

INTERIM HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

VALLEY BETH SHALOM HAROLD M. SCHULWEIS DAY SCHOOL

Encino, California

vbsds.org

Start Date: July 1, 2023



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 is a thriving Conservative Jewish congregation. Co-located and sharing the campus with the synagogue is a filled-to-capacity preschool operated by the synagogue, and Valley Beth Shalom Harold M. Schulweis Day School (referred to herein as VBSDS or “the school”), a K-6 co-ed school of about 200 students. The school welcomes students and families from all levels of Jewish observance. With the departure of the current head at the end of the 2022-2023 school year, the school seeks an interim head for the 2023-2024 school year. Concurrently, the school is launching a search for a permanent Head of school to start in July of 2024, and that search is expected to conclude in the Fall of 2023.

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

As with any interim position, the responsibilities of the Interim Head will be to continue to support the many things that are going well with the school, to strengthen the warmth and cohesion of the school community, and to address issues to get the school ready for a new permanent head. While helpful, it is not necessary for the Interim Head to be Jewish.

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

The Interim Head will find many strengths upon which to build, including:

- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- The school is financially stable and there are resources in the community willing to provide support as the school makes the transition through the Interim year and into the tenure of the future permanent head.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

While an interim head cannot be expected to accomplish everything in a single year, the community is eager for the Interim head to assess the needs of the school, take action where possible, and set the trajectory for longer-term continued growth and improvement. Among the areas of opportunity are:

- The pandemic and other factors took a toll on most schools. Strengthening of morale and trust that each person will be respected and listened to, and a uniting sense of common purpose will assure that the school retains the warmth and sense of community that has always been a hallmark of VBSDS.
- Leverage opportunities to grow the school by:
 - Expanding external outreach, telling the exciting story of the successes of VBSDS students as well as working on internal retention through the sixth-grade year.
 - Simplifying the process of preschool families moving into Kindergarten at the day school.
 - Helping to refine the uniqueness, the differentiators and the value proposition that make the school as good as it is and communicating those messages more effectively.
 - Captivating both internal and external audiences with the excitement of where the school is headed and its competitive strengths.
- There is an opportunity to review the organizational structure of the school.
- While continuing to emphasize *menschlichkeit* (a *mensch* is a moral and honorable person of good character and who behaves with common decency), it is important to assure that the school retains its rigor, forward-looking pedagogy, and academic excellence in both secular and Judaic subjects.
- With a new Head and with new Rabbinic leadership at the synagogue, there is an opportunity to strengthen the collaboration between the school and the synagogue where there is mutual benefit to be had.
- The school would benefit from an examination of its approach to fundraising and establishment of a culture of philanthropy which is coordinated with the fundraising efforts of the synagogue.
- The school community would welcome a review and possible reinstatement of academic “extras” as well as traditions and practices that fell victim to the pandemic.
- In concert with a very strong financial management team, it will be helpful to adjust the operating budget to the realities of projected future revenues.

QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

This is a hands-on position. The Interim Head will be expected to be highly visible in the daily life of the school from the car line to classrooms visits to the sidelines. While part of the job will be a review of the organizational structure of the school (see the third bullet above), the interim will be expected to be boots on the ground rather than feet on the desk in the office!

Among qualities desired in the Interim Head are:

- Familiarity and experience with the full range of head of school responsibilities, both academic and administrative.
- 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.
- 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.
- “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 who will address gaps in operations, policies and procedures.
- 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.

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 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.