



AKIBA-SCHECHTER  
Jewish Day School  
ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016

**MIRIAM SCHILLER**

HEAD OF SCHOOL

**CARLA GOLDBERG**

PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR

**2015-2016  
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OF DIRECTORS**

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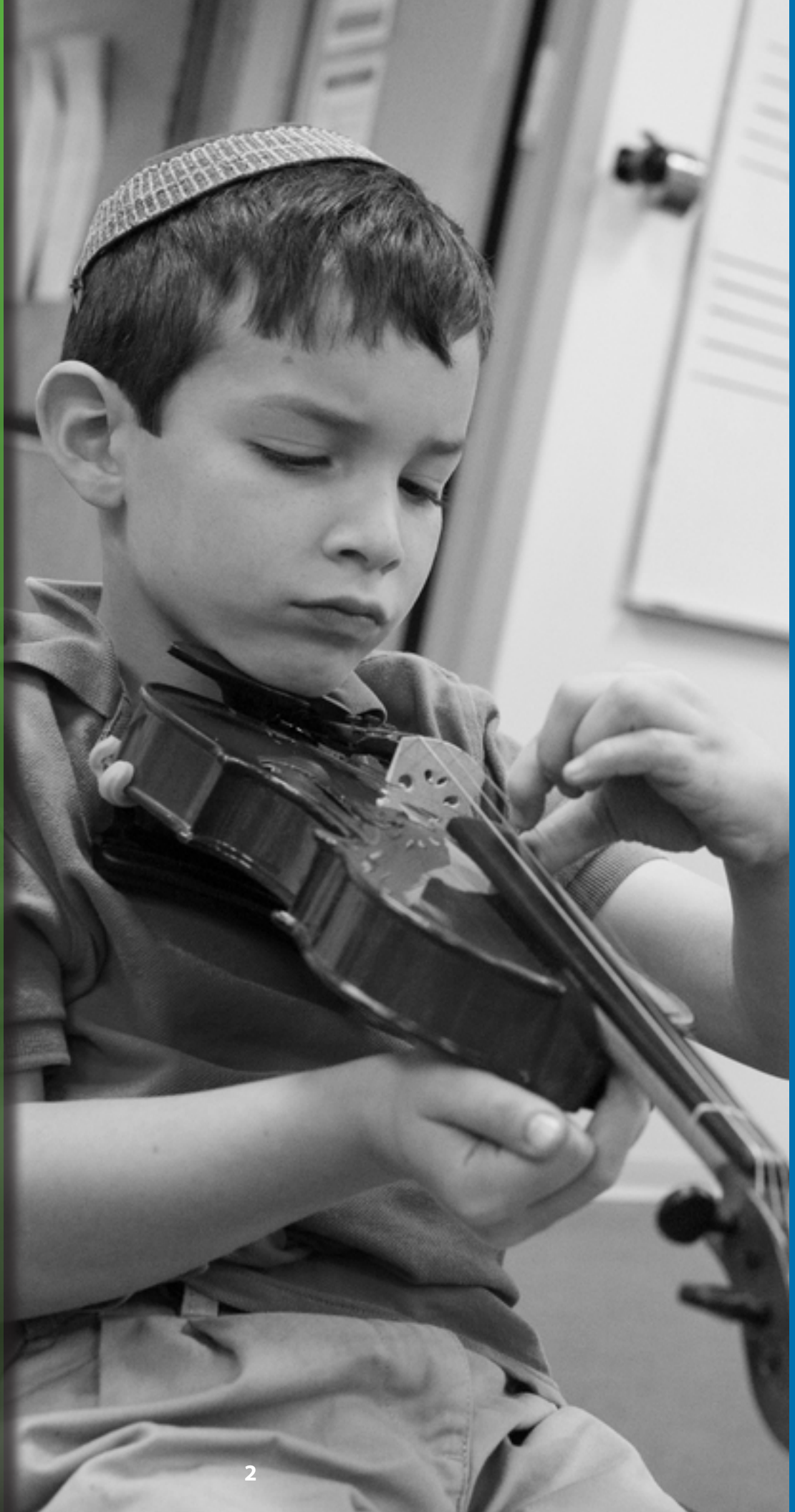
*Debbie Schwartz*

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*A partner in serving our  
community, supported by the  
Jewish United Fund/Jewish  
Federation, the Associated  
Talmud Torahs and the  
Chicago Kehillah Jewish  
Education Fund.*





**A**s president of the school's Board of Directors, I would like to thank the Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School community for a very exciting and successful school year. Our Board members, teachers, staff, parents, alumni, alumni parents, grandparents and friends of the school provided gifts of time, talent and treasure which helped Akiba-Schechter achieve several important goals. On behalf of the entire school, thank you.

Our students continue to embrace their Judaic and general studies with enthusiasm, curiosity and perseverance. Because we teach students and not subjects, our teachers can focus on individualization, which is part of what makes Akiba-Schechter so unique. Throughout the year, our students' academic and artistic gifts were visible through assemblies, exhibits and performances.

The school launched its first Annual Fund, which is a vital component of Jewish day and independent schools. Tuition, alone, does not cover the entire cost to educate a student and the difference is made up through Annual Fund dollars. The 'gap' is approximately \$3,000/student and I'm thrilled to announce that the Annual Fund raised over \$430,000! Thank you to all who donated to this important fundraising initiative.

With a focus on professional development to ensure that teachers and staff integrate best practices into everyday education, our team attended local, regional and national workshops and conferences.

The year was filled with many activities including holiday celebrations, Grandparents and Special Friends Day, the school musical, Akiba Shuffle, Celebrate Akiba and more. We strive to ensure a sense of community within the school through these events.

The Board of Directors and school administration collaborated on strategic plan goals which included demonstrating excellence in academic quality compared to the best Jewish day schools; obtaining accreditation from the Independent School Association of the Central States; developing a facility and fundraising plan for expansion up to 210 K-8 students and creating a robust Annual Fund in support of general operations.

Over the year, it has been a joy and an honor to work towards aspiring goals. We thank our entire community for your support of the school. Your commitment, on behalf of our students, has helped make Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School the leading Jewish day school that it is today.

With gratitude,

Harvey Loeb

After 28 years at Akiba-Schechter, I am still grateful for the opportunity to make a meaningful impact on children's lives: the way they view themselves, the way they treat others, the way they view their role in the larger community, and the possibilities that await them. I am grateful for the outstanding, out-of-the-box, relentlessly dedicated teachers who help make this miracle a reality every single day. -- *Miriam Schiller, Head of School*

I am grateful for a community of lifelong learners. I am thankful that our families know the true value of early childhood education and support continued professional development for our teachers. I am humbled that we have been able to send nine early childhood teachers to participate in the Reggio Study Tour in Italy. I am grateful that I was one of these educators and that I am able to share my enthusiasm and passion for this beautiful philosophy of play-based education with my colleagues, our children and our families. I am proud that we at Akiba are leading the field by embracing Reggio inspired learning in our classrooms. -- *Carla Goldberg, Preschool Director*

## OUR MISSION

We seek to provide an excellent secular and Judaic education in Hyde Park to a diverse community of Jewish children from all over Chicagoland. Boys and girls study all aspects of our curriculum together in multi-aged classes. 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, the performance of mitzvot and support for the State of Israel and its people.

## OUR PRESCHOOL & KINDERGAREN

Akiba-Schechter's Preschool and Kindergarten is an accredited program open to all children. We are a community school that creates a safe, stimulating, and nurturing environment for children to learn through active exploration and play. Children engage in activities that include dramatic play, movement, art, sensory experiences, music, library, and yoga. Through secure relationships with teachers and friends, children develop a sense of independence and autonomy, as well as an ability to understand the needs and concerns of others.

## OUR DAY SCHOOL

At Akiba, we teach students—not subjects—giving them the skills of life-long learning.

### Lower School

In the Lower School, literacy is the foundation of that independence, which is why we're so committed to teaching it well. 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.

Cheerful music, colorfully displayed artwork, and children busy at play are some of what you'll see when you walk through our building. We believe children learn best when the curriculum is thematic and child-centered, which, ideally, is child-initiated. Our teachers are always prepared with rich plans for each day of school, but they are also ready to put those plans aside when the children's ideas lead in a different direction. While the final product is always nice to see, we most embrace the process of creating.

### Middle School

In Middle School, the focus shifts more toward independence. Through hands-on activities, problem-based learning, and seminar-like discussions, students learn to ask good questions and find meaningful answers. Subject matter often transcends the classroom; large-scale projects like debates, mock trials, and historical re-enactments involve even the Lower School. High standardized test scores, awards in state-wide competitions, and numerous other scholastic achievements bear out the success of our approach.





# *Did you know?*

*Create a Jewish Legacy* is the school's first campaign initiated to secure legacy and endowment gifts for the school. By establishing a legacy through a bequest or a planned gift, an individual will:

- Support an outstanding Jewish and general studies education that deepens Jewish identity, instills strong values and develops critical thinkers and inquisitive future leaders
- Ensure a Jewish day school education to those who seek it regardless of financial ability or Jewish observance affiliation
- Guarantee the future of the only Jewish day school on the South side of Chicago

By participating in *Create a Jewish Legacy*, you will help ensure the sustainability of the Jewish community for years to come. By leaving a legacy gift, an individual can ensure that the traditions and organizations that mean so much today will be there for future generations. By making a legacy commitment, an individual can express values instilled in by parents and grandparents and perpetuate important Jewish traditions.





## *Did you know?*

Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School received a grant, in tandem with other Chicago-area Jewish day schools, that allows us to work closely with PRIZMA: Center for Jewish Day Schools to promote Akiba-Schechter and the concept of Jewish day schools. This grant, the Chicago Day School Growth Program, aims to significantly improve the image of Chicago's Jewish day schools among all families with young (0-4) children, but particularly among non-Orthodox parents who have above average propensity to seriously consider a Jewish day school education.

The grant focuses on improving topic area that matter most to these parents in choosing a school, as well as where they currently believe Jewish day schools are uncompetitive relative to public and independent schools.

The grant seeks to translate the strengthened perceived image into more inquiries to Chicago Jewish day schools. Those inquiries are then followed up by the day schools and converted into visits, applications and matriculations.

## SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

**8th grader Sarah Campbell took 1st Place in the state in the Scripps National Spelling Bee**, and competed at the week-long national competition in Washington, D.C.

**7th grader Shira David advanced to the national levels of the Chidon Hatanach** (National Bible Contest) and competed in New York City. She also took **3rd Place in Project Shine, a national Tikkun Olam Contest** in which students envision and write project proposals for a major chesed effort that will serve their local community.

**6th grader Aaron Faier advanced to the state level of the National Geographic Bee** after placing as one of the top scores in his region.

For the second year in a row, **Akiba-Schechter's Preschool sent several staff members to participate in a Reggio Study Tour in Reggio Emilia, Italy.** This trip was made possible through donations from parents, as well as from grants from the Community Foundation for Jewish Education. Reggio participants held a panel evening in which they presented their findings from the study tour to parents and community members, and shared the ways they plan to continue integrating Reggio Emilia philosophy into their classrooms.

The entire Preschool and Kindergarten took part in a several month-long **Family Study**, in which every classroom defined the word "family" and represented it through a different art medium. The resulting art pieces graced the walls of the entire Preschool building in a gallery that grabbed the attention of the entire school, as well as local newspapers.

For the 5th year in a row, Akiba-Schechter's **8th grade graduating class went on a two-week trip to Israel** in June. The trip, which requires at least two years of 8th grade fundraising, spans at least 30 different locations from the Negev to the Golan.

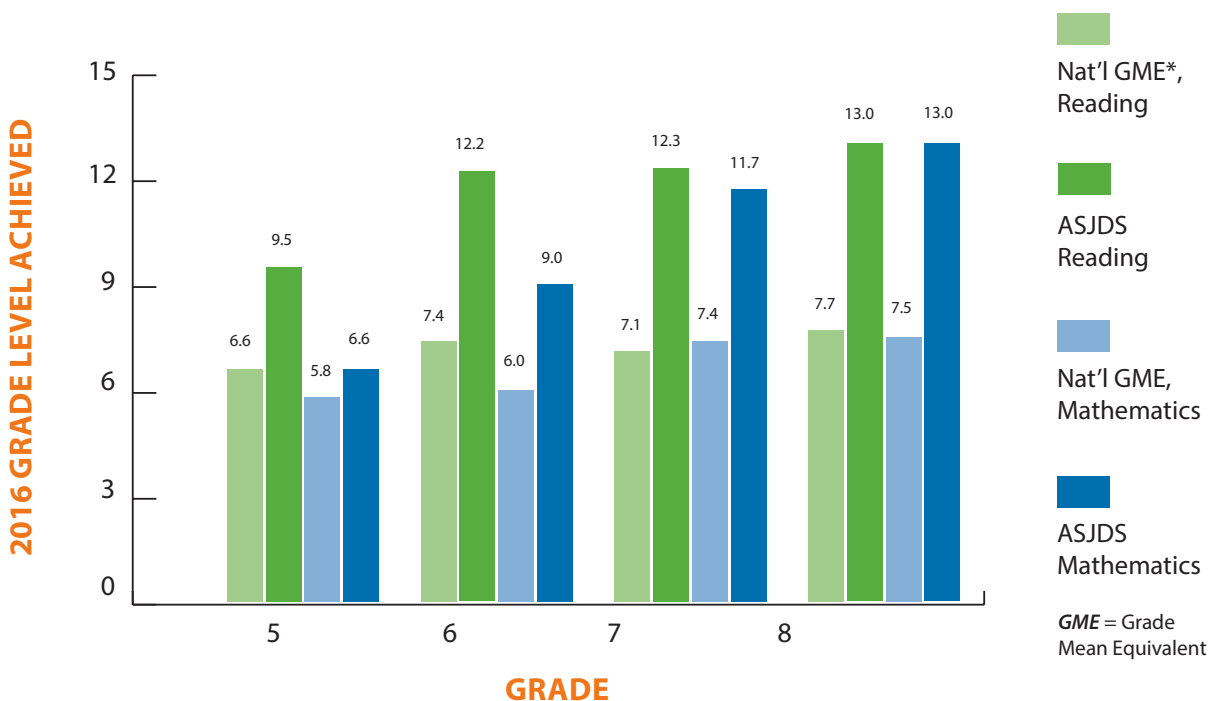
Mrs. Rapp's 1st/2nd grade class took part in a major migration study, in which they followed the **journey of whooping cranes from Wisconsin to Florida.** Later, they participated in something called "**symbolic migration**," which links classrooms from northern migration routes of Monarch butterflies to classrooms in Mexico, where the butterflies originate. Students exchanged photos and letters with their symbolic migration partners.

The Chesed Club, run by Middle school teachers and teacher Mrs. Gold, launched a **major all-school campaign to raise funds for teacher Baila Brackman's son Shmulie**, who has leukemia. Funds, which were raised through challah baking, selling #teamshmulie wristbands, and the major culminating event of riding Bike The Drive were directed toward Chai Lifeline. This organization helps meet the needs of seriously ill children and their families.

As a culmination to their unit on To Kill a Mockingbird, the **Humanities classes held a "tea party" with character Aunt Alexandra in her "parlor."** Every student dressed up as a character from the novel, adopted his or her dialect and speech, and brought a book-themed dish to the event. Prizes were awarded for "Most in-character," "Most Extravagant Dish," and "Best Costume." The event was a huge success.



**Grades 1-8 Standardized Testing:** Akiba-Schechter administers the TerraNova tests to students each year. It is a norm-referenced, nationally standardized achievement test administered to students across the country.



## OUR GRADUATES

Mazel tov to the 2016 graduates: Sarah Campbell, Elijah Devir, Yossel Goldbloom, Jacob Gordon, Ari Gutman, Aya Hamlish, Abigail Koifman, Isabel Kucher, Shira Friedman-Parks, Rebeca Price, Rosa Shanes, Daniel Siebzener, Zoe Weiner, and Chavie Zeller. They now attend the following high schools: Fasman Yeshiva High School, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, Kenwood Academy, Northside College Prep, Walter Payton College Prep, and Whitney M. Young Magnet High.

### High School Acceptance

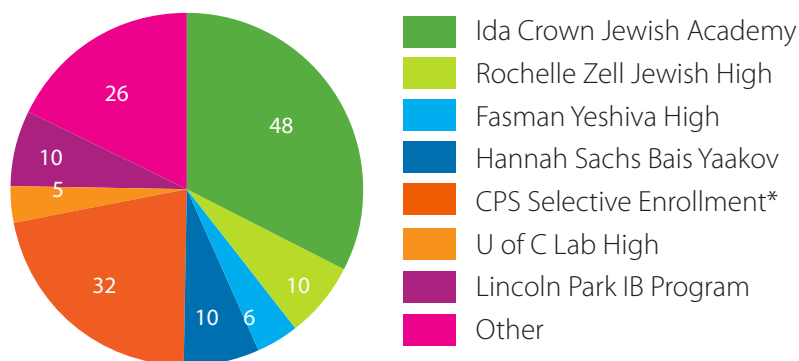
90% of students who applied to CPS Selective Enrollment High Schools were accepted to one of their choices.

84% were admitted to their 1st choice: Payton, Jones, Northside, or Whitney Young.

95% of students were accepted to their 1st choice of high school, public or private.

93% of students who applied to the U of C Lab High School were accepted.

### High School Enrollment



#### \*CPS Selective Enrollment High School Student Breakdown:

Walter Payton = 18, Jones College Prep = 9, Whitney Young = 4, Northside College Prep = 3, Lane Tech = 1



# *Revenue & Expenses 2015-2016*

<b>REVENUE</b>	
Tuition & Fees	\$2,874,879
Subsidies from JUF (Jewish United Fund)	\$122,905
Contributions	\$782,455
Events net of expenses	\$25,117
Investment income	\$582
Grants	\$1,525
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$3,807,463</b>

<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Program services, instructional and educational activities	\$2,498,556
Supporting services	\$1,017,880
Building occupancy	\$376,806
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$3,893,242</b>



## *Did you know?*

The Annual Fund is the most important fundraising initiative of the school year. Tuition does not cover the full cost of educating each student. Like all Jewish day and independent schools, Akiba-Schechter implemented the Annual Fund to make up the difference between tuition and the actual cost per student. The difference is approximately \$3000/student.

A gift to the Annual Fund provides essential funds for:

- Scholarships
- New programs
- Professional development
- Building maintenance
- A strong learning environment

**Give today, impact today.** Annual fund dollars are immediately available and can be directed to the area of greatest importance. Your Annual Fund gift helps make exceptional achievements possible. With a successful annual campaign, Akiba-Schechter can dream big.



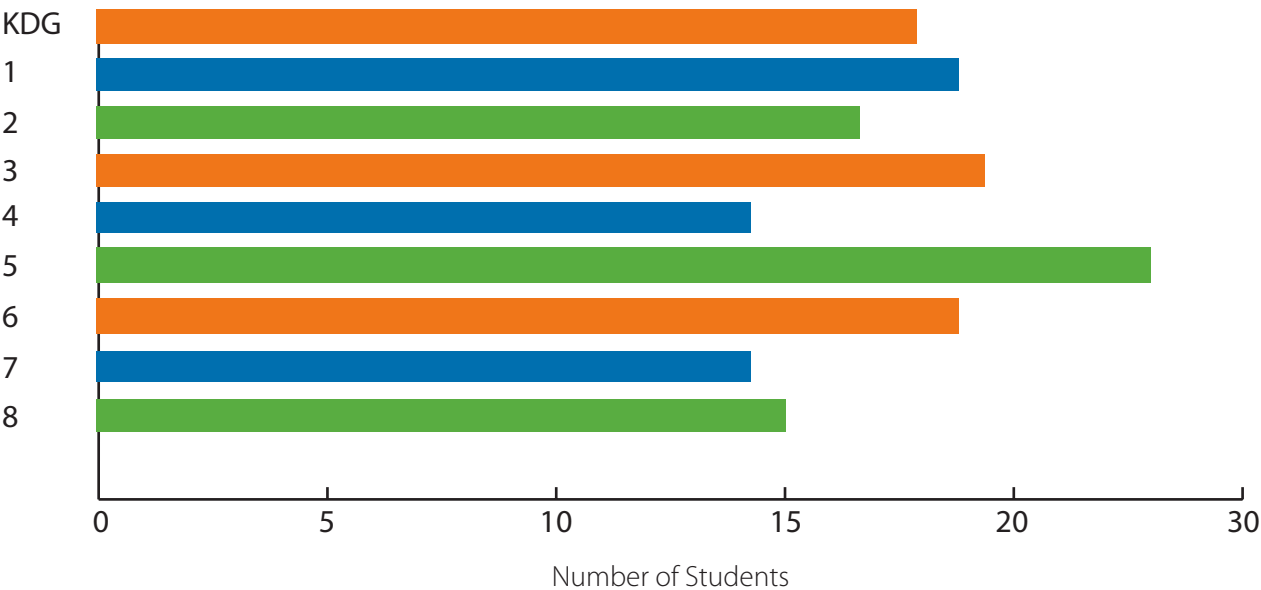
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Places of Residence, Preschool - 8th Grade

Our TK students reside throughout Chicago, its suburbs, and Northwest Indiana.



2015-2016 Grades 1-8 Enrollment



TEACHER AND STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the 2015-2016 summer, several teachers took part in professional development training.

- Humanities teachers Mindy Schiller and Neil Landers received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to take a 6-week course on the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.
- Head of School Miriam Schiller took part in a week-long seminar on Holocaust and Human Development sponsored by Facing History and Ourselves, an Akiba partner organization.
- Third/Fourth grade teacher Jaime Leonard and Kindergarten teacher Jill Kohl took part in the Responsive Classroom workshop, which works on developing students social and emotional acuity.

*inspire.  
challenge.  
nurture.*

*We are successful due to the support of our strong community, including each individual, family and organization that has made an investment in our school. Thank you for contributing your time, dollars, and expertise to support our mission.*



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