

May 3, 2019

Dear Friends,

After much reflection on my professional and personal journeys, I am writing to inform you of my decision to retire from San Diego Jewish Academy at the end of the upcoming school year, as of June 30, 2020. At that time I will have served for eight years at SDJA and thirty years in total as a Head of Jewish day schools.

As much as I hope I have had a positive impact on this school that I love so much, I have found that the school has had an even greater impact on my own set of values. At San Diego Jewish Academy, so much of our community lives their lives as families; blended, connected and often multi-generational. Grandparents, parents and children gather together for Shabbat, for holidays, during the week, and more. I have come to understand and deeply feel the sense of family connection that is THE hallmark of SDJA. At this point in my life's journey, this is what I want for my own family as well. And although there is never a perfect time to leave, I believe that Michal and I have one great adventure still ahead of us as fulltime grandparents living close to our children, and now is the time to embark upon it.

Accordingly, I advised the Board Chair of my decision to retire after the upcoming 2019-20 school year so that SDJA has the time needed to find a candidate worthy of this school and her faculty, children and families. The Board of Trustees has met to discuss my departure and to begin the planning needed to ensure a smooth transition, in which I will participate to the best of my abilities.

It has been a privilege to serve as the Head of School at San Diego Jewish Academy. Together we have traveled on a journey that began with our *Vision of 2020* Strategic Plan. Along the way, we reached our long-sought upturn in enrollment, our lower school was awarded Blue Ribbon national recognition, and we saw the successful completion of the *Our Family is One* Campaign thus ensuring the continued vibrancy of the school. Most importantly, our children's interests have always been at the center of every decision we've made and have always been the focus of our planning. Today, we stand proud of all we have accomplished for them and for the future of the Jewish communities in which they will live and lead.

If we have been successful at all, it is thanks to the dedication and hard work of the Boards of Trustees that have so selflessly served the school. The school administration is the strongest I have experienced in my career, and our faculty is outstanding in their teaching and their love for children. Mostly though it is the parents of San Diego Jewish Academy that have had the biggest impact on our success. Their belief in our core Jewish values, their commitment to the idea of supporting the school that serves our children, and their deep



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faith in our educational program have made everything we have done possible. "Thank you" doesn't seem adequate to express my appreciation for all of you, but words can't always reflect what the heart feels.

I look forward to doing all that I can to aid the process the Board of Trustees has begun to put in place, and I will work to make the transition smooth and seamless. We are already deeply engaged in planning for another stellar CAIS and WASC accreditation process, continued educational innovation and a year of joyful classroom learning.

Lastly, I cherish another year of our building a better future for our children, grounded in our core mission of serving our Jewish community by providing academic excellence, social responsibility and active Jewish living. That has always been the defining quality of this very special place, San Diego Jewish Academy.

*B'vrakha,*



Chaim Heller  
Head of School



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