

Building Our Future, Together

Kehillah Fund Annual Report | 2022/5782





Supporting Our Schools

Sustaining our Kehillah

Dear Kehillah:

The power of a community lies in the strength of its individuals and families.

Jewish education is the most important investment we make for the future of our community, and an essential means of nurturing each individual's connection to Hashem. I cannot express enough gratitude for the dedication of all the teachers, administrators, and volunteers who work tirelessly to make this possible.

There is nothing quite as powerful as a child learning Torah in their genuinely innocent idealism. What we have built with the Kehillah Fund is a model that is envied by communities all across North America. By working together to equitably support our schools and our students, we have created the potential for an unlimited future.

As you peruse these pages, you'll see that potential in the schools, families, and supporters who educate our children. It's built when students watch a sofer inscribe sacred text

into a new Torah, when teachers have the support to ensure children of all abilities can succeed, and when parents provide loving support to their children each and every day.

As we all understand, our current school system exists as a consumer-funded model where the financial burden falls on families. Through our continued growth and commitment to working together as a kehillah, we can create a more sustainable and stronger future for us and for our children.

Thank you so much for your shared commitment to Jewish education, for taking the time to read our annual report, and for your generosity to our community.

With gratitude,



MAX DAYAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2022 Year at a Glance

Our Impact, By the Numbers

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

11

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

3,171

DOLLARS RAISED

1/1/22–12/31/22

\$805,613



TOTAL DONORS

1/1/22–12/31/22

1,677



DOLLARS DISTRIBUTED*

1/1/22–12/31/22

GENERAL FUND

\$820,000

ACHDUS FUND

\$79,640

*An \$80,000 Resource Fund distribution was made in January 2022 and reported in the 2021 Annual Report.

AVERAGE MONTHLY GIFT

\$40

AVERAGE ANNUAL GIVING

\$480

DONOR RETENTION

80%

A Message from Our Founders

Dear Kehillah:

As we sit down to write this message, we feel an immense sense of gratitude and pride for the incredible community that has grown around the Kehillah Fund over the past 19 years.

We have been blessed to work with countless dedicated and passionate individuals who share our vision for strengthening Torah-based education in Chicago. But this year, we want to take a moment to recognize our ambassadors, who have truly gone above and beyond in their support. We are inspired by their tireless fundraising, outreach, and awareness efforts, and we could not have achieved our goals without their unwavering support.

The Kehillah Fund has a unique and vital role to play in securing a vibrant future for our entire community. We are deeply committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of their circumstances, has access to the high-quality education they deserve, rooted in the timeless values of Torah. We know that this work is challenging, but we also know that it is essential.

So to all of our ambassadors, donors, and supporters, we want to say thank you. Your generosity and commitment to our schools have been nothing short of inspiring. Together, with Hashem's help, we are ensuring that our children receive an exceptional education, and that our community continues to thrive for many years to come.



Joseph A. Walder Elizabeth Walder

JOSEPH AND ELIZABETH WALDER
FOUNDERS AND BOARD DIRECTORS

Kehillah Fund Schools Nurture the Joy of Learning and Jewish Connection

Partnering with Kehillah Fund, our schools continually seek new ways to inspire students in their education and connection to Torah. Through a wide range of innovative programs—academic, social, and Judaic—both students and teachers have achieved unprecedented success.



Hebrew reading fluency remains an essential focus at **Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov (JDBY)**, and this year's Time for Tehillim Program was a tremendous success. The program was designed to increase students' familiarity with the words of Tehillim, making it easier for them to recite Tehillim in the future. Across grades 2-5, over 360 students challenged themselves to reading Tehillim at home. Both parents and teachers noted an increase in students' fluency across all grade levels, and students reported that they would be excited to take on the challenge again.

Addressing a school-wide need for expanded occupational and speech-language services, **REACH**, a professional development and resource program under

the auspices of the Associated Talmud Torahs, was there with support. Early intervention is key, and the expanded program reached more than 1,000 students. The program was a game-changer for teachers, who were able to learn from experts and apply that knowledge in their classrooms.

Shaarei Chinuch Day School brought the joy and wonder of caring for animals to students while instilling the values of responsibility and empathy. Rochel Atkins, a former parent at the school, generously provided quail eggs and an incubator for the students to use. With excitement, the students observed the eggs hatch and are now nurturing the chicks. Through this experience, they have learned the value of pets as wonderful additions to life and the importance of taking care of the world that Hashem has given us.

An expanded Mishmar program is helping boys at **Arie Crown Hebrew Day School** cover more ground in Talmud and Mishnah, while giving older boys a place to review schoolwork, do Limudei Kodesh homework, and study for tests. With extended hours and days, the program, located at Adas Yeshurun, has answered parents' requests for higher levels of learning and helped students connect and learn face-to-face following a COVID-era increase in screen time.

“When we see the monthly debit from our account, we are happy, knowing that we are joining our community in support of our community's schools.”

—Rabbi Shmuel and Sarah Wineberg
Cheder Lubavitch Parents



Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School students are now able to read from their very own kosher Torah, thanks to the dedicated work of Sofer Zerach Greenfield. The new Torah arrived at Akiba-Schechter in January 2023, and on January 31, students participated in a ceremonial completion, where they held the kulmus (quill) while Rabbi Greenfield wrote the final lines. A 7th-grader has already read from the new Torah at his Bar Mitzvah, and plans are underway for other students to read from the Torah and serve as mentors to younger students.

Observing how **Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School** students relate differently to various parts of the day, Rabbi Michael Friedman developed a new curriculum called “בכל דרכיך” (In All Your Ways). Rabbi Friedman aimed to showcase how other areas of learning could be applied to Judaism and Torah. The program brings Torah topics to life while exploring how STEM can be used to deepen our understanding of Torah, foster *emunah*, and enhance our appreciation of Hashem's world.

Mrs. Chana Greenberg, a Resource Specialist at **Cheder Lubavitch Hebrew Day School**, understands the importance of robust phonemic awareness skills in helping children decode words—an essential foundation for reading and writing. As a result, she introduced the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness program to Pre-1A and



1st-grade classes. Engaging and interactive activities, such as rhyming games, have significantly enhanced the students' ability to dissect sounds in words and reassemble them. Students have also started reading and spelling basic short vowel words.

In the aftermath of the challenging pandemic years, **Keshet** has increased resources to bolster students' mental health and socialization. An art therapist now collaborates with small groups of students from every grade level to delve into emotions and experiment with new communication methods. To provide middle school students with socialization opportunities they missed during remote learning, Keshet has combined recess

“There is a beauty in supporting all of our Jewish day schools.”

—Devorah and Joey Seif
Arie Crown Parents





with a local school for grades 6-8. The school reports that these new programs are nearly the most popular—coming in second only to therapy dog visits.

At **Yeshiva Ohr Boruch**, Menahel Rabbi Heshy Forster initiated a structured recess program to assist children in navigating the social aspects of play, such as learning to lose or take turns without frustration. A staff member now organizes activities for students in grades 1-6. The younger grades frequently participate in running games like tag or capture the flag, while the older grades engage in sports such as basketball or football. The boys now enjoy wholesome play with increased exercise, reduced arguments, and inclusive participation.

As part of their Lemudei Chol program, grades 3-5 at **JCFS Knapp Yeshiva** participated in a collaborative game arcade STEM project. Students built their own games using simple materials such as cardboard, tape, string, and other supplies. They then showcased their arcade, complete with prizes, to other classes at the school. This teacher-driven initiative provided valuable hands-on experience, enhancing fine motor coordination, social-emotional skills, and understanding of mathematical and physical concepts.

Students at **Torah Academy of Buffalo Grove** now have a dedicated space for davening, thanks to the transformation of a back warehouse currently under renovation. Now, every morning, 39 elementary students begin their day with joyful tefillah in a formal shul setting, complete with beautiful chairs, enhancing their kavanah and connection to Hashem. Additionally, the students' proficiency in tefillah has advanced tremendously as a result. After davening, Rabbi Holman teaches the children Shabbos zemiros, songs from the Haggadah, or a Mishnah from Pirkei Avos.

“ **The Kehillah Fund inspires the united support of our community which ensures a diverse set of incredible educational options for our children. Our children deserve that.** ”

—Mushky Kulek
Shaarei Chinuch Co-Director



The Achdus Fund

Vital Support for Day School Families

Although our community strives to make Jewish education accessible for all, the tuition burden remains a significant challenge for many families, especially in light of recent inflation. The Achdus Fund is designed to help day schools support families in need, distributing funding annually based on schools' requests. In 2022, the Kehillah Fund distributed \$79,640 in Achdus funding for 181 students, making a difference for 87 families.

Arie Crown Hebrew Day School turns no child away due to financial constraints. But for families experiencing severe struggles, “the Achdus Fund has been a tremendous resource,” says Sam Medow, Executive Director. “The support gives families the comfort to know they have community partners to help.”

At **Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov–Yeshivas Tiferes Tzvi (JDBY-YTT)**, where the Fund supported 42 students in 2022, Mrs. Ahuva Wainhaus, JDBY Menacheles shared, “The Achdus Fund is very helpful to families that struggle to pay minimum tuition.” One JDBY parent wrote, “Thank you for advocating on my behalf! Bezras Hashem I hope I can get back to doing it myself!”

Because the Achdus Fund is there for families, schools like **Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School** are able to fund critical school resources, enrichment, and faculty professional development. “The Achdus Fund is a wonderful resource,” says Dov Shandolov, Hillel Torah Business Administrator. “It allows schools to focus on the education of our students. Since its inception, Kehillah Fund has been a leading innovator in school funding that other models across the country have tried to emulate.”

Why We Said Yes to Kehillah Fund



By **Robin Loeb**,
Associate Director

My long-standing connection to Kehillah Fund goes back to 2005, when my husband Harlan and I received a personal invitation from Nesanel Siegal to join an initiative supporting Chicago's Orthodox day schools. Little did we know just how unique it was (and still is). Kehillah Fund is well-known as the model for communal-based funding in the United States supporting the city's spectrum of Orthodox Jewish K-8 schools. What a testament to our special community!

When we became donors, our oldest child had just started kindergarten at Arie Crown. We were asked to contribute at a level that worked for us. We saw it as a meaningful tzedakah opportunity in which our monthly donation could have significant impact. We were proud to be part of this collective enterprise. Indeed, the power of community is evident in the upwards of 1,700 donors who give to Kehillah Fund each year, and the impact is evident in the more than \$15 million allocated to our schools over the last 18 years!

Almost 20 years later, as Associate Director of the Kehillah Fund, I am privileged to work with parents, alumni, teachers, Rabbonim, ambassadors, and a great team representing the diversity of our community. Best of all, I see children in every school benefit from our community's generosity.

Kehillah Fund's value proposition is profound in its simplicity: everyone can help support Chicago's Orthodox day schools. Please join me in contributing to Kehillah Fund—a one-of-a-kind organization inspiring a shared commitment to Jewish education.



Ambassador Spotlight

Going Above and Beyond for Jewish Education



Eli and Baila Berkovich, proud parents of four children, reside in West Rogers Park. Three of their children attend Arie Crown Hebrew Day School, with their youngest not yet in day school. The

Berkovich family has generously supported the Kehillah Fund for the past 15 years.

Last year, Eli and Baila deepened their commitment to the Kehillah Fund by becoming ambassadors for the organization's second annual crowdfunding campaign. Initially hesitant, Baila found herself stepping out of her comfort zone. "I thought we'd only do some light social media posting, but in the end, we surprised ourselves," Baila shared.

The couple discovered they made a formidable team. Embracing the process wholeheartedly, Eli particularly enjoyed the friendly competition and sense of urgency throughout the 36-hour campaign. Their combined efforts led to impressive success: they increased their fundraising goal during the campaign and ultimately raised over \$5,000 from 37 donors—the highest number of donors secured by an ambassador team.

Eli and Baila deeply value the Kehillah Fund's mission of serving all K-8 schools in our community. "It's wonderful that we're all working toward one goal: providing kids with a wholesome Torah education. It felt great to be part of that."

For Eli, who originally hails from Belarus and relocated to Chicago with his family at age four, the experience held particular significance. "Growing up, I was told how challenging it was to be Jewish in Russia. Two generations of my family missed out on Jewish education. Now, I am grateful to have the opportunity to provide that for my children."

From their initial hesitance, Eli and Baila have transformed into passionate advocates, eager to inspire others to join Kehillah Fund's upcoming campaigns. Their unwavering passion and commitment to the Kehillah Fund stand as an example of the profound impact community support can have, underscoring the vital importance of investing in the future of Jewish education.

Three Primary Funds

Kehillah Fund allocates dollars to our schools through three primary funds:

GENERAL FUND—Reliable monthly distributions provide a baseline of support to our schools. Funds are allocated based on the total number of students enrolled in kindergarten through 8th grade.

ACHDUS FUND—Financial support to bridge the gap in our schools for families who cannot afford to meet their tuition commitment. Funds are allocated per request to each school on an annual basis.

RESOURCE FUND—Supplemental aid to support students with specialized learning needs (i.e. adaptive materials and technology, teacher training, salaries, and more). Funds are allocated based on the number of enrolled students in kindergarten through 8th grade.



A Message from Our Rabbinic Advisor

Dear Chicago Jewish Community,

The transmission of the Torah at Sinai remains the most transformative event in world history, shaping the essence of Jewish education to this day. As we reflect on the importance of our Kehillah Fund, let us draw inspiration from two profound lessons found in the way the Torah was given and received.

Our Sages taught us that Hashem would only bestow the Torah upon a united nation, one where no individual was left behind. Moreover, our ancestors' heartfelt declaration of "Naaseh V'nishma," "We will do and we will listen," demonstrated our unwavering commitment to do what's right, no matter the circumstances.

The message is clear: the Torah is the heart of our heritage. Each child deserves the opportunity to access the finest Jewish education, irrespective of their background or financial means. As a community, we must stand together, passionately dedicating ourselves to making this vision a reality.

Thank you for embracing the Kehillah Fund's mission and for believing in the importance of nurturing our children's Jewish education.

May we witness the continued growth, happiness, and good health of all our children.

With warmest regards,



RABBI YAAKOV ROBINSON
RABBINIC ADVISOR



Monthly Giving Makes the Most of Your Support

Learning never stops. Not for the students engaged in the exceptional Torah-based education at Kehillah Fund partner schools. Not for the generations of Chicago Orthodox community members dedicated to nurturing our culture and connection. When you give monthly to the Kehillah Fund, your support keeps pace with the speed of learning.

The truth is, monthly giving is the best way for you to support our community-based funding model:

- A monthly income flow mirrors the pace of expenses incurred by the schools.
- With monthly contributions, we can build a reliable, predictable cash flow for our schools.

- A monthly donation affords donors the opportunity to make payments over the course of the year. With monthly contributions that suit your budget, whether \$18, \$100, \$360 or \$500+ per month, individuals or families can make a meaningful and affordable donation to support Torah education.

Thanks to regular monthly donations to the Kehillah Fund, we've been able to maintain and increase giving to our schools each year, even while navigating a pandemic and economic uncertainty.

We're proud to help our Jewish day schools make an impact every day. Please consider making a monthly gift to help our schools provide the very best education to our children.

We thank all who have supported our commitment to Jewish education. Through your contributions, you are helping to sustain our community, our children, and our future. To view our complete 2022 Donor Roll, visit kehillahfund.org/annual-report.

Stay Connected and Informed

For those of you on social media, following the Kehillah Fund Facebook page is a great way to learn about what's happening in our community and day schools. Hear about the schools and personalities that make up our wonderfully diverse community, and stay up-to-date

on our latest news. Our messages convey our shared commitment to Jewish education and our gratitude to all of you for your support. **Be sure to like and follow us on Facebook!**



Our People

Kehillah Fund Team

Max Dayan, Executive Director
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Esther Krystal, Operations Manager
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Rabbi Yaakov Robinson, Rabbinic Advisor

Dr. Joseph and Mrs. Elizabeth Walder,
Founders and Board Directors

Ways to Give

Keep Our Kehillah Strong

Become a Monthly Donor

Giving monthly is the best way to support our kehillah. Become a member of the Kehillah Fund family by scheduling your monthly gift at kehillahfund.org/monthly.

Increase Your Monthly Gift

Consider increasing your monthly donation to amplify your impact at kehillahfund.org/increase.

Make a One-Time Gift

Make a difference by scheduling your one-time donation at kehillahfund.org/onetimegift.

Other Gift Opportunities

Life insurance, real estate, stock gifts, will gifting and other tax strategies are available at kehillahfund.org/plannedgiving.

Sponsor a Day of Learning

Honor a loved one, commemorate a yartzeit, honor a parent, teacher or leader, add significance to a simcha, or create a zechus for a loved one's refuah. Learn more at kehillahfund.org/dayoflearning.

Employer Match Program

Many employers match employees' charitable contributions. Gifts from spouses and retirees may also qualify for a match. Visit kehillahfund.org/employermatch.

Corporate Giving

Learn how your business can show support for our community through a gift to the Kehillah Fund at kehillahfund.org/corporategiving.

We also welcome gifts by check to Kehillah Fund, 5215 Old Orchard Road, Suite 450, Skokie, IL 60077. All donations are tax-deductible. EIN 26-3948613

To learn more, visit kehillahfund.org/donate, or contact Max Dayan, Executive Director, at mdayan@kehillahfund.org or (224) 470-2927.



“ Families are tremendously grateful for the Achdus Fund support that allows them to continue in our school during financially difficult times. ”

—Miriam Kass, Akiba-Schechter Principal

Our Schools

Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School

Arie Crown Hebrew Day School (ACHDS)

Cheder Lubavitch Hebrew Day School

Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School

JCFS Knapp Yeshiva

Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov –
Yeshivas Tiferes Tzvi (JDBY-YTT)

Keshet

REACH

Shaarei Chinuch Day School

Torah Academy of Buffalo Grove

Yeshiva Ohr Boruch

