



# GIDEON HAUSNER JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

**Strategic Plan: Envisioning 2018**



# ABOUT GIDEON HAUSNER JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School, founded in 1989, educates 400 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. While the school has continued to grow in size and popularity over the years, it remains committed to the core values that made it such an attractive option for families on the Peninsula since its founding: Outstanding academics, a strong sense of community and the nurturing of Jewish values and traditions.

Hausner traces its roots to 1989 when a group of parents sought to create a school with a strong academic program in a warm and supportive setting. Their hope was for an academic institution with an accepting pluralistic environment where Jewish families would feel comfortable and included, and an egalitarian school where students could participate fully in Jewish and secular activities. These visionary parents founded the Mid-Peninsula Jewish Community Day School. The school would be renamed Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School in 2003.

Using the most advanced pedagogical methods, Hausner provides its students with the opportunity to become lifelong learners in a joyful, supportive environment. Along with an outstanding General Studies program, students study Hebrew as well as Jewish texts, traditions and values, and cap their experience with an 8th grade trip to Israel. Throughout its curriculum (General Studies, Jewish Studies and Hebrew), Hausner offers low student-to-teacher ratios, averaging 12:1 in the lower grades and 18:1 in the Middle School Program.

Teaching to the whole child, Hausner focuses on social and emotional growth in tandem with academic growth. The school also offers a wide array of enrichment activities to suit a broad variety of interests, from chess to art to title-winning sports teams. With the launch of its one-to-one iPad program during the Fall of 2012 for grades 6, 7 and 8, the school continues to prove its penchant for innovation, fitting of our location in the heart of Silicon Valley. Academically, the school continues to excel with median standardized test scores in the 90th percentile and higher for all grades, which is even more noteworthy when considering the school screens Kindergarten applicants for readiness and not aptitude. Building upon the strengths of its extraordinary history, the school continues on a trajectory of success based on its core mission to promote academic excellence, community responsibility and vibrant Jewish living.



**This page:** Students learn as a team through hands-on experiments (Top) • In the Winter of 2012, a Middle School student enjoys reading with a second grader in the Lehmann Library (Bottom) •

**Cover:** (Clockwise) Middle School Program students work together in teams to better understand the properties of chemicals • A rendering from our campus expansion project • Students sound shofar during Rosh Hashanah •

Scholarships partially provided by the Schwartzman Family Scholarship Fund as well as the Jim Joseph Foundation in partnership with the local Jewish Federations.



## MISSION STATEMENT

To promote academic excellence, community responsibility, and vibrant Jewish living

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The goals outlined in this guide set Hausner's course for the next five years and beyond. The goals delineated in the following pages were created with input from faculty, staff, parents, alumni, students and community leaders. The goals are organized into five areas: Educators, Educational Program, School Community, Facilities and Infrastructure, and Financial Health and Stability.



## ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PLANNING TASKFORCE

The Strategic Planning Taskforce consisted of members of the Board of Directors, faculty, parents and school administrators whose work from September 2011 to February 2013 made this plan possible: Gary Meyers, Chair; James David, Julie Dorsey, Ilan Frank, Zohar Gilad, Dr. Ira Lit, Hilary Luros, Laura Manion, Sharone Melamed, Emily Mitchell, Aileen Mitchner, Dr. Denise Pope, Rabbi Noam Silverman and Julie Smith.

**Hausner in photos:** In the Spring of 2012 in front of non-profit leaders, parents and students, a kindergartner explains a community service project she and her classmates worked on; the annual event, Celebration of Tzedakah, is also the culmination of our nationally acclaimed 7th grade philanthropy project (Top) • Seventh graders in the school's sukkah (Bottom) •

## LIVING OUR MISSION & PHILOSOPHY



**Hausner in photos:** (Clockwise) With joy, students from different grades welcome Shabbat together • With focus and determination, a student writes down his reflections on an assignment • A Holocaust survivor visits the Hausner sukkah and connects with 8th grade students; after the visit, Rabbi Noam Silverman asked survivors about the time spent with the students. They used words such as “charming, kind, beautiful, intelligent and our future.” In turn, when he asked the students, they said “strong, heroic, courageous, amazing, incredible, inner strength” • A Third Grade class presentation during their Native American Open House event gives students the opportunity to practice their public-speaking skills in front of their teachers, peers and parents •

# ENVISIONING 2018 AT HAUSNER

February 2013

—JULIE SMITH  
HEAD OF SCHOOL



Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School is a remarkably successful institution, distinguishing itself as a leading community Jewish day school in the Bay Area while serving a diverse range of Jewish families. As we look to the next five years, our objective is to build on this strength with clearly defined strategic goals, informed by our mission and executed by our leadership team. With the goals outlined within the pages of this plan, Hausner will deliver an even stronger program to more students. The next five years at Hausner will be focused on refining and enhancing the Hausner experience in a multitude of areas – our program, our faculty, our community, our finances and our facilities.

**Based upon the goals outlined in the following plan, a day at Hausner in January 2018 will look something like this:** *Older students working in a flexible space in a fully equipped science lab set up for interdisciplinary science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) projects. This STEM environment exists now because the art and music departments moved to the newest building, ensuring students receive a broader music and art education during their time at Hausner. Next to the music and art classes is the beautiful new Beit Tefillah, offering the appropriate spiritual and contemplative space for up to 150 people, and designed to support an experiential K-8 Jewish Studies program. Students are so engaged with interactive Hebrew learning on iPads right now that they don't even realize it's raining outside. Later in the morning, students will still be able to practice basketball skills because the multi-purpose space doubles as a gym, as well as a fully equipped theater. We are all excited that this afternoon the entire school will gather to watch a school play put on by Hausner's (K-8) Drama Department.*

As we imagine what Hausner will be like in five years, the goals outlined within this plan move us toward making it a reality. With more than 20 goals within these pages, I will prioritize several for initial focus. While there is work we can and will do to advance each goal, my main focus in the short term is on the goals in the Educators section. Our faculty forms the backbone of the school community, and many of the other goals in this plan are predicated on the continued strength of our teachers. It is so gratifying to know that our community recognizes the importance of outstanding educators and supports our investment in attracting and retaining the faculty our school community deserves.

I would like to thank the members of the Strategic Planning Taskforce as well as the parents, faculty and community members involved in this process. Your dedication and work resulted in the goals you will read about within these pages. Each goal will have a positive impact on the school for years to come. Thanks again to each of you.

## LIVING OUR MISSION & PHILOSOPHY



**Hausner in photos:** (Clockwise) The Kindergarten to 8th grade environment creates special moments for students in different grades to interact, which facilitates building a stronger sense of community within the school • Kindergartners develop fine motor skills while writing letters in Hebrew that they learned that day • Middle School Program students learn about the gases produced through certain chemical reactions •



# A TRUE COMMUNITY EFFORT

February 2013

—JEFF WEITZMAN  
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS



School communities are complex places with lots of moving parts, diverse needs and at times, competing goals. If not careful, schools—like any organization or business—can form closed silos and decisions can be made in a vacuum. Not wanting this for the Hausner community, the school’s leadership sought input and feedback from a wide variety of sources as it planned the next five years. The resulting goals articulated in this Strategic Plan are that much stronger because of the process employed by the Strategic Planning Taskforce.

In addition to the community survey data collected in the past few years, the Strategic Planning Taskforce needed to find a mechanism to capture what was important to the myriad constituencies within the Hausner community. With that in mind, the Taskforce hosted several “parlor meetings” with members of our Board of Directors, parents, community members, current Hausner students, as well as alumni and their families, in addition to faculty and staff. At parlor meetings and subsequent follow-up sessions, the school invited participants to give critical input and feedback. Remember, these kinds of plans are only strong if the entire community has an opportunity to participate in the process. Thank you parents, faculty and community members for your participation and input.

The Strategic Planning Taskforce focused on five key areas, including the educational program, educators, school community, financial health and stability, and facilities and infrastructure. With much data in hand, the Taskforce’s subcommittees compiled, analyzed and synthesized the information and ensured we wouldn’t be left with potentially ineffective and diluted goals. With draft goals in hand, the Taskforce again solicited feedback from our community. Contained within these pages is the product of this work that was carried out over eighteen months.

On behalf of the Hausner Board of Directors, thank you and *Kol HaKavod* to the Strategic Planning Taskforce, and a special thanks to its chair, Gary Meyers. **Your collective work will have a positive impact on the school for years to come. The process the Taskforce employed to steward the community has led to goals that have the full backing of Hausner’s Board of Directors and our deepest gratitude.**

# EDUCATORS

**Hausner 2013:** First and foremost, every school begins and ends with the quality of its teachers. As the cornerstone of the school, Educators at Hausner ignite an intellectual curiosity within students while cultivating critical-thinking skills through project-based learning experiences. In every classroom, teachers guide students as they develop the skills and passions necessary to become life-long learners. Against this backdrop, Hausner creates a culture of teachers aspiring to be leaders not only in their classrooms, but also throughout the school and within their field, as they inspire and engage students each and every day. Providing ample professional development opportunities on campus, in the Bay Area, across the country and around the world, the school works to ensure its Educators most successfully meet the needs of its students.



**Educators in Action:** (Left) Second graders become bee experts and with that knowledge, they invite their parents to class and play a trivia game that poses the question, "Are you Smarter Than a Second Grader?" Everyone has a good time, and the students have the opportunity to showcase their knowledge.

(Top) Faculty and students discuss their success raising money for a local non-profit during Community Service Day. Hausner creates meaningful opportunities for each student to participate in the mitzvah (commandment) of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world.) Students participate in varied activities such as making blankets for sick children, preparing sack lunches for the homeless, decorating cards for the elderly, or distributing food to the needy.

# EDUCATORS GOALS

- 1. Continue to recruit excellent educators and systematize the inclusion of faculty in the hiring process.**
- 2. Maintain and build upon rich professional development opportunities available to Educators with a focus on the expansion of faculty leadership, mentorship and collaboration.**
- 3. Codify faculty supervision and evaluation procedures while maximizing constructive feedback.**
- 4. Ensure the school provides a competitive compensation and benefits package through a standardized benchmarking process.**

**Rationale:** The personnel structures in place now are a combination of organic growth and purposeful institutional decisions. Although experiencing rapid growth over its more than 20 year history, Hausner is currently a very stable organization that can further refine processes related to its personnel. In addition to the strong faculty in place, we must continue to hire and retain the best of the best. As the school continues to mature, it will strive to proactively retain and attract strong Educators through competitive compensation packages and high-quality professional growth opportunities that continue to inspire faculty and staff.

## **PARENT’S PERSPECTIVE:**

“One of the teachers had an extraordinary ability to communicate important facts and engage students fully in learning. He was as skilled and effective as an excellent college professor. Needless to say, we were deeply impressed.”

– **DR. ALAN GARBER**, ALUMNI PARENT AND  
PROVOST, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

## **TEACHER’S PERSPECTIVE:**

“There are many things I love about teaching at Hausner, especially the high level of student engagement and the sense of community that you can feel in all areas of the school. I also appreciate that Hausner values teaching to the whole child – academically, socially and emotionally.”

– **LAURA MANION**, NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHER  
GIDEON HAUSNER JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

**Hausner 2013:** Through its Educational Program, Hausner produces extraordinarily successful students. There are many measurements of success, not least of which is the extensive positive feedback we receive from our alumni. Graduates report being well prepared both socially and academically for excellent smaller independent high schools as well as larger distinguished public high schools. We hear from alumni parents that Hausner graduates are confident, self-directed learners who test into the highest academic honors lanes or tracks and receive acceptances from selective colleges and universities. One more measure of success that confirms the strength of our program is Hausner students' scores on the Educational Records Bureau's (ERB) Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP). The standardized test provides a rigorous assessment of student achievement of essential standards and learning domains. Our third through eighth grade students collectively achieved an average median score in the 90th percentile or higher in all testing categories for the test administered in the 2011-12 school year. Hausner students also outpaced the average median scores achieved by independent and public schools in suburbs with similar demographics. Moreover, while tests such as this one focus on a breadth of content, the Hausner curriculum emphasizes a depth of understanding and critical thinking skills (teaching students to think analytically, not simply reciting memorized information) developed through project-based learning activities.

Notably, the school conducts its admission screening with a focus on readiness and not aptitude, which means Hausner educates students with varied strengths and abilities. With this broad range of students, the school creates an inclusive and joyful learning environment with an objective of igniting and fostering student aspirations to be life-long learners. Hausner also weaves Jewish values as well as social and emotional well-being and growth into its curriculum.

## HIGH SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY HAUSNER GRADUATES (Sample list from 2007 to 2012)

Castilleja School • Crystal Springs Uplands School • Henry M. Gunn High School • Homestead High School • Kehillah Jewish High School • Los Altos High School • Menlo School • Menlo-Atherton High School • Mountain View High School • Palo Alto High School

## COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED BY HAUSNER GRADUATES (Sample list from 2007 to 2012)

American University	Harvey Mudd College	Tufts University
Brandeis University	Johns Hopkins University	UC Berkeley
Brown University	McGill University	UC Davis
Columbia University	Mount Holyoke College	UC Santa Cruz
Carleton College	New York University	University of Chicago
Claremont McKenna College	Parsons:	University of Southern California
Duke University	The New School for Design	Yale University
Harvard University	Stanford University	

# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM GOALS

- 1. Enrich Hausner's strong academic program by developing an outstanding interdisciplinary K-8 Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) curriculum.**
- 2. Increase the depth of the Hebrew and Jewish Studies programs with a focus on tangible learning outcomes related to textual, cultural and language literacy.**
- 3. More broadly communicate the school's educational philosophy, embedding it in every facet of school life.**
- 4. Advance a school-wide program to support social and emotional learning modeled after successes in the individual grade levels.**
- 5. Address student engagement and learning along the entire range of abilities and performance for students currently at Hausner, while also deeply examining our ability to serve students with special needs that the school cannot currently accommodate.**



**Rationale:** Flowing from an articulated philosophy, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education will take advantage of the school's already strong math and science programs, the interdisciplinary ethos within the faculty, as well as local resources in Silicon Valley. At the same time, an outstanding STEM program will solidify and extend Hausner's academic reputation, creating another key strength important to the local community. Hebrew and Jewish Studies programs embody another critical aspect of a Hausner education; therefore, the school must continue to ensure it offers an engaging and robust program.

The Educational Program continues to evolve to meet the needs of Hausner's student population. Broadly articulating the Hausner educational philosophy will create uniformity throughout the academic program. Within that philosophy, Hausner must clarify and communicate its approach to addressing the needs of students of varying abilities.

**Joyful Learning:** Students experience lava flow from a volcano made in their classroom. From the start of their education at Hausner, students are engaged with a curriculum focused on developing critical thinking skills through project-based learning experiences.

# SCHOOL COMMUNITY

**Hausner 2013:** The school community at Hausner fosters a sense of belonging that extends beyond the classroom. The school administrators, faculty, as well as current parents and students, fully welcome new families, creating multiple opportunities to join together throughout the school year. The school reflects the diversity within the Bay Area Jewish community. Joining American Jews at Hausner are students from countries such as Israel, South Africa, Russia and Brazil. Families affiliated with the different denominations of Judaism, and from a broad range of observance, as well as intermarried families come together to create an inclusive community.



## SCHOOL COMMUNITY GOALS

- 1. Create schoolwide structure to enhance a sense of school community with increased engagement across all constituent groups.**
- 2. Connect more regularly with organizations and people in the broader community.**
- 3. Develop a communications strategy for all Hausner constituents.**

**Rationale:** Engagement is the key component in creating community, and Hausner must create a structure that supports both planned and organic engagement with its myriad constituencies. By doing so, the school will ensure that it continues to maintain strong relationships within the school walls and beyond. Communication is a key component in sustaining the school community and its relationship with the broader communities that surround it.

# FINANCIAL HEALTH AND STABILITY

**Hausner 2013:** Through prudent financial planning, including increased fundraising efforts, Hausner is in a stable financial position, having successfully weathered the recession. It has also increased the amount of confidential financial assistance available to families, to almost \$1 million a year, or 12 percent of its annual revenue. Moving forward, Hausner will continue to be financially judicious ensuring its ability to educate students for generations to come.

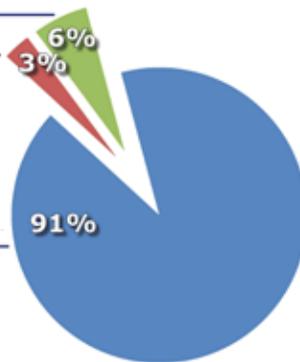
## 2012-13 Operating Budget

### Revenues

Annual Fund Campaign

Grants

Net Tuition and Other Income



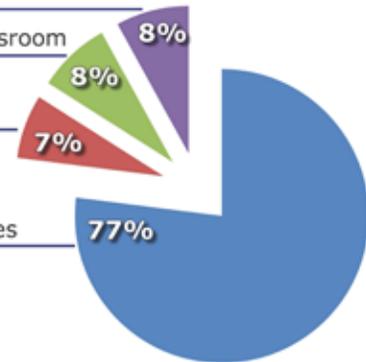
### Expenses

General & Administrative

Curriculum & Classroom

Occupancy

Employee Expenses



## FINANCIAL HEALTH AND STABILITY GOALS

1. **Update Board-approved Financial Philosophy guidelines.**
2. **Diversify sources of income.**
3. **Support the L'Dor VaDor Campaign.**
4. **Develop a multi-year fully costed financial plan to ensure Hausner can adequately finance projects within this plan.**

**Rationale:** The 2007 Board-approved Financial Philosophy guidelines serve the school well, but require periodic review to ensure they continue to respond to the school's evolving financial needs and the current economic climate. Also, while Hausner has increased its operating fundraising significantly over the past five years, the school can now look to other potential sources of income. Significant fundraising, along with considerable financial stewardship, are required to support and sustain the campus completion project. At the same time, developing a multi-year financial plan ensures Hausner can adequately support the strategic goals outlined in this plan.

# FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Hausner 2013:** Hausner offers its students a beautiful four-acre campus, conveniently located in Palo Alto. The current campus, while a joyful learning environment, is not optimized to deliver a rich interdisciplinary program. While administrators and teachers continually work to create short-term solutions to space constraints, students miss opportunities to have more authentic and enriching educational experiences, especially within the performing arts.

## FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS

- 1. Expand the campus to address the community needs of a growing student body, reflecting the school's mission and philosophy, while ensuring the facilities can be operated effectively.**
- 2. Ensure that all facilities are as energy efficient as possible, demonstrating the school's commitment to environmental stewardship.**
- 3. Develop and implement a comprehensive maintenance program that will sustain the entire facility to its original, outstanding standards for utility and visual appeal.**

**Rationale:** Hausner's facilities need to be expanded to be competitive with surrounding independent and public schools. By better utilizing the campus, Hausner will deliver its strengthened program more optimally and to more students. Hausner will add more programmatic space in the Raizin Building by moving some classroom spaces to the new facility. In our Middle School Program, we will have the ability to have three sections of 18 students at each grade level to accommodate the increased enrollment and high student retention we are experiencing. The expansion will significantly build out our science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) facilities. Hausner will also have dedicated spaces for art and music that will no longer interfere with other programmatic needs on our campus. Hausner's vibrant theater program will create tight-knit community experiences that children will remember long after leaving Hausner. The campus will be further enhanced by the building of a gym and another outdoor field. We will host home-court sports games, such as basketball and volleyball, playing in front of a full-cheering crowd. These additions to our facility will provide students a place to play on rainy days, so they can get exercise throughout the day.



**Rendering:** At the heart of campus expansion is the new Pavilion Building and adjacent field space. The Pavilion Building will house a Beit Tefillah, separate art and music rooms, as well as a multipurpose room that can serve as a gym or theater. The positive impact of these new facilities will be felt in their effect on our academic program, school community and in freeing up our library and other spaces on campus.

## Philosophy

Learning



Community



Respect



Torah



Israel



Compassion



Justice



## PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

"Hausner's caring climate, focus on the whole child, and hands-on, project-based curriculum, have been a terrific match for our kids. They continue to blossom into creative, independent thinkers, who can communicate their ideas well, and most importantly, who strive to fulfill Jewish values."

— **DR. DENISE POPE**, CURRENT AND ALUMNI PARENT  
CO-FOUNDER OF CHALLENGE SUCCESS AND  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION SENIOR LECTURER



**Life at Hausner:** (clockwise) An older student acts as a mentor to a younger student • A student works on a project that focuses on critical-thinking skills • The community gathers for Rosh Hashanah • *Photos within the Strategic Plan by Jay Blakesberg and Gabriel Sanchez* •