



July 2, 2021

Dear DJCS Families and Staff,

We have had a successful school year, developing effective responses to the many challenges we faced. We succeeded in planning and implementing a virtual program that would engage our students in ways well-suited to this new medium. We were thankful to the parents who continued to support our programs and students who responded happily to their teachers' efforts. Teachers provided virtual opportunities to learn based on teacher/student interaction typical of the classroom, as well as computer-based materials that students could use independently. Staff presented new experiences such as Beit Hatfuzot Virtual Tours, virtual connections with our Shinshinim, the Virtual J programs, Unboxing Judaism Holiday Boxes, and online programming for Hebrew. We continued to focus on our foundational values of a welcoming environment, respect for diversity, and recognition our shared Jewish core. In the 2021-2022 school year, we will be expanding initiatives to engage parents and seek their input into new family programming possibilities.

During the pandemic, the DJCS maintained important relationships. We continued to collaborate with the Centre for Jewish Education (UJA) and align practices accordingly with the Part-time Jewish Education models. We have consistently sought recommendations from the various health and science tables and have followed government regulations and directions. We have also continued to respect policies and procedures from the Miles Nadal JCC that apply to tenants who provide supplementary programming in their building.

Provincially, we are still uncertain of the date for Ontario students to return to school. We continue to consult with educational experts regarding the re-opening of schools in Ontario and Canada, and across the world. The DJCS was able to move quickly and successfully to remote learning in March of 2020, and we anticipate even more confident transitions in the future when our capacity to deliver in both remote and on-site models has been demonstrated.

The Board of DJCS has considered all these factors and has decided that DJCS will plan for a remote start in September 2021, and then a transitioning return to MNJCC for January 2022. This model, which includes social distance guidelines recommended by Health Canada and Toronto Public Health for the on-site period, ensures safety for students, families, staff and our community.

Having presented our current plan, we want to assure everyone that we are also following the changing health landscape. More Ontarians are being vaccinated and the eligible age for vaccinations is decreasing to encompass more of our school-aged population. We continue to monitor the situation, and if, in the fall, a safe return is possible, the Board will consider an on-site return at an earlier date. For September and October, remote learning is the plan. Beyond that, health

data will guide our decisions. Whenever during the school year, we transition from one model to another, the times and class groupings will remain constant.

This year, the DJCS worked on refining the digital skills of staff. The DJCS also invested in upgraded software designed for education that delivers all remote lessons and allows for both class and independent learning. Each teacher now has an individual Zoom account that enables sharing classrooms materials and creating learning groups in breakout rooms. We have acquired more digital devices and purchased programs that support assistive technology for students with special education needs. Our Hebrew language learning pivoted to the Behrman House online learning center. We piloted this partnership from March to May with great success.

DJCS is working diligently with the MNJCC logistics and facilities managers to ensure we can resume classes on-site at the optimal time and maintain flexibility according to Toronto Public Health Guidelines and Ministry of Education suggested guidelines. The MNJCC will be doing a thorough deep cleaning of all classrooms before each session. More details will follow 30 days prior to returning on-site. In the meantime, DJCS staff will have weekly safe access to the classrooms and resources to support their lesson preparation.

The DJCS Board and staff are preparing all aspects of school life to succeed as either remote or on-site experiences. This preparation requires double the planning and increased resources for technology, staffing and cleaning. The Board will not pass on these costs this year; however, we want the DJCS community to be aware of the effort that is going into sustaining our school.

Plan:

September Start Date: Sunday September 19, 2021. All classes begin. Curriculum meetings will be held on the first day of school.

Day/Time for Classes: Term 1 Online Schedule

- Sunday Jewish Studies 9:30-11 am
- Sunday Hebrew Alef and Bet 12-1 pm
- Wednesday Hebrew Alef 4:30-6 pm

We remain one community and with perseverance and understanding, we will emerge through this experience together and with strength. We wish you a relaxing and healthy summer.

Board of Directors of the Downtown Jewish Community School

Belinda Keshen, Principal