



THE RASHI SCHOOL

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

At The Rashi School, a single thread of essential questions connects every child's path — from first discoveries to a developing identity. Here, we believe great learning begins with a great question. From the moment a child steps into our Pre-K classroom through their final year in Grade 8, every subject, lesson, and conversation is anchored to a grade-level essential question.

Discovery: Why does the process of discovery require your senses, mind, and heart?

Pre-K students use playfulness, innocence, trust, and curiosity to discover themselves, their community, and the world around them. These characteristics sculpt our youngest learners into budding students. They engage through nature walks, dramatic play, studying historic leaders, and simply learning to be a good friend.

Change: What causes it, what are the consequences?

Kindergarten students are enamored by changes that are happening to and around them. Be it the weather, life cycles, changes in their classroom, family, or friendships, Kindergartners learn by observing change, its causes, and its outcomes. All of these discoveries are infused into their STEAM, humanities, and social justice learning.

Community & Communication: Why is communication important in building community?

First graders begin to form a community academically, as a cohort, and as friends. They learn to collaborate, ask questions, and build empathy. Every subject is tied to building a cohesive and productive community, using communication as the scaffold. They investigate dinosaurs and fossils to understand how we are all connected, and they explore various communities from the lens of an economist, historian, geographer, and social scientist.

Systems: What is/might be the impact of changing part of the system? Why does an entire system change after only changing one part?

Second grade students are now more confident and ready to take risks. They are ready to become role models to their younger peers and responsible citizens of their own community. They question, hypothesize, and create solutions that help better their surroundings. They explore being *shomrei adamah* (guardians of the Earth) through interdisciplinary studies of the Charles River and the Dead Sea.

Movement: What drives movement within populations, cultures, and individuals?

By third grade, students begin to connect the concept of change in a larger context. Questions like how and why have people moved to and around North America; how does planetary rotation effect the solar system; and how does friction alter movement, are asked. As they grow into “older” students, they too need to move and adapt their learning and behaviors and take more responsibility for their actions.

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Energy: Why does energy drive a change?

Fourth graders are asked to think abstractly, make mental models, and relate to events and cultures far away from their own. They are developmentally mature enough to understand that behaviors (energy) might have a long lasting impact — good or bad. They are now ready to tackle global-sized changes caused by natural or human-made energy, and can put this into practice through persuasive writing, investigative research, and problem solving through complex discussion.

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Seeds of Life: What is the legacy that you leave behind?

Fifth graders, in their last year in the Lower School, spend the second half of the year starting their transition to the Middle School. Grade 5 is consistently challenged to integrate interdisciplinary skillsets to demonstrate their learning. What seeds have they sowed that will help them progress successfully into adolescence — academically, socially, and personally? What impact have they made on the world and on the Rashi community?

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Failing Forward: What brings a system to collapse?

For some, the transition to Middle School is smooth, while for others it might feel intimidating. Sixth graders learn that in order to move forward they must take calculated risks, and realize that mistakes are crucial for their own growth, as well as the growth of our community and global society. They study climate ecology, perform original monologues for their parents and peers, and engage in multiple design thinking projects.

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Small & Large Scale: Do similar principles hold true on both small and large scale events?

Seventh graders typically feel old enough to make decisions, but are not quite ready to be the leaders of their school. It is a year of personal (internal) and social (external) balance, noticing how their actions ripple similarly through both. In science, students explore molecules, chemistry, physics, and how planets behave. In an interdisciplinary unit between Jewish Studies and Social Studies, they learn about bias, inequity, and civil rights in preparation for their culminating trip to the Deep South.

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Sum of Our Parts: What determines our identity?

Eighth graders go on a journey of crafting their own identity, which they get to proudly share not only with the Rashi community, but also when applying to their secondary schools. As the leaders of our student body, they play a key role in the implementation of school-wide community programs. Rich academic exploration across subjects gels into a final capstone project, celebrating the culmination of their Rashi journey and sharing their knowledge and gifts with the world.

These essential questions are a promise that every year builds on the last, that each child is met exactly where they are, and that the journey from curious Pre-K explorer to confident Grade 8 leader is intentional, joyful, and deeply meaningful.