

NEW FOR 2009-2010!

We want to share with you highlights of the new people, programs and directions that will be part of the coming school year.

Building News

New Flooring on Rickles Patio

The black rubber tiles have been replaced with a vibrant green and blue seamless flooring that is ideally suited for playground safety. This resolves a safety concern and helps create an exciting environment.

Technology Updates

Over the summer, the desk top computers in the computer lab were distributed to lower school classrooms that needed updated computers. The computer lab is now equipped with new, large screen laptops that will allow students the flexibility to collaborate and have mobility within the computer lab.

Lower School

Responsive Classroom

This past June Sinai Akiba Academy hosted a week of training in Responsive Classroom, a program that fosters social, emotional and academic growth in a strong and safe school community. Leslie Alexander, a staff developer with the Northeast Foundation for Children, spent the week teaching nineteen of our lower school teachers and teaching assistants and eight teachers from other independent schools the principles of Responsive Classroom. All of the teachers completed the training excited about implementing Responsive Classroom this fall. At Sinai Akiba we are creating a Responsive Classroom steering committee to help trained teachers implement the program into their classrooms. In addition, we have set up monthly lunch meetings for teachers to continue to study and discuss this method of teaching.

Math

We are excited to build on our outstanding math program with the adoption of a new math textbook, *TERC Investigations*, for our first and second grade classrooms. *Investigations* is a concept-based math program that challenges students to become deep and flexible math thinkers. This textbook series is being used with great success by many independent schools around the country. Our first and second grade teachers have been attending workshops and working with a consultant during the summer to map out math instruction for the coming school year. In addition, our math consultants will work with our upper elementary teachers to help them continue to implement concept-based instruction into their math curriculum.

Literacy

This past summer four SAA teachers traveled to New York to attend an intensive week long literacy seminar at Columbia University Teacher's College. Two teachers attended the Reading Workshop and two teachers attended the Writing Workshop – already an area of strength in SAA's curriculum. All four teachers returned with new ideas to invigorate the teaching of reading and writing. We plan to continue to work as a lower school faculty to hone our practice in the workshop model that we have implemented successfully in recent years. Teachers continue to carefully and explicitly teach comprehension strategies and writing skills in a stimulating, involving environment.

Library

We are pleased to welcome Cathy Ryne as our new school librarian. In addition to teaching our lower school students in the library and instilling within them a love of reading, Cathy will work with both lower school and middle school teachers to better integrate library instruction with classroom curriculum.

Middle School

Math

The middle school has adopted a new text book for sixth and seventh grade, *Making Connections: Foundations for Algebra*, published by CPM Educational Program. Last year the 6th grade teachers and students, under the auspices of our math consultants, Mary Sirody and Kristy Smith, explored three text books that represented the best current practices in math education. This one was selected for its challenging curriculum that emphasizes the development of deep conceptual understanding. The program focuses on problem solving and helps students make sense of math by seeing the connections between mathematical ideas and using math flexibly in a wide variety of contexts. In addition to working closely with the text last year, our math teachers attended a one week training this summer and will continue to work with our math consultants this year.

Advisory

Helen Molitz, Lisa Palmer, Rabbi Feig, and Ariel Greene attended the *Hands on Advisory* conference in Philadelphia presented by Independent School Management. The program focused on themes, curriculum and activities that can strengthen and enhance an advisory program. They were able to interface with teachers and administrators from other private schools to discuss the components of a successful advisory program. They have many new ideas to implement and they look forward to sharing some of those with middle school parents when they attend an advisory meeting with their child on September 9th from 8:00a.m. until 9:00a.m.

Activities Period

This year we are implementing a weekly activity period so our students can participate in special programming without disrupting their advisory or elective time. The activity period will occur on a rotating basis and will provide time for programs that provide enrichment and stimulation beyond the regular curriculum.

Electives

We already have some interesting electives planned for this upcoming year such as art, knitting, yoga, robotics, middle school news team, middle school magazine, and drama. Students may only have a study hall by teacher recommendation. Eighth graders will participate in the *Eighth Grade Experience* during elective period. During the first trimester they will be taking a course to prepare them for their visit to Israel. In the second trimester they will work on the yearbook, and the last trimester will be devoted to preparing for graduation.

New Tikkun Olam Program

This year, advisories will be instrumental in our tikkun olam projects. As a group, each advisory will select an organization they want to support and will devise an action plan to submit for approval. Part of the focus of their work in advisory for the year will be to successfully implement their plan. Individually, students will meet with their advisor to discuss how to fulfill their independent community service hours in a meaningful way.

Computer Classes for Parents

Last year, Internet specialist, Lori Getz offered a class for middle school parents to teach them the ins and outs of social networking and other useful information for parents of teens to know. This year she will present a series of evening classes for parents who are interested in keeping up with the latest technology and sharpening their computer skills.

Judaic Studies

Meet the Author

Each lower school grade level will meet with a Jewish author at some point during the school year. The students will either read a book or the librarian will read it to them. The author will explain the process of writing a book and give the students the opportunity to inquire about being an author.

MS summer reading integrated with Jewish history

Students in the middle school were assigned a young adult Jewish fiction book to read which will be incorporated into the Jewish history classes. Students will learn to draw information and knowledge from literature through the connection between the book and Jewish history.

MS inner city project

Each grade in middle school will participate in a Tikkun Olam community service project in an inner city school. In addition, we are partnering with the Israeli Consulate and L.A. Best to create holiday programs that our students will facilitate with the inner city schools after school hours. We are in the process of creating the program details. We are very excited about the opportunity that it will provide for our school community to interact with students from an inner city school.

Hebrew

Third graders will be introduced to a new Hebrew textbook *Chaverim BeIvrit*. This curriculum is already being used in the fourth grade, where we experienced great success in enhancing students' Hebrew language skills.

Fourth grade classes will be grouped during Judaic studies for the entire afternoon based on Hebrew skills. There will be one advanced class and two grade level classes. In each class the Hebrew will be taught at the appropriate level that will enable the students to be active learners and experience success.

Bet Midrash for sixth grade students and parents

This year we will have two evening sessions for sixth grade students and parents, which will focus on studying the parasha (Torah portion) and how to prepare a d'var torah from it. This will enable the prospective b'nai mitzvah families to engage as a family. The dates are on our school calendar.

Los Angeles-Tel Aviv Partnership

Our school rejoined the LA-TA Partnership. Our goal is to establish a long term relationship between our school community and Gretz – an elementary school community in Tel Aviv. There will be an exchange of teacher delegations that will enable our staff to work together on developing programs and activities that will be embedded or derived from the curriculum. As we develop these programs and projects we will keep you informed via the parent bulletin and our school website.

NEW TEACHERS

Limor Barkol – Middle School Hebrew and Bible Teacher

Limor was born in Tel Aviv, Israel. She served in the Israeli navy as a captain for 8 years and attended the University of Tel Aviv studying history and management. For nearly 30 years Limor has been teaching Hebrew and Judaic studies. Her most recent position was as the director of Jewish studies at Morasha Jewish Day School for 14 years. Before that her career included teaching at the Hebrew Academy in Huntington Beach, and several other Jewish schools. Limor is fully trained in the Tal Am program 1st – 5th. Her awards include a scholarship from the Orange County Bureau of Jewish Education in 1994. In 2004 Limor was a recipient of the Grinspoon – Steinhardt award for excellence in Jewish Education along with the Smotrich Family Foundation Award. In her free time she enjoys traveling with the KIVUNIM – Jewish roots worldwide program, reading, exercising and spending time with her family.

Daryl Brook – Middle School English, Mathematics and Social Studies

Daryl Brook is a new teacher to Sinai Akiba, but he has worked for over a decade in Toronto, Canada's diverse public schools. He earned his Bachelor of Arts at the University of Toronto (Philosophy, Literature), and a graduate degree in education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He has also recently acquired a Specialist in Adolescent Literacy certificate. Daryl's teaching practice encourages creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, equity, responsibility and compassion.

Carmit Burstyn – Middle School Hebrew Teacher and Hebrew Mentor to Middle School Teachers

Carmit was born and raised in Israel. She received her Bachelor of Education at Seminar HaKibbutzim College in Tel-Aviv. Her area of expertise is in biblical studies and Hebrew literature. Carmit attended a 3 year program at the Hebrew College in Boston, MA where she earned a certificate in teaching Hebrew as a second language. She arrived in Los Angeles in 2003 where she taught Hebrew to middle and high school students. During the last couple of years she served as a mentor and a consultant in the field of Hebrew language methodology for teachers in Jewish day schools. Carmit believes that teaching the Hebrew language to Jewish youths is one of the ways to strengthen their Jewish identity and Zionist awareness.

Andy Chagi – Music Teacher General Studies

Andy Chagi is a Southern California native. He received his B. A. Degree in music from California Lutheran University. He has taught in both public and private schools since 1982. Andy is a very positive, willing and caring person. His high energy productions and performances have been a favorite of teachers, parents and students for many years.

Sonia Chernotsky – DeLeT Fellow

Sonia is currently a fellow in DeLeT (Day School Leadership through Teaching), a program of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education. She earned her Bachelor's degree in sociology from California State University, Northridge. She has worked at Adat Ari El Early Childhood Center as a preschool teacher and recently worked at The Jewish Federation. She is very excited about her new adventure at Sinai Akiba Academy and cannot wait to learn with and from her students.

Elizabeth Kutny – 3rd Grade Teacher General Studies

Liz comes to our school from Cambridge, Massachusetts. She split the last school year between a seventh grade science classroom and a fifth grade general studies classroom. Liz completed a Bachelor's Degree in journalism from St. Michael's College in Vermont and a Masters Degree in Elementary Education through an intensive program offered by Lesley University. She looks forward to sharing her energy and enthusiasm with the third grade students at Sinai Akiba.

Cathy Ryne – School Librarian

Cathy is a native of St. Paul, Minnesota and has lived in Southern California for over 30 years. Cathy worked as a children's and young adult librarian for 22 years at Sierra Madre Public Library. She then worked as a school librarian at Stephen S. Wise Temple Elementary School. She is currently president of Temple Beth David in Temple City; president of the Children's Literature Council of Southern California; and publicity chair for the Association of Jewish Libraries of Southern California. Cathy is very excited to be working at SAA.

Rebecca Saliman – Middle School Jewish History, Bible, and LSP Bible Teacher

Rebecca earned her MA in Jewish Education and CA State Teaching Credential from HUC-JIR. She was also a DeLeT (Day school Leadership through Teaching) fellow. After two years of teaching Judaic Studies at Kadima Hebrew Academy, Rebecca is excited to join the Sinai Akiba staff. When Rebecca isn't teaching or learning, she enjoys Israeli dancing, reading, and hiking.

Michal Setton – Middle School Hebrew Teacher

Michal was born and raised in Israel. She served as an officer in the Israeli Army. After her service she earned her bachelor degree in special education and Bible studies with honors from the Beit Berl College. She moved with her husband to Los Angeles for his work in the World Zionist Organization in 2008. Michal joined our school in January 2008 as support staff for the middle school Judaic teachers and worked on different projects throughout the year. Michal will teach Hebrew classes, be the in-house substitute teacher and will have additional responsibilities in the middle school.

Kathleen Smith (RN, BSN, MSN) – School Nurse

Kathy was born in Santa Monica and has been a local girl her whole life. She is a Registered Nurse and received her Bachelors of Science Degree in nursing and Certified Public Health Nurse from California State University Los Angeles. She continued on to receive a Masters Degree in nursing with a pediatric clinical nurse specialty and a minor in education from UCLA. Kathy is a member of Sigma Theta Tau's National Honor Society of Nursing from UCLA. Her experience as a nurse ranges from many years as a critical care nurse in the pediatrics intensive care unit at UCLA, transport team nurse, ambulatory pediatric care and gastroenterology nurse for private practice. She is committed to the health and well being of all children and is excited to be part of the staff.