



Head of School Leadership Opportunity to start July 2012

Woodbridge, Connecticut

K-8th grade

www.ezraacademy.net

Introduction

Ezra Academy in Woodbridge, Connecticut seeks a Head of School to lead a community of approximately 145 kindergarten through eighth grade students and 30 faculty and staff members. The school has a strong tradition of outstanding secular and Judaic education. Ezra Academy also provides a warm, enriching Jewish community, which encompasses a broad spectrum of religious observance. Located approximately 1 ½ hours from Manhattan and 2 ½ hours from Boston, the Greater New Haven area is the gateway to New England. The 25,000 strong Jewish community supports a full range of Jewish institutions. Home to Yale University, New Haven boasts strong arts, cultural, and educational opportunities, as well as diverse neighborhoods and communities. From the beaches along Long Island Sound to the ski slopes of Mt. Southington, this area has a tremendous amount to offer prospective candidates and their families.

Mission Statement

Ezra Academy, a K-8 Solomon Schechter Day School, educates Jewish children within a nurturing community to become independent, lifelong learners, committed and knowledgeable Jews and responsible, caring citizens.

The School

Ezra Academy was founded in 1966 as a Solomon Schechter Day School and has since graduated more than 400 students. In 2001, the lower school, grades kindergarten through five, was named the George G. and Leah E. Posener Elementary School in honor of benefactor George G. Posener (z"l) and his wife Leah (z"l). Ezra Academy is located on the grounds of Congregation B'nai Jacob and shares the synagogue's beautiful sanctuary and chapel, as well as its spacious social hall/auditorium. The school's facilities also include a full gym with a new climbing wall, a state-of-the-art playground, athletic fields, a recently updated science room, a library, and a computer lab.

Ezra students participate and excel in a variety of academic competitions including Mathcounts, New England Math League, and the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth. Ezra Academy is accredited by the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools(CAIS) and the Solomon Schechter Day School Association. Ezra graduates thrive at a variety of local public high schools and selective private schools such as The Jewish High School of Connecticut, Hopkins School, Choate Rosemary Hall, Hamden Hall Country Day School, Cheshire Academy, and Ramaz.

Shelley Kreiger successfully led Ezra Academy for thirteen years until her retirement in 2008. Under her leadership the school attained its initial CAIS accreditation. Rabbi

Amanda Brodie succeeded Mrs. Kreiger as Head of School and served for three years, enriching the school by improving differentiated instruction. She continues to serve Ezra Academy as Assistant Head of School and Head of Judaic Studies. On July 1, Richard Gusenburg, an experienced educational administrator, joined the Ezra community as Interim Head of School for the 2011-2012 academic year. The Board of Directors appointed a Head of School Search Committee with the goal of hiring a new, long-term Head of School by July 2012.

Community

Ezra Academy is located in Woodbridge, Connecticut, which is a small, wooded town bordering on New Haven. Founded in 1638 by Puritan settlers, this historic city offers an extraordinarily rich cultural life. At the center of New Haven's numerous attractions is Yale University, whose many museums and libraries are open to the public. Yale New Haven Hospital is one of the world's leading centers of medical research and treatment. New Haven is also home to award-winning regional theaters and hosts the annual New Haven Festival of Arts and Ideas, which features important artists and performers from around the globe. The Yale School of Music and the New Haven Symphony Orchestra offer outstanding classical music performances, and the city is also famous for its jazz scene.

Sports opportunities abound with Yale's sports programs and the New Haven Open at Yale, which attracts top professional tennis stars. There are, as well, active community sports teams for children in virtually every sport. The New Haven region is not only a dividing line between New York and Boston, but also a dividing line between its sports enthusiasts, and passionate fans of each area's teams abound.

Greater New Haven has a Jewish population of approximately 25,000, served by an active Jewish Federation and modern Jewish Community Center, as well as a Department of Jewish Education offering a wide range of programming for all age groups. Greater New Haven is home to more than twenty synagogues of all denominations, as well as an eruv, communal mikveh, and several kosher restaurants and food outlets. A recent addition to the Jewish communities of the region is the new, pluralistic Jewish High School of Connecticut (JHSC), located in nearby Fairfield County.

Ezra Academy draws students from 23 different towns, mostly in Greater New Haven, such as Branford, Cheshire, Hamden, Orange, Milford, West Haven, and Woodbridge. The school also attracts students from towns in neighboring Fairfield County, including Bridgeport, Fairfield, Trumbull, Weston, and Westport. The Jewish Federation of Eastern Fairfield County is located in Bridgeport. This area also includes a Jewish Community Center and a Home for the Elderly, as well as many synagogues and programs to support a vibrant Jewish community. Fairfield County is often considered a transitional area between New York and New England.

Connecticut combines the natural beauty and quiet lifestyle of New England with proximity to vibrant New York. Both New Haven and Fairfield Counties provide exciting, fulfilling, and safe communities in which to live and raise a family.

Students

Ezra Academy exemplifies *K'lal Yisrael*, the diverse Jewish community. The school brings together children from various cultural backgrounds, unified by Jewish tradition. Ezra's student body reflects a broad spectrum of religious practices. All Ezra

Academy students are Jewish, and while most come from Conservative families, many are Reform, Orthodox, or unaffiliated. The school community is also economically diverse, with well over one-third of students receiving need-based financial aid. Students come from more than 10 different synagogues and 15 different communities in New Haven and Fairfield Counties.

Faculty

The Ezra Academy faculty is comprised of experienced, dedicated, and talented professionals. Most of the secular teachers are state-certified, and most hold advanced degrees. The school is fortunate to have many veteran teachers who continue to inspire students and to incorporate the best traditional and innovative educational practices. As these outstanding professionals retire, the next Head of School will face the challenge of finding new teachers of the same caliber.

Academic Program

Ezra Academy's secular curriculum gives students an outstanding foundation in math, science, language arts, Spanish, and social studies. Writing, public speaking, and creative problem-solving are emphasized across all subject areas, and both homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings are employed as appropriate. During the past few years, the school has undertaken a major effort to differentiate instruction so that all students can be supported and challenged and achieve their fullest potential. Ezra Academy also offers art, music, physical education, and computer classes which are frequently integrated with academic and Judaic subjects and Jewish holiday observance.

Judaic Studies

The typical Ezra Academy student spends approximately 60% of the school day on secular subjects and 40% in Judaic learning. Students explore Jewish history, prayer, culture, Israel, biblical and rabbinic texts, while learning Hebrew as both a biblical and modern language. The approach is often interdisciplinary, weaving together secular and Judaic subjects when possible. For example, fifth graders study the book of Exodus and ancient Egypt at the same time, while in science class they learn about fertile river basins and flood plains. Each grade includes memorable special events, for students and families, such as the kindergarten Hashem Sheli (Hebrew name celebration), first-grade siddur ceremony, fourth-grade havdalah ceremony, and fifth-grade Torah-reading event. The entire Ezra Academy experience culminates in an eighth-grade Israel trip whose emotional and educational power can hardly be overstated.

Governance

Ezra Academy is governed by a Board of Directors composed of 24 members. The Board of Directors is responsible for strategic planning and oversight relating to financial management, fundraising, facilities planning, and institutional policies.

Special Strengths of Ezra Academy

- Welcoming and caring community
- Joyous celebration and study of Shabbat, Jewish holidays, and Jewish life cycle events
- Academic excellence, resulting in strong student achievement and impressive test scores
- Dedicated, well-qualified teachers, working collaboratively and incorporating best practices
- Strong Jewish values, including commitment to Israel in its diversity

- Involved parents who care deeply about the school
- Differentiated instruction to meet the needs of a broad range of students, including a large number of intellectually gifted students, as well as a significant minority with special learning needs
- Small class sizes
- Cultural and socioeconomic diversity among students and staff; celebration of diversity within the school community and beyond
- Successful alumni who retain strong bonds to the school and often come back to visit
- Full-time registered nurse providing health care and education
- Smart boards and mimeos in all secular classrooms
- Diverse, culturally rich Greater New Haven and Fairfield County communities
- Wonderful variety of synagogues and Jewish institutions in the Greater New Haven and Fairfield County communities

Challenges & Opportunities for the next Head of School

The next Head of School must be someone who can work to leverage Ezra Academy's considerable strengths in addressing some critical challenges.

- The next Head of School will be expected to increase enrollment of new students and improve retention of existing students.
- The percentage of students in need of financial aid has increased in recent years, creating additional financial pressures. In order for Ezra Academy to operate within a balanced budget, the school will need to reach out more effectively to current and potential donors and community partners.
- While teachers are using and developing outstanding curricula, the CAIS re-accreditation committee recommended developing a formal, written scope and sequence curriculum, as well as a technology plan that would encompass the entire school community.
- The Board will be evaluating the school's facilities and location and deciding whether a change would be desirable and feasible.
- The next Head of School will work with the Board to create and implement a long-term strategic plan for Ezra Academy.

The Next Head of School

The Search Committee conducted several focus groups with parents and teachers and also met with many individuals from the community to discuss hopes for Ezra Academy's future and what traits and qualifications the next Head of School should possess. The ideal candidate would demonstrate all or most of the following attributes:

- Outstanding ability to communicate Ezra Academy's mission, to represent and "sell" the school in the wider community
- Commitment to timely, efficient, and transparent communication with all stakeholders
- Supportive attitude towards teachers; experience in supervising, mentoring, evaluating and motivating faculty and staff
- Ability to plan strategically, to prioritize, and to delegate; to make tough decisions when necessary and to stand firm and follow through on these decisions
- Experience and comfort with fundraising, financial and personnel management, and marketing

- Knowledge of Judaism and ability to serve as a Jewish role model, along with respect for the broad spectrum of observance and belief in our community
- High degree of professionalism
- Love of teaching and learning
- Empathy, energy, positive attitude, and devotion to educating the whole child
- Disciplinary approach which combines respect for children and adults with consistent expectations and procedures
- Record of successful leadership, ideally in a Jewish day school or other educational setting
- Commitment to discussion, collaboration, seeking and using input and feedback

The Search and Application Process

Nominations and expressions of interest are invited. Inquiries should be directed to Steven Fraade and Rachel Gerber via email to ezresearch@gmail.com.

Applicants should submit the following materials, also to Steven Fraade and Rachel Gerber at ezresearch@gmail.com:

- cover letter expressing interest in and qualifications for this position
- current resume
- statement of educational philosophy and/or other supporting material (e.g. articles or speeches) that would be useful to the Search Committee
- list of 3 references with name, phone number, and email address of each (We will obtain permission from candidates before contacting references.)

The Head of School Search Committee will begin reviewing applications on October 3, 2011.