



Ottawa Jewish Community School
(OJCS), Ottawa
2018-2019

NoTosh Team:
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It is no mean feat to define who you are as a school and community but the Ottawa Jewish Community School (OJCS) was determined to do just that, and more.

“A school in motion will stay in motion. The narrative of decline is behind us; the narrative of rebirth, revitalization and rejuvenation has begun.” - Dr Jon Mitzmacher, Head of School, OJCS

With its long history and important role within the Jewish community of Ottawa, OJCS knew that undertaking a process of redefining who they were, and where they wanted to go, whilst staying true to their beliefs and traditions, needed a fresh approach. A dedicated Design Team of parents, teachers, school leaders and Board members began to create clear North Stars, core values every member of the community could use to shape their work and learning.

Together with NoTosh, the Design Team looked at their school with fresh eyes, from many different viewpoints, all while making their thinking visible to the wider community.

The **NoTosh Design Thinking process** guided the OJCS team as they immersed themselves into the work. They created a highly visible and accessible Project Nest, filled with thoughts, opinions and ideas from across the school. A physical space within the school, the Project Nest became the central location for evidence of what makes this school unique. Immersing themselves into the gathered data, the Design Team then worked to synthesise the hundreds of insights, interviews and observations from across the community and used this to draw out, reiterate and highlight their core values.

“I loved being a member of the Design Team and learning with NoTosh. I started to do my own research, own my own learning and in turn that let the kids own their own learning and it amazed me what happened in the class.” - Julie Bennett, Grade 3/4 General Studies Teacher, OJCS

With the help of NoTosh's award-winning creative team, the Design Team created a set of six, concrete, concise and jargon-free North Stars whose purpose is to remind the community of who they are and of the 'OJCS way'. These North Stars are evident all around the school in Hebrew, English and



French. From the walls to the language used in classrooms, each North Star is lived, embraced and used to drive and inspire all within the community as well as acting as a compass for decision-making.

“Thanks to these values and the direction they give, we have inspired more fundraising in the last six months than in the previous six years.” - Dr Jon Mitzmacher, Head of School, OJCS

From Core Values to Strategy

With their core values clearly defined the OJCS team began to identify a number of strategic prototypes with each North Star acting as a compass. The data from their initial immersion phase played a key role in this work and ensured that each potential prototype was dynamic and reflective of the voice of the whole school community. The OJCS team brought together a collection of prototypes to engage the whole community for years to come, while still working for the day-to-day.

For example, Grade 3 and 4 students took part in a project that encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning. Other students across the school worked on developing practices that put into action the idea that every single person is responsible for the other. They've changed the way things are done, and have shown that they really do learn better together.

The OJCS team also looked to define a single, ambitious objective for the school fuelled by both the strategies and the North Stars. The OJCS objective is as specific as it is inspiring, measurable as it is innovative and was born out of the will and desire of the school community for OJCS to become the best version of itself. The objective was designed to push each and every member of OJCS forward in their learning and personal growth.

“The process was really inspirational, it taught me a lot about focussing more on the process and making sure that we understand why we're doing certain things and that we have input from all stakeholders, especially our students.” - Deanna Bertrend, Grade 6/7/8 Social Studies Teacher and Student Life Co-ordinator, OJCS

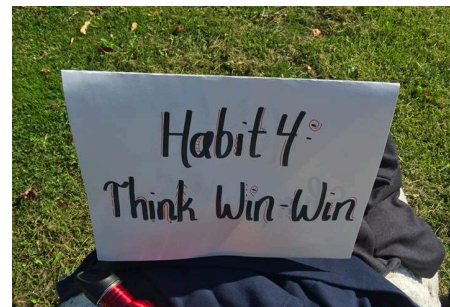
The impact of the work is felt in every aspect of the school. The vision of every teacher is pulling in the same direction and the difference is noticeable.

“You can measure it objectively through numbers - attrition down, enrollment up, survey data trends, fundraising dollars. You can also measure it subjectively - feelings in the walls, word on the street, buzz in the community. The OJCS is laying the ground to become the innovative leader in education in our community.” - Dr Jon Mitzmacher, Head of School, OJCS

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