



המדרשה ע"ש שניאור זלמן שכטר
SOLOMON SCHECHTER

ACADÉMIE • ACADEMY



Nurturing

Future Leaders

A Strategic Plan for Empowering
Academic Excellence, Jewish Identity,
and Community Engagement at
Solomon Schechter Academy

2023-2026

ssamontreal.org

A Message from Our Head of School and President of the Board of Trustees

We are excited to present to you the goals and vision included in our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

As the Academy enters its 54th year, we grow by building on the strategic plans of the past. We must continuously evolve to meet the needs of our students while delivering the highest academic standards; to instill the values of *Derech Eretz* - respect, responsibility, and integrity - developing moral character and Jewish identity; and to ensure financial sustainability, strategic governance, and strong leadership.

Our new strategic plan is an **ambitious 3-year plan**, as opposed to previous plans, which were 5-10 years long. Our aim is to be more adaptable to an ever-changing world. The lessons of the last few years have shown us that **we must be ready to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.**

We thank the many stakeholders who were consulted, including parents, staff, alumni, and other community members, who provided valuable insights that helped us to establish the strategic priorities and direction for Solomon Schechter Academy. We are grateful for the steadfast leadership of the Strategic Planning Committee, in particular, Melanie Weinstock, Daniel Ehrenfeld, and Julien Marais, in guiding this important plan to fruition.

With your help and support, we will do our part to hand over to the next generation, as our new vision states, a school that provides our students with the tools to achieve academic success, the guidance to become confident individuals engaged in their education, and the foundation to become leaders in Quebec and beyond, while instilling within each child a strong moral character, a meaningful Jewish identity, and a sense of community. *MiDor, LeDor!* From Generation to Generation!



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Steven Erdelyi
HEAD OF SCHOOL
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A handwritten signature in white ink on a dark blue background.

Robbie Peck
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES
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The Strength of Our History

Founded in 1969, Solomon Schechter Academy (SSA) is proud to be **the largest mainstream private Jewish elementary and preschool in Montreal**. Educating more than 400 children annually, Solomon Schechter Academy lays the foundation for a lifetime of learning and instills a passion for excellence and Jewish traditions. The Academy's educational process is a vibrant partnership between students, parents, and educators, beginning with Junior Pre-K at age three, continuing through elementary school graduation at age twelve.

The Academy's strong foundation originated from its roots as the Shaare Zion Academy (1951-1969), continuously evolving to meet the educational needs of the contemporary Jewish community. In the early 1970's, a French-immersion stream was created, later becoming a full "section française", which today offers all students, including those with English eligibility, the tremendous opportunity to learn in a **French-immersion environment**.



Over time, SSA's facilities have also expanded beyond the many bright and spacious classrooms.

The **Amiel Early Childhood Centre** was inaugurated in 2013 and provides our youngest students in preschool and Kindergarten the formative indoor and outdoor spaces in which to learn and grow. The **Azrieli SMART Floor**, together with the **Beverley and Harvey Greenberg Makerspace**, allow students of the Academy to explore their creativity and develop the skills needed for future success in the science and technology fields and in the arts. This includes coding, robotics, 3D design, music, visual arts, computer animation, video production, and more. The state-of-the-art **Sondra & Martin Schwartz Family Gymnasium**, as well as brand new playgrounds on both campuses, enable each child to enjoy sports on a daily basis and to pursue higher levels of athletics and wellness.

The heart of a Solomon Schechter Academy education remains its Judaic Studies and commitment to developing strong Jewish values and a love for Israel within each student. Highlights include **Tikkun Olam activities** for all age levels, the annual model **Seders** and **Chagigot**, the **Bnot Sherut** and **Shinshin** programs, through which we welcome inspiring Israeli youth to spend the year with us at SSA, and the Grade 6 trip to Israel, an incredible program unique to SSA. While **academic excellence** has long been a cornerstone of SSA, the nature of learning has changed dramatically in recent years.

We are a school of choice for **diverse learners**, knowing that no two children learn in the same manner, and that social-emotional wellbeing goes hand-in-hand with success in learning. The Academy's team of teachers, teaching assistants, resource and clinical specialists work together and with SSA families, so that each child may reach their full potential, receiving the extra support and enrichment they need to succeed.

Today's Solomon Schechter Academy is an **inclusive environment**, welcoming families from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds who practice a variety of Jewish traditions, reflecting the unique mosaic of Montreal and enriching the community that is SSA. We are proud to be Montreal's leading elementary school and look forward to reaching new heights in the years to come.





Vision, Mission, and Values

At the heart of Solomon Schechter Academy's Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 is a focus on **preparing our students for the future**. Our aim is to build on our strengths and address areas where we strive to improve – all centered on a new vision that reinforces our current mission and values.

Vision

To provide our students with the tools to achieve academic success, the guidance to become confident individuals engaged in their education, and the foundation to become leaders in Quebec and beyond, while instilling within each child a strong moral character, a meaningful Jewish identity, and a sense of community.

Mission

Solomon Schechter lays the foundation for a lifetime of learning and instills a passion for excellence and Jewish traditions.

Values

The following core values guide our decision-making and behaviour throughout all elements of our school:

- **Respect**
- **Integrity**
- **Responsibility**
- **Tikkun Olam**
- **Innovation**
- **Excellence**





A Plan for Our Future

With a strong history and mission as our guide, in 2022 we undertook the goal of delivering a fresh and relevant Strategic Plan to guide Solomon Schechter Academy from 2023-2026.

Formulating such a plan was an ambitious endeavour, led by the Strategic Planning Committee, and supported by many stakeholder groups in the SSA community. Current and past parents, staff members, and recent alumni shared their first-hand experiences through confidential surveys, while open-forum discussions held with current parents, and a review of feedback from prospective future parents, established common themes which helped to form the key priorities for the strategic plan.

From these priorities, a new vision and a **four-pillar strategic plan** was established.

The Academy's mission remains, as well as the **six core values established during the previous strategic plan**. Each pillar includes a number of related priorities and commitments to our community. The administration, strategic planning committee, and Board of Trustees have identified the tasks and key performance indicators that are required in order to achieve the priorities of each pillar within the strategic plan. **Progress will be measured regularly** throughout each school year and **reported to the community** annually.

The four strategic pillars that will inform our focus over the next three years are further elaborated upon within this plan. They are:

- 1. Excellent Multilingual Education with a Whole-Child Approach**
- 2. Derech Eretz**
- 3. Financial Sustainability**
- 4. Strategic Governance and Leadership**

The continued support from our community is critical to ensuring the success of Solomon Schechter Academy. As we set out to bring the vision of this plan to life, we welcome your feedback and comments.



Strategic Pillars 2023-2026

Excellent Multilingual Education with a Whole-Child Approach

Solomon Schechter Academy's dedication to excellence extends beyond academic achievement to encompass the holistic development of every child. Through a **whole-child approach to education**, we are committed to creating a learning environment that **nurtures students' social-emotional, physical, and cognitive growth**, preparing them to thrive as engaged citizens and successful contributors to our global community.

Academic success and excellence have long been hallmarks of SSA's reputation and are universally recognized among our stakeholders as underlying the Academy's identity and purpose, moving forward. The tools each student needs to achieve success and prepare for life beyond SSA, differs for each child. With this insight, we commit to differentiation both inside and outside the classroom, through a combined approach of streaming, resource and enriched support, small-group instruction, and tailoring our teaching to the unique needs of each child.

Parents wish for their children to acquire **confidence and self-assuredness** through their SSA experience, including from their classroom learning, and also through their

interactions with staff, administrators, and their fellow students. Confidence also stems from feeling nurtured in a safe space. We want our students to develop a love of learning and to be engaged in their education, with active interest and enthusiasm. Beyond the material itself, they learn how to learn.

A fundamental goal of Solomon Schechter Academy is to **prepare our students to excel** in whatever path they may choose going forward, providing each child the tools and the opportunities to become bilingual leaders who can thrive in Quebec, Canada, and around the world.





We Commit To

- Providing greater differentiation within the curriculum across all subjects and grade levels.
- Enhancing our French curriculum with a focus on oral communication skills.
- Reviewing our trilingual pedagogical model to enhance student learning by providing a full spectrum of support and enrichment.
- Developing innovative ways to deliver our Judaic Studies curriculum and program.
- Investing in our STEAM curriculum by integrating it across other subject areas and leveraging new technology and materials for creative learning.
- Modernizing our classrooms to support active learning models with flexible seating and a variety of tools and resources.
- Providing unique opportunities for students' to showcase their accomplishments, achievements, and skills.

Derech Eretz

As a school community, we are committed to instilling the Jewish values of **Derech Eretz** - respect, responsibility, and integrity - into the fabric of everything we do. By committing to **Derech Eretz** as a strategic priority, we are not only cultivating strong character traits in our students, but also preparing them to become **compassionate leaders who will positively impact the world around them.**

The members of our SSA community appreciate that our school is not only a place to learn the academic curriculum, but to develop their moral compass; SSA endeavors to emphasize **moral character**, so that our children become good citizens and know how to behave, even when no one else is looking.

As a Jewish school, Solomon Schechter Academy students receive a robust education in Jewish history, practices, rituals, values, culture and in the Hebrew language, as well as develop a connection to the State of Israel, all of which is critical in the formation of their **Jewish identity.**



We strive to create a unified, cohesive and **welcoming community** at Solomon Schechter Academy, embracing the diversity of our student families and community members, while ensuring that each one feels they belong and forms an integral part of the whole. SSA also nurtures a sense of community beyond its walls, with respect to the Jewish community, as well as broader Montreal, Quebec, and Canadian society.

We Commit To

- Increasing initiatives that encourage and develop students' prosocial behaviour.
- Integrating activities and providing opportunities to build our students' sense of community and Jewish identity.
- Developing school-wide and grade-level *Tikkun Olam* programs.
- Expanding leadership experiences for our students.





Financial Sustainability

We are committed to ensuring that **future generations** of Jewish children will have the opportunity to experience the excellence of a Solomon Schechter education. Our obligation to future students and parents is to make certain that our school possesses the **human resources, intellectual acuity, and financial capital** needed for long-term financial sustainability and operational excellence, to continue fulfilling our mission.



We Commit To

- Developing a balanced, long-term financial plan that encompasses a sustainable revenue and cost structure, supported by an improved annual budgeting process.
- Ensuring the Academy's infrastructure meets the environmental learning needs of our students.
- Leveraging opportunities for alternative sources of funding.



We Commit To

- Providing the Academy with a strong future of lay leadership through succession planning, effective and strategic recruitment, and opportunities for mentorship at all levels of governance.
- Developing the Academy's professional leadership in a forward-thinking manner geared towards long-term stability.
- Ensuring school policies are aligned with the vision and values of the Academy.

Strategic Governance and Leadership

Solomon Schechter Academy has benefitted from a long history of inspiring and exceptional leadership, both within the school administration and among the volunteer leadership. Professionals who are passionate about our school and have expertise in a variety of fields join together to continuously raise the bar in the pursuit of a common goal: providing our youth with an **exceptional Jewish and secular education**. Solomon Schechter Academy is dedicated to developing our strategic governance and leadership in order to deliver on its mission and ensure the highest **quality education** for its students.



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