

כאיש אחד בלב אחד  
ONE PEOPLE ONE HEART



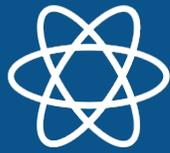
# AKIBA YAVNEH ACADEMY

Dallas, Texas

**HEAD OF SCHOOL**  
Start Date: July 1, 2023  
[akibayavneh.org](http://akibayavneh.org)



Carney  
Sandoe  
& ASSOCIATES



# Akiba Yavneh Academy

## בית ספר עקיבא יבנה

### Mission

Akiba Yavneh Academy is dedicated to providing an academically excellent and values-based General and Judaic education to Jewish students of all backgrounds to inspire a lifelong love of Torah, higher learning, and the State of Israel.

### Philosophy

Akiba Yavneh strives to educate the whole child by recognizing the unique potential of each student, fostering a culture of respect and kindness, and encouraging a sense of community in our school. Akiba pursues excellence with a rigorous dual curriculum and celebrates the diversity in their community of learners by providing innovative and differentiated learning opportunities to address each student's developmental needs. Students achieve distinction in leading universities and yeshivot after graduating from Akiba Yavneh.

## OVERVIEW

Akiba Yavneh Academy (AYA) is a Modern Orthodox, coeducational school focused on providing a rigorous academic education of general studies and Jewish scholarship to students in early childhood through 12th grade. Located on a beautiful 8.5 acre campus in North Dallas, Akiba Yavneh helps students develop into responsible, confident, independent thinkers, lifelong learners, and active participants in a democratic society.

Yavneh Academy of Dallas (9th-12th) and Akiba Academy (Pre-K-8th), long co-located on the same campus, merged in 2019. This merger timing was unfortunate. Before the post-merger integration could be accomplished, along came the pandemic and everything went virtual.

Now the process of full integration and the benefits to be had from a strong unified school are underway under the direction of an experienced Interim Head of School. The Head of School is the sole employee of the Board and leads all personnel. While the school is proudly and effectively a Modern Orthodox Jewish school, it has had a positive history with and is open to the best leadership candidates, whether they are Jewish or not.



With about 450 students in their infant, early childhood, lower/middle/high schools, AYA is a thriving institution. Known for its exceptional relationships between students and faculty, as well as its warm and welcoming culture, the school welcomes Jewish students of all levels of observance, and is proud of its graduates who are both college-ready and well versed in and proud of their Jewish heritage and culture.

AYA seeks an experienced leader to realize the benefits of the merger, to strengthen post-merger structures and systems, to tell the amazing AYA story of the high achieving students at every grade level, and to lead a team dedicated to excellence in both secular and Judaic studies. The position begins July 1, 2023.

## THE SCHOOL

Akiba Academy opened its doors in 1962 with a mission to combine a rich general-studies education with complementary teachings in Judaic history and culture so students could develop as both Americans and Jews. Simultaneously, Yavneh Academy of Dallas has been providing the highest level of college preparatory courses with an outstanding Judaic Studies program to Dallas students since 1993. Yavneh Academy of Dallas merged with Akiba Academy during the 2019-2020 school year to create Akiba Yavneh Academy of Dallas.



Today, Akiba Yavneh Academy is a vital asset to the Dallas Jewish community and is dedicated to supporting the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth of each child. From the cutting-edge approach of the Early Childhood program to the rigorous and individualized education at the high school level, Akiba Yavneh provides a nurturing environment for students to develop into responsible, intelligent, and moral leaders of tomorrow. Foundational to the educational approach at Akiba Yavneh is a focus on Judaic Studies, where students study traditional Jewish texts, the Hebrew language, and Jewish history. The school boasts an extraordinary student-teacher ratio and small class sizes.

Yavneh students complement their coursework with cultural experiences that inspire them to pursue their passions, connect with others, and transform the world. Daily life at Yavneh is vibrant, rewarding, and full of opportunities for growth. Yavneh supports a vast array of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, including community service, student clubs, athletic teams, school trips, and social events. Akiba Yavneh has a track record of graduates who go on to the best high schools and top tier universities and ultimately become distinguished leaders in their communities.

Akiba Yavneh Academy's student body is a mixture of Jewish men and women from the Dallas community. These students represent a wide range of synagogues across the Metroplex, and Akiba Yavneh welcomes all Jewish families regardless of affiliation. Some of Yavneh's students arrive already speaking Hebrew fluently, and some not at all. Others have extensive training in Jewish history and text, and others have no prior experience. Regardless of their background, when students leave Akiba Yavneh, they will have established a lifelong love of learning, strong sense of responsibility and empathy, lasting commitment to the Torah, and mastery and appreciation of Hebrew through its study and application.

Akiba is a member of the Texas Association of Non-Public Schools and The National Society of Hebrew Day Schools. The school is accredited by Cognia.



### **A Word About Organizational Structure**

Pre-merger, Akiba and Yavneh had separate boards, separate school heads, and while a few functions were in “shared services,” they were separate schools. Now there is one reconstituted Board who has determined that while instructional and student-facing programs of the school have remained effective, organizational structure needed some work. In the capable hands of an Interim Head of School, much progress has been made. Still, the new permanent Head will need to continue to strengthen post-merger institutional functions as well as assure top-quality Judaics and secular studies. This is a relatively new structure and everyone agrees that they want the school leadership and governance to mirror the best practices of fine independent schools.

## **ACADEMICS**

Akiba Yavneh Academy’s dual curriculum is unrivaled among Dallas schools. It combines the highest level of courses with an unparalleled Judaic Studies program, and it is carefully crafted to help maximize each student’s potential. Guiding the actions of all faculty, staff, students, and parents are integrity, care, responsibility, and respect. These values ensure Akiba graduates are today’s accomplished thinkers and tomorrow’s compassionate problem-solvers and leaders.

At Akiba Yavneh, academic excellence is built upon a meaningfully integrated curriculum, a culture of collaboration, individualized instruction, dedication to Judaic studies, and commitment to community outreach. Incorporating best practices of both innovative and traditional education, Akiba Academy has created an effective approach that sets high academic standards for all students and makes connection and collaboration possible.



Akiba teachers are committed to educating the whole child, providing opportunities for students to grow academically, emotionally, socially, as well as spiritually. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate. They are provided ample opportunities to learn and plan together, discuss children’s growth and development, and reinforce each other’s learning activities. A remarkably low teacher-to-student ratio allows the customization of each student’s curriculum and enables teachers to work closely with students to maximize their unique strengths and talents, ensuring each student is both nurtured and challenged with an ambitious curriculum.

### **Judaic Studies**

Akiba Yavneh’s Judaic Studies program provides a solid foundation in traditional Jewish texts and helps students develop a strong Jewish identity and connection to the State of Israel, its history, people, and culture. Judaic Studies staff, many of which come from the finest educational institutions in both America and Israel, teach from a Modern Orthodox perspective.

All students learn Talmudic Literature, Chumash (Bible), Navi (Prophets), Halacha (Jewish Law), Jewish history, and Hebrew language. Courses of varying levels are offered, enabling students to learn at a level and pace appropriate to their prior exposure to Jewish texts. Hebrew is taught as a living and dynamic language. Students learn to read Hebrew texts with full comprehension and fluently communicate in Hebrew, both orally and in writing. Advanced students are provided the opportunity to study Hebrew literature.



## Early Childhood

Akiba's Early Childhood Program is carefully structured to not only provide the best in preschool education, but also heighten each child's sense of empowerment and self-worth. Providing both half and full-day early childhood education programs, Akiba Yavneh accepts students ranging from infants (3 months) through Pre-K.

The Akiba Yavneh Early Childhood curriculum promotes problem-solving and higher cognitive skills and encourages independent thinking, curiosity, and imagination. Pre-K students are taught skills in reading, Hebrew language, math, and science. In addition to normal classroom activities, children also have regular music, art, physical education, and library time, as well as the opportunity to participate in afternoon enrichment classes in everything from science to ballet. The school continues to enhance the program to stay on the cutting edge of best practices for early childhood education based on current research.

Akiba Yavneh is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and was one of the first schools in the nation to be accredited by the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative (JECEI)—confirmation that the Early Childhood Program is among the most progressive in the country.



### **Lower School**

In addition to a strong secular and Judaic education, Lower School emphasizes social and emotional learning and creates an environment that inspires a love of Israel and Judaism. Classes in English and language arts, math, science, and social studies are designed to encourage students to think critically and are taught using a centers-based approach, allowing for differentiation and focused teacher attention. Recess is intentionally built in to the day to encourage physical activity and nurture positive student relationships. Physical education, art, technology, and social/emotional learning are offered weekly.

### **Middle School**

Middle School students at Akiba are provided with a rigorous academic program focused on skill-building, higher order thinking, and social emotional development. Akiba offers honors level courses for mathematics, English and language arts, and Hebrew. In addition to physical education, students have a wide array of electives to choose from, including art, martial arts, cooking, and yearbook. Middle school students are also each a part of an advisory. The advisor forms strong bonds with each of the students and is there to support students. During advisory, students work on organization, cyber safety, building community, and other relevant topics that impact adolescent life.



## High School

Akiba Yavneh Academy's High School sets rigorous academic standards, provides individualized student support and college counseling, and offers students a variety of opportunities to deepen their understanding of their own identity. High School students receive a strong education in key areas of study, including English, mathematics, science, social studies, and history. Students can enroll in elective courses including the fine arts and studio art, music, speech, yearbook, journalism, health and wellness, and mock trial. Akiba Yavneh also offers advanced courses, including AP Calculus AB & BC, AP Engineering, AP Computer Science, AP English Language, AP English Literature, AP Music Theory, AP Physics C-Mechanics, AP Statistics, AP U.S. Government, AP U.S. History, and several courses with concurrent enrollment at Southern Methodist University and the Dallas County Community College District.

Beginning in freshman year, college guidance counselors help students and their families navigate the college admissions process. By getting to know each student as a unique individual, Akiba Yavneh staff uses an individualized approach to set students on the right path, equip them with the knowledge and tools to make intelligent decisions, and help them overcome challenges along the way. Akiba Yavneh students have been accepted to more than 125 colleges and universities around the world.

## College Acceptances

Students of the classes of 2019 - 2021 have been accepted to the following colleges and universities, among others:

American University  
Arizona State University  
Babson College  
Bar Ilan University  
Brandeis University  
Carnegie Mellon University  
College of Charleston  
Cornell College  
Drexel University  
George Washington University  
Indiana University  
Johns Hopkins University  
New York University  
Northeastern University  
Northwestern University  
Ohio State University  
Pennsylvania State University  
Purdue University  
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute  
San Diego State University  
Southern Methodist University  
Stern College of Yeshiva University  
SUNY – Birmingham  
Texas A&M University  
Tufts University  
Tulane University  
University of Arizona  
University of California – Santa Barbara  
University of Colorado – Boulder  
University of Georgia  
University of Miami  
University of Michigan  
University of Pittsburgh  
University of Texas – Austin  
Vanderbilt University  
Washington University in St. Louis  
Wellesley College  
Yale University  
Yeshiva University



### **The Structured Learning Classroom**

Akiba Yavneh is also home to the Structured Learning Classroom (SLC). Specifically designed to meet the educational, behavioral, communication, social, and sensory needs of students on the autism spectrum or students with significant needs, the SLC provides instruction in all general and Judaic subjects, as well as targeted social, behavioral, adaptive, and communication skills.

The SLC educational philosophy is based on a hybrid model where educators and specialists design a program based on the individual needs of each child. The typical classroom teacher to student ratio at the SLC is 2:4, with a variety of specialists available to address specific needs for students.

## **ATHLETICS**

Akiba Yavneh Academy is committed to providing a positive athletic experience to all students. Student athletes learn lasting lessons in perseverance, self-discipline, sportsmanship, respect of one's opponent, consideration of the rules, and team building.

Middle School athletics offers students the opportunity to participate at a competitive level. Interscholastic sports offerings include competitive boys' and girls' basketball, track, soccer, tennis, girls' volleyball, and boys' flag football. The volleyball and basketball teams both hold multiple championships. High School athletics offers students the opportunity to compete against other top-Dallas private schools. Interscholastic sports offerings include competitive boys' basketball, girls' basketball, boys' & girls' tennis, boys' soccer, girls' volleyball, girls' soccer, and boys' and girls' cross country.



## SCHOOL LIFE

Core to student life at Yavneh is the joy of celebrating Jewish traditions and building a school-community inspired by a rich heritage. Akiba Yavneh students are encouraged to become involved in clubs, academic and governing councils, mentoring, and community service projects. Whether it's musical instruments, math, a foreign language, computers, film, yearbook, mock trial, or the performing arts, students can join a variety of special interest clubs. National Honor Society is also offered to high-achieving students.

Community involvement and service is also a fundamental part of the Akiba curriculum. Beginning in preschool, every student learns the philosophical and practical importance of tikkun olam or repairing of the world. In grades 1 through 8, students are given the opportunity and responsibility to help others through hands-on service projects. From learning farming skills to raising money for those in need in their own community, Akiba students develop a deep understanding of their place as global citizens and their ability to make a difference.



## CAMPUS

The Schultz Rosenberg Campus is home to seven buildings totaling 115,000 square feet, including the early childhood center, Lower School, Middle School, High School, the Andrew & Nicole Schultz Family athletic facility, the Leah & Harold Pollman dining hall, an art gallery, administrative offices, as well as an outdoor amphitheater and sculpture garden. This stunning environment was designed to foster academic excellence and spiritual connection.

## DALLAS, TEXAS

Dallas is a vibrant and dynamic urban center. With a population of 1,304,379, Dallas is the ninth most-populous city in the U.S. Located in North Texas, Dallas is home to lively, safe, and diverse neighborhoods, a thriving culinary scene, leading art museums, more than 400 parks, five professional sports teams, and 24 Fortune 500 companies. Over 41 colleges and universities are located within its metropolitan area, which is the most of any metropolitan area in Texas. Dallas is an affordable and pleasant place to live; the median home value in Dallas is \$297,044. Additionally, there is no state income tax.



Dallas is the center of the North Texas region's art scene. The Arts District in downtown Dallas is home to several arts venues, including the Dallas Museum of Art, the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, The Trammell & Margaret Crow Collection of Asian Art and the Nasher Sculpture Center. Dallas is also home to more than 160 miles of the most beautiful and diverse urban hike and bike trails in the country, connecting different communities, providing alternative transportation corridors and recreational amenities for Dallas residents.

Dallas is home to people of many religious backgrounds. Its Jewish population of approximately 45,000 is one of the largest of any city in Texas. Since the establishment of the city's first Jewish cemetery in 1854 and its first congregation in 1873, Dallasite Jews have been well-represented among leaders in commerce, politics, and various professional fields. There are more than 25 synagogues in the Dallas area, multiple erus, and numerous Kosher-certified restaurants and markets.

Two commercial airports serve Dallas: Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and Dallas Love Field. Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) is the Dallas-area public transportation authority that provides rail, buses and HOV lanes to commuters. DART began operating the first light rail system in Texas in 1996, and it is now the largest operator of light rail in the US. Today, the system is the seventh-busiest light rail system in the country with approximately 55 stations on 72 miles of light rail, and 10 stations on 35 miles of commuter rail.



## STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

The new leader will encounter many strengths of the school including:

- A faculty that is uniformly cited for their exceptional dedication to and relationships with their students.
- The academic leadership team is “the strongest it has ever been.”
- The school’s graduates have a record of high achievement, and the future generations of knowledgeable and committed Jewish community leadership is alive and well in the student body.
- The board is very clear that it espouses a best-practices relationship with the administration.
- The school is on a solid financial foundation. There is no debt, an endowment, a history of balanced budgets and fiscal prudence.
- The facilities are both beautiful and highly functional.
- The academic program of the school is firmly 50% secular subjects and 50% Judaics.
- The school has financial assistance funds available from its own endowment, the operating budget and support from the local Jewish Federation.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Among the challenges and opportunities the new Head of School will be expected to address are:

- While the Board has a clear idea of the identity of the school, there is an opportunity to both sharpen the messages and proactively communicate the school's identity both internally and in the broader Dallas community, in order that the perceptions of the school match the reality.
  - \* It will be important to continue to set a high bar of academic excellence and strong college preparation in secular subjects, where the school sometimes does not get credit for its admirable record of college acceptances.
  - \* Because Akiba and Yavneh had different cultures pre-merger, intentional plans to establish and communicate the one Akiba Yavneh post-merger culture would be very helpful.
  - \* The program of the school is definitely Modern Orthodox; but Jews of all levels of observance are welcomed and find success at AYA, and that message needs to be emphasized.
  - \* The school would benefit from the new Head of School, the "face of the school," actively working to build personal and institutional connections with the other elements of the Dallas Jewish community.
- Informality and warmth are a positive feature of the school. However, there is an opportunity to operate more efficiently, to systematically address problems effectively, and to communicate promptly and clearly.
- Any merger is a significant event and change, and that can be destabilizing. It will be important to intentionally build trust and morale within the NEW school (ie, the combined AYA).
- The school has a highly effective program for students who need learning support. It is ongoing work to differentiate the school program to "meet each child where they are."
- There is an opportunity to create more K-12 curricular alignment.
- As in all schools, there is a desire for greater choice of electives, languages etc. It would be good to investigate the applicability of online classes supported by the school, in subjects where the school lacks critical mass to offer those itself.
- The school would benefit from a constructive evaluation system for both faculty and administrators.
- While much of the above bullets are about solidifying the foundation of the school, the new Head will have the opportunity to build on that foundation and lead AYA to be a forward thinking, leading example of a 21st century Modern Orthodox school.

## DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

- An experienced school leader with a demonstrated track record of assembling and holding accountable a cohesive, collaborative leadership team.
- Ability to make a compelling case for the importance and value of a Jewish education.
- A systems thinker capable of assuring that the administrative structures and systems of the school are efficient, consistent, high performance, transparent and coordinated.
- A high EQ “people person” who seeks out and builds relationships both within the school and in the broader Dallas community.
- Ability to build on the warmth of the school community so that AYA is the school of choice for Jewish students and families, and the place that faculty and staff want to remain to apply their craft.
- Appreciation for the value of diverse viewpoints and experiences in preparing students for the future; but also the ability to unite those diverse community members in commitment to a common vision and purpose.
- A commitment to differentiated education where the school meets and serves each student where they are.
- An entrepreneur with a growth mindset, eager to assure that the foundation is solid, but work collaboratively with the school community to move AYA forward as a leading example of a 21st century Modern Orthodox school.
- A highly organized self-starter with hands-on knowledge of what is going on at the school, but able to effectively delegate.
- Ability to set clear boundaries and expectations, and assure uniform enforcement and consequences for those who fail to live up to those expectations.
- A leader who is collaborative where possible, decisive when necessary, and can make wise and even sometimes tough decisions.
- A leader who sets a “tone at the top” of passion for the mission of the school, and the fun and joy of embracing Jewish values and culture.

## TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultant in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as separate PDF documents:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A one-page statement of Jewish educational philosophy and practice;
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate’s permission) to:

### **Skip Kotkins**

Senior Consultant

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