

Student Shabbos

By: Ayelet Friedman (Class of 2023)

All year long, Bais Yaakov high school students greatly anticipate Student Shabbos, a special Shabbos when the students are invited to participate in a lively, inspirational program at the school.

Unfortunately, the program was canceled for the last two years because of COVID-19, so for many, this was their first Student Shabbos, lending an even greater sense of anticipation to students who had not experienced this incredible Bais Yaakov highlight. The program accomplished this and more by leaving the students with a lasting taste of the splendor of Shabbos.

Student Shabbos was filled with activities aimed to inspire and to further express an appreciation for Shabbos, which the engaging speakers and compelling workshops made possible. The program enlisted the dynamic speaker, Mrs. Toba Shifrin, who entertained and inspired all who had the privilege of hearing her. Though she spoke more than once, students were eager to listen each time, as she always had insightful advice and humorous anecdotes: a powerful combination. Some students were selected to give Divrei Torah during the Seudos Shabbos, enhancing the overall experience and increasing school achdus, as their schoolmates would heartily cheer and embrace them once they had finished. The program additionally offered workshops aimed to elevate the neshama, as well as to allow the students to voice opinions and ideas of their own. Many teachers graciously prepared different topics that challenged their students' minds, leaving them thirsty with a desire for more. Not only were the teachers involved with the workshops, but many assisted with the Friday night Grade Onegs, as well. The Onegs further increased the joyous atmosphere and fellowship among peers with delicious sweet treats and dynamic entertainment. The teachers' sacrifices and involvement to ensure that the students would have a memorable experience allowed everyone the opportunity to strengthen their relationships with their teachers, intensifying their admiration and appreciation for them. The Onegs and workshops imprinted lasting memories among the students, enhancing the entire Student Shabbos experience.

Student Shabbos was centered around the opportunity for growth in ruchnius, and the students' enthusiasm certainly deepened this goal. At the designated davening time, the feeling of the Shechinah was so strong, it was almost tangible. Voices blended in unison to form a beautiful symphony, pleading to open the gates of Shomayim. We would all again sing together during Shabbos zemiros and the final climactic kumzitz, spending the precious, waning moments of Shabbos joined together as one. The contrast between the zemiros and kumzitz was the contagious ruach and the sense of tranquility, yet amid both lay the same strong foundation of unity and vibrant energy. As we swayed back and forth, arms around our friends, the serenity and deep love for Shabbos was evident. A lasting effect of the experience was not only the incredible inspiration and spiritual elevation, but also the new friendships that had formed or had been strengthened along the way. These friendships remain a valuable gift each student will carry with her from Student Shabbos through the rest of her life.