foundations

A Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Pilot Program
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Yavneh & Foundations

A Holistic Partnership

Yavneh Academy is a Modern Orthodox coeducational yeshiva day school committed to the academic, spiritual and emotional development of each child.

– Yavneh’s Mission Statement

The Foundations Pilot program is one of the modalities through which Yavneh is deepening its commitment to the social and emotional learning and wellbeing of the Yavneh students.
What We Wish for Our Children

Our Intentions

Health       Love       Resilience

Joy         Problem-Solving Abilities     Gratitude

Cooperation Mindfulness Change-Making Skills

Self-Regulation Security Confidence

Positivity Empathy Menschlichkeit

Bright Idea
At this year’s Prizmah conference for Jewish educators, many panels and workshops began with the presenter posing the question: “What do we wish for our children?” These were some of the answers of the parents, educators, and administrators in those rooms.
CASEL is the Collaborative for Academics and Social and Emotional Learning. According to CASEL, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

The Foundations Program is committed to actualizing our wishes for our children. We will do so by following the CASEL framework for achieving competencies in:

1. Self-Awareness  
2. Self-Regulation  
3. Relationship Skills  
4. Responsible Decision-Making  
5. Social Awareness
How Will We Achieve Our Goals?

Foundations classes will employ aspects of the following educational approaches:

1. **Responsive Classroom**
2. **RULER**
3. **Generation Mindful**

Additionally, mindfulness & gratitude practices will be incorporated daily within the program.
Responsive Classroom is an evidence based approach to teaching that focuses on engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness.

https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/

Responsive Classroom equates the importance of academic learning with social and emotional learning. Their approach to education fosters both simultaneously.

Bright Idea

“Social emotional learning leads to an 11 percentile point gain on standardized achievement tests.”
- Durlak et al. *The Impact of Enhancing Students’ Social and Emotional Learning*
Yale’s Center for Emotional Intelligence has created a curriculum for social and emotional learning called RULER. RULER asserts that soft skills are essential to effective teaching and learning, sound decision making, physical and mental health, and success in school and beyond.

RULER

- Recognizing emotions in self and others
- Understanding the causes & consequences of emotions
- Labeling emotions accurately
- Expressing emotions appropriately
- Regulating emotions effectively

The RULER skills and tools set students up for success in both the short and long term, in every aspect of their lives. The Foundations program is committed to helping students acquire these skills.
How Will We Achieve Our Goals?

Generation Mindful

Generation Mindful was founded by parent educator, Suzanne Tucker. She believes that when children are seemingly in need of a “time out,” what they truly need is a “time in” - to re-engage with themselves and their supportive adult. Based on that premise, she created guiding posters that help children identify and label their emotions while also offering calming strategies.

Foundations has chosen to use the Generation Mindful materials in the classroom because they are a more playful and accessible way for children to engage with RULER concepts at a developmentally appropriate level.

Bright Idea

“I'm convinced that when we help our children find healthy ways of dealing with their feelings, ways that don’t hurt them or anyone else, we’re helping make our world a safer, better place.” - Fred Rogers
Mindfulness and gratitude practices are proven to increase happiness and contentment.

According to UCLA’s Mindfulness Awareness Research Center, regularly expressing gratitude literally changes the molecular structure of the brain, keeps the gray matter functioning, and makes us healthier and happier. When you feel happiness, the central nervous system is affected. You are more peaceful, less reactive, and less resistant. And gratitude is the most effective practice for stimulating feelings of happiness.

*Smith-Kane, SSK, 2019, May 9th, Neuroscience Reveals How Gratitude Literally Rewires Your Brain to be Happier, culturas.us*

**Bright Idea**

Jon Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “Paying attention on purpose in the present moment non-judgmentally.”
How the Pilot Will Work

Program Implementation

“Students do need to be held accountable for their behavior, but only after we as adults have held ourselves accountable for ensuring they are equipped with the skills, tools, understanding, and motivation required to be successful.”

- Patrick Mulick, Board Certified Behavioral Analyst

In order to support our students in SEL skill acquisition, Foundations classes will:

1. **Incorporate tried & true Responsive Classroom (RC) protocols**
   
   a. **The First Six Weeks of School**
   
   RC dedicates the first weeks of school to the development of classroom routines, rules, and expectations. Teachers are taught to “assume nothing, and teach everything,” thereby spending considerable time modeling appropriate behaviors and interactions.
   
   b. **Community Building**
   
   The Morning and Closing Circles are an integral part of the RC approach, allowing for each day to begin and end with a communal gathering that allows each child to feel valued as a member of his/her classroom community.
   
   c. **Shared Positive Language**
   
   The RC approach is deliberate in speaking to children positively. They address children with “envisioning language,” which views the child in his/her best light, and are positive and clear when reminding, re-enforcing, and redirecting.

2. **Employ Generation Mindful posters to guide emotional understanding & facilitate conflict resolution**

3. **Practice Gratitude & Mindfulness daily via journaling activities, literature, guided discussions & intention setting**

**Bright Idea**

Initially, as we introduce the new SEL curricula, the children will need time and support to acclimate. With Foundations, each participating class will receive a full-time and dedicated social emotional specialist to assist in program implementation.
Our Hope

“In the final analysis it is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings.”

- Ann Landers

“We launch this new & exciting pilot with the hope and expectation that the innovations introduced in the Foundations Program will expand beyond their original classrooms, and ultimately enhance the experience of all Yavneh students.”

- Message from Rabbi Knapp, Head of School
The Team

Natalie and Davidi Jonas, Founders & Coordinators

Rabbi Knapp, Head of School

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Working in Partnership

Rabbi Penn
Associate Head of School
Principal, Lower School

Mrs. Shani Norman
Early Childhood Director,
Assistant Principal,
General Studies, Grade 1

Mrs. Adrienne Shlagbaum
Assistant Principal
General Studies,
Grades 2-5

Mrs. Roni Isaacson
Director of Guidance
Lower School

Dr. Dana Septimus
Psychologist
Early Childhood
Department

Mrs. Alison Landa
Director of Teaching
and Learning
**Q. How are children chosen for the Foundations classes?**

At Yavneh, tremendous thought is put into classroom makeup. Teachers, administrators, and the mental health team work closely to create heterogeneous, balanced classes. Children are slated for classes primarily based on teacher compatibility, and with consideration to friend requests. Foundations classes were and will be created in the same way yearly, assuring a healthy mix of children. The heterogeneous grouping is of particular importance as we gauge the effectiveness of our new modalities across all types of learners.

**Q. Will Foundations classes be following the regular Yavneh curriculum?**

Yes! Foundations is completely a part of Yavneh, and will be following the school-wide curriculum. The classes will differ in that they have the additional SEL curriculum and may have slightly different pacing.

**Q. Will this program affect my child’s academic learning?**

Only in the positive! We expect that students in the Foundations program will continue to excel academically and that the heightened focus on social emotional learning will enhance performance.

**Q. Were Foundations teachers specially trained for these classes?**

Yes. Each teacher in the Foundations program has received specialized training to incorporate the curricula at the core of Foundations. Additionally, all teachers in Foundations will receive ongoing support and training.
Q. How long is the pilot going to run?
The pilot program is expected to run for 3 years at a minimum. During that time frame, Yavneh is committed to optimizing the student experience for all Yavneh students by incorporating the best practices proven in the Foundations pilot program.

Q. Will the pilot look the same every year?
Magic 8 ball says...check back later! :) There are certainly some core aspects that we believe will be consistent year to year. At the same time, we are committed to constant observation, and if appropriate, we will make adjustments to create the ideal learning environment.

Q. Can I be supporting the SEL program at home with my child/ren?
We believe that the best education is borne in partnership between school and home. We encourage parents to sync up with their child’s teachers to discuss optimal strategies to solidify the academic, emotional, and social learning.

Q. Who should we speak to if we have more questions?
Please be in touch with our Founder & Coordinator, Natalie Jonas at nataliejfoundations@gmail.com and/or our Head of School, Rabbi Knapp at jonathan.knapp@yavnehacademy.org.
Useful Resources

Websites

CASEL
Responsive Classroom
RULER
Generation Mindful
EASEL

Books for Parents

Yardsticks
The One-Minute Gratitude Journal

Books

In My Heart: A Book of Feelings (Growing Hearts)
The Color Monster: A Story About Emotions
Breathe and Be: A Book of Mindfulness Poems
Breathe Like a Bear
I Am Human: A Book of Empathy
I Am Yoga
Peaceful Piggy Meditation
...and more!
Useful Resources

Articles

Should emotions be taught in schools?
How to Teach Kids About the Brain
How Can We Help Kids With Self-Regulation?
Dealing with Challenging Early Childhood Behaviors: Know the Neuroscience
A child’s bad behavior isn’t ‘attention-seeking.’
She’s seeking a relationship.

Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning
Scientists Say Child’s Play Helps Build A Better Brain
Scientists Show How Gratitude Literally Alters The Human Heart & Molecular Structure Of The Brain
How to Raise an Emotionally Healthy Child
Picture Books That Teach Kids How to Stop and Think, Handle Emotions, and Be Mindful