

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

VALLEY BETH SHALOM HAROLD M. SCHULWEIS DAY SCHOOL

Encino, California

vbsds.org

Start Date: July 1, 2024



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

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MISSION

Is to empower each child to reach his/her potential as a confident, skilled, and passionate learner with a strong Jewish identity. Exceptional, forward-thinking academic general and Judaic studies programs emphasize inquiry, critical thinking, and creativity while instilling Jewish ethics, values, spirituality, a personal connection to Israel, and a strong sense of social responsibility. Embraced by a nurturing and dynamic community, our students build a foundation that fosters academic achievement, celebrates the joy of Jewish life, and cultivates a desire to make a difference in the world.

POSITION OVERVIEW

Valley Beth Shalom Harold M Schulweis Day School (referred to herein as VBSDS or “the school”) is a K-6 co-ed school of about 200 students. The school welcomes students and families from all levels of Jewish observance. Led by an interim Head for the 2023-2024 school year, the school seeks a permanent Head of School to begin July 1, 2024.

The school is co-located on a campus with Valley Beth Shalom congregation, a Conservative Jewish synagogue, as well as a thriving Early Childhood Center (ECC) run by the synagogue.

The school operates with its own board to whom the Head reports. While the Early Childhood Center, VBSDS and the synagogue are all legally one organization, the synagogue does not exercise operational control over the school. In the best of circumstances, the school and the synagogue and the ECC will collaborate to serve their mutual constituents, to reinforce mutual values and sense of community, to coordinate and avoid duplication of efforts, and to share resources.

ENCINO, CALIFORNIA

Located in the southern part of the San Fernando Valley, Encino is part of the greater Los Angeles area and conveniently located to both residential neighborhoods and transportation corridors. More information can be found [HERE \(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encino,_Los_Angeles\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encino,_Los_Angeles)

STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

Among the many strengths the new head will find are:

- From a facilities standpoint and financial benefit, the school’s sharing a campus with the synagogue and preschool provides facilities far better than what a stand-alone school might afford.
- The school puts great emphasis on Social Emotional Learning and creating good, responsible, ethical young people imbued with timeless Jewish values of kindness, compassion, humanity and a drive to make the world a better place. In fact, feedback from the various middle schools to which VBSDS graduates matriculate, is that the VBSDS students are noticeable as being mensches, as being kinder and better behaved as well as being prepared for the academic work ahead.
- Historically, graduating sixth graders are accepted to the middle schools of choice and are well prepared for that next step in their education.
- Many cite exceptionally high-quality faculty who not only are effective teachers, but also care about each child as an individual.



- The athletics program of the school is often cited as a real strength. Highly regarded coaches reinforce the life lessons that athletics can embody, and a large percentage of students find a rewarding athletic experience.
- For many, the school is their community. There is a warmth and a sense of belonging that is very important to parents, students, faculty, staff and administration alike.
- The school received accolades for how it handled the COVID – 19 pandemic and were able to safely stay open when other schools could not.
- The board of the school is wise and dedicated and eager to support the Head while avoiding involving itself in operational matters.
- There is a passionate and engaged core of dedicated parents who work closely with and provide much needed support for the school. From serving in the lunch line to putting on events, to volunteering for whatever is needed.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Among those things where the new permanent head can have great impact are:

- The school exists in a highly competitive environment where families have the options of excellent public schools and other independent schools (both Jewish and secular). VBSDS has historically had a reputation for high academics, excellent social-emotional programs, and graduating mensches, as noted above. There is a sense that today the school must work harder to reclaim that reputation, especially for academic rigor, and the new Head will be expected to be a compelling external advocate for the school, able to make both rational and emotional appeals to prospective parents. VBSDS is a wonderful school that needs to better articulate its unique “value proposition” with a powerful, succinct brand and messaging strategy necessary for our “sound-byte” world. Internally, this will give everyone the pride of a common purpose and united efforts. Externally, it will cement the reputation of excellence for which the school has always been known.
- Opportunities to grow enrollment must be maximized, including a more seamless path from the ECC into the day school.
- The school welcomes a broad range of students and families from varying ethnic, religious, cultural, political and socio-economic backgrounds. The new Head will need to relate to all different types of Jewish students and families, to balance among their various interests and needs, and to celebrate that diversity.



- The school's formula for future success is to have excellent secular academics, the excellent social-emotional development that is a hallmark of VBSDS, *AND* an excellent program of Judaic studies and Jewish culture. The Head will need to assure that those three objectives are fully achieved and provide the necessary educational leadership to inspire and support the team to continuous improvement.
- As with many schools, it is ongoing work to assure that the most capable students remain challenged and those with additional needs have appropriate learning support.
- The school would benefit from greater clarity and consistent enforcement of student behavior expectations.
- Because VBSDS is such a warm and close community, the head will be expected to be highly visible and interactive in the daily life of the school, from the drop-off line to the classrooms, the sidelines and more. We are a small enough family that everyone wants to know and be known by the Head.
- The relationship between the school and the synagogue is a multi-faceted one, at times collaborative, at times independent. There is an opportunity to gain greater mutual benefit from closer collaboration where possible. It is particularly important that as one community, the school and the synagogue espouse the same Jewishly-derived values and positions on potentially polarizing issues pervasive in the external culture. As the school needs to optimize its approach to fundraising, coordination with the synagogue will be essential.
- There is an opportunity to strengthen the culture of philanthropy within the school community. The head will be expected to oversee a strong development function and personally cultivate relationships with donors and to assure proper stewardship of contributed funds.
- It is ongoing work to assure that the administrative team is well organized, well led, has clarity as to who does what, and is responsive to the needs of all constituents of the school. A cohesive, effective administrative team will allow the Head to focus on building relationships, strategic initiatives and setting the "tone at the top" for the warm, inclusive, joyful culture of VBSDS.



QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Among qualities desired in the Head are:

- Familiarity and experience with the full range of head of school responsibilities, both academic and administrative. Experience leading in an elementary school and a love of elementary school students, is highly desired.
- A people-person who is eager to engage with students, with parents, with faculty, and with colleagues and collaborators at the synagogue and the preschool.
- A marketing, story-telling mindset that is able to encapsulate the excitement and successes of the school and communicate those in clear and compelling ways.
- Familiarity with the nuts and bolts of organizational structure, staffing levels and decisions.
- Sufficient classroom and educational background to provide direction and oversight and set the high bar for quality and rigor in both secular and Judaic studies.
- Experience with what effective fundraising/development/advancement functions look like in a school and the ability to put in place an optimal structure.
- An open leader who seeks first to listen and learn and is accessible and authentic.
- Experience leading in a complex, diverse environment and possessing the essential skills of tact, constructive listening, and conflict resolution.
- “Collaborative Backbone”: a penchant for making inclusive and collaborative decisions when possible, but the backbone to make tough decisions when necessary, and stick to them.
- The ability to be both: a high-level visionary able to coalesce the school community around an exciting and uniting sense of purpose; and a hands-on manager able to assemble, motivate and hold accountable the administrative team; as well as provide informed top level guidance for excellence in the academic program that is both research-based and proven.
- Financial literacy sufficient to partner with the business office and the board to re-engineer the budget as necessary.
- Familiarity with the intersection of tuition and financial assistance.
- An unabashed cheerleader and role model whose personal contagious enthusiasm and joy in Judaism set a tone at the top for the joyful and inclusive culture of the school.



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 statement of experience with and philosophy of pluralistic Jewish elementary education;
- 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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The full-time equivalent salary range for this position is \$200,000-250,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors that include years of experience, education level, and expertise.