

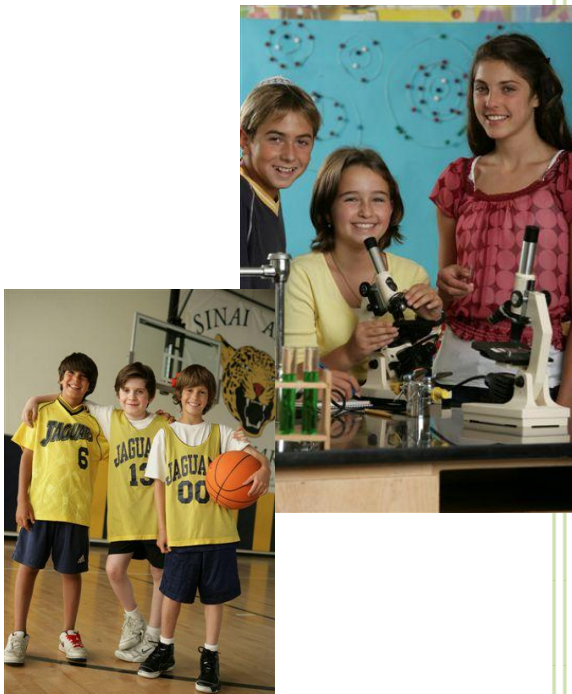


*A School for the Mind, the Heart, the Soul*

# Head of School

Leadership Opportunity  
July 2012

## Sinai Akiba Academy



Carney, Sandoe  Associates

800-225-7986 ▼ [www.carneysandoe.com](http://www.carneysandoe.com)

Los Angeles, California

547 students

Pre-K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade

[www.sinaiakiba.org](http://www.sinaiakiba.org)

## THE POSITION

Sinai Akiba Academy in Los Angeles, California, seeks a Head of School to lead a community of nearly 550 pre-kindergarten through eighth grade students and 106 faculty members. Located in the Westwood neighborhood of West Los Angeles, the school has a well-earned reputation for outstanding general and Judaic education. Parents looking for educational excellence choose Sinai Akiba for its challenging academic program in a Jewish day school setting. The school benefits from the sound leadership and nurturing guidance of Rabbi Laurence Scheindlin, who has served as Headmaster since 1977. Dedicated and mission-driven teaching, joyful learning, and a spirit of collaboration among parents and staff have created a flourishing school, ready to welcome the next leader. Today, Sinai Akiba strikes a balance between a demanding academic environment and a forward-looking vision of constructive, ongoing change. The next Head of School will find a cooperative culture and a staff-wide commitment to high standards. He or she will be charged with ensuring the continuing excellence of all aspects of the school's operation in the context of the mission statement.

## THE SCHOOL

Sinai Akiba Academy is a Solomon Schechter Conservative Jewish day school established in 1968, which draws on the rich traditions of Jewish heritage while offering a powerful academic environment. The school inspires students within a warm, culturally rich community that offers an exceptional educational and spiritual journey. The school community, diverse in national origin, religious observance and economic status, is guided by the common goal of fostering respect and responsibility for one another. Sinai Akiba is a values-based environment, and students are given the opportunity to grow both as Jews and as citizens of the world. This warm and caring community is part of the greater synagogue community of Sinai Temple. What sets Sinai Akiba apart from other Jewish day schools in Los Angeles is the exceptionally strong academic program.



The lower school is Kindergarten through fifth grade and includes three classes per grade level. One Geshur class serves as a bridge between pre-school and kindergarten for children with fall birthdays who may benefit from an additional year. The departmentalized program in the middle school serves grades six through eight. The Sinai

### *Mission Statement*

*Sinai Akiba Academy offers an outstanding general and Judaic education that develops the mind, heart and soul. We engage students in the joy and discipline of learning, introducing students to a life of personal growth, sensitivity, responsibility and intellectual inquiry, shaped by Jewish practices and informed by a respect for diversity of thought.*

Temple Preschool is a separate school of 150 students with its own Director who works under the general supervision of the Sinai Akiba Head of School and Sinai Akiba Academy Committee. Though many of these children go on to enroll at Sinai Akiba, admission is not automatic.

Sinai Akiba Academy has an outstanding reputation among secondary schools and SAA graduates find themselves extremely well-prepared for top-tier Jewish, secular/independent and public high schools. Graduates attend many types of high schools including: Milken, Harvard-Westlake, Brentwood, Buckley, Marlborough, Crossroads, Archer, Windward, Shalhevet, as well as Beverly Hills, Hamilton, Palisades and Santa Monica High Schools. SAA high school graduates move on to a varied list of colleges and universities including: Barnard College, Claremont McKenna College, Cornell University, Columbia University, Harvard University (including the medical and law schools), Northwestern University, NYU, Pomona College, Princeton University, Stanford University, UCLA, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UCSD, USC, University of Michigan, University of Pennsylvania, Washington University and Yale University.

### ***Sinai Akiba at a Glance***

*Grades: Pre-kindergarten – 8<sup>th</sup> grade*

*Current enrollment: 547*

*Teachers and specialists: 75*

*Teaching assistants: 31*

*Faculty with advanced degrees: 45%*

*Student-Teacher ratio: 10:1*

*Operating budget: \$10.1 million*

*Endowment: \$7.0 million*

*Financial Aid: \$1.7 million*

*Students receiving need-based aid: 27%*

Sinai Akiba Academy is accredited by the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), the Western Association of Schools and

Colleges (WASC), and the Bureau of Jewish Education of Los Angeles (BJELA). The School is affiliated with the Solomon Schechter Day School Association (SSDSA) and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). The most recent CAIS accreditation report was exceptional, commending the school and granting a full six-year term.

### **THE SYNAGOGUE**

SAA is fortunate to be part of Sinai Temple and the Temple community. The synagogue was established in 1906 as the first Conservative congregation in Southern California, and today is lead by Rabbi David Wolpe, a nationally renowned author and commentator. The Temple offers SAA families a spiritual home which reinforces the lessons of Torah, community and Zionism offered in the school. Three ongoing Shabbat minyans provide varied opportunities for worship, from a traditional main sanctuary service to the lay-led family minyan to an alternative and musical service in the round. The Temple building



44 Bromfield Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108

TEL 800.225.7986 • FAX 617.542.9500

search@carneysandoe.com • www.carneysandoe.com

pulses with activity seven days a week offering a rich array of cultural, religious and social action programs as well as affinity groups which make the large synagogue feel like a small community. Many preschool families forge their connection to the Temple and its schools through Dor Chadash in which young families engage their children in Jewish communal experience beginning in toddlerhood and infancy. The rabbis and the cantors teach in the school periodically and are familiar to the students by the time of bar/bat mitzvah age when they transition from school to Temple instructional programs to prepare them for this cherished life cycle event. Many families “come for the school then stay for the shul,” integrating into a strong, supportive Sinai community for a lifetime.

### CAMPUS AND SETTING

The lower school building was constructed 12 years ago and features three classrooms per grade level which are child-friendly and conducive to flexible forms of instruction and state-of-the-art instructional technology, in addition to a magnificent gymnasium. Recent renovation of the third and fourth floors of the original school building containing the 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms created the new Lainer Learning Center that houses the library. The project has transformed two floors into a spectacular educational environment with the library at the center and classrooms and tutorial rooms arranged around the perimeter. The library has expanded to properly house its premier collection of Judaic literature. The layout also allows for smaller work spaces for group and individual study as well as a classroom/study area used for lower school library lessons and for special presentations. All 20 classrooms have been designed to have a light, open atmosphere, featuring overhead clerestory windows and high ceilings. Interactive smartboards, digital projectors and computer stations bring technology beyond the state-of-the-art computer lab.

Athletic facilities include the recently rebuilt Rickles Gym with a basketball court, expanded play areas, a retractable wall and mobile seating. Glass doors along the north wall allow more natural light and open access to the outdoor play space. Rickles Gym is an attractive multi-purpose room suitable for a variety of Temple and school events. The school also houses the two-story Weinberg Gym with a basketball court and viewing rafters, and an outdoor rooftop gym.



Lying at the base of the Santa Monica Mountains at the western edge of Los Angeles, the community of Westwood lies between Beverly Hills to the East and Santa Monica to the West. Sinai Akiba is on Wilshire Boulevard, a primary east-west thoroughfare connecting downtown Los Angeles with Santa Monica. The vibrant area is a mixture of residential neighborhoods, towering business complexes, and apartment

buildings. Westwood boasts excellent international restaurants, renowned theaters and the small shopping district of Westwood Village, dating back to the 1920s. The UCLA campus, several blocks west of the campus, brings all of the events and opportunities of a major university.



#### STUDENTS

Sinai Akiba Academy is a living example of K'lal Yisrael, the diverse Jewish community. The School weaves together children from various national and socio-economic backgrounds, unified by Jewish tradition. Sinai Akiba's student body also reflects a

broad spectrum of religious practices, ranging from modern Orthodox and traditional Conservative to Reform. The community includes families from numerous countries including Israel, Iran, Canada, Mexico, South America, Russia, South Africa and Morocco. The school's commitment to tuition assistance helps it to maintain this dynamic and diverse community. SAA families are united by their commitment to the quality of education the academy provides and by membership in Sinai Temple (a requirement after a child is admitted to the school). One of the goals is for students to carry with them warm memories and a firm foundation of knowledge and skills for building their Jewish identity—fostering deep feelings of connectedness with Israel, the Jewish community and religious life.

#### FACULTY

Sinai Akiba's dedicated faculty and staff are its core strength. With several teachers who continue to inspire after 20+ years at the school, Sinai Akiba has a dynamic team of enthusiastic educators. All highly credentialed, 45% members of the staff and faculty hold advanced degrees, and every member of the staff is encouraged to take part in ongoing educational and professional development. Both general and Judaic studies faculties bring a wide variety of experiences and talent to the classroom, forging strong personal bonds with their students and engaging them in both the joy and the discipline of learning.



#### THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Sinai Akiba offers a challenging general studies curriculum with many opportunities for children to learn about their world through literature, social studies and science. The School cultivates an understanding and concern for the natural world and fosters ease

with technology, while nurturing a love for history, appreciation for the arts and enhancement of physical abilities. Two thirds of the school day is dedicated to math, language arts, social studies, science, history, art, computer, music, drama and library. One-third of the day is devoted to Judaic studies as students master Hebrew, apply their critical thinking skills and knowledge of literature to understanding Bible and rabbinic literature, learn synagogue skills and develop a commitment to Israel and other Jewish values. As a co-educational, egalitarian school, leadership skills and creativity are especially encouraged through co-curricular activities including student council, arts programs, league sports, physical education and after-school clubs. Through a rigorous and challenging course of academic study, students learn in an atmosphere that prepares them for future success in the most competitive secondary schools, colleges and universities.

### **JUDAIC STUDIES**

The Judaic studies curriculum is the “heart and soul” of Sinai Akiba Academy, providing students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to both participate actively as members of the Jewish community and to maintain a vigorous commitment to human rights and the ideals of democracy. At Sinai Akiba, children develop a positive sense of Jewish identity and a reverence for traditions by actively participating in Jewish practice, the study of Jewish texts and conversational Hebrew. Art projects, songs and dramatic presentations enhance these studies and serve to make holiday celebrations warm, exciting events. With an emphasis on social interaction and mutual respect, tzedakah (charity) and community service projects, SAA teaches responsibility to others. The school also teaches respect for the diversity of Jewish practice within a culturally rich, caring community that empowers students with a keen sense of their connection to the larger community—the keystone for becoming compassionate Jewish leaders in their communities and the world. By the time they take their culminating trip to Israel in eighth grade, students have an unshakable connection to the Jewish people. As they move on through high school, college and beyond, SAA alumni become leaders within the Jewish community.



### **LOWER SCHOOL (K - GRADE 5)**

The lower school is a welcoming and secure learning environment for children from Gesher (a pre-kindergarten year) through fifth grade. With individual attention and encouragement, students discover a personal joy and interest in learning while acquiring disciplined study habits and building sound foundations for higher academics. The math program builds progressively upon a sequence of concepts and skills. Tools such as

graphs, charts, drawings and manipulatives are used to deepen students' understanding and abilities with an emphasis on problem-solving, critical thinking and a comprehensive math vocabulary. Through a combination of literature-based and phonics reading programs, students develop sound reading skills and a true appreciation for literature. They also become skilled writers, and are given many opportunities to express themselves through a variety of creative and academic writing projects. Specialists in science, social studies, art, music, computers, library and physical education create stimulating, activity-based lessons with challenging, age-appropriate material.

The Judaic Studies curriculum makes Jewish traditions and values a natural part of students' daily lives, with an emphasis on Shabbat, festivals and prayer. The Lower School program utilizes materials from Tal Am and MaToK as well as other programs to integrate the study of the Hebrew language into all other Judaic subject areas. In the earliest grades, students begin learning Bible stories in English, and studying Hebrew as a conversational language. Games, high-interest stories and age-appropriate activities empower them to read, write and use Hebrew in everyday communications, preparing them for the transition from abridged Biblical texts to the original texts. Students learn to interpret creatively while also studying traditional commentaries, such as those of Rashi. Through the Shabbaton program, Lower School students are invited to participate in Shabbat services in one of the three synagogue miynans.



#### **MIDDLE SCHOOL (GRADES 6-8)**

In the middle school, students continue to engage in hands-on projects that encourage group involvement, kindle creativity and continue to inspire joy in learning. At the same time, teachers maintain high standards for academic achievement in order to prepare students for high school and college. Students show independence of thought and increasing self-reliance in these grades, yet they still need the comfort and guidance provided by loving parents and dedicated teachers. The departmentalized program gives students an enhanced sense of independence as they move from class to class. Students read challenging literature, regularly write research reports, and become adept at linking creative reading with creative thinking. The Middle School math programs consist of pre-algebra, algebra and geometry. Through a combination of experimentation, demonstration and text study, students acquire a firm foundation of scientific knowledge and methodology in a three-year sequence of science courses. Each student is assigned a teacher/advisor who meets regularly with their students to monitor and assist with academic and social growth, empowering while assisting students to resolve their own peer and personal issues.

Growing social maturity and insight are accompanied by the study of Judaic literature through study of rabbinic literature. By studying samples of Hebrew prose and poetry, students expand their ability to express themselves in Hebrew, both orally and in writing. This exposure to centuries of profound Jewish thought contributes to the development of the whole person in a values-oriented context. At the same time, students are encouraged to look for the application of traditional text to current life, as they begin to study and think about Judaism in an increasingly mature manner. Middle school students participate in a variety of school and Temple community social action and Israel advocacy programs offering them the chance to act on the lessons they have learned in class. The culmination of the Sinai Akiba experience is the eighth grade trip to Israel.



### **DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING**

Sinai Akiba is dedicated to meeting the unique needs of every student, with differentiated instruction occurring throughout the grade levels and curricula. In addition to individualized instruction in the classroom, SAA provides a Learning Support Program for students who require additional educational support, with specialized instruction in General and Judaic studies for individual children and for small groups. The Learning Support Program creates a positive learning environment where children experience progress and success at Sinai Akiba Academy. The gifted coordinator, trained in the needs of gifted learners, works throughout the lower school, educating faculty on the specific needs of each gifted student, providing enriched resources and materials for these students, and meeting with students one-on-one from time to time.



### **GOVERNANCE**

The school functions in a two-tiered system as is typical of synagogue and church schools. The governing body is the 22-member Sinai Akiba Academy Committee charged with supporting the administration to enhance the learning and community experience at the school for all students. The Head of School is a member of the senior staff of Sinai Temple and works closely with senior Temple leadership.

### **DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI**

The school boasts a robust culture of giving, with more than 90% parent participation every year. Total fundraising from all sources approaches \$1 million per year. In 2010, for example, 98% of parents participated and the total campaign generated \$523,000 from all sources. As another example, the Annual Event and Auction – the school's flagship



Carney, Sandoe & Associates

44 Bromfield Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108

TEL 800.225.7986 • FAX 617.542.9500

search@carneysandoe.com • www.carneysandoe.com

event – raised more than \$450,000 in 2011. The school has a full-time professional Development Director, as well as some 50 volunteers aiding the effort. The Head of School is an important and integral part of development. Grandparents, alumni parents and alumni also contribute to the effort. Reunions and other events like SAA College Night keep graduates in touch with the school, and bring them together to reconnect at different stages of their lives. Although fundraising is a continuing challenge, especially in the current economy, the school's efforts have shown impressive results. Among other things, the financial aid budget has increased along with the increased need. The school is also committed to growing its already meaningful endowment.

#### **SPECIAL STRENGTHS OF SINAI AKIBA**

- Welcoming and caring community, with a family feel
- Academic excellence; a well-designed curriculum, good preparation for fine secondary schools
- Dedicated, well-qualified teachers, working collaboratively and incorporating best practices
- Well-respected school, with a reputation for excellence
- Balanced, whole-child focus on each student's progress and success
- Instilling Conservative Jewish values
- Parents care deeply about the school and are involved in many positive ways
- Judaic studies program is a point of pride (strong, unique and rich with thinking skills)
- Outstanding resources, (library, technology, funding for new projects)
- Nationally-recognized Temple offering programs and services that support and enhance the school curriculum
- Good support for faculty (salaries, benefits, professional development opportunities)
- Cohesive, collaborative and expert administrative team committed to continuous change
- Highly-trained faculty who participate eagerly in professional development and curriculum development opportunities.
- Diversity developed around different cultures
- Learning support at all levels
- Good financial management
- Takes best advantage of cultural attractions in LA
- Smart, happy, hardworking students thriving in a small, nurturing environment

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL

**Recruitment & Outreach** – As the largest and most well-established Jewish day school in the west Los Angeles area, Sinai Akiba has enjoyed a strong advantage in the marketplace for a number of years. Recently, application and enrollment rates have dropped slightly as the admissions environment has become more competitive. The expanding Jewish populations in west L.A. are Reform and Orthodox whose young families seek a Jewish education that is either less or more traditional than the Schechter program at SAA. In addition, the geographic concentration of more observant Conservative families has moved east nearer to competitor schools. Research by the SAA admissions team has shown that the multi-cultural nature of the school community – which is viewed as a significant strength by many who attend the school – nonetheless deters some Ashkenazi families from applying or enrolling. Families wholly unfamiliar with the actual day-to-day experience of living in the “salad bowl” of Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Persian cultures within the school often have negative misperceptions about what they believe the experience will be. Despite diligent and respectful efforts to address this, major breakthroughs have eluded school and temple professionals and lay leadership thus far. The new Head of School should be prepared to reach out to young families in the Ashkenazi community and be a constructive change-agent with regard to this issue of concern.



**Finances & Fundraising** – Sinai Akiba endeavors to set tuition at a level consistent with market surveys of near-by Jewish and secular private schools. Nonetheless, tuition increases which are necessary to build the school program and provide value are steadily eclipsing the ability of some middle and upper-middle income families to afford the school. In the last two years, the financial aid as a percent of budget has more than doubled, although as a percentage of dollars to income it is consistent with other secular and religious schools. In addition, the pool of parents with means to contribute sizably to the annual campaign has shrunk, especially in some of the lower grades. As a result, in the long-term the school may not be able to rely exclusively on annual giving dollars to cover the operating deficit. The school has an endowment and reserves which can provide a cushion against deficits from time to time but the Board would like to avoid accessing these funds to support operations on an annual basis. The new Head of School must be prepared to strategize about the best way to resolve this and must be a vigorous and tireless participant in bringing about a long term solution.

**Diversity Management** – The cultural and international diversity of SAA is simultaneously its most unique strength and bedeviling challenge. SAA parents frequently express pride that their families and children are not “cookie cutter” versions of one another and that strong friendships are forged among parents and children who hail from diverse backgrounds. Nonetheless, intra-cultural relations within the community are not always without friction as families struggle to navigate the social intricacies engendered by divergent cultural norms. The new Head of School must be alert to this issue, be able to address it with vision and sensitivity, and must embrace and evolve the community-building programming that is already underway.



#### **THE NEXT HEAD OF SCHOOL**

In order to qualify for this position, it is *required* that a candidate be Jewish and be an educator and/or a Rabbi.

*Ideally*, candidates for the position will have a commitment to the values and practices of Judaism, particularly Conservative Judaism.

Qualified candidates *should* possess the following characteristics:

- Ability to connect with adults and students
- Ability to communicate with a diverse community
- Comfortable with fundraising
- Good manager of finances and personnel
- Effective public speaker
- Able to lead and develop vision
- Willing to embrace the mission, accomplishments and culture of the school
- Supportive advocate and mentor for teachers
- Current with best practices for teaching in the 21st century
- Consistent, fair and thoughtful decision-maker
- Intelligent, well educated, lifelong learner

**TO APPLY:**

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically and as separate documents the following materials:

- *cover letter expressing interest in the Sinai Akiba Academy position*
- *current résumé*
- *statement of educational philosophy and practice*
- *list of 5 references with name, phone number, and email address of each to:*

**Dr. Thomas Redmon**  
Senior Search Associate  
**CARNEY, SANDOE & ASSOCIATES**  
44 Bromfield Street, Boston, MA 02108  
[tom.redmon@carneysandoe.com](mailto:tom.redmon@carneysandoe.com)  
<http://www.carney.sandoe.com>  
678-852-9084

*~ Sinai Akiba Academy is an Equal Opportunity Employer ~*

