



New Technology Enhances Current Dual Curriculum

Gross Schechter Day School's Middle School Classrooms Receive an Upgrade

Schechter continues to lead the way in teaching and learning, following its latest classroom technology upgrade. The latest upgrade was based on the recommendation of the school's forward-thinking Technology Committee.

Recognizing how interactive technology would be critical in creating this new teaching and learning space, a SmartBoard (hyperlink)/MacBook Pro laptop environment was created in grades 5-8.

By helping to make lessons and information more accessible and engaging, these new classroom technologies are proving invaluable in educating the school's middle school students -- creating an enriching classroom where all students are able to reach their full potential.

Both Judaic and general studies teachers further maximize the benefits of its new technology. "Teachers can tailor their interactive lessons to suit the needs of students, accommodating different learning styles, and moreover, make interactive learning accessible to the entire student community. The laptops allow for more project-based learning as the students are able to utilize technology in a more collaborative way," says Susan Siegel, Director of Education.

Beginning last spring, Schechter's Technology Committee went through a comprehensive and thoughtful process in order to create a Vision Statement, define goals, and plan the new technology rollout. The process began with a comprehensive needs assessment of the current technology situation on campus. The next step was a thorough review of other schools' technology plans, approaches and philosophies. With a shared understanding of the nature of students and how they learn, the Committee was able to create a new Vision Statement, as well as acquisition and implementation plans.

The most powerful change for the school was deciding that technology would no longer be taught as a separate subject. Instead, it will be seamlessly integrated into classroom life as students learn how to use technology through their Judaic and general studies curriculum. Schechter has re-purposed the technology teachers as in-house "techxperts" who work hand-in-hand with our classroom teachers to ensure the most impactful use of technology in their classrooms.

Another exciting development involves our website, which has been moved to a CMS (content managed system) WordPress platform allowing for more flexibility with content updates. Middle school grade level advisors are now using blogs to communicate with parents. Preschool and elementary teachers will soon be using the WordPress blogs as well.

Overall, everyone on campus is very excited about the new technology. One Technology Committee member commented that they were pleasantly surprised to see how enthusiastically all the teachers and staff have embraced the new technology.

The mission of Schechter's Technology Committee, "As a school committed to engaging, empowering and inspiring students, we will seamlessly integrate technology to maximize teacher instruction and individual student achievement, promote efficiency and open communication across all areas of the organization, foster and support Jewish identity, and prepare our students for school and life beyond Schechter".

The funding for this upgrade project comes from our operating budget and special fundraising efforts. An additional fundraising campaign took place and friends of the school stepped up in significant ways to make certain the goals of the Technology Committee were met and students received the tools they need to help them reach their full potential. Schechter has leased all the new computers so that every year one third of the campus computers are upgraded.

This new use of technology also included new servers and infrastructure that allows a Mac environment to coexist with the PC environment. Phase II of the technology upgrade will include new computers for another wing of the school and eventually the business offices. For questions about the technology upgrade, please contact Rabbi Rogozen at rogozen@grossschechter.org.

Gross Schechter Day School's mission is to provide children an education equally outstanding in general and Judaic studies, in an engaging, empowering environment based on Conservative Judaism, so they become committed to Jewish life and emerge as leaders in the Jewish and general communities.

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