MESSAGE FROM THE
CHAIR OF THE
STRATEGIC
PLANNING
COMMITTEE
Dear RPRY Community,

It gives me great pleasure to share RPRY’s Strategic Plan for 2023-2028. This plan is the result of an extensive process that began with a review of existing data assembled over the past several years, the collection of new information through focus groups and surveys, conversations with community leaders and a wide range of stakeholders in our yeshiva, and countless hours of analysis, discussion, and brainstorming by the Strategic Planning Committee.

Throughout this process, the committee has been focused on helping RPRY fulfill its mission, articulated on p. 8 of this document. We seek to enhance the social, emotional, academic, and spiritual aspects of our students’ education across all curricular subjects and co-curricular activities; to ensure intentional and high-quality communication with all stakeholders; and to build and maintain robust enrollments that ensure that RPRY continues to serve our community long into the future.

RPRY plays a unique and vital role in the Jewish community of central New Jersey: it is an Orthodox institution that is committed to excellence and joy in both Torah learning and General Studies; it is devoted to love of the Land and State of Israel; and it welcomes and serves Jewish children from a wide range of backgrounds. Above all, RPRY provides an outstanding environment for all its students. This point was underscored by the responses that parents of current RPRY students provided to questions about their children’s experiences in school. Overwhelmingly, parents responded that they “strongly agree” with these statements:

◊ RPRY fosters my child’s love of Judaism.
◊ RPRY instills strong Torah values in my child.
◊ RPRY offers my child a warm and supportive environment.
◊ My child enjoys school.
◊ My child feels safe and comfortable in school.

These responses are a testament to our outstanding faculty and staff, and they illustrate what makes RPRY such a special place.

On behalf of the Strategic Planning Committee and RPRY’s Board of Governors, I invite you to read this document to learn about the new and exciting initiatives on our horizon. As we reflect on over three-quarters of a century of RPRY’s history, I hope you will join us in realizing the bright future that lies ahead.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Cypess
CHAIR, STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE
MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

RABBI PESACH RAYMON YESHIVA
FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

RPRY is a place where every person enriches the social, emotional, academic, and spiritual growth of our community.

Dear Friends,

In the second chapter of Pirkei Avot, the great sage Ben Zoma asks, "Who is wise? One who learns from every person." Since joining the RPRY family less than a year ago, I have seen this mishna in action. RPRY is a place where every person enriches the social, emotional, academic, and spiritual growth of our community. Our dedicated faculty recognize the intrinsic value in each student, and they make space for each student to contribute to the learning and growth that take place in the classrooms and across the school. I am very grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow in partnership with each one of our students, teachers, staff members, and parents, as well as the wider community of support that envelops RPRY.

Strategic planning is also a realization of Ben Zoma’s mishna. I have been blessed to participate in a process that has sought to hear and understand every voice. Through an extensive process of information gathering, analysis, and discussion, the Strategic Planning Committee has incorporated perspectives from across our community, taking stock of RPRY’s great strengths and identifying opportunities for innovation, enhanced excellence, and growth. This process would not have been possible without the participation of each individual – each of you. I am deeply grateful.

As we embark on the implementation phase of this strategic plan, I invite you to join us. Find out what makes RPRY so special. You are welcome to attend our school’s public events and open houses, to take a tour of our building, and to contact me with your questions. I look forward to partnering with you to make the vision outlined in this strategic plan a reality. With Hashem’s help, RPRY is positioned to go from strength to increasing strength.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Michael Ribalt
HEAD OF SCHOOL
RPRY’s strategic planning process involved information gathering, broad consultation, analysis, and extensive discussion among the Strategic Planning Committee. The committee began its work in November 2022 by reviewing existing documents and reports from 2021–22, such as the focus groups that were held as part of the Head of School search and the self-study from the school’s reaccreditation through the Middle States Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools. We followed this review with focus groups and meetings with parents of current RPRY students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Based on the ideas and feedback shared during focus groups, we drafted surveys for parents, faculty/staff, and the broader community of RPRY’s supporters. We were extremely pleased by the robust responses to these surveys, and we thank everyone who gave their time to share their ideas and their vision for RPRY’s future.

From February through May 2023, the Strategic Planning Committee met weekly to analyze and discuss the information that we had gathered and to imagine a bright, bold future for RPRY. We saw evidence of outstanding strengths across a wide range of areas, including academics, social and emotional learning, the warm and supportive environment, and a stellar faculty. And we saw opportunities for growth and change as we seek to foster RPRY’s continued development in its next phase. Informed by RPRY’s history, driven by its mission, vision, and core beliefs, and motivated above all by our commitment to this vital institution, the committee developed recommendations to help RPRY grow and thrive. We invite you to explore this document and join us in bringing it to life!

MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Reuben Atlas
Binyamin Cooper
Rebecca Cypess, Chair
Rob Haarburger
Jordan Kaplan
Elana Kurtz
Tova Renna
Rabbi Michael Ribalt
Brondy Strassman
EXPLORE THIS DOCUMENT AND JOIN US IN BRINGING IT TO LIFE!
MISSION

RPRY empowers thinkers and enriches souls. A pillar of the Jewish community in central New Jersey for over 75 years, the Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva instills in students a love of Torah, the Jewish people, and the Land and State of Israel. We value all wisdom as part of a Torah worldview and educate children to achieve their highest potential, develop self-reflective and creative minds, and embrace their diverse learning styles. As a warm community of learners, we cultivate students from early childhood through eighth grade who are independent and inclusive, caring and confident, engaged members of society and faithful servants of Hashem.

CORE BELIEFS

Theological

◊ Hashem and Torah: We believe that a relationship with Hashem, His Torah, and the Jewish People is fundamental to our lives as Jews.
◊ B’Tzelem Elokim: We believe that all human beings are created in the image of Hashem and deserve respect and dignity.
◊ Mitzvot and Middot: We believe that Torah and halacha are our guides to correct conduct in the world and that the teaching of values and good character traits is paramount.

Educational

◊ Whole Child: We believe that an effective education addresses each student’s intellectual, social, emotional, and religious development.
◊ Environment: We believe that students learn best in a warm, nurturing, inspiring, and supportive community.
◊ Academic Excellence: We believe that to actualize his or her potential as a servant of Hashem, each student must be challenged and inspired with outstanding Judaic and General Studies.
◊ Learning: We believe that learning is an active, joyful, life-long process.

Social

◊ Responsibility: We believe that each of us should be a productive, engaged, and upstanding citizen of our community, our country, the Jewish People, and the world.
◊ RPRY Community: We believe that our yeshiva plays an integral role in the growth and success of the central New Jersey Jewish community and beyond.
◊ Israel: We believe that the Land of Israel is the Jewish Homeland and that the State of Israel is central to our national and personal destiny.
RPRY EMPOWERS THINKERS AND ENRICHES SOULS

PROFILE OF THE IDEAL GRADUATE

An RPRY graduate is a:
◊ Believer who accepts the centrality of Torah and Hashem’s providence in the world and actively seeks a relationship with Him.
◊ Learner who confidently uses the tools and motivation acquired at RPRY to further advance their Judaic and General Studies knowledge, skills, and understanding.
◊ Mentsch who leads an honorable life of integrity, respect, humility, compassion, and kindness.
◊ Oveid Hashem who is committed to living life according to halacha and continually aspires to improve their practice both bein adam lamakom and bein adam lechaveiro.
◊ Leader who serves the needs of their community and seeks to improve the world around them, and whose example has a positive influence on others.
◊ Religious Zionist who celebrates the divine gift of the modern State of Israel and promotes its welfare.
1. Introduce new academic, spiritual, social, and emotional learning initiatives and bolster existing ones that strengthen and support RPRY’s mission.

a. Introduce a new organization of the yeshiva to best support each age group in achieving milestones in their social, emotional, academic, and spiritual development:
   - Early Childhood will encompass the youngest students through Kindergarten.
   - Lower Elementary School will encompass Grades 1–3.
   - Upper Elementary School—a new unit designed to serve this age group—will encompass Grades 4–5. Classes in both grades will be separated by gender.
   - Middle School will encompass Grades 6–8. As before, Middle School classes will be separated by gender.
   ◊ This new organization will allow for increased attention to the needs of each age group, and faculty will receive mentorship in recognizing and meeting those needs.
   ◊ It clarifies the position of Kindergarten as part of Early Childhood, ensuring that its programming is age-appropriate and its faculty can best serve the needs of its students.
   ◊ It clarifies the position of Grade 5 as part of Upper Elementary School, allowing the faculty to better serve the needs of its students, enabling them to recognize the milestones they have achieved, and supporting parents in being responsive to the age-appropriate growth of their child.
   ◊ The introduction of Upper Elementary School as a new unit of RPRY will support students and help them thrive at a time when many changes are occurring in their social, emotional, academic, and spiritual lives. As they develop academic independence and grapple with new social demands, the single-gender environment in Grades 4 and 5—coupled with close mentorship in spirituality and Torah learning from their Morah or Rebbe—will provide an appropriate peer group and strong role modeling that will set them up for success.
   ◊ The yeshiva administration will determine how best to accommodate individual classes in the Upper Elementary School if the needs of a specific grade require an adjustment. The social, emotional, academic, and spiritual programming will remain in line with the school unit, and genders will remain separate.

b. Appoint a dedicated Early Childhood Coordinator—a dynamic, seasoned educator who will bring new life to the program and attract increased enrollment.

c. Ensure that each grade has special, age-appropriate programming that marks academic achievements and fosters excitement around learning.

d. Assess opportunities to expand girls’ limudei kodesh in middle school and address the needs that are identified.

e. Assess opportunities to expand Hebrew-language learning and address the needs that are identified.

f. Bring Benot Sheirut Le’umi (Israelis performing national service) to the yeshiva to support Hebrew-language learning as well as programming that fosters love of the Land and State of Israel.

g. Ensure that RPRY’s curriculum and learning goals in both Judaic and General Studies are fully developed and clearly mapped on the school’s website.

h. Implement the action steps identified by the Middle States reaccreditation process with the goal of continuous accreditation.
2. Recruit and retain excellent faculty.
   a. Develop a system of faculty mentorship and support to ensure the widespread implementation of best practices in yeshiva day school education.
   b. Increase benefits available to employees, including subsidized health insurance and others such as increased Qualified Tuition Reimbursement (QTR) and/or contributions to 403B plans, as the school budget allows.

3. Clarify and expand the role of RPRY’s Think Tank, a crown jewel of its educational method, to facilitate student success through support and enrichment.
   a. Improve communication around Think Tank to ensure that it is clearly understood by all parents and students.
   b. Ensure that all teachers throughout Early Childhood through Grade 8 understand how to implement the Think Tank method and are doing so effectively.

4. Ensure that RPRY meets the learning needs of as many students as possible.
   a. Build on RPRY’s successes in differentiated education by continuing to promote and disseminate techniques of differentiated learning among all faculty.
   b. Investigate strategic partnerships with organizations that support specialized learning needs.

5. Continue RPRY’s outstanding record of student programming centered on social/emotional growth and develop programming to support students’ skills around positive mental health and resilience.
   a. Continue professional development opportunities for faculty on social/emotional learning.
   b. Increase faculty development and programming to support students’ skills around positive mental health and resilience.

6. Promote the growth of RPRY’s student population to ensure a healthy social/emotional learning environment.
   a. Appoint a person or small group of people to oversee all recruitment and retention efforts.
   b. Continue to hold regular open houses, tours, and other promotional events to share RPRY’s excellent programs.
   c. Strengthen connections between RPRY and residents of East Brunswick.
      i. Create opportunities to establish relationships between East Brunswick residents and RPRY’s administration and faculty, e.g., shabbatonim, seminars, etc.
      ii. Engage with prospective East Brunswick families.
      iii. Work with East Brunswick community leaders to develop an approach that seeks to attract families to RPRY.
   d. Continue efforts to engage residents of other communities.
      i. Hold regular parlor meetings in areas within commuting distance, such as Manalapan, Lakewood, and South Brunswick.
      ii. Continue working with local shuls on communal growth initiatives.

7. Ensure that RPRY’s facilities support its academic mission.
   a. Finalize assessment of the current building to ensure that we have spaces for innovative programs, group gatherings, simultaneous functions, and early childhood needs.
   b. Set priorities for renovation of specific spaces. Implement renovations as capital fundraising allows.
1. Build on RPRY’s strong tradition of Torah learning through increased offerings that affirm the centrality of Torah in our children’s lives.
   a. Continue RPRY’s remarkably successful Saturday night Mishmar, RJJ learning, Torah Bowl, Mishna Yomi, and other special initiatives.
   b. Add to these initiatives through optional learning programs, e.g., programs on legal holidays, alumni learning, preparation for Chidon HaTanach, Nach Yomi, Yediot Klaliyot, Masmidim, etc.

2. Build on RPRY’s outstanding warmth and its history of cultivating exemplary Torah values among students.
   a. Increase opportunities for chessed and service throughout our school, for example, as after-school programs or clubs.

3. Ensure that religious observance is meaningful and engaging for all students.
   a. Continue expanding special davening experiences for holidays throughout the year.
   b. Ensure that there are fully engaged role models at RPRY’s daily minyan for both boys and girls.
   c. Ensure adherence to dress code policies.

4. Implement the goals and action steps identified throughout this plan that enhance RPRY’s Torah values.
PILLAR THREE:

STRATEGIC PLAN

OPERATIONAL CLARITY AND EFFICIENCY

1. Assess the Business Office and implement changes to ensure the greatest possible operational clarity and efficiency.
   a. Streamline collection and payment systems and processes, and improve stewardship to instill a sense of trust in the business operations in the school.
   b. Review RPRY’s budget system to align with best practices.

2. Diversify RPRY’s revenue stream to ensure its financial stability.
   a. Create and fill a part-time, professional position to oversee development and alumni relations, thereby increasing fundraising capacity and building a community of support around RPRY.
   b. Assess the opportunity to expand RPRY’s Early Childhood program to maximize its financial contribution to the overall school budget.
   c. Explore opportunities to expand RPRY’s summer camp.
   d. Look for ways to capitalize on RPRY’s facility for additional revenue, e.g., through Sunday classroom rentals.

3. Consider strategic partnerships to increase enrollment.
   a. Explore launching satellite preschools and other engagements in communities such as Manalapan, Lakewood, South Brunswick, etc.
   b. Explore bringing some programming to local day cares to introduce RPRY’s outstanding Early Childhood faculty and attract new families.
4. Build a culture of growth, stability, and expertise among RPRY’s Board of Governors.

a. Ensure that the Board of Governors organizes and mandates at least one board development session every year.

b. Require all members of the Executive Committee to participate in at least one additional development session every year, subject to the approval of the Board Development Chair.

c. Clarify the roles of the professional staff and lay leadership through the creation of a clear organizational chart and accountability for implementation and oversight.

d. Create a succession planning process to ensure continuity of key lay leadership positions. Fully execute the school constitution’s vision of First VP as the designee to be the next President.

5. Maximize clarity of communication, allowing RPRY’s volunteers to anticipate needs well in advance and facilitating the success of important fundraising events.

a. Ensure that RPRY’s internal and external calendar systems are clear and streamlined, and that key dates and deadlines are communicated to volunteers and the broader community early on.
1. Develop a strategy for effective communication with all of RPRY’s stakeholders.

a. Assess the allocation of funds for public relations and marketing in the annual budget.
b. Identify next steps to rebrand RPRY and develop a holistic communication strategy.
c. Develop a clear set of communication guidelines for all platforms (email, social media) that are consistent with best practices in the field and that support effective communication with all stakeholders.
d. Define Communication roles and responsibilities across professional staff and lay leadership.
e. Improve the clarity and efficiency of communications between the school and parents, starting with an assessment of the school’s instructional technology to ensure alignment with faculty and parent needs.
f. Showcase our current student and alumni achievements.
   ◊ Track and maintain records as to which high schools and colleges our graduates attend and as to their achievements there (e.g., selection as valedictorian, rabbinic ordination, professional accomplishments, etc.)
g. Affirm RPRY’s role as a pillar of the central New Jersey Jewish community through the continuation of community events and establishment of new ones (e.g., Simchat Beit HaSho’eva, concerts, an adult basketball league), as well as through community partnerships and excellence in communication.
STRATEGIC PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION

1. The implementation of this plan is the responsibility of RPRY’s Board of Governors, with leadership provided by the Executive Committee.

2. The Strategic Planning Committee recommends that one member of the Executive Committee be tasked with coordinating implementation. In consultation with the President and the rest of the Executive Committee, that Coordinating Officer will be responsible for delegating each goal and action step.

The Coordinating Officer of the Executive Committee may wish to appoint an Implementation Committee, which may include members of the original Strategic Planning Committee, to help coordinate and oversee implementation of the strategic plan.

3. The goals, timelines, and priorities may be adjusted by the Executive Committee as the implementation process unfolds.

4. The Coordinating Officer will communicate regularly with all board members about the goals that have been delegated to them, ensuring that progress is being made and working to overcome any obstacles.

5. At least one full board meeting per year should be devoted to assessment of the implementation of the strategic plan:
   a. Where does each goal and action step stand? What progress has been made and what obstacles have been encountered?
   b. What adjustments need to be made to the timeline and priorities in light of accomplishments and obstacles from the preceding year?
6. After three years, a full stock-taking should occur:
   a. Are the goals and action steps working to move the school in a positive direction, supporting the pillars of Excellence and Innovation, Torah Values, Operational Clarity and Efficiency, and Communication?
   b. What are the next steps, and what adjustments need to be made?

7. A new, comprehensive strategic planning process should take place after five years (2028).
Empowering Thinkers, Enriching Souls