

## **Main Points of Rabbi Idstein's "State of the School" Address given Wednesday night, June 7, 2017**

Torah Academy is a GREAT school!

- It has GREAT students!
- It has GREAT teachers!
- It has GREAT parents!
- There is GREAT learning!
- There is GREAT love for Yiddishkeit and its values!

Nevertheless, Torah Academy has places to grow even further so to top it all off-

- There is a GREAT desire on our part to grow and improve even more!

**There are many aspects of the school to highlight and discuss. It is impossible to touch upon all of them. If I miss something that pertains or is of interest to you and your family please feel free to contact me. If I may, please wait until after school is out unless it is timely in nature.**

Here are some of the highlights that I would like to share –

Something new for this past year - We start our day all together in the gym. It creates orderliness and seder. We start with a positive and upbeat inspirational quote. Ask your child what day of the week is Rabbi Idstein's favorite! I have been asked to publish my daily quotes!

**TORAH TOTS –**

- We are simply bursting in enrollment!
  - This talks to the success of the program thus far, and speaks to the future enrollment and future stability of the school.
  - Next year our PreK will have 40 children!
  - There is no stronger way to build than from the bottom up!

- For next year.....
  - We received a grant and will be making improvements in the playground.
  - After a successful year, new ideas and improvements will be further developed in the 16 month group – to make it more age appropriate.
  - Amongst their other responsibilities, Mrs. Sherman and Mrs. Fishman have forged a partnership with the Parent Aware Program – A program of extensive training and preparation for our Early Childhood Staff to ensure that we are a top rated program.
    - With it comes an opportunity for many scholarships
  - Vaccination Policy – We have looked into the policy and are making the necessary changes to insure a safe and healthy school for everyone.

#### GENERAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT

- MNSAA Accreditation Complete!
  - We are OK'd for the next 6+ years!
- Thank you to Mr. Ford for all your efforts in seeing this to fruition!
- In addition, for your.....
  - Kindness
  - Commitment to the school and its values
  - Friendship to staff and administration
  - Mr. Ford will transition into retirement by returning to school in a different capacity. This capacity is still unclear but may include some teaching, mentoring, and other administrative tasks to continue to better the school.
- Current Principal Search –
  - We conducted a national search -
    - We have networked with
      - Jewish sources here and across the US and Canada
      - MN Educational sources

- Newspapers
  - Torah Umesorah
  - Past Employees and contacts in schools throughout the state
- We have interviewed many candidates.
  - Upon the decision that their candidacy should be pursued the candidate met with a parent/teacher focus group
  - Upon passing that test a power meeting with the hierarchy of the school to ask more “penetrating” and pertinent questions was held.
    - At this point we have offered someone the job and are waiting to work out the details.
- Teacher Hires –
  - We are looking for some teachers for next school year.
  - We are FOCUSED on QUALITY CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION!
  - We have been more selective in who we interview
  - We have hired some teachers and are already close to completing the team.
  - We are CONFIDENT in our new hires and prospects as we have changed our vetting processes and have already seen results in the quality of the applicants.

#### JUDAIC STUDIES –

- Kriah Program – What results we have seen already!
  - Scan scores in Primary grades are on the rise
  - 7<sup>th</sup> grade girls Pirkei Avos story
  - Next year we look forward to even more streamlining and further support in this all-important area.
- New Mishmor Program for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade boys
  - Weekly Mishmor Shayla from Rabbi Waxman
  - Extra learning to prep for High School
  - Chulent and camaraderie with friends and Rabbeim.
  - Special thanks to wives for the extra effort!

- Revamped Middos Program
  - Highlighting specific behaviors instead of esoteric concepts.
  - Stay tuned for our grand finale!
- Increased Awareness of Chumash Vocabulary
  - Word Lists for all classes
  - Standardized testing to chart improvements

## LOOKING FORWARD TO NEXT YEAR –

- I would also like parents to know the following and challenge them to increase and expand our partnership!
  - TORAH ACADEMY IS INVESTED IN THE SUCCESS OF EACH AND EVERY STUDENT EACH AND EVERY DAY!
  - TORAH ACADEMY IS LOOKING TO BE YOUR NOBLE PARTNER IS VIRTUALLY ANYTHING THAT WILL HELP YOUR CHILD!
- That being said....No matter what your child needs be it academic, medical, emotional or anything else – LET US KNOW! Let our partnership EXPAND!
  - You might not be aware of the countless hours we have invested in our partnership with Sha’arim to meet the needs of our students – We care!
  - Every Thursday morning we meet to discuss students in each and every class to make sure their plethora of needs are met – WE CARE!
  - But, we can’t help if we don’t know! There are countless of examples of parents who did not communicate pertinent information to us, whether family related, or otherwise; or who communicated with the teacher and the administrators never knew.
    - If the administrators know so many things can be helped or if need be avoided!
  - On the same token I have more than one parent who emails me or texts me or calls the office to let me know that something is

askew that day and 9 times out 10 something negative is avoided!

- We want to know! We want to help! Your children are the beneficiaries!
- Additionally, as a principal it is my job to look at the holistic picture of the entire school. As a parent it is your job to view the school and its services through the eyes of your children.
  - As a principal it is my job not to lose sight of the parents view and as parents I would like to ask you not to lose sight of the principal's view.
  - The school has many rules and policies as well as events, trips, and other occasions – **embrace them and be part of them** even if they don't speak to you for whatever reason. We are a small school in a small community and EVERYBODY COUNTS AND MAKES A DIFFERENCE. LET'S EXPAND OUR PARTNERSHIP!
    - Let me give you an example – Yesterday, the younger grades went to Twin Lakes Park for a celebration of meeting their AR goals. They walked, had a picnic, and were even allowed to bring a can of soda! Their teachers created an aura of excitement and positivity and made a small and simple trip into an exciting one. Their classroom doors were marked that we are going to Twin Lakes Park instead of Disneyland!
      - One negative comment could have defused the whole trip.
      - Two children staying home because “we go to the park every Shabbos” ruins the trip.
      - Prod and encourage your children to take part even if it is not what they had in mind!
      - We are a small school YOU DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE to the others around you! **Let's EXPAND OUR PARTNERSHIP!**

- **Let me give another “humorous” example. I am, after all, a teacher at heart....**
  - **Raise your hand, please - How many of you are here tonight because you received one of the myriad of emails that went out for tonight’s event?**
  - **How many of you are willing to bet against me when I say that I am 100% sure that someone tomorrow will say to me – OMG there was an event last night – how come I did not know?**
  - **As a facilitator for many of these events I can only tell you how hard we try and communicate – Let’s EXPAND our partnership and read each other’s communications!**
- **Frequent absences and lateness – When an entire class is present, the class is complete! Your child’s attendance pattern makes a difference! With our small classes EVERY CHILD’S PRESENCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE!**

Yes, we know that family doesn’t come often and taking the children out early only happens on rare occasions – but at times there is a bigger picture – LETS EXPAND OUR PARTNERSHIP!

- We are not trying to usurp your parental rights. We understand there will be occasional exceptions – We just ask that you think about the whole picture before making your decision!
- When we are on the cusp of a vacation, groups of parents who leave early and come back late can really handicap the learning atmosphere.
  - Instructional days are stepping stones for lifetimes – yours and your children’s friends!
- We had a little girl in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade who hadn’t missed a day of school and she didn’t want to. She asked her parents to rush back after YomTov – they did!

- When the school makes a rule support it. The rules were not made in vacuums. We considered as many views as we could. If you don't agree, please ask us! But don't tell your children not to listen. It isn't educationally sound and it doesn't take the bigger picture into consideration. LET'S EXPAND OUR PARTNERSHIP!
- In short both positivity and negativity are contagious. One is something I'd like to catch the other isn't!
- My door is always open – please use it! I will always listen and consider your thoughts and feelings – Try me!
- Embrace the challenge – be a partner even more than you have been – you will see the difference!

#### IN CONCLUSION FOR NEXT YEAR....

- Torah Academy is looking forward to
  - Continuing to excel in the personal love, care, and attention that we are accustomed to giving each and every day.
  - Modeling Torah values and a Torah way of life.
  - Keeping your children SAFE in every meaning of the word

#### IN ADDITION....

- The summer has not even started yet, but....
  - We are looking into more....
    - Special thanks to Mrs. Mila Kvasnik for her very successful Glitter Moon Program
    - More After School Enrichment programs to include educational and meaningful fun activities.
      - Examples include wiring and elementary handi-work for boys!
      - STEM activities
      - Dance for girls
      - Sports

As always, we are open to your suggestions – PARTNER!!

We thank you for another great year. We look forward to an even greater coming year! GOOD NIGHT!