

# *MATANEL FOUNDATION*

## *ACTIVITY REPORT*

**Program:** *Tuition Scholarships for Students at the Shoshanim Arts and Science High School for Haredi Girls*

**Year:** 2019-2020

Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole rapport will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as word document).

Name of the Program: Tuition Scholarships for Students at the Shoshanim Arts and Science High School for Haredi Girls

Year of activity: 2019-2020

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Function of the report's writer: Director, Resource Development

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Number of active participants in the program: 29 students

Estimated number of impacted participants: Direct participants, as above. However, with a ripple effect, a great many people are impacted (it is impossible to estimate the number) as, with an increasing number of Haredi girls being educated towards complete matriculation, the socio-economic status of the entire sector will change, as will its attitude towards women.

Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines): At the time of this report, the Shoshanim School is beginning its third year of operation, with seventy 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade students in three classes (one class each grade). As in all the country's schools, a full schedule of classes is currently being held online, until it will again be possible to hold classes in person. Students continue to pay tuition and to receive tuition scholarships while classes are held online. Two very exciting developments that took place during this past summer were the establishment of a biology lab with basic equipment within the school, as well as a fully equipped computer science lab.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.): 2019-2020 was Shoshanim's second year of operation, with forty-seven 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade students in two classes. It is particularly exciting to watch the school grow, and to understand the extent of the need it is filling – to educate Haredi girls towards full matriculation, the gateway to a satisfying and lucrative career. Shoshanim has developed an excellent reputation, and there is great demand for places.

While the corona crisis presented many challenges for all schools, at Shoshanim there were extra difficulties. As is characteristic of the Haredi community, some students and teachers did not have computers or internet access at home. The school and the Society for Advancement of Education ensured that computers and internet access were provided to all students and teachers in need of them. Additionally, following the initial lockdown, when other schools returned to studying in capsules, special permission was received for each Shoshanim class to be considered one capsule, given the relatively small size of classes, enabling all students in each class to be present at school at the same time.

**Collaborations:** Shoshanim's students arrive from seminary backgrounds, at varying levels of core subjects, and much work is done during the first year to try to fill in the gaps and reach a standardized level. However, in 2019-2020 there were not enough girls at a high enough level to form a group studying for five-point matriculation in math. Thus, those who were able, joined the virtual high school online, comprising students from the entire country, with one class of Haredi girls studying for five-point math matriculation. There was also intensive collaboration with the Haredi branch of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, and five-point art students studied there, as Shoshanim is lacking the necessary equipment for such subjects as print-making. Shoshanim's teachers accompanied the students there, however Bezalel's teachers taught the classes.

Shoshanim has three matriculation tracks – computer science, art, and biology, and some students choose to do two tracks. As mentioned above, in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, students learn all subjects, including introduction to programming, in order to close gaps and standardize academic levels, and then studies within the matriculation tracks begin in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The school works together with the Center for Educational Technology, with teachers learning how to improve their teaching of technological subjects, and students studying through CET's digital platform. The school also collaborated with the *Noar Shochoer Mada* science program for youth at the Hebrew university, using their labs and participating in their "Kisimei Mada" summer camp, which gives students a taste of the various scientific disciplines.

**Scholarships:** During 2019-2020, twenty-nine of Shoshanim's students received scholarships funded by the Matanel Foundation's generous donation. The vast majority of the scholarships were between 400-500 NIS, however there were three students from particularly difficulty socio-economic circumstances who received scholarships that were substantially higher. These funds greatly assisted the students, whose families are unable to pay full tuition payments at the best of times, and for whom the corona crisis has considerably worsened the situation. Recipients of the scholarships were selected by a committee of representatives from the SAE and Shoshanim's principal, and were chosen based on criteria of need and academic potential.

#### **Scholarship recipients' personal stories:**

**Shira** [REDACTED] is an extremely talented student, who was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade last year. A year-and-a-half ago, Shira's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, and was hardly able to work. Shira is the oldest of five children, and she took over operation of the home – cleaning, cooking, and whatever else was necessary. Shoshanim provided her with a computer and internet access, and she participated in the virtual five-point matriculation math class, and she is studying computer science as well. This is a very

intensive study program, together with the stresses Shira experienced from her home situation, and the scholarship was very important in helping to ease her load. Shira has been very successful academically, and the principal described her as “brilliant.”

**Yehudit** [REDACTED] also a very talented student, was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade last year. She is currently studying in the art matriculation track, and is very successful and creative. Yehudit’s parents are from Russia, and there are many difficulties within their home. Yehudit was in need of very intensive support, and, in addition to a scholarship, was provided with private lessons and much assistance by the school counselor, in order to enable her excel academically.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...): Students are evaluated according to participation, academic achievement (grades), attendance, and overall motivation. Comparison with previous year and results....

One of the measures of success last year was the ability of students to navigate distance learning, and they met with varying degrees of success. For this reason, it is not really relevant to compare with the previous year, as the circumstances were so different. However, help was provided to those who needed it, and they were able to succeed in their studies. The current year will be the first in which students write matriculation exams, and that will be another indicator of success. Academic success, the students feeling a sense of ability, and their comfort at the school, are additional indicators of success.

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year: Shoshanim is now in its third year, with 70 students. While studies took place online for much of last year and are currently in this framework as well, students were and are still required to pay tuition and, as such, scholarships were provided. This year, the distress of needy families is exacerbated by the corona situation, making the scholarships even more essential. We are hoping to provide scholarships to 40 students, should we receive a renewed donation from the Matanel Foundation.