



JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL OF CONNECTICUT

The mission of the Jewish High School of Connecticut (JHSC), a new pluralistic Jewish day school, is to educate Jewish youth for whom Jewish values and traditions shape and guide their lives and for whom learning and responsible actions are the foundation for achievement.

The Case for JHSC

Families across southern Connecticut want and need an independent, pluralistic Jewish high school – one that offers a rigorous, comprehensive curricular and co-curricular program of general and Jewish studies, athletics and the arts, in an open environment that encourages spirited discussion and cultivates critical thinking. To fulfill the high standards of Jewish education and to prepare students thoroughly for college and beyond, **JHSC** and its faculty will integrate well-established educational principles with progressive techniques and methods found in contemporary general and Jewish education.

Nearly 1000 years ago **Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides)** established standards for Jewish education that directed and motivated students and teachers for generations. For Maimonides, great Jewish schools are rooted in the principles of **Torah u'Madah**—a robust, integrated program in Jewish and general studies that provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead enlightened, ethical and productive lives. In the current Jewish community of North America, too many Jewish day schools have deviated from these principles, offering curricula that promote doctrinaire ideologies and practices or graduate students lacking the knowledge and skills in Jewish text and tradition. **JHSC** seeks to reclaim the **Maimonidean** vision, applying this educational model to the needs and aspirations of the 21st century teenager.

The Jewish High School of Connecticut is not affiliated with any one synagogue or Jewish movement yet is all-inclusive. JHSC will provide stimulating, challenging and supportive learning in an environment free from religious or ideological agendas. Students will develop skills to make meaningful, informed choices on their own terms while building strong personal relationships with the American Jewish community and the land of Israel.

History, Leadership and Community Development

A group of visionary community leaders, educators and parents in southern Connecticut gathered in 2006 to explore the possibility of building a pluralistic Jewish high school that would serve Jewish families from Greenwich to New Haven.

By 2007, the Board of Trustees – eighteen distinguished volunteers representing the religious and geographic diversity of the southern Connecticut Jewish community – established the **Jewish High School of Connecticut**. Without delay, **JHSC** registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, and became a member of the Connecticut branch of the National Association of Independent Schools (**NAIS**) and of **RAVSAK**: the Jewish Community Day School Network. The School receives funding from the **United Jewish Federation of Greater Stamford, New Canaan and Darien**, the **Annual Campaign of the UJA Federation of Eastern Fairfield County** and the **UJA Federation of Westport/ Weston/Wilton/ /Norwalk**, and is the recipient of a New Schools Grant from the **Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE)**.

Rabbi Edward Harwitz was appointed by **JHSC** as founding Head of School in July 2008. With more than 20 years experience in Jewish education, Rabbi Harwitz served as founding Head of School at the Jewish Community High School of the Bay in San Francisco. In that role, he successfully attracted a diverse Jewish student population – nearly 60% of the School’s demographic never attended Jewish elementary or middle schools and came from families unaffiliated with the Jewish community.

In 2008 - 2009, Rabbi Harwitz and the **JHSC** Board of Trustees established a five-year projected budget and business plan to prepare for the high school’s fall 2010 opening. An aggressive marketing and public relations campaign was implemented targeting the larger, unaffiliated Jewish community and creating brand awareness among affiliated Jewish families throughout southern Connecticut.

Over 700 brochures and related materials were distributed in fall 2008 to regional Jewish day schools, a number of local “private” middle schools and 10 to 15 regional supplemental and “Hebrew” schools that cater to students currently not attending Jewish day school. The Head of School and **JHSC** staff taught at and addressed numerous Jewish day schools, synagogues, high school fairs and parlor meetings held in individual homes throughout Fairfield and New Haven counties.

JHSC presented its first Open House in November 2008 attracting over 150 participants and 40 prospective families. At the close of December 2008, **JHSC** exceeded its initial expectations for the first admissions season, drawing a strong applicant pool that reflected the diversity of the southern Connecticut Jewish community.

Given this initial response and, with an increasingly enhanced profile, **JHSC** is seeking to assemble a class of 40 “pioneer” students for the fall semester 2010. We are encouraged by the enthusiasm expressed by potential students and parents, particularly those new to Jewish education and those currently not affiliated with a synagogue or Jewish organization. As evidenced by its applicants and

attendance at admissions events, students and families throughout southern Connecticut believe **JHSC** offers a unique, exciting high school opportunity and a vibrant vision of Jewish education.

The JHSC Community

The Jewish communities of southeastern Connecticut, populated by over 60,000 Jews from Greenwich to Danbury to New Haven, are growing exponentially as has interest in Jewish education— two new synagogues and one new Jewish Day School have been created in the last six years. The expansion of Yale’s School of Medicine and Cancer Center is expected to attract additional Jewish families to the area, increasing the demand for Jewish education.

The region currently boasts six Jewish elementary day schools that graduate approximately 100 students each year. Approximately 25% of day school students attend Jewish high schools outside the geographic area while the rest attend local public or private schools. The experience of other pluralistic Jewish high schools, combined with the first applicants in 2008, suggests that the majority of **JHSC** students would come from secular elementary schools. The Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (**CAIS**) reported the strong need for additional schools in the region. **JHSC** seeks to fill this void and provide an alternative for families looking to educate, inspire and challenge their children.

Unique and Innovative Programs

JHSC will design pilot programs to educate and introduce **JHSC** to the southern Connecticut Jewish community during the forthcoming preparatory year. While Jewish day schools generally do not serve students before opening, **JHSC** seeks to offer educational opportunities that will showcase the high school’s mission, entrepreneurial spirit and unique educational approach. These programs, distinct from those offered at other Jewish high schools in North America, would include:

- **College accredited Jewish studies courses in partnership with a local university.**
- **Four year curriculum in Jewish service learning and philanthropic training**
- **Four-year curriculum and program in Israel education in partnership with national Israel advocacy organizations.**

THE JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL OF CONNECTICUT: The Challenge ... and Your Investment

IT IS not often a community has the opportunity to

- make history by building a great, pluralistic Jewish high school for young people;
- structure a unique model of American Jewish education for the 21st century;
- educate upcoming generations of highly-educated, ethically committed Jewish teenagers who will assume leadership roles in the Jewish organizations and agencies of the future;
- ensure and secure the standing of the American Jewish community and the state of Israel in the world by cultivating cadres of high educated, articulate and passionate advocates for Jewish learning, culture, community and the land and people of Israel;

OUR challenge is to realize the groundbreaking **JHSC** endeavor that has been anxiously anticipated by affiliated and non-affiliated “pioneering” Jewish teenagers and their families residing in southern Connecticut. Much must be accomplished if we are to achieve our goal to open in September 2010.

YOUR investment and contribution of private dollars to **JHSC** is essential to fulfilling this goal.

HOW TO GIVE

You may contribute in many ways:

- Outright gifts of cash;
- A gift of appreciated securities, real estate or personal property. You may receive an income tax deduction to the extent permitted by law;
- A gift returning lifetime income to a donor and/or another beneficiary designated by the donor. Life income gifts may be funded through gifts of a variety of assets. A life income gift may be structured as a pooled income fund, as a charitable gift annuity or as one of a variety of charitable trusts aimed at achieving particular income or growth objectives;
- A gift of a residence with retained life estate;
- A gift of a new or paid-up life insurance policy;
- A bequest under your will for a specific property, for a dollar amount or for a portion of your estate after obligations to others have been fulfilled, may be directed to the **JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL OF CONNECTICUT (JHSC)**.

For additional information on how to make a gift to **JHSC**, please telephone, write or email:

Jewish High School of Connecticut
2710 Park Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203 275-8448 203 275-8449 (fax)
info@jhsct.org www.jhct.org

Student Reactions to JHSC

In their applications, future “pioneer” students expressed their interest in being part of **JHSC**:

I am interested because I don't just want a school to feed me to an ivy league—I want an environment that's loving and mixes education with the religion I practice, the religion I love and want to gain more knowledge about.

Female student from Westport, CT., Synagogue affiliate, never considered Jewish day school education

*JHSC would allow me to learn more about my Jewish heritage. I'm interested in learning Hebrew as a second language: this would enable me to better understand all the Jewish holidays my family celebrates. The **Jewish High School of Connecticut** would offer me opportunities that I don't have because my family does not belong to a temple.*

Female student from Bridgeport, CT., unaffiliated with synagogue or other Jewish institutions

I want to continue my Jewish learning while having the opportunity to work with other students who care about the same things I do.

Male student from Stamford, CT, currently attending Jewish day school but originally had no interest in Jewish high school