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Hebrew Academy – A Synchronous Education Program Goes Live

Bryn Harari, PhD | Principal, Hebrew Academy



After an unprecedented and successful transition to distance learning last March, the Hebrew Academy of Orange County swiftly transformed and re-imagined itself again to re-open its doors in September. Nearly 300 students participated in a synchronous program that has given parents and students the most expansive and inclusive opportunities for learning during this Pandemic.

The Hebrew Academy offers an educational program that differs from many others, providing both onsite instruction and distance learning synchronously (at the same time). While many schools offer a hybrid program, where parents must choose one option for the whole year, and where students may only have the option of learning in-person for part of the time, Hebrew Academy students were warmly welcomed back on campus for a full in-person program. The students started the new year knowing that teachers and the school were prepared to adapt and respond to any situation that might arise, ensuring that students would have access to seamless and uninterrupted learning throughout the year.

To make this possible, classrooms were prepared with state-of-the-art technology that enables teachers to teach students in the classroom while engaging students at home via Google Meet. Teachers are trained on numerous platforms to ensure seamless consistency, as well as safe and secure access. To support parents, a teacher was hired to assist



parents and students as they learn from home. This teacher contacts each family at the start of the day to ascertain that they can access the technology, that they are aware of what the assignments are and have access to materials. The teacher is also able to provide additional tutoring or instruction where needed.

In addition to providing continuous and uninterrupted learning, this model of education has powerful implications for a

changing educational landscape. For students such as Shoshana in Long Beach, a third-grader who is learning at home because someone in her family is vulnerable to the virus, this opportunity meets her needs for inclusion and belonging. Shoshana said, “Although I can’t be at school myself, I still feel part of the class, and I get to see my friends every day.”

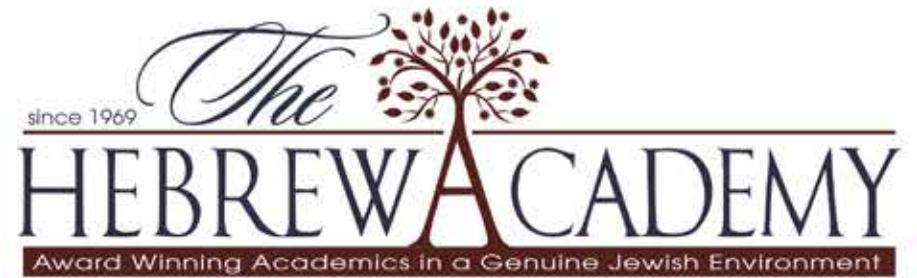
These options for distance learning represent just some of the ways this award-winning school has responded to the unique demands of the day. Students learning on campus returned in September to find a campus transformed, with indoor classrooms re-imagined, outdoor classrooms available, lunch and play areas that allow for small cohorts and distancing, as well as touchless facilities. Many of these developments have been made possible by generous grants and partnerships with local Jewish philanthropic organizations, including Jewish Long Beach and the Jewish Community Foundation of Orange County.



It is no surprise that the Hebrew Academy has been able to pivot and flex as effectively as it has during these challenging times. After all, the school has been serving Jewish students throughout Orange County and Long Beach with a variety of innovative programs for more than 50 years!

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