

IN THE WORDS OF SAN DIEGO JEWISH ACADEMY STUDENTS

The importance of learning in a Jewish environment

“The SDJA is extremely unique as it is strongly rooted in Jewish ideology and values. From the young age of kindergarten we study Hebrew, learn about our Judaic background and history and enthusiastically celebrate Jewish holidays. I have such fond memories from these experiences. For example, the Hebrew kitchen in 5th grade is an activity that I will cherish forever. It is extremely crucial to keep such memories alive because we are the future of the Jewish people. If we can associate our childhood memories with positive Jewish experiences then we can assure that the next generation of Jewish leaders supports our people. The continuity and support of Judaism in the future depends on us. Thus, if we are strongly rooted with knowledge and a love of our people, then we can adequately fulfill our role in the Jewish community.” – **Ali Viterbi, 10th grade**

“It is important to learn in a Jewish environment because it helps to bond together the Jews of San Diego. Giving the correct morals and fundamentals of what a person should have.” **Sophia Gross, 9th grade**

“Not only am I surrounded with Jewish kids who are just as eager to learn about their heritage as I am, but my Jewish knowledge has blossomed over the years.”- **Morgan Neustel, 8th grade**

“Jewish studies isn't only about religion to me. It's more of a way of life. A way to live life a correct Mitzvah filled way. At this school you learn the great values and honor of being Jewish.”- **Jessy Gordon, 8th grade**

“By attending a Jewish day school I am not only surrounded by Jewish kids but also Jewish morals and values - something I wouldn't get anywhere else.”- **Micah Frank, 11th grade**

“To me it is important to learn in a Jewish environment because I love to engage in the teachings of my religion and it is important for me to know where I came from, who my ancestors were, and why they are so great. For example, learning Hebrew benefits me in the long run because I am now able to understand and participate in discussions when I go to Israel.”- **Jaclyn Gaylis, 11th grade**

“It's important to learn about your family's history and their cultures, and as a Jew your family's history grows beyond just your relatives but into the whole Jewish community. By learning in a Jewish environment you are able to learn the history of your people.”- **Haley Epstein, 11th grade**

What Makes SDJA Different

“When you are little and you say, "I'm going to be a great leader and mensch when I grow up", that's how SDJA "raises" you.”- **Ali Tradonsky, 8th grade**

“There are many aspects at the school that I enjoy. However, more so than anything, the Academy's Humanities curriculum makes it so unique. The humanities program at SDJA provides students with a unique opportunity to reflect on ourselves based on what we learn during the course of the year. This interactive program is structured in a way that it is unique to the Academy. The humanities curriculum effectively prepares students, including myself, for the world. Over the course of the past two years, I have learned more about myself than ever before.”- **Sam Freeman, 10th grade**

“The small community binds us like a true Jewish family.”- **Gabi Rothman, 8th grade**

"I am currently in my 12 year at the SDJA and I would never consider leaving. The main difference between SDJA and other schools is that at SDJA there is a place for everybody. Everybody is accepted at SDJA and everybody can be true to themselves."- **Micah Frank, 11th grade**

"SDJA is different from other schools because we have such diversity between students and we are all accepting of each other. Everyone knows everyone and you can walk down the hallways comfortably in your own skin. You can be confident that no one will harass you or pick on you because of what you look like, how you dress or what ethnicity you are. We are all living in coexistence and together as a community. We care for one another." –**Jaclyn Gaylis, 11th grade**

"SDJA isn't just a regular school- it's a community. In other schools, students don't create bonds with each other or with teachers as we do."- **Becky Rudin, 11th grade**

"I love the SDJA because during lunch recess we have many games to play like soccer, ga ga and capture the flag." –**Kelila Rotto, 5th grade**

"I think that at other schools you don't feel like you know everyone. But at this school you feel like it's just a big family. Everyone helps one another and that's what I love about SDJA."- **Savi Lurie, 5th grade**

"I think our school is special because I have a better understanding of Judaism and have embraced my Jewish heritage."- **Shana Weisman, 5th grade**

Favorite SDJA memory

"My favorite SDJA memory is Homecoming in 9th grade. I remember playing with all the fans watching, but more importantly I remember the love I had for my coach and my teammates. Football gave me a family at the SDJA." – **Ilan Bielas, 11th grade**

"I have so many memories here because I have been here since kindergarten. I have always loved Sports Day because it is so fun to connect a Jewish holiday with sports and athletics."- **Alexa Grossman, 7th grade**

"I loved Yosemite. When I first came to the school in 4th grade I came from South Africa. Everyone was friendly and made me feel welcome." –**Max Abramson, 6th grade**

"My favorite memory in lower school is the second grade play. We did an entire play on the seasons in Hebrew."- **Katie Sherman, 8th grade**

"My favorite SDJA memory is my seventh grade trip to Catalina. My whole grade got together and bonded and experienced so much. I loved getting to get away from the school and bond with my grade so that when we got back we were even closer than before." –**Noa Kempinski, 8th grade**

"My favorite memory is Mrs Armstrong giving out ice cream pops in KB. There's nothing like a Mrs Armstrong ice cream pop on a sunny day!"- **Gabi Rothman, 8th grade**

"The Junior Lockdown was the best night of my life! We bonded as a junior class and we broke down any insecurities we had with each other. We are now prepared to go into senior year as a tight class."- **Becky Rudin, 11th grade**

"The best memory I have of SDJA is when I got to eat lunch with the Holocaust survivors." –**Savi Lurie, 5th grade**

"My favorite memory is when I first came to the SDJA a week late. I only knew one person but friends took me in and from then on they have been my best friends."- **Daniela Vainer, 5th grade**

Favorite Class

"I clearly remember walking into my first AP European class intimidated beyond belief. I sat down among my fellow students, mainly seniors, and when the class was open to discussion about Europe and the entire class was able to add in their two cents. I sat there silent. As I walked out of the class I asked myself what I had gotten myself into. I was ready to drop the class. I felt so out of my element. But I stuck with it. Though I struggled in the beginning I stayed in the class. The class forced me to mature as a student and push myself to the absolute limit. While there were nights that I lost hours of sleep, it was all worth it. My countless hours of studying and creating persiats* paid off because of the student I became. On my last day of the class, when I walked out I didn't walk out intimidated, but rather proud of all that I had accomplished. The class made me love learning." –**Haley Epstine, 11th grade**

"Ms. Stark's AP Art History has been my favorite class because she encourages us constantly and always challenges us. With art history, she has shown me that everything in our lives relates back to art. Art is something so important in our lives and usually we never take the time to appreciate its beauty. Because of Mrs. Stark, I now understand art and love it."- **Jaclyn Gaylis, 11th grade**

"My favorite class has been Mr. Murphy's humanities class because Mr. Murphy taught us life values and showed us true contemporary emotions through documentaries and videos like "Saving Private Ryan". –**Ilan Bielas, 11th grade**

"Hebrew is my favorite class because I get to learn the language that brings the Jews of the world together."- **Daniela Vainer, 5th grade**

SDJA's unique faculty

"What makes SDJA teachers special is that they actually care. They are always willing to help students and they are always rooting for us. The teachers are always available to meet, help and talk to students. The teachers look out for the students and really reach out." – **Micah Frank, 11th grade**

"SDJA teachers are very special. When you ask for help you don't only get help, but they make sure you understand the material to the fullest. Also as the years pass, you develop a strong relationship with the teachers. The teachers help throughout school."- **Natalie Bakhshi, 8th grade**

"SDJA teachers are special because they care about teaching you to live your life, not just to learn the material." –**Ilan Bielas, 11th grade**

"SDJA teachers truly care about our well being and our success. They will always go out of their way to make sure that students are achieving to their true potential. No student gets left behind."- **Becky Rudin, 11th grade**

"SDJA teachers have a spark in them. When they teach they never make class boring." **Savi Lurie, 5th grade**

Favorite Part of the Day

"My favorite part of the day is sports because although we take it seriously, some of the best memories are made on fields and courts."- **Sofia Gross, 9th grade**

"My favorite part of the day is Tefillah. We get to take a break from our hectic day to just sit and meditate and think about our day and the rest of our lives." – **Jessy Gordon, 8th grade**

"My favorite part of the day is passing periods because you always see your friends smiling and talking and it's just having fun." –**Gabi Rothman, 8th grade**

"At the SDJA there was a teacher named Levana. She became very ill suddenly and passed away very unexpectedly. The Gold Meir Lower School created a garden called Levana's Garden in honor of our special teacher. The children planted flowers and plants. Levana was a very cherished teacher so her death had a huge impact on everyone. The children wrote nice sayings to put inside the garden, and they represent the sort of teacher Levana was. There is a butterfly garden inside this special garden and it has paths shaped like turtles. The memories of Levana are still in our hearts."- Sigal Kahn, Reut Baltinester and **Samantha Mausner, 5th graders**