



Staten Island Hebrew Academy  
3495 Richmond Road  
Staten Island, NY 10306  
(718) 987-9700  
[www.sihebrewacademy.org](http://www.sihebrewacademy.org)

## Where Rich Legacy Meets Academic Excellence

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September 2020

Dear SIHA Family,

We are overly excited to plan our return to **real** school and we hope that this proposal, with Hashem's help, will be sufficient to allow the school to reopen. We have every expectation of beginning the school year in the building and are preparing for various scenarios to provide the best education possible in the safest environment. We still have a lot of work in front of us, but our plan is designed to give parents and staff a broad sense of what we are thinking about and preparing for 2020-21. Please realize that the final plan will depend upon the guidance we receive from the New York State Education Department, Governor Cuomo and the Nassau County Department of Health. As our partners, you should understand the main principles that are guiding our decision-making processes:

- Prioritize student, faculty, and staff health and safety.
- Provide face-to-face learning instead of remote learning whenever it is safe to do so.
- Promote practices and policies to reduce risk of virus transmission by ensuring hygiene and health related policies that are research based, clearly communicated, effectively implemented, and diligently enforced.
- Demonstrate flexibility and fluidity by preparing various scenarios with the ability to move from different models on a weekly or even daily basis.
- Create the best and most normalized educational environment for our children.

We would like to recognize our faculty and staff for all their hard work and ingenuity in designing a new way to educate our students. Our SIHA administration has led our faculty through the most challenging of times, and we are so proud of how well all our staff has responded. We also want to thank our parents and students, whose commitment, trust, and optimism have fueled our school's success. Most importantly, as we look ahead, we hope that our community will remain healthy and safe. We will continue to care for each other and work together to empower, educate, and inspire our students. We are grateful for your continued collaboration, optimism, and patience. We feel privileged to do this work with you and to lead this community through these challenging times.

Dr. Chana Uzhansky  
Head of School  
SIHA

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The school encompasses Kindergarten – Grade 8 in a building complex of approximately 13,000 square feet. We have prepared and planned for student's re-entry for in-person instruction as well as distant learning instruction, either for short - term or long – term distance learning as a result of a local incident or community – wide pandemic changes.

This proposal was formulated based on current knowledge from reports, medical advice (Dr. Pavel Gozenput MD, Internist, Dmitry Shindelman, Board Certified CPNC, Pediatric Specialist, and Dr. Luba Moysik DO FP), faculty staff discussions and bulletins from the CDC and BOCES. The responsible party is the Head of School.

Transmission of the COVID virus takes place primarily through droplets pushed out by sneezing and coughing as well as aerosol droplets which are exhaled and remain aloft in the air for a considerable amount of time and can easily travel on air currents. These factors are the basis of our plan to open school in a safe manner. As a member of our SIHA family, every student, teacher, and staff member have a fundamental right to be valued and cared for, and that includes the expectation of physical safety. While it is possible that students, teachers, or staff members will be exposed to COVID-19 over the course of their work or studies, everyone is entitled to expect that every effort and reasonable precaution will be taken to prevent this from happening. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this means complying willingly with rules and policies designed to keep our community safe and healthy. This includes thinking of others, appreciating that their risk tolerance might be lower than ours, and adjusting our behavior with sensitivity and respect, even when inconvenient to ourselves. We expect our respect and sense of responsibility to others to be visible in myriad ways, including the following: To navigate this unprecedented public health challenge, mutual respect, trust, and a deep sense of our reciprocal obligations to one another will be essential.

- All members of our community and visitors to our school must wear masks, wash and disinfect their hands, and mind physical distancing norms.
- All members of our community and visitors to our school must follow self-screening guidelines for symptoms of illness and refrain from coming to the school when symptomatic. Per the CDC, symptoms include fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting and diarrhea.
- All members of our community and visitors to our school must comply with self-quarantine rules regarding exposure to COVID-19 and recent travel to COVID hotspots.
- All members of our community and visitors must take responsibility for maintaining a healthy environment by showing respect and concern for safety for all school staff members including teachers, office staff, administration, maintenance staff, bus drivers, and nurses.



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To navigate this unprecedented public health challenge, mutual respect, trust, and a deep sense of our reciprocal obligations to one another will be essential. Above all, our most important principle is to prioritize student, faculty, and staff health, safety, and well-being. To that end, we have taken three important steps to build our school wide strategy of safety.

### 1. Task Force

We have formed a task force composed of school administrators, medical professionals, lay representatives from our Executive Board, and executive office professionals to guide us in the process of reopening

### 2. Experts Medical Consultants

We are working with a team of medical professionals who are experts in pediatrics, infectious diseases & immunology. They will be guiding us towards preparing appropriate safety and hygiene protocols, as well as training our staff to ensure protocols are implemented effectively.

### 3. Director of Health & Safety

Additionally, to ensure protocols are adhered to, we will be appointing one person to lead and ensure compliance

#### **SIHA's Approach to Safety Has Six Pillars:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Social Distancing and Reducing Student Density | 2. Health Screening and Preventative Hygiene  |
| 3. Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting         | 4. Communications, Training, and Coordination |
| 5. Procedure for Arrival and Dismissal            | 6. Security and Building Access               |

**Each of these critical areas help shape our approach to ensure that our policies and protocols provide the necessary conditions to mitigate risk of exposure to COVID-19.**



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### **1. SOCIAL DISTANCING AND REDUCING STUDENT DENSITY**

Infectious disease experts have promoted social distancing as an essential strategy in the containment of COVID-19. By their nature, schools are high-density, which can promote disease transmission. We recognize that to effectively reduce the risk of infection; we must implement the following effective social distancing policies:

- Class size will be guided by NYS guidelines and our medical consultants. Until further notice, there will be no more than 15 students per cohort.
- Large common areas like the gym, cafeteria and shul will be limited to use by small groups only.
- Minimizing movement between classrooms by students.
- Masks will be worn by staff at all times.
- Masks will be mandated for use by students on buses and in hallways.
- Use of physical barriers where needed and specifically by student desks.
- Students will not be able to share school supplies.
- There will be no field trips unless approved by our medical committee.

### **2. HEALTH SCREENING AND PREVENTATIVE HYGIENE**

Another essential pillar recommended by health care professionals involves mandating health screenings and preventive hygiene, which begins with hand washing and use of masks. Coupled with physical distancing, these are the most effective strategies in containing COVID-19.

- All SIHA staff will be tested for COVID-19 before the beginning of the school year to ensure that our building will be COVID-free on the first day of school. Staff will continue to be tested every two weeks by an inhouse hired lab technician as long as it is deemed as an effective method in preventing COVID-19 transmission.
- Staff will be required to complete a daily screening survey prior to coming into the building
- Parents will be required to complete a screening survey prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> day of school and every two weeks thereafter
- SIHA is planning to require individual temperature and symptom screenings prior to entering the building each morning as long as it is deemed as an effective method in preventing COVID-19 transmission.
- Symptomatic children and adults, and those who are asymptomatic but have been placed in quarantine due to exposure to a COVID infected individual, will not be allowed to enter our building.
- Everyday hygiene practices will be enforced. As has been well-documented, hand washing many times daily with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is critical. In addition to hand washing, frequent use of alcohol based hand rub with formulations containing 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol is a simple yet effective way to prevent the spread of pathogens and infections. Students will be trained how to follow new COVID-19 protocols.
- Teachers will be taking daily logs of students wiping down and sanitizing their personal area 3-5x a day.
- If a student or adult develops symptoms while at school, we will have the individual in an isolated room, by the office.
- The individual will be cared for by one identified staff member, who will wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and follow infection control practices designed to decrease the risk of transmission. We will call parents and arrange for the child to be picked up.
- Lunch will be served in classrooms and all personnel handling any perishable items will be required to wear gloves the entire time and dispose them as often as is required by DOH.
- Water fountains will be closed for use except for the water bottle dispensing portion of it

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### 3. CLEANING, SANITIZING, AND DISINFECTING

- We will implement a strict routine for frequent cleaning of bathrooms, classrooms, hallways, common areas, elevators, doorknobs, railings etc. when school is in session along with a rigorous night-time disinfectant routine.
- Janitors will be keeping a log of all their cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting

### 4. COMMUNICATIONS, TRAINING AND COORDINATION

- We will establish clear expectations for our SIHA community, through a structure that is both sustainable and flexible to adapt to changing realities.
- We will implement signage in school with our protocols, hygiene and social distancing reminders. We need all members of our community to accept new responsibilities within this changed culture.
- We will reduce contact by placing marked floor direction in hallways and stairways.

### 5. DROP-OFF/ DISMISSAL

- In the event that our local school districts are not able to provide busing this Fall, we will be establishing a schedule for drop-offs and dismissals. Though we are planning for a full day of instruction at our schools, we may create a staggered schedule for arrival and dismissal so that we can maintain a safe system of social distancing and so that we can conduct daily temperature checks in a safe and efficient manner.
- Please note that we are doing all that we can to press upon the Dept of Pupil Transportation to provide our students with their deserved busing to and from school.

### 6. SECURITY AND BUILDING ACCESS

At SIHA we pride ourselves with our open-door policy. However, at this time non-essential visitors will be restricted from school buildings temporarily, until we can ensure our new protocols have become standard and routine.

Essential visitors include:

- Approved vendors, package delivery vendors, and facility specialists.
- Essential visitors will need access for entry through our security, which will incorporate a temperature and symptom check prior to entry.
- Signage at all entrances will indicate our health hygiene policy, including masks and hand sanitizing upon entering the building. Arrival/Dismissal, Common Areas (Playgrounds, Hallways, Bathrooms etc.)

#### Fire Code Compliance

The construction, alteration, relocation, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, maintenance, removal, and demolition of every building or structure, and every appurtenance connected or attached to any building or structure, must comply with the requirements of the 2020 New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code (BC), except as specified in 19 NYCRR 1221.2(d). Such activity may require building permits and review by local municipalities and/or code enforcement officials to ensure such compliance. Schools should consult their local authority that have jurisdiction for code enforcement. Changes or additions to facilities may require review by local municipalities and/or code enforcement officials to ensure such compliance.

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### **Doorways**

Many stair and corridor doors have closers with automatic hold opens. These doors are normally held in the open position and are automatically released by the fire alarm system. The function, position, and operation of those doors will remain unchanged. Fortunately, they need not be touched during normal use.

### **Emergency Drills**

SIHA will conduct standard operations and procedures to the best of their abilities without deviating from current requirements. Fire (evacuation) Drills and Lockdown Drills are required by Education Law and regulation and the Fire Code and they must be conducted without exceptions. SIHA will follow Fire Code Section 404 which requires schools maintain Fire Safety, Evacuation, and Lockdown Plans and these plans include how lockdown and evacuation drills are conducted

In anticipation of ongoing and evolving challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, SIHA has developed three models for learning. These models take into account our principle which states, "Provide face-to-face learning in place of remote learning whenever it is safe to do so". These learning models acknowledge the critical role face-to-face interactions play in a child's learning while implementing physical distancing norms that reduce student density.

Our learning models are as follows:

- Face-to-Face Learning - for Low Risk Scenario
- Hybrid Learning - for Medium Risk Scenario
- Distance Learning - for High Risk Scenario

### **LEVEL OF RISK**

#### **LOW RISK SCENARIO**

- State / County Departments of Health determines risk to be low
- State/City encourages reopening
- Low COVID rates in community

#### **MEDIUM RISK SCENARIO**

- State / County Departments of Health determines risk to be mid-range risk
- Partial Re-openings
- Increased number of cases in the community

#### **HIGH RISK SCENARIO**

- State / County Departments of Health determines risk to be substantial
- City/State mandating or recommending school closures
- High rates of COVID in the community

### **INPUT & DRIVERS**



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## LOW RISK SCENARIO

### Face-to-Face Learning Model:

This is a traditional school experience with students attending school in person five days a week with our facilities operational. This model will be used when the risk level is determined to be low. External indicators would need to support our confidence in opening the school to full density and usage. Preventative hygiene policies will be implemented in combination with realistic physical distancing guidelines. To limit the risk of infection if and when we are able to learn completely face-to-face, we will not allow students to go on trips or to participate in live interscholastic activities until the risk of infection has been mitigated in the general public.

### COHORT MODEL

- Our classes will be broken up into smaller cohort groups (pending guidelines).
- The cohort groups will be arranged by the level of the students to maximize our ability to promote student achievement.
- Where possible, we may physically split our classes into two, allowing for more students to attend school on a given day.
- Within this model, we may utilize additional teaching staff to rotate with homeroom teachers, allowing for an entire class to be present in school at the same time.
- To the best extent possible, there will be no contact between cohorts,
- Sufficient supplies will be provided in each class to ensure no cross-contamination. The advantage of a cohort model is that if infection occurs, only the infected cohort has to be quarantined while the rest of the school can continue to operate. If a cohort must be quarantined, it will continue to learn via distance learning for the duration of the quarantine period.
- To reduce interactions with students outside of their classes, most students will remain in a set homeroom with their belongings and teachers will move from class to class.
- A hybrid model of a classroom zoom in option will be available to high risk students or to students that have high risk family members



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## MEDIUM RISK SCENARIO

### HYBRID LEARNING MODEL:

The Hybrid Learning Model combines face-to-face learning with a parallel online learning experience. One of the major challenges in maintaining a safe environment in our school is the issue of population density. This model introduces physical distancing and density reduction as key strategies to further reduce exposure within our community, while at the same time providing face-to-face interaction between students and teachers as much as it is safe to do so. This means having fewer students and/or faculty in the building and less contact for those who are present. This model will be used if we are in a medium-risk level environment.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL A/B ROTATION MODEL

- An A group and B group would attend school on alternating days, with each group attending for a full five-day schedule over a two-week time span.
- On days in which students are not in the school building, they will either join their live classes via Zoom, or be given significant responsibilities to learn virtually, independently and/or collaboratively with other students. We will educate and empower our teachers and students to maximize this time.
- We are exploring the possibility of providing actual and virtual locations to which students not in the school building can drop in and receive services such as davening, tutoring, research help, and guidance. In the A/B rotation model, each group operates as a cohort, and if re-infection occurs, only the affected cohort needs to be quarantined. Distance learning will continue for the duration of the quarantine period.

### SIHA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Grades 1-5 would continue to operate in person learning within the cohort model described above.



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## HIGH RISK SCENARIO

### DISTANCE LEARNING MODEL

This is the same model our community experienced in the final months of the 2019-20 school year. Our school building will be closed but remote learning will continue. This is the model of learning which will be used if it is deemed unsafe to have even half of our students in our facilities at one time. We have learned a great deal about how to best deliver Distance Learning from our experiences in the Spring of 2020 and would use that knowledge to refine the experience in the Fall. We will maintain our SIHA website, including class schedules with Zoom sessions and various educational programs and activities. We will provide distance learning schedules for students that will be similar to live classroom quantity and quality. Classroom learning would be conducted remotely through the Zoom platform for live instruction, and both synchronous and asynchronous work delivered via Quickschools and or Google Classroom.

### Protocol for Incidents of Infection:

We have developed a protocol for dealing with a virus infection incident among students and staff. If a student or staff member is diagnosed with the virus, they will be escorted by a staff member wearing protective gear to a secure waiting area until they are picked up. We will use the CDC decision tree to determine if the school needs to be closed for a thorough cleaning (approximately 2-5 days or longer depending in the status of community health). During such closings, teachers and students will revert to using distance teaching methods. Our obligation to do contact tracing requires us to notify the Department of Health about any new case of infection. Any new case of infection will be reported to the parents as well. The school will request guidance from the DOH as to when to allow infected students to return to school.

### Attendance

SIHA will be collecting and report daily teacher/student engagement or attendance, regardless of instructional setting via Quickschools.

## CONCLUSION

The SIHA Reopening Task Force is committed to reopening school this fall. Our guiding principle is to provide face-to-face learning whenever it is safe to do so. On July, 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 State and Local officials released the guidelines that have been discussed in this document. This plan is approved of upon submission pending Head of School affirmation that plan will be followed as delineated. We continue to consult our medical and legal advisors for direction on how best we can maintain the safety measures needed to provide face to face learning for our students. We also are in touch with our advocacy agencies such as TeachNYS and other groups to be sure our needs will be met. Since we cannot predict the future, we ask members of the SIHA family to work with us as we prepare for the next school year. We will continue to update you throughout the summer. We are hopeful that our State of New York, like New Jersey and Connecticut, will maintain their approval for the reopening of our schools. As we continue to pray that our students be restored to the norms and fullness of their religious, educational, and cultural experiences, we at SIHA are fully committed to implementing all relevant State guidelines so that our staff and children will remain safe throughout the duration of this pandemic. Task Force will meet weekly to review compliance to community health status changes and new protocols.

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