



AKIBA-SCHECHTER JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

Fostering academic excellence through individualized attention while developing strong Jewish identities.

Community Preschool and Kindergarten, Jewish Day School Grades 1-8.



# Welcome

Founded in 1949 and located steps from Lake Shore Drive in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School attracts families from throughout the Chicago metropolitan area and abroad.

**Mission:** We seek to promote academic excellence and develop students with strong Jewish identities. By focusing on the individual gifts and needs of each student, our teachers create a caring family of learners who are committed to responsible citizenship and the performance of mitzvot.

## We value identity.

Immersed in the richness of tradition, our children are the next generation of leaders.

## We build community.

In our award-winning Preschool and Kindergarten, surrounded by all faiths and ethnicities, children learn how to be a good friend, become a life-long learner, and joyfully celebrate Shabbat and Jewish Holidays. The Grade School embraces and celebrates all denominations of Judaism and children come from diverse geographic locations and socio-economic backgrounds.

## We believe every child is unique.

Every child feels special in our intimate, multi-age classrooms. Students progress at their own pace and develop lasting relationships with peers and teachers. At Akiba-Schechter, childhood is celebrated.

## We strive for excellence.

Students compete at the highest level of regional and national academic competitions. They leave here as critical thinkers and problem solvers, equipped to succeed in their own communities and beyond.



**PHOTOS: LEFT,** FRIENDS ENJOY A MOMENT TOGETHER DURING LAG B'OMER COLOR WARS . **TOP,** PRESCHOOLERS ENJOY THE COLEMAN FAMILY PLAYGROUND. **BOTTOM,** TWO YEAR OLDS PLAY IN THE LEAVES.



# Preschool + Kindergarten: why we play



"We are incredibly happy to have found Akiba, and have been so impressed with the level of excellence in teaching. Having seen our daughter thrive at Akiba, we now fully embrace the idea of learning through play. Our daughter is constantly nurtured emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually by her teachers."

ANNE SCHMIDT, PARENT

Welcome to Akiba-Schechter's Preschool and Kindergarten, a community school that seeks to create a safe, stimulating and nurturing environment for children to learn in a play-based setting. From Reggio Emilio-inspired classrooms to a curriculum that emerges from the students, our program reflects learning through play. A typical day will include free play, a time for navigating relationships and making choices; group time, where the focus is on listening to each other; and outdoor play. Through secure relationships with teachers and friends and hands-on activities, children develop a sense of independence and autonomy, as well as an ability to understand the needs and concerns of others.



**PHOTOS: OPPOSITE, CELEBRATING SHABBAT IN THE KINDERGARTEN.**

**ABOVE LEFT,** FOUR YEAR OLDS CHECK OUT THE EFFECT OF THE EARTH'S ROTATION ON DAY AND NIGHT.

**ABOVE RIGHT,** TWO YEAR OLDS MAKE OBSERVATIONS.



# Preschool: imagine the possibilities

Walk into any Preschool classroom and find a warm space where children own their learning, embrace their community and are engaged with their teachers and peers. Heads bow over a structure as children confer with each other about how best to support its walls. A mixing bowl and assorted ingredients rest on a table, surrounded by children measuring out flour and beating eggs.

Regardless of the day, teachers embed the current study into every activity. For instance, around Chanukah, students might examine shadowboxes during free play as part of their study of light and dark. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day might generate a group discussion about “what makes a good leader?” and how we should treat each other. There is a constant hum of activity, each child immersed in the project of the moment--a project the children themselves picked to study--and the teachers organize the learning.

**“Our daughter has flourished in three fantastic years at Akiba. She has a positive attitude toward school that we attribute directly to the devoted work, energy and creativity of Akiba’s wonderful staff. You made every day great and we are grateful for that.”** ADAM SHAW, FORMER PRESCHOOL PARENT



**PHOTOS: OPPOSITE, “...BUT THE PEOPLE AROUND THE TABLE ARE WHAT WE NEED THE MOST:” A PRESCHOOL THANKSGIVING DISPLAY. LEFT, PRECHOOLERS PRACTICE YOGA. ABOVE RIGHT, AN OUTDOOR INSTRUMENT ON MIKE’S PLACE, THE NEW PRESCHOOL PLAYGROUND, WHICH INTEGRATES NATURE AND LEARNING IN AN URBAN SETTING.**

FRENDS

FRENDS



BY gabi

ABIT



# Kindergarten: the perfect bridge

Akiba-Schechter's Kindergarten serves as the ideal bridge from Preschool to Elementary School, both for those children who continue their education at Akiba and for those who move on to other private or public school options. Kindergarten is the perfect balance between play and academics, and builds intangible but fundamental skills: voicing an opinion, socializing, asking questions, thinking critically and working in a group.

**"We are proud of the way our children leave Kindergarten poised to enter 1st grade: confident that they can embrace new challenges, nurtured as individuals, and harboring a love for learning that will enable them to be successful for the rest of their academic careers."** CARLA GOLDBERG, PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR



A typical week in the Kindergarten might involve graphing the students' responses to a question during Morning Meeting, writing stories for a Young Authors unit, conducting a science experiment, baking a batch of blueberry muffins in celebration of the letter "B," and of course--outdoor free play. Students make use of "Handwriting Without Tears," a special curriculum that develops the fine-motor skills associated with writing, and participate in at least seven specials: yoga, swimming, gym, art, music, library, and Hebrew.

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**PHOTOS LEFT, KINDERGARTENERS SHARE THE BOOKS THEY WROTE DURING A YOUNG AUTHORS UNIT WITH THEIR 3RD/4TH GRADE BUDDIES.**

**ABOVE LEFT, DRAWING WITH CRAYONS DURING ART CLASS. ABOVE RIGHT, PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN GO SWIMMING EVERY WEEK IN SPRING AND FALL.**



שימקהה בת שנות אלפיים,  
ל להיות עם חותמי בארץנו  
ארץ 7.  
8.

# Grades 1-4: learning to think



At Akiba-Schechter, we teach students--not subjects--giving them the skills of life-long learning. Literacy is the foundation of that, which is why we're so committed to teaching it well. In multi-age classrooms, children in 1st/2nd grade read one-on-one with a teacher daily, allowing them to advance at their own rate.

Teachers at Akiba are not the “keepers of knowledge,” but empower students to find answers themselves. Moreover, open-ended and collaborative assignments promote the fact that there is not “one” right answer. Students mentor each other and develop empathy and respect for one another, secure in the knowledge that each is integral to the community. Multi-age and flexible ability groupings mean that children are always in flux, never stagnating at either the top or the bottom of a class. This promotes humility while still encouraging constant growth. Small class sizes and individualized attention mean children advance according to their own motivation.

Beginning in 1st grade, students make use of Tal Am, a Hebrew-immersion curriculum filled with song, drama, and culture. Children also learn to analyze biblical Hebrew while gaining literacy of Jewish holidays and the Torah’s portions.

**“Akiba has invigorated my love of teaching. Teachers and students are valued for who they are, while encouraged to grow and take risks. Despite the emphasis on standardization in education, Akiba is decidedly non-standard. Many schools pay lip service to the “whole child,” but at Akiba it really means something.”** SCOTT SALK, 1ST/2ND GRADE TEACHER AND ATT EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR 2012



**PHOTOS:** OPPOSITE, 1ST/2ND GRADE TEACHER SCOTT SALK WORKS WITH STUDENTS ON A MATH PROBLEM USING THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO EVERYDAY MATH, ONE OF OUR MATH PROGRAMS. ABOVE, A SECOND GRADER TESTS A SELF-MADE SUSPENSION BRIDGE HE DEVELOPED FOR AN ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING UNIT. **RIGHT:** ALEF (1ST GRADE) STUDENTS PERFORM A PUPPET SHOW IN HEBREW.



# Grades 5-8: mind + body + soul

In Middle School, the focus is on independence. Students take seven courses in addition to music, art, and physical education, and any extra-curricular clubs they may choose to participate in. General Studies subjects include English, Math, Science, and History; Judaic classes include Hebrew, Tanakh, and a choice of either Talmud, Jewish Thought or Jewish History. Utilizing original biblical texts, courses are designed to challenge the students to think critically, while encouraging them to explore who they are as Jews and as human beings.

Through hands-on activities, problem-based learning, and seminar-like discussions, students learn to ask good questions and find meaningful answers. National programs like History and Science Fair promote independent research skills and the confidence that comes from defending one's findings to an audience. Subject matter often transcends the classroom through large-scale projects like debates, mock trials, and historical re-enactments. High standardized test scores, awards in statewide competitions, and other scholastic achievements bear out the success of our approach.



**"You inspired me to figure out who I really am, challenged me to examine instead of reject ideas. Because of you, I will continue to question, but I will do so as I accept my Judaism as a deep and central part of who I am."**

POLLY HOCHMAN, CLASS OF 2012 (WALTER PAYTON COLLEGE PREP)

**PHOTOS OPPOSITE LEFT,** 7TH/8TH GRADERS PRACTICE GENETICS PROBLEMS BY USING DIFFERENT-COLORED GUMMY BEARS. **LEFT,** RABBI HOLMAN AND HIS STUDENT REVIEW A PAGE OF TALMUD TOGETHER. **ABOVE,** 7TH/8TH GRADERS TAKE CERAMICS EVERY SPRING AT THE HYDE PARK ART CENTER. HERE, A STUDENT WORKS AT THE WHEEL.



# Beyond the Classroom:

## student life + extracurricular activities

When asked which activities they most remember about Akiba, alumni often reply: "Color War," "the musical," or "Shabbatons" (weekend retreats). So much of student life happens outside the classroom. Students choose from optional programs, both during the school day and as after school activities, including the *Akiba Globe* Newspaper, Chesed Club, literary club, Yearbook, Math Olympiad, Choir, Chess, Fencing, CircEsteem, the Annual Musical, Orchestra and other changing and developing programs.

**"I love being around the school; I wish I could have gone there when I was young. The feeling of love and community that I experience there is honest, never contrived and all too rare."** JOHN SEFNER, PARENT

We are especially proud of the Buddy Program. This pairs 6th-8th graders with 1st/2nd graders; 3rd/4th graders with Kindergarten students; and 1st/2nd graders with 4 year olds. This innovative program promotes inter-age, authentic relationships between our oldest and youngest students.

**PHOTOS LEFT:** ON LAG B'OMER, MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN ARCHERY. **TOP:** ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL. **RIGHT:** 1ST GRADE AND 8TH GRADE BUDDIES READ TOGETHER.



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② List of Interview

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③

59 Essay



Meeting

5/14/12

# Accomplishments + Alumni

## Students

### Chidon Hatanach (NATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST)

Several of our students regularly advance to the national level in this annual competition.

### History Fair

During our inaugural year, 5 students competed at the state level, 1 received a Blue Ribbon.

### National Geographic Geography Bee

Numerous time, our students have placed in the top 100 in the state.

### National Science Fair

Almost every year, our students take home 1st place awards at the state competition in Springfield.

### Scripps National Spelling Bee

Our students have placed in the top 5 in the city, once advancing to the nationals in Washington, D.C.

## Alumni

Every year, at least 2/3 of the 8th graders who apply to Chicago's elite Selective Enrollment High Schools like Walter Payton and Whitney Young are admitted to their 1st choice.

### OUR GRADUATES ARE WELCOMED AT A VARIETY OF HIGH SCHOOLS:

Chicagoland Jewish High School | Fasman Yeshiva High School | Francis W. Parker School  
 Hannah Sachs Bais Yaakov | Ida Crown Jewish Academy | Jones College Prep  
 Lincoln Park IB Program | Northside College Prep | University of Chicago Laboratory Schools  
 Walter Payton College Prep | Whitney Young Magnet High School

### OUR GRADUATES ARE ACCEPTED AT A VARIETY OF UNIVERSITIES:

Brandeis | Columbia | Emory | Hebrew University of Jerusalem | John Hopkins | McGill | NYU  
 Northwestern | Oxford University | Princeton | Sarah Lawrence | Swarthmore Syracuse | U of C  
 U of I, Urbana-Champaign | University of Michigan | Vassar College | Washington University | Yale

## Teachers

### Carla Goldberg (PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR)

Kohl-McCormick Awardee

### Miriam Kass (3RD/4TH GRADE TEACHER)

Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education

### Scott Salk (1ST/2ND GRADE TEACHER)

Associated Talmud Torahs Educator of the Year

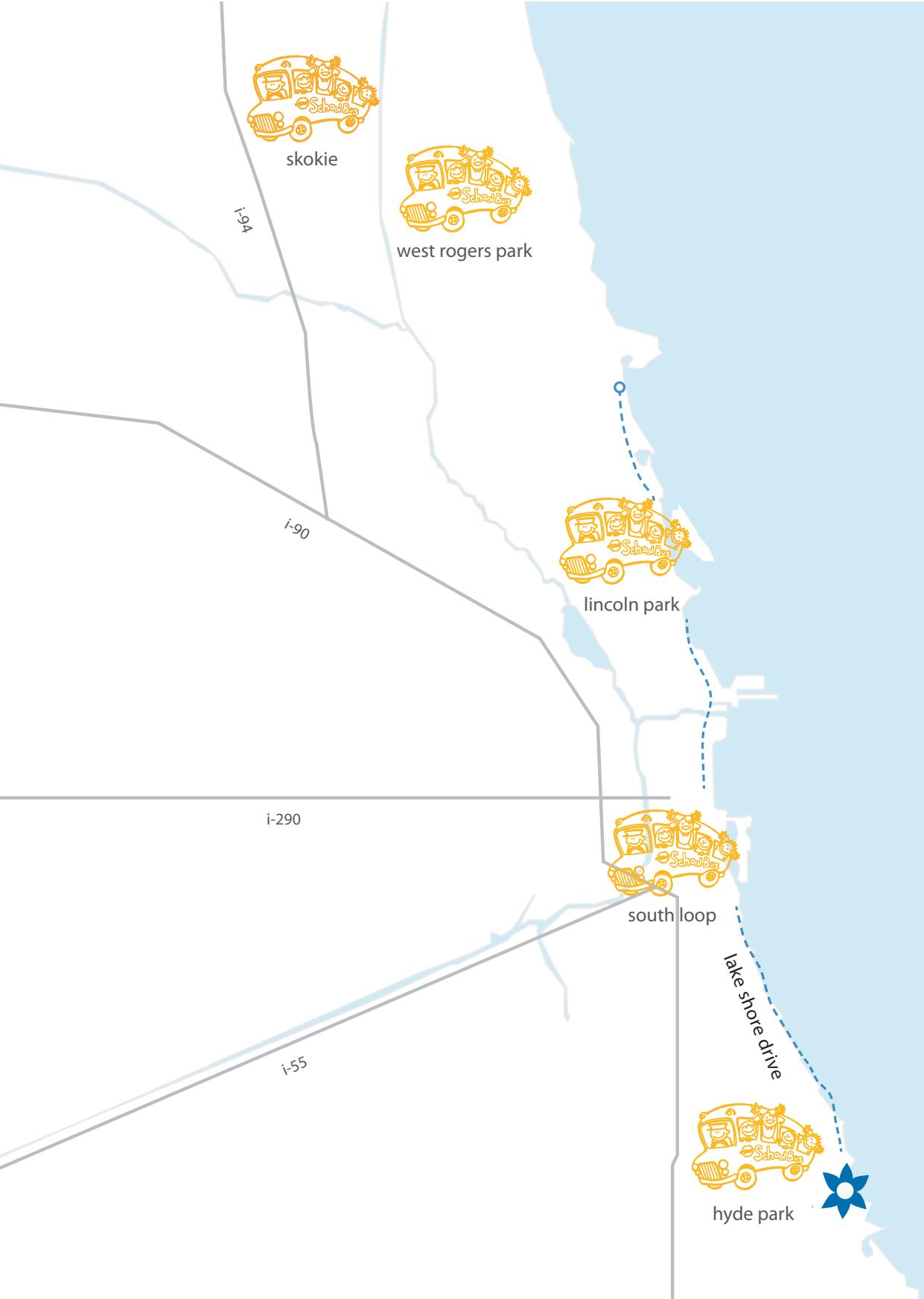
### Miriam Schiller (PRINCIPAL)

Associated Talmud Torahs Lifetime Educator



**PHOTOS LEFT:** 3RD/4TH GRADE TEACHER MIRIAM KASS RECEIVED THE GRINSPON-STEINHARDT AWARD. HERE, SHE EXPLAINS THE PARAGRAPH SANDWICH.

**ABOVE:** 8TH GRADERS TRAVEL TO ISRAEL FOR TWO WEEKS EVERY SPRING. HERE, THEY HAVE JUST CLIMBED MASADA.



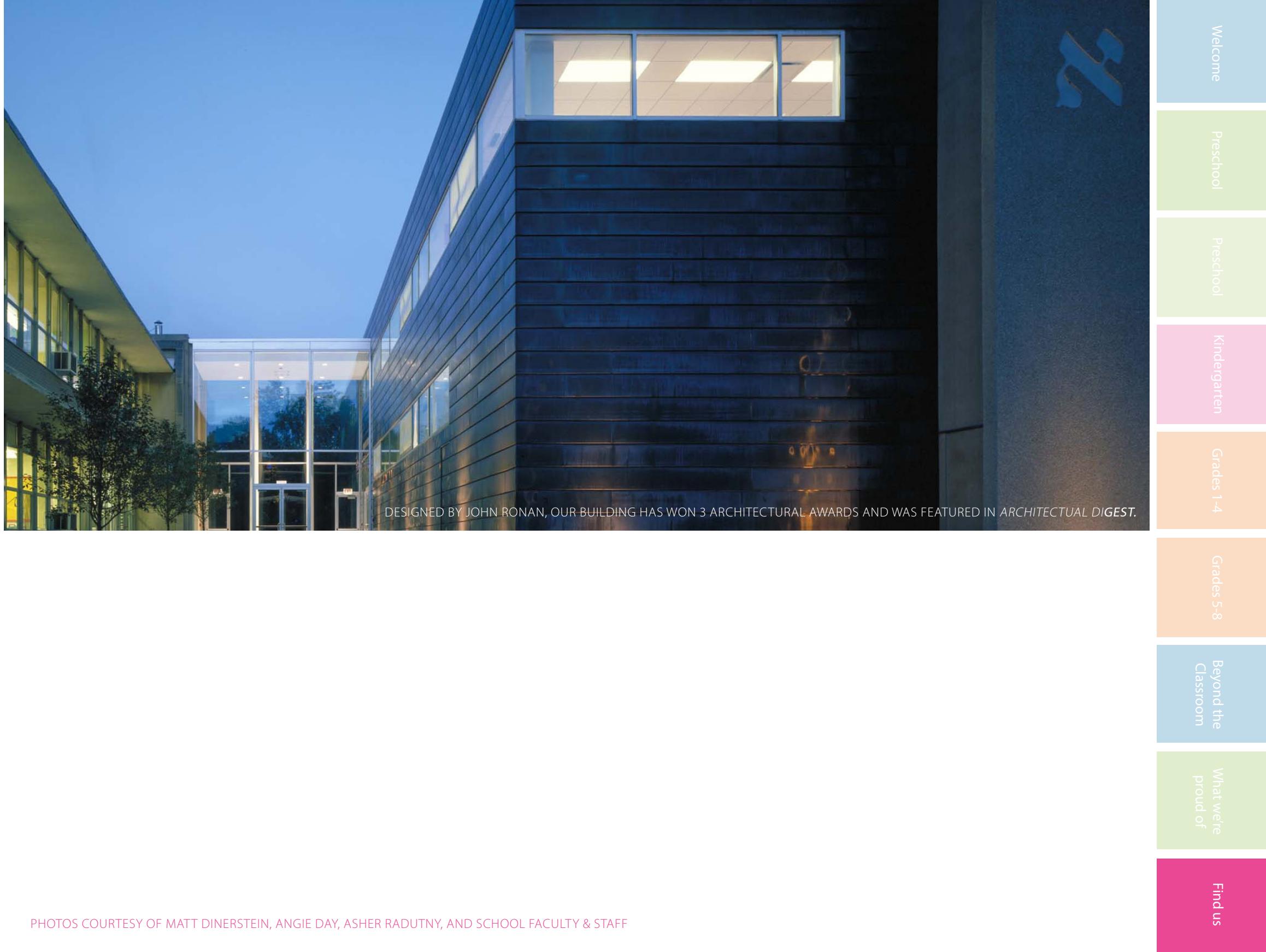
We are located less than 15 minutes from downtown.

**4 school bus stops:  
Skokie, West Rogers Park, Lincoln Park & South Loop.**

To learn more and schedule a tour, contact Yelena Spector, Director of Admissions.

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Welcome

Preschool

Preschool

Kindergarten

Grades 1-4

Grades 5-8

Beyond the  
Classroom

What we're  
proud of

Find us

DESIGNED BY JOHN RONAN, OUR BUILDING HAS WON 3 ARCHITECTURAL AWARDS AND WAS FEATURED IN ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MATT DINERSTEIN, ANGIE DAY, ASHER RADUTNY, AND SCHOOL FACULTY & STAFF



**inspire. challenge. nurture.**

[www.akibaschechter.org](http://www.akibaschechter.org)