



SJCS | Seattle Jewish
Community School

2024-2025/5785 Impact Report



"Hope is a light in the darkness, a light as bright as a pure heart."

Hope is a wonderful thing, as wonderful as the world, giving strength another try."



Ella Feldman,
SJCS Class of 2027

A Year of Hope

Thank you for partnering with us to make Seattle Jewish Community School's (SJCS) mission and vision a reality. During the 2024–2025/5785 school year, we focused on *tikvah*/תִּקְוָה (hope) as a precursor to bold action for our school and our communities.

As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, of blessed memory, taught, “hope is the belief that, together, we can make the world better.”



Please join us in reflecting upon the last year at SJCS, with gratitude to donors like you for making it possible.

Hope in a Thriving SJCS Community

- A team of parent volunteers guided prospective families on dozens of tours, greeting a robust number of interested families with warmth and enthusiasm.
- We filled our incoming kindergarten class for the second year in a row, welcoming 16 students to the Class of 2031 beginning this fall.
- We established an SJCS *Tzevet Nihul/צוות ניהול* (Leadership Team), ready to manage the school's current and future growth.
- SJCS lay and professional leaders came together at a retreat to think strategically about how best to seize our strong prospects for growth, while sustaining the cherished closeness of the institution.
- We secured additional office space across the street from campus, accommodating current and anticipated growth and allowing us to reconfigure spaces in our main building in service of our educational program.

"I have witnessed the tangible nature of hope from the support of this strong SJCS community. Lifelong friendships are formed from the sense of belonging rooted in the mission of SJCS. Through these friendships, the students build their capacity to contribute, shape, and give to the larger community."

– SJCS Teacher

A young child with dark hair, wearing a black and white plaid shirt, is smiling and holding up a hand-drawn sign. The sign is made of cardboard and features the word "PEACE" written in large, stylized letters. The letters are painted with blue and orange acrylic paint. There are small, colorful heart and dot stickers scattered around the letters. The child is holding the sign with both hands, one at the top and one at the bottom, and is looking directly at the camera.

- We advanced governance practices and effective succession planning, beginning the school year, for the first time in SJCS history, with a President-elect in place.
- We enhanced parent education by becoming a member of Parent Map's ParentEd Talks program.
- We received our EnviroStars Green Business designation, highlighting our commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

- At our first Arts Showcase, parents, grandparents, and friends watched students dance, sing, and show off their artwork before enjoying lunch together.
- We incorporated National Squirrel Appreciation Day as an annual celebratory event at SJCS in honor of our favorite squirrel, our mascot, *Sasson HaSna'ee*.
- We held our first Safety & Security Week to help students, parents, and staff practice protocols that keep us all healthy and safe.
- 94% of current parents contributed to the *Hashrishu Et Zir'ay HaTikvah* (Plant the Seeds of Hope) Annual Fund campaign, well surpassing national average rates of parent participation across independent schools.
- Our spring event, *L'Sasson/לשון* (To Joy!), highlighted ties to the SJCS community across time and generations, exceeding fundraising goals and raising a total of \$105,000:
 - Our host committee members were SJCS grandparents whose children also attended SJCS
 - A group of SJCS alums from across the years performed a heartfelt song together
 - Members of the SJCS Class of 2018, nearing their high school graduation, formed their own reunion and filled a table
 - We held the event at Hillel UW and acknowledged Amy Huppin Sherer, former SJCS parent and teacher, who exemplifies community ties as the departing long-time Greenstein Family Executive Director of Hillel UW



- We received 549 gifts from 222 donors, including 71 new donors, surpassing our total fundraising goals for the year (for a second consecutive year).

Hope in Broadened Horizons, in Green Lake and Beyond

- The Parents Association Leadership Council (PALC) hosted STEM Night for students and parents to explore the effects of sunscreen through a microscope, conduct Play-doh appendectomies, build 3D printers, learn coding, and more!
- We addressed the educational needs of diverse learners through academic learning support services and enhanced behavioral health learning support to foster community and relationship development within our classrooms.
- We worked in Green Lake Park to weed and mulch trees and flower beds, both as part of our celebration of *Tu B'Shvat* (ט'ז בשבט) (The 15th of Shvat) and on a special spring service day.



- We added a special component to our annual Pesach/פסח (Passover) Learners' Seder by having each student plan their own "kosher for Passover" lunch following their family's traditions.
- We supported David Zimand, our head of school, through a full year of aveilut/ אבלות (mourning) following the loss of his mother, culminating in his final recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish and a presentation about her life and values.



Our fifth graders, together with peers from KapKa Cooperative School, visited Green Lake Park to learn about efforts to build a frog sanctuary and to restore native fauna.

Our third, fourth, and fifth graders participated in an author's summit with students from KapKa, they met with the author, shared their own stories, and enjoyed lunch and recess together.

We enjoyed the newly-remodeled Green Lake Library:

- Our fifth graders attended the reopening and were featured in an article about the event
- All students walked to the library regularly to check out books, with many securing their first library card and opening their own Libby accounts

Our students, along with many parents, made the most of special sites in our region, visiting the Burke Museum, Climate Pledge Arena (for a Seattle Storm game!), Discovery Park, the Tilth Alliance, the UW campus and farm, and Wiley Slough, among other places.

As part of our joyful approach to arrival each day, we initiated a weekly "Celebration of Cities" program, highlighting music tied to different places — several students and their families made playlists for Baltimore, Cape Town, Charlotte, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, Medellin, New York, Pittsburgh, and Tel Aviv.



"What gives us hope through uncertain times is the strength of our children's roots in their identity, community, shared Jewish values, curiosity and love of learning, and compassion—which begins in their homes and in SJCS classrooms and branches out into care for the greater community and world."

– SJCS Parents

Hope in a Strong Seattle Jewish Community

SJCS students swept first, second, and third places, and the honorable mention in the 2025 Art of Remembering: Student Art Contest Honoring Holocaust Survivors sponsored by the Holocaust Center for Humanity, a contest open to all fifth and sixth graders across four states (WA, AK, ID, and MT).

We participated in a community-wide celebration of *Lag BaOmer* / ל"ג בעומר (Thirty-Third Day of Counting the Omer), bringing together students from six Greater Seattle Jewish day schools (SJCS, JDS, MMSC, NYHS, SHA, and TDS).

Our first and second graders visited Congregation Beth Shalom, Mercaz Seattle, and Temple Beth Am, and hosted rabbis from Kavana Cooperative and Chabad of NW Seattle, to learn about diverse ways members of our community practice Judaism, including in celebrating *Shabbat*.

We built on our productive partnership with Seattle's PJ Library program, bringing many dozens of young families to our campus for events including *Tot Shabbatot*, *Stories in the Sukkah*, Kindergarten Readiness Panel, and a *Tu B'Shvat* Celebration.

Our Kindergarten Readiness Panel and partnership with PJ Library attracted national attention, through an invitation for Ross Diamond, our director of admissions and marketing, to present on it to admissions professionals around the country.

Our board established a tuition discount for children of Jewish communal professionals called the *Oskim B'Tzarchei Tzibur* / (Those Engaged in Communal Needs) program.



- We built on the successes the *Kehillah M'Shulevet* (Integrated Community) program, bringing together fifth graders from both SJCS and JDS:
 - Enhancing our walking tour of historic Jewish neighborhoods with a trip to Pike Place Market to learn about its Sephardic roots, visiting the celebrated Pure Food Fish Market and meeting its manager, the fourth generation of the Sephardic family that established Pure Food Fish in 1911
 - Incorporating a silent film into the annual Purim *Spiel* written and performed by the students, this year presented as a Film Festival
 - Hosting the second Sephardic *Shabbaton*, which included a Friday night Sephardic feast for fifth graders from across the city and a full *Shabbat* experience made possible by home hospitality in Seward Park

- David Zimand and Gabrielle Azose, our director of curriculum and pedagogy, presented on [Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day School's podcast](#) about place-based learning opportunities and the Seattle Sephardic Heritage Initiative.

- David and Gabrielle also presented on the *Kehillah M'Shulevet* program at the biennial Prizmah conference

"Being Jewish gives me hope. To me, it means embodying traditions like Shabbat and holidays, being part of a community at SJCS, and getting to learn who you are based on your traditions. It's so special to be Jewish because there aren't that many of us."

– SJCS Alum



- We packaged 850 pounds of food for Jewish Family Services.

- We secured access for adults in our community to national Hidden Sparks and Wellness Institute parent education programs, including ones focused on helping children navigate rising anti-Semitism.

Hope in Meaningful Connections to Israel

● We joined schools from five continents in the special Global *Mifgash*/מפגש (meeting) Program to mark the first anniversary of October 7:

- Our students participated in making a music video for a verse from *Tehillim*/גמ כי אליך (Psalms), *Gam Ki Elech* ("Though I Walk..."), set to music by Yossi Hershkovitz, a beloved high school principal in Jerusalem who was killed early in the Gaza war
- One of our students was chosen to pose a live question during the event

● Our students met with current and former IDF soldiers:

- On *Yom HaZikaron*/יום הזיכרון (Israel's Memorial Day), we met with those visiting Seattle as representatives of Israel
- Hosted by JDS, we met with participants in the Brothers for Life program, founded in Seattle, which pairs newly wounded soldiers with supportive mentors who have been previously wounded

● Our students also met with Jewish, Arab, Druze, and Bedouin high school students visiting Seattle as part of the *Cholamei HaGalil*/חולמי הגליל/*Chalimi AlJalil* (Galilee Dreamers) program, designed to provide opportunities for positive encounters among Israel's diverse population.

"Children are our future and our hope. We have witnessed and enjoyed seeing the depths of connection and breadths of teaching of Jewish and Israeli topics at SJCS. It is more than a school, it is a home away from home, a loving and nurturing community, and a place where lasting memories and bonds are forged."
– SJCS Grandparents

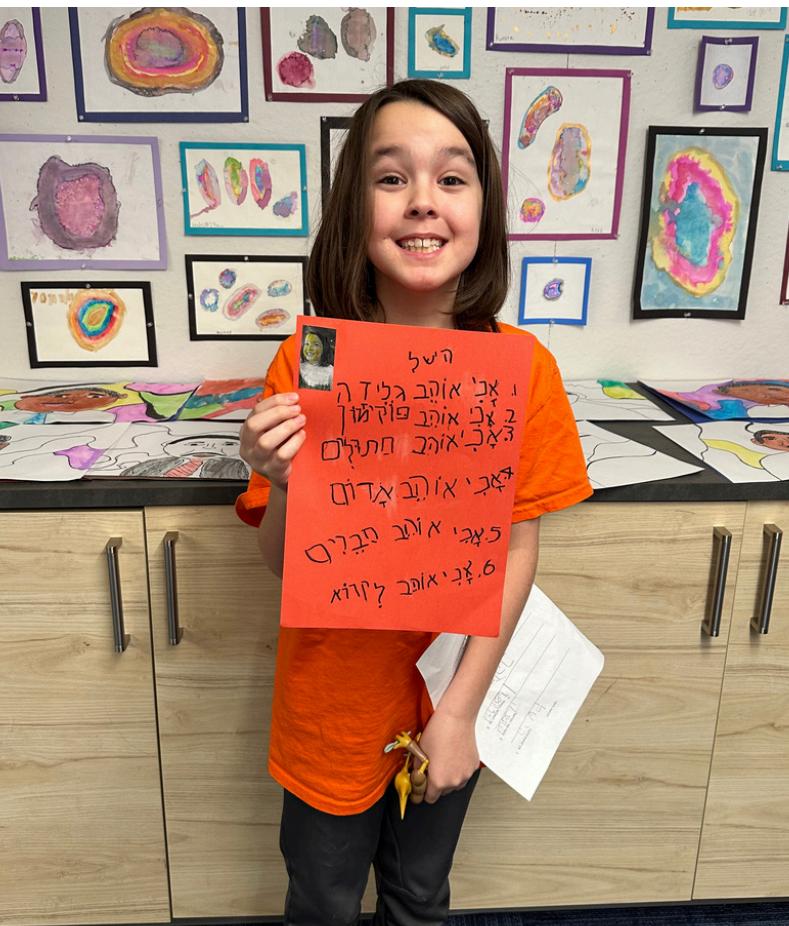


● We reviewed SJCS Hebrew and Israel education to meet the current moment:

- Participating for a second year in Cascadia, a professional learning community for Hebrew language educators from across the Pacific Northwest, overseen by Hebrew at the Center, and adopted a new Hebrew curriculum this year, while also building on our Hebrew enrichment opportunities
- Enhancing our Israel education curriculum, drawing on extensive resources made available through our membership in the innovative, multi-media IsraelLINK and Unpacked, Jr. programs.
- Setting the foundation for engaging in deep communal consideration of Israel education at SJCS during this period of historic evolutions that will continue to influence the lives of our students as members of the international Jewish community

● Our third, fourth, and fifth grade students participated in a penpal project with similar-aged students from Be'er Sheva.

● We hosted our second annual alumni Sukkot event where attendees made cards for SJCS families currently living in Israel.



Thank you for supporting SJCS!

Together with our community, we continue to provide a welcoming educational community that combines the timeless wisdom of Jewish intellectual heritage with contemporary insights into children's learning and growth. Your generosity gives us hope in a vibrant future.

Please note that any omissions or misspellings on this list are entirely unintentional, and we sincerely apologize for any oversight.

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