- For Hanukkah, we created a huge papier mache hanukkiyah. Parents and students were then encouraged to bring in decorations to adorn the candelabra. The nine candlesticks were assigned to different groups of faculty and staff to decorate—and each one had a different theme. Dubbed "HanukKammunity," the decorative hanukkiyah now rests in VTT's learning commons.
- For Tu B'Shevat, kindergarten students created miniature trees to commemorate this environmental holiday. Students wrote their wishes for mother earth on paper leaves and then hung them from the life-sized burlap tree in the foyer.

Although holding Passover Seders at school are a VTT ritual, this year VTT went "outside the box" and into a tent—literally! The gym was transformed into a desert tent and classes of students participated in Seders while seated on the floor in the tent. Moshe Rabeinu (in the guise of King David High School's Rabbi Stephen Berger) came for a special visit from Biblical times and interacted with students in a lively Q&A session, challenging them to recall details of the Passover story as well as the reasons behind various rituals. Students from preschool 3 through the grades experienced the Pesach in the desert and had a wonderful time.





Yachad is designed to guide student behaviour, foster a greater sense of accountability within the school, and create a spirit of unity that can be felt throughout the school.



## YACHAD (UNITY)

2014-15 also marked the launch of Yachad, a school-wide social responsibility initiative, developed by our teacher leaders. Yachad is designed to guide student behaviour, foster a greater sense of accountability within the school, and create a spirit of unity that can be felt throughout the school.

Each month students were encouraged to explore a different theme (kindness, mitzvot, compassion, care for the environment, etc.) and at the end of each month, one grade led a school-wide assembly connected to theme. It was here that particular students were recognized for displaying behaviour related to the monthly theme and given a bracelet in recognition.

Yachad has been a great success and will continue for 2015-16.

## SCHOOL WIDE BEHAVIOUR MATRIX



	SETTING					
	ALL SETTINGS	BATHROOMS	HALLS	CLASSROOM	OUTSIDE	ASSEMBLIES
RESPECT FOR SELF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move slowly and safely.</li> <li>Do your best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep safe.</li> <li>Wash your hands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk safely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be organized.</li> <li>Listen to learn.</li> <li>Move safely.</li> <li>Arrive on time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play safely.</li> <li>Stay on school grounds.</li> <li>Dress appropriately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter quietly and face forward.</li> <li>Sing "O Canada" and "Hatikvah" proudly.</li> </ul>
RESPECT FOR OTHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treat others kindly.</li> <li>Speak positively to others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow privacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be quiet.</li> <li>Be careful of others and keep right.</li> <li>Stay in your line.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work cooperatively.</li> <li>Be kind and encouraging.</li> <li>Respect people's personal spaces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play cooperatively and take turns.</li> <li>Speak and act kindly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep eyes and ears on the speaker.</li> <li>Allow others to focus.</li> <li>Keep your hands to yourself.</li> </ul>
RESPECT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put garbage and recycling in the right place.</li> <li>Take care of school property.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leave it clean.</li> <li>Use just what you need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect the work of others.</li> <li>Keep the halls tidy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the classroom organized.</li> <li>Use things properly and safely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use equipment properly.</li> <li>Put garbage and recycling in the right place.</li> <li>Respect nature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect the gym space.</li> </ul>

## CHESED AT VTT

Chesed, or kindness, is an integral value at VTT. Every year, VTT officially recognizes our obligation to repair the world (tikkun olam) and perform acts of kindness during our Random Acts of Chesed (RAC) Week where students make determined choices to better the lives of their classmates, teachers, and community.

This year, our Grade 7 students took this mandate one step further by participating in a RAC Race. Gathering on a Sunday morning, students and their parents divided into teams and spread out across different neighbourhoods in Vancouver to deliver food and other treats to random people. The goal was to build connections with people as loneliness was identified as the number one social issue in our city. This experience culminated in a soulful Havdallah service at VTT attended by well over 100 students and parents.

The RAC concept was then expanded to build cross-cultural understanding among schools of different faiths. This was accomplished in a variety of ways:

- In December, a group of VTT students from Grades 3-7 visited St. Augustine's Catholic School on Vancouver's Westside to share the story of the miracle of Hanukkah and deliver Hanukkah-themed packages (donuts, dreidels, candles) to the school. They also sent similar packages to members of the Ismaili community.
- This was followed by a collaboration by all three schools to collect essential items for people living on Vancouver's downtown Eastside. Students assembled hundreds of care packages, with personal notes of hope and encouragement included.
- VTT, St. Augustine's and youth from the Ismaili community worked in partnership to distribute the care packages to hundreds of homeless individuals. Tim Horton's supported the initiative by donating food and drink. Jewish, Catholic and Muslim students worked side by side with the expressed goal of repairing the world, a value shared by all three faith communities.
- In May, students from all three schools participated in the Ismaili World Partnership Walk at Stanley Park to combat global poverty.

## ONGOING CHESED

A range of acts of chesed continue on an ongoing basis over the course of the year at VTT:

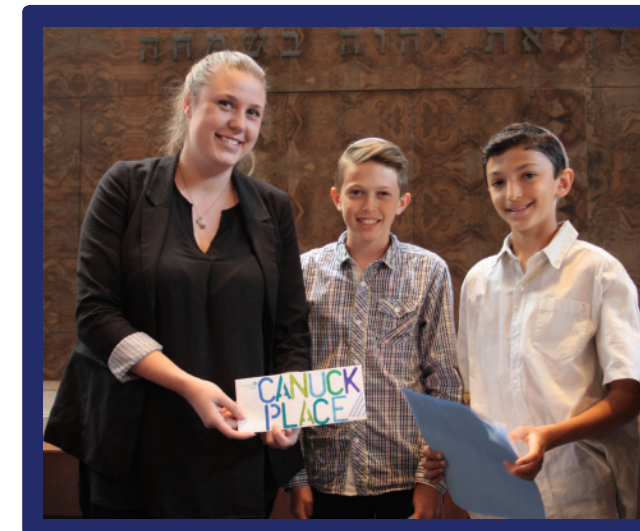
- Over a dozen VTT students joined the Talmud Torah ChildRun Team to raise money to fight childhood cancers at BC Children's Hospital.
- Grade 2 students successfully collected warm socks, toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste to donate to Jewish Women International. Every year Talmud Torah's second grade successfully impacts this important drive for JWI.
- This year saw the creation of two Chesed Clubs: one for Grade 6 and the other for Grade 7, facilitated by VTT faculty.
- These spirited and committed groups of students accomplished two major initiatives: collecting hundreds of pairs of shoes for Ruben's Shoes, serving underprivileged children in the Dominican Republic; and raising over \$4,000 towards relief efforts following the devastating earthquake in Nepal. These students held bake sales and established neighbourhood lemonade stands to raise this money—accomplished in two weekends!

## MITZVAH OF VALUING PHILANTHROPY

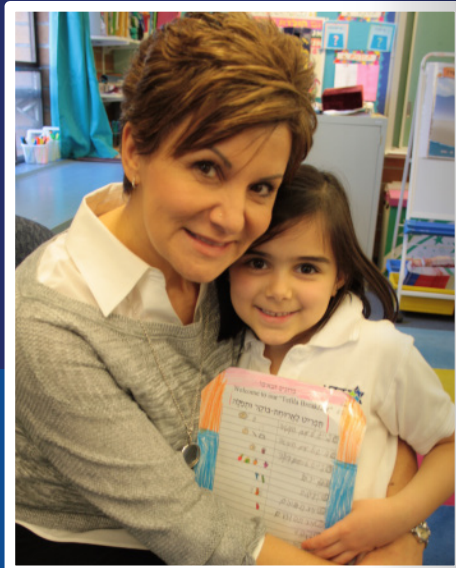
For the eighth year in a row, Talmud Torah's Grade 7 students enthusiastically embraced the values and goals of the school's Mitzvah of Valuing Philanthropy (MVP) curriculum, a teen philanthropy program. Through acts of tzedekah and chesed, the students learned in a hands-on way what it means to become a caring and responsible adult.

During the year, students selected a mitzvah of meaning to them, and then researched, interviewed and selected a non-profit agency that delivers on that mitzvah. They then presented the mission and needs of their chosen agency to their classmates. The students subsequently worked together to assess the needs and, as a class, decided how to allocate to every agency from their communal pool of funds. The year culminated in a Ceremony of Giving, as representatives from the chosen agencies came to VTT to receive their grants from the students. The students jointly contributed and raised over \$21K and generously disbursed the funds to 25 most deserving agencies, plus left a legacy gift to the Grade 6 class to help fund their own MVP journey.

Since MVP's inception, VTT students have raised \$165K and donated to 210 agencies.







## PILLAR TWO: COMMUNITY

### VTT COMMUNITY – DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF FAMILIES

VTT is proud to welcome families from across the city and around the world. In 2015, we have families who hail originally from Hungary, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Israel, England, Estonia, Texas, Alabama, and Toronto – and who live throughout the Lower Mainland, commuting from Vancouver’s Westside and Eastside, the North Shore, Richmond, Burnaby and Coquitlam.

As a community school, we attract families from across the Jewish affiliation spectrum and we respect each family’s level of religious observance. We are also proud of our socioeconomic diversity.

VTT takes care to introduce new families to more established ones to help them and their children get settled. And since many families do not have relatives nearby, VTT becomes an extended family. Parents celebrate holidays together, support each other with childcare and other family responsibilities, and warmly welcome new families into the fold. VTT’s parent-run Yahoo! Group, online for the last 11 years, is a wonderful resource to past, current and incoming families. This is often the first stop for many of our new families seeking advice, support and resources.

### PAC – PARENT ACTION CHAVURAH

PAC Missions Statement: “The PAC is a body that acts on behalf of the parents and school to enhance the overall VTT community. We do this by helping with volunteerism, ruach, fundraising and further connecting the different parts of the VTT community to one another.”

#### PAC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- To act both as Ambassadors to the school and representatives of the parent body.
- To support each of the volunteer teams in implementing various activities with the goal of increasing ru’ach and inclusion and positivity amongst the school community.
- To pursue fundraising efforts to support PAC activities as well as special programs at the school.
- To personalize, enhance and support the holiday activities in the school by working closely with the Judaics leadership.
- To coordinate parent volunteers in the school and encourage family involvement.
- To encourage the administration’s “Open Door Policy” when approached with various issues and suggestions from parents.
- To represent and help parents (especially new parents) navigate the school and understand where to find information and who to approach with questions. To bring forward concerns or suggestions from the parents to the administration through the PAC Co-Chairs when necessary and appropriate.



## COMMUNITY CONCERTS

### HANUKKAH CONCERT

For the last 10 years, Vancouver Talmud Torah has been staging lively concerts to retell the Hanukkah story through song and dance, featuring students from Kindergarten through Grade 7. Our performing arts specialists (drama and music) take popular, contemporary music and rewrite the lyrics to tell the story of the Maccabees' revolt against the Antiochus and the rededication of the Temple. This year's theme, Maccabedoodah, used popular Disney songs to re-enact the Hanukkah story. Popular Disney characters, acted by Grade 7 students, lent further credence to the theme. We staged two shows at the Beth Israel ballroom, a morning grandparent show and an evening parent show. Both were packed to capacity.

### SPRING MUSICAL

All students in Grades 5 through 7 who audition have the opportunity to participate in Talmud Torah's spring musical production. This year, 50 students of varying ages staged Little Mermaid to four packed houses at the JCC's Norman Rothstein Theatre.

Directed by VTT drama and music specialists, our students rehearsed every Sunday for four hours at VTT for three months. They learned dances from a professional choreographer, received stage direction from a stage manager, and donned rented Little Mermaid costumes to add further authenticity to the production. A lighting designer and set designer further complemented the professional nature of the production. Aside from the opportunity to perform multiple times in front of a live audience, students shared that bonding with students from across the grades was the most significant—and meaningful—benefit of participation. It is always one of the most profound highlights of a student's 10-year career at VTT.





## PILLAR THREE: FINANCIAL STABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

### VTT TODAY - ENROLLMENT

In the Jewish Day School world, enrolment and retention are the key drivers to a successful and financially sustainable school.

VTT has admitted 80 new students to VTT for the 2015/16 school year. This is an impressive number when compared to the annual average over the previous seven years of 53, and includes 30 new students coming to VTT just for Kindergarten alone.

What is also important number is our retention rate. This is the measure of how many students who enroll at VTT in Kindergarten actually graduate from VTT in grade 7 – and that number stands at an outstanding 85% compared to more typical retention rates of 65% to 75% for North American Jewish day schools.

VTT continues to enjoy strong enrolment, with upwards for 485 students expected for the 2015/16 school year. We have noted slightly lower than average preschool registration but that is consistent with what all other early years institutions are experiencing across the province. The opening in September 2016 of our Licensed Early Years After Care Program will enable many families to access VTT in the early years. The hours are favorable to working parents and the program offered will be of the same high standard that VTT is known for. We have seen very strong interest already in our new aftercare program and expect enrolment to benefit for many years to come.

VTT is proud to have delivered a break-even budget in the fiscal year-ended June 30, 2015 and will continue to strive for positive financial performance in the years ahead, while continuing to invest in educational excellence, preserve the accessibility of a VTT education and rebuild our cash balances to address future contingencies.





## CONCLUDING COMMENT

VTT gratefully acknowledges the support of all its donors and is committed to meaningful, respectful recognition of the current and past builders of the school.

Our sincere thanks to Federation for their support of our school, the capital campaign initiatives and for working alongside us to ensure that VTT remains a wellspring of Jewish identity, continuity and future leadership.

The financial contribution from Federation has been instrumental in ensuring that VTT can continue to meet the diverse needs of our families and for that we say Todah Rabbah.



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ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM



998 West 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 2G1  
T. 604 736 7307 E. [info@talmudtorah.com](mailto:info@talmudtorah.com)  
W. [talmudtorah.com](http://talmudtorah.com)

