



New Building For New Sephardic High School (/index.php/local/27-schools/5296-new-building-for-new-sephardic-high-school)

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Yeshiva Sha'arei Zion HS for Girls opened their doors this September in their building on Woodhaven Boulevard. Starting with 15 girls in their ninth grade, the new building has four classrooms and a student center/lunchroom on the second floor, and the school is geared up to open its newly renovated first floor, which includes a custom-built library lounge, Robotics and Engineering Maker Space, Art Room, and Science Lab.



"I never imagined that my high school would be so beautiful and well designed!" remarked Hodaya Yaakovov, a freshman student. "The colors are so pretty. It almost feels like a hotel. But really, it's a home away from home!" chimed in Angelina Rachel Abramov, another freshman. "I love how the quotes on the wall of the student center inspire me. I really enjoy *davening* and eating in this room. You could tell that so much love went into the planning of this space!"

The Menahel, Mrs. Zerykier explained, "Everything is designed with the students' interests in mind. We have a student-centered approach to education: We design our classes and learning spaces to inspire thinking and growth. We plan every detail – from our curriculum to our furniture. Our desks are flexible and on wheels. They could be set in rows for classic instruction, connected in pairs for *chavruta* learning, or joined into circles for collaborative group projects. While there is so much that we have already unpacked, there is still so much more that we have ordered that we look forward to bringing into the new space. It's a very exciting project. We are creating an innovative, cutting-edge school to prepare our girls for the 21st century. Students enjoy using their new Chromebooks and we look forward to installing our new flat-screen, state-of-the-art touchscreen boards in every classroom. Here, they will gain important skills necessary to thrive. We know that these girls are the future of *klal Yisrael*. Like everything we do, our space communicates our commitment to our students and their education. Just as a home is built with warmth, intention, and love, we, too, design our space to facilitate friendships, growth, and learning. Here, we empower every

student to become her best self."



At YSZ HS, learning extends beyond the walls of the Woodhaven building. Educating from head to heart, the YSZ HS creates a rich social-emotional curriculum that promotes character, *k'dushah and yir'as Shamayim*. Rabbi Benhaim, who teaches *Halachah* and Hebrew to the girls, remarked, "This school instills a true sense of pride within the girls. It supports each girl's ability to develop her own identity and to be proud of her rich Sephardic heritage."

From *T'filah* at sunrise on the beach to a two-day overnight teambuilding retreat, the girls at YSZ HS have come to appreciate that they are in an incredible place. "I can't believe I ever considered a different high school," remarked student Leanna Kataev. "YSZ is absolutely the best place to be!"

The teachers, too, are all trained in this student-centered methodology. "This student-centered approach truly challenges the students to think. When they work together on text, they actually have to think and develop their skills instead of simply listening to a teacher lecture," noted Mrs. Phaelaef, the high school's *Navi* teacher. Classes are tracked and are differentiated to students' skills. Ms. Maroletti, the Math teacher, noted, "I've been in many schools throughout my career; this is how education should be."

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