THE FUTURE OF JEWISH DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN BALTIMORE

Baltimore’s Jewish community comes together to open The Independent Jewish Academy of Baltimore for 2013-2014 School Year

Baltimore – November 15, 2012 – The future of Jewish day school education in Baltimore is brighter than ever with the establishment of The Independent Jewish Academy of Baltimore, a co-educational college preparatory school for grades K-12 that will open for the 2013-2014 school year. Guided and informed by Torah, The Academy will transcend denominational affiliations and will be open to all of the diverse segments of the community, celebrating every form of Jewish self-identification. This unique combination will provide the Jewish community of Baltimore with a school that perfectly fits their needs.

Initially, The Academy will be located on the campuses of Oheb Shalom and Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. David Prashker will serve as the Head of School, Gerri Chizeck will be Director of the K-8 program and Leslie Smith Rosen will take on the role of Principal for grades 9-12.

“As a new school, we will be looking to hire the best faculty available for the new mission and vision of the school,” said Prashker. “Some faculty will work at both campuses and others at one campus.”

“Every Jewish community requires a complete ‘portfolio’ of educational opportunities to meet the needs of every family,” said Jane West Walsh, Executive Director and Day School Specialist at PARDES, the Reform Day School Network. “The Academy will provide the final piece of the puzzle that will complete our community’s portfolio, ensuring that every Jewish family in Baltimore can choose a school that fits their needs, from Kindergarten through 12th grade. The new school will not only be a fine Jewish school, but an outstanding independent school preparing the next generation of knowledgeable, confident and empowered citizens.”

A team led by Prashker, Chizeck and Rosen is already engaged in creating the curriculum and is working with an interim board to guide the scope and sequence of the program, oversee recruitment and admission of students, engage a distinguished faculty and leadership team, and build the new governance structure. Local, regional and national Jewish and general studies experts are also being engaged to ensure that The Academy’s programs reflect the school’s trans-denominational mission, and encourage both critical thinking and critical inquiry. Additionally, the school’s curriculum will be heavily focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and Creative Mind, The Academy’s innovative and signature approach to teaching and learning.

“In the 21st century, we need people who can think creatively and analytically, explore alternative ideas, collaborate with one another and innovate,” said Prashker. “We need people who are technology experts and who can solve problems. By incorporating STEM and our unique Creative Mind approach, The Academy will focus on experiential and project-based learning, developing students’ capacity to make informed choices based on knowledge,
rigorous analysis, creativity and critical thinking. All areas of the curriculum, including the Humanities, Arts, and Languages will be approached through this lens.

“Many Jews now solely identify with being Jewish culturally or ethnically, challenging the traditional ‘denominational’ structures,” said Chizeck. “The Academy is not for just one kind of student, but we embrace everyone who considers themselves Jewish and wants to learn.”

Upon opening, The Academy will be affiliated with RAVSAK, the Community Day School Network, and NAIS (the National Academy of Independent Schools), and will be applying for accreditation from AIMS (Association of Maryland Independent Schools).

“A quality day school education is one of the best investments we can make in our children to ensure Jewish knowledge and literacy,” said Lawrence Ziffer, Executive Director of the Center for Jewish Education. “Any local effort to increase the number and diversity of young people receiving a Jewish day school education should be encouraged and supported by our community. It is particularly important to reach families who previously considered Jewish day school education to be beyond their reach or level of affiliation.”

Concurrent with the opening of The Academy on July 1, 2013, The Day School at Baltimore Hebrew and Shoshana S. Cardin School will cease operations. In the meantime, both schools will work with The Academy for the seamless transfer of students.

“I congratulate the leadership for their wisdom in cementing the future of this important educational institution,” said Marc Terrill, President of The Associated.

For more information about The Academy, visit www.jewishacademybaltimore.org. Applications for the 2013-2014 are currently being accepted.

About The Independent Jewish Academy of Baltimore
The Independent Jewish Academy of Baltimore is a co-educational college preparatory school for grades K-12. Guided and informed by Torah, The Academy transcends denominational affiliations and is open to all of the diverse segments of the community, celebrating every form of Jewish self-identification. The school’s curriculum is heavily focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and Creative Mind, The Academy’s innovative and signature approach to teaching and learning. The school provides a fully co-educational setting that fosters respect, acknowledges difference and encourages growth through a reflective and intentional approach to Jewish life and identity. For more information, visit www.jewishacademybaltimore.org.

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