



PJA Proud

HEAD OF SCHOOL

Start Date: July 2027

Portland Jewish Academy

Portland, Oregon | pjaproud.org



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

PORTLAND JEWISH ACADEMY

MISSION

Portland Jewish Academy provides an academically rich, values-based education that supports the social, emotional, and spiritual growth of children from infants through eighth grade. As a community day school that welcomes students and families of all backgrounds, PJA inspires Jewish engagement, and cultivates a sense of belonging in a welcoming and inclusive community.

MIDDOT - OUR CORE VALUES



לימוד | LIMMUD | Study

"Turn it over and over again for one can find everything in it." (Pirkei Avot 5:26)

PJA believes in education for the whole child and supports multiple approaches to learning. Love of life, Judaism, and learning are integrated into all aspects of our school community.

אחריות | AKHRAYUT | Responsibility

"It is not on you to finish the work, and you are not free to neglect it." (Pirkei Avot 2:21)

At PJA, we are guided and inspired to take responsibility for the world in which we live. Through acts of *Chesed* - kindness, and *Tikkun Olam* - repairing the world, we see ourselves as agents of change who can achieve social justice and pursue peace.

כבוד | KAVOD | Respect

"Who is worthy of respect, one who respects all humans." (Avot 4:01)

As a community we learn to treat ourselves, others and the world with dignity and respect.

קהילה | KEHILLAH | Community

"Bless all of us as one in Your light." (Amidah prayer)

Jewish learning and engagement enhances our participation in a variety of communities, and encourages a sense of belonging and connectedness.

זהות | ZEHUT | Identity

"Beloved is the person created in God's image." (Avot 3:14)

Our *middot* serve as a foundation to form and build identity, both as a school and as individuals. We seize the opportunity to explore who we are, what we stand for and what we believe.

הודיה | HODAYAH | Appreciation

"I give thanks before you everlasting God, you have returned my soul to me with compassion." (Modeh Ani prayer)

Our PJA community nurtures a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the world around us, inspired by Jewish thought and learning.

OVERVIEW

The largest Jewish Day School in the great Pacific Northwest, Portland Jewish Academy (PJA) welcomes about 250 diverse children from infants and toddlers through 8th grade. This pluralistic school benefits from a unique co-location with the Mittleman Jewish Community Center (the JCC) and enjoys a similarly unique and beneficial governance structure. The shared campus is in a hilly and wooded residential area, situated between Hillsdale and Multnomah Village commercial districts, and convenient to families from across the Portland metro area. PJA attracts families from across the full spectrum of Jewish observance and, especially in the Early Childhood program, families who do not identify as Jewish as well. Portland has the lowest cost of living of any major metropolitan area on the West Coast and yet enjoys all the amenities of life and culture of a bigger city. The bustling Portland International Airport is a hub for transpacific, European, as well as cross-country flights. Plus, access to the great outdoors is literally on Portland's doorstep.

The school is firmly entrenched as a major institution in Jewish Portland. PJA enjoys excellent and collaborative relationships with the synagogues in town and major Jewish institutions and philanthropies. Many of the professionals and leaders working in community Jewish organizations either send their children or have sent their children to PJA. While there are two small Orthodox schools, PJA is the only pluralistic Jewish community day school in Oregon.

To get a sense of the ethos of this wonderful school, one need look no farther than its internet domain name: **pjaproud.org**. The pride that everyone associated with the school feels is palpable and widespread. After many years of wonderful leadership, the current Principal is retiring at the end of this school year. The position has been retitled as "Head of School" to more accurately reflect the scope of responsibilities, which includes overseeing the Day School and Early Childhood programs, as well as a large afterschool program that serves approximately 190 students at three local public schools along with an on campus program. With some of the more "business side" functions being shared with the JCC, the school seeks a new inspiring and visionary educator to lead PJA beginning in July of 2027.



PJA'S GOVERNANCE

As noted above, PJA and the JCC share a campus. There is an Executive Director with overall responsibility for the entire operation as well as direct leadership of shared services such as finance, fundraising, marketing/communications, facilities, HR etc. The Head of PJA and the Assistant Executive Director of the JCC, each responsible for their own operation, both report to the Executive Director. The school and the JCC each have their own governing boards. Because of the shared services overseen by the Executive Director, the Head of PJA is able to focus primarily on the student-facing program of the school. Employees of the school report directly, or indirectly to the Head. The Head has operational responsibility for the school and works collaboratively with the Executive Director on the functions included in the services shared with the JCC. The Head attends all board meetings and most board committee meetings and provides vision and strategic direction as well as operational oversight.

While this governance structure is not common, it works well. In fact, it allows the Head to be even more student-and-faculty centered than in schools where the Head spends a lot of time on non-program work.



STRENGTHS OF THE SCHOOL

PJA knows who it is, whom it serves, and has clarity of mission. The Middot (core values) are a living and integrated part of everything that happens at the school. Partly in anticipation of its NWAIS re-accreditation happening this Fall, the school has updated its foundational documents and branding. Among other strengths of the school are:

- The first thing out of everyone's mouths is "community." Indeed, the warmth and interconnectedness and universal welcoming of everyone is a hallmark of the school.
- Students report tremendous comfort in easy access to and close relationships with their teachers. Students feel individually well known and cared for. The school is described as "safe" which applies to how students feel emotionally as well as the physical security necessary for Jewish institutions.
- The school has enjoyed relative stability in the excellent faculty with lower turnover than might be found in many schools. Faculty feel they have responsibility and support and autonomy to teach to their strengths, to be innovative and always put students first.





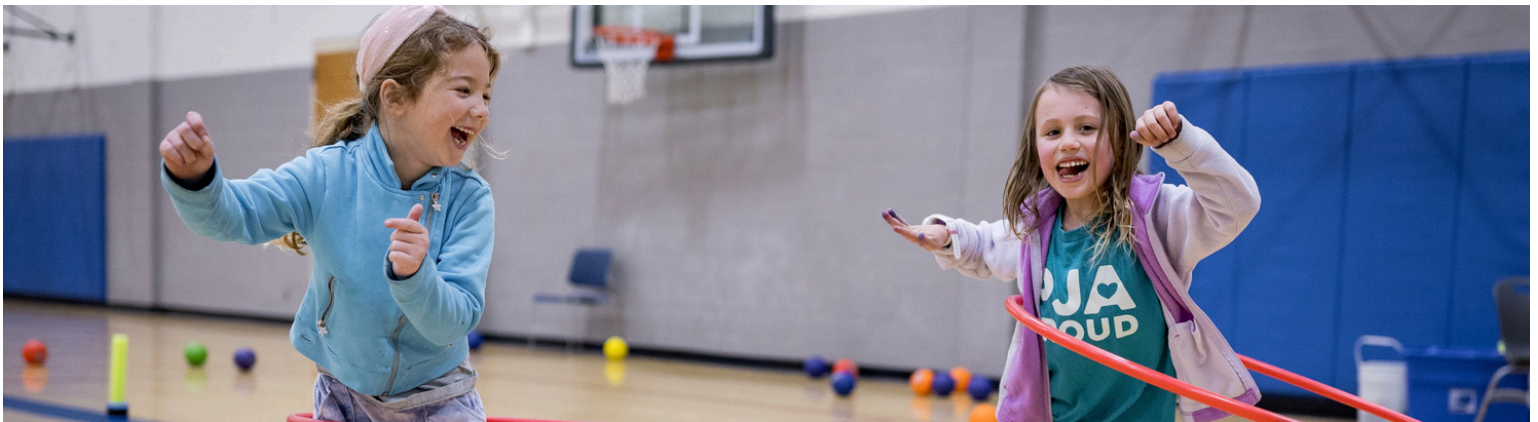
- The shared facilities with the JCC are a real asset. How many schools have two swimming pools, a full-size gym and indoor turf field, updated fitness facilities, a Kosher café, excellent security, ample easy parking, and all the other attributes of a JCC, as well as their own dedicated mission-specific instructional and co-curricular spaces? With the active membership and usage of the JCC, there is always a buzz on the campus from early morning until after work in the evenings.
- The school is proudly Jewish. With Israeli Hebrew language faculty, celebrations of Jewish life and culture, weekly Kabbalat Shabbat and age-appropriate tefillot (prayer services), the school lives the Jewish pride in its domain name.
- With no Jewish high school in the area, PJA graduates matriculate to a wide range of public and other private schools. They are academically well prepared for whatever they encounter after PJA and equally importantly, they have critical thinking skills, strength of character and a solid sense of their own identity as Jews in a secular society. Graduates go on to success in a range of higher education and careers (including some who actually come back to work at the school!). SEL is a strength of the program that is reflected in the success of PJA graduates wherever they go after 8th grade.
- While not specific to PJA, Portland, Oregon is consistently rated as a top place to live in the country. Access to mountains, rivers, forests and ocean all within less than a two-hour drive is highly desirable. The city itself is described as “readily walkable and bikeable and a top-tier food, coffee and culture scene.”

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

As in many schools, PJA's big challenge is to grow enrollment. There is competition in free public schools, including free Preschool For All in Multnomah County. There is also a sense that secular private schools draw a number of Jewish families that could be at PJA. With enrollment growth comes the desire to expand student options, especially in extra-curriculars such as music, arts, athletics etc. There is realistic optimism that 10% - 15% growth is possible. Leadership believes that continued growth in the financial assistance budget could be helpful as could be a more comprehensive and targeted outreach program. The school also believes that there is an opportunity to increase the retention rate from the Early Childhood program into Kindergarten and the day school.

Other challenges and opportunities include:

- "Balance" is something to strike in multiple aspects of PJA. One member of the community stated: "Our value of and care for our community mandates that we teach multiple narratives from multiple perspectives." In addition:
 - An ongoing opportunity is to strengthen the coherence and integration of PJA's academic, Hebrew language, Jewish Studies, social-emotional, experiential, and values-based learning so that students experience these not as separate parts of their education, but as interconnected dimensions of what it means to learn and grow at PJA.
 - Continue to examine how to provide appropriately challenging, engaging, and developmentally responsive learning for the full range of students, while maintaining strong academic expectations in both General and Jewish Studies, and preparing graduates for success in high school and beyond.
 - While about half the EC families do not identify as Jewish, there is nevertheless an opportunity to inject more Jewish/Judaics programming in the EC.





- There is a desire to strengthen connections and shared community between the Early Childhood program and the Day School, building relational ties while honoring the unique identity and needs of each.
- PJA serves learners with a wide range of strengths, needs, and learning profiles. The school is continuing to develop an increasingly inclusive model of student support, including strengthening classroom teachers' capacity to differentiate instruction and designing systems that provide appropriate challenge, access, and support within the learning community.
- Similarly, there is a desire for more rigor and challenges for the most capable students who are ready for accelerated work.
- The school is well connected with and benefits from its membership in NWAIS and Prizmah. Some suggest that greater connection with local area schools, both public and private, perhaps through various city-wide intraschool activities, could benefit and bring greater visibility to PJA.
- Any change brings the opportunity to look at systems and programs with a fresh eye toward innovation and creativity and the PJA community always welcomes new ideas and approaches.

QUALIFICATIONS AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

Perpetuating the culture of warmth, inclusivity, joy of Judaism and the other values of PJA's Middot is everyone's job. The Head must set the "tone at the top" both by personal example and by clarity of expectations for all. Doing so requires someone who is highly relational, welcomes and forms trusting relationships with all constituencies of the school, meets everyone "where they are" and exudes calmness and competency. In addition, some specific personal characteristics successful candidates will possess include:



Educational Leadership

- A child-centered leader who loves children and deeply feels a responsibility to look after the whole child including their academic, Jewish, social-emotional and character development.
- Demonstrated commitment to inclusive education and experience supporting schools in meeting the needs of diverse learners, including students requiring additional support and those ready for greater challenge.
- A leader who keeps current with emerging thought, ideas and practices in child development, progressive education and, Jewish education. Able to reinforce PJA's current strengths while helping the school to continually evolve.



Organizational & Strategic Leadership

- A systems-thinker who can match their personal warmth with organization, clarity of communications, thoughtful balancing of the many interests in a wonderfully diverse school and translation of Jewish values into everyday life of the school.
- A leader who can build a strong professional culture characterized by collaboration, reflection, feedback, professional growth, shared responsibility, and high expectations for teaching and learning.
- Prior experience with creative and successful enrollment growth strategies is highly desirable.
- While the Executive Director and the shared services team have primary responsibility for the matters listed in the "PJA's Governance" section above, the new Head should have familiarity in all those areas sufficient to be a strong partner with the ED and that team. In particular, the Head will have oversight of the school's operating budget, and an essential role in fundraising as the one to "make the case" for philanthropic support of the school.
- An experienced team builder who sets clear expectations and supports staff while ensuring the alignment of institutional and financial resources.



Community & Jewish Leadership

- Passion and ability to make the case externally and internally for the importance and value of a pluralistic Jewish education and community.
- Ideal candidates will have sufficient personal knowledge of Judaics to provide meaningful support and direction to the HJS (Hebrew & Jewish Studies) faculty. Leading a personally knowledgeable "Jewish life" is highly desirable.
- "Collaborative Backbone": willingness to seek input and listen whenever possible with the ability to make decisions, including sometimes tough-but-necessary ones, and stick by them.
- A demonstrated commitment to creating a school in which students, families, and employees experience belonging, equitable access, dignity, and full participation, and an ability to lead thoughtful dialogue across differences in identity, background, perspective, Jewish practice, and experience.
- A community-oriented leader who is excited to immerse themselves in the local landscape, cultivate strong ties across the broader Portland Jewish community, and serve as a visible, authentic community member.



LEARN MORE

- [School Website](#)
- [Why PJA](#)
- [Strategic Vision](#)
- [About Portland, Oregon](#)





TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants 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;
- Statement of experience with and philosophy of pluralistic Jewish 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

skip.kotkins@carneysandoe.com

The full-time salary range for this position is \$165,000 - \$190,000. The starting salary is based upon, but not limited to, several factors which include years of experience, education background, and expertise.



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