



WISESCHOOL



ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



Our Vision

The vision of Wise School is to inspire and empower our students and their families to learn deeply about our world and Jewish heritage, to be creative, and to experience wholeness so that we can make great happen in our community, our nation, Israel, and the world.

Our Mission

At Wise School, through depth, complexity and differentiation, our students learn how to learn. Children build knowledge as they ask questions, research, solve problems, and add layers to their understanding. Through the application of creativity, children voice their independence, expand their minds, and work towards achieving their greatest potential. Students become creators instead of consumers; they focus more on the process than the product. Students maximize their opportunity to stand out in a competitive world by looking at life through innovative lenses. Our students experience wholeness (שְׁלֵמוּת—*shleimut*), by making interdisciplinary connections through development of mind, body, and soul. We acknowledge and appreciate moments of Shalom. We recognize each student's strengths and contributions as we build an inclusive community. We honor our Jewish faith as a living heritage, begin to develop a deep understanding of and commitment to Israel, and develop proficiency in and appreciation of the Hebrew language. At Wise School, thoughtful people inspire meaningful actions in order to make great happen through acts of tikkun olam (תִּקּוּן עוֹלָם—repair of the world).

Staff Leadership 2021-2022

Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback
Senior Rabbi

Tami Weiser
Head of School

John Heffron
Principal, Elementary School

Pam Kleinman
*Director of General Studies
& Student Support*

Malka Clement
*Director of Hebrew &
Judaic Studies*

Beth Behar
*Director of Admission &
Exmission*

Estefany Garcia
*Office Manager &
School Registrar*

Jillian Moore
*Financial Aid Manager &
Administrative Assistant*

Jaana Gantt
Administrative Assistant

Natalie Cohen
Communications Manager

Stephanie Milonas
Wise School Counselor

Rishelle Manan
Wise School Counselor

Jen Shankman
Director of Early Childhood

Jayne Rosen
Assistant Director

Jennifer West
Curriculum Director

Jenna Pitson
*Parenting Center
Coordinator*

Genene Turndorf
*Parenting Center
Coordinator*

Amanda Bernstein
Office Manager

Cecilia Nguyen
Work Room Specialist

A letter from the Head of School

This year our school theme was “Nivrah B’Tzelem - Our Creativity is Godly.” In this annual report you will see vivid examples of how this theme was brought to life throughout our grade levels and programs. We are especially proud of our signature instructional program, the Wise Learning Process (WLP), where creativity is embedded through interdisciplinary lessons. Beginning in our Aaron Milken Center classrooms and carrying through our sixth grade graduates, our students have multiple opportunities to use higher-level critical thinking skills while at the same time developing their creative skills.

In our Music Lab, Science Lab, Project Studio, and Tyberg Art & Innovation Lab, we witnessed creativity every single day. Through coding and robotics, art projects, award-winning Odyssey of the Mind presentations, and Garage Band compositions, our students were creative. In our Judaic Studies and Hebrew classes, students created sukkah models, shared the Passover story, celebrated Yom Ha’Atzmaut, and led services as Klei Kodesh. Our unique Hebrew Immersion classrooms in the Aaron Milken Center presented our preschool students the opportunity to learn and internalize Hebrew.

While COVID continued to present us with challenges, our community rose to the occasion with creative ways to stay connected. There were times we had to meet



on Zoom, and then many opportunities to safely come together for worship services and social events. We committed to keeping our community strong, and I was especially grateful to our WPA leadership and our parents for working together to make this commitment a reality.

As I walked through classrooms and hallways, read winning Daughters of the American Revolution essays, judged outstanding debate tournaments, cheered for athletes in Katz Family Pavilion, I saw that our creativity is indeed Godly. We are inspired and inspiring, and I am grateful to be the Head of School at this mountaintop place, leading this very important work.

Thank you for your continued support as you read our 2021-22 Wise School Annual Report.

Warmly,

Tami Weiser

Tami Weiser



A letter from

Rabbi Yoshi Zweiback

A core value of our congregation is Creativity — יצירתיות.

In the way we learn, worship, celebrate, remember, and endeavor to repair the world, we think expansively and remain open to new ideas.

The last few years have demonstrated time and again that this value is much more than words on a page: We live it day by day. As we've navigated the COVID-19 pandemic together, we've found new ways to learn, to observe our ancient traditions, and to gather together as a community safely. I couldn't be prouder of our students, families, and staff. The efforts that went into ensuring that our studies could continue under often challenging and unusual circumstances have been nothing short of heroic.

The education theme for our last school year, "*Nivra V'Tzelem: Created to Be Creators*," is taken from a verse found in *Pirkei Avot*, the Wisdom of Our Ancestors: "Beloved is humanity for they were created in God's own image! Especially beloved are they because it was made known to them that they were created in God's image!" (*Pirkei Avot* 3:14) It's a very deep insight about human awareness. It's one thing to be given the gift of life and—more than that—the divine spark within; it's quite another to become aware of that gift.



So much of our learning at Wise School is about awareness. Our littlest ones learn how to be part of a community, how to work together, how to share, how to play nicely, and how to treat each other with respect. As our students age, they learn critical thinking skills that enable them to become aware of how complex, interesting, and interconnected our world is. In our *t'fillah* (prayer) curriculum, our students learn to become aware of their own spiritual lives so that, ultimately, they can develop an awareness of God's presence in our world.

In the pages that follow, you will read about the many creative ways we have learned, explored, and developed in the year that has passed. I am grateful for that work, for that growth, and for the community that has supported it. And perhaps even better—I am grateful to be given the gift of awareness so that I can truly appreciate the wonder of it all.

L'shalom,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yoshi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "Y" and a simple "oshi" following.

Rabbi Yoshi



A letter from the **WPA**

It was another year of learning and adapting. The creativity and resilience of the 2021-2022 Wise Parents Association Executive Board led to a wildly successful year in spite of all the challenges. The board boldly thought outside the box and took advantage of serendipitous opportunities. The board's incredible attitude, willingness, and spirit of cooperation turned every setback into a set-up for an even bigger comeback.

Although we started out the school year six feet apart and masked, we didn't let that stop us from getting everyone on campus for our kick-off Back to Wise event with a beautiful Shabbat service under the stars, followed by live music (while enjoying our wine and cheese).

We continued the year with our Wise Speaker Series which was held in person and on Zoom to accommodate everyone who wanted to participate.

Our outdoor Holiday Boutique and Book Fair were far more successful than we had expected thanks to our incredible community and their desire to come together and support. Our Party Book events were also sold out—another testament to how much our families wanted to connect and celebrate together.

We continued Midor L'dor on Zoom because of how uniquely successful it was the year prior: Zoom allowed families from all around the world to join their kids or grandkids, which was never possible before. Additionally, we brought the famous Wise Purim Carnival back, which proved to be another smashing success. The in-person Gala gave us a decade-in-the-making opportunity to honor Tami Weiser and Rabbi Yoshi. The list of proud successes goes on and on.

It was imperative for us to convey our appreciation for our wonderful teachers, administration, maintenance, security and clergy. We focused our efforts on two Staff Appreciation events and continuing our week long Yom Ha'Moreh by showering them with a personal handmade gratitude wall from the students, a daily snack mart featuring different themes like "Thanks a Latte", "Do'nut know what we would do without you" etc. and culminating with live music, a taco stand, a gelato cart, sushi and well-deserved gifts! This was our way of letting them know they that are the foundation of Wise School and truly are never taken for granted.



When our community began to feel disconnected, an impromptu morning Shabbat service led by our caring clergy brought us all together, and its effect was so powerful that it became a monthly staple.

We continued to amp up support with our temple's social action leaders and brought back events like the Passover SOVA Market, the sixth grade teachers-vs.-students fundraising basketball game, and monthly SOVA drives and outreach.

We were also able to give the incredibly deserving sixth graders the opportunity to experience the landmark Sacramento field trip that they missed in fourth grade due to COVID. The entire grade was able to make the trip, supported by parents and teachers! It's hard to express how very much it meant to these kids.

We feel beyond fortunate to have been given the opportunity to serve our Wise School community and are so grateful for the friendships, support, and hard work of our sensational executive board. Each one of them brought in their unique talents while helping to create a successful, fun, and innovative term. It couldn't have been done without them and we couldn't feel more proud of the school that we are a part of and the community that has become our family.

We are so pleased to pass the baton back to Kevin and Ariana West, who will continuously strive to strengthen Wise School and truly Make Great Happen for our community.

Keili and Rama
Wise School Co-Presidents 2020-2022



Wise Learning Process

Wise School is a proud recipient of the 5-Star Award given by the California Association for the Gifted. We fundamentally believe that all children have the capacity, creativity, and curiosity to engage with best practices in gifted education.

Our Wise Learning Process (WLP), developed through our ongoing partnership with Dr. Sandra Kaplan of the USC Rossier School of Education, is at the core of our work.

We organize units of study around universal themes and big ideas in order to provide a more global perspective on the academic content and to allow for interdisciplinary connections. We believe that learning the skills of critical and creative thinking, and applying them across the subject-matter disciplines, is essential to succeed in the unknown jobs of the future. This past year, all grade levels created units of study that were interdisciplinary and that incorporated many of the strands and tools of our WLP. We also created a digital portfolio of grade-level WLP units and learning activities, including samples of student work and teaching resources used. The portfolio is used by both returning and new faculty to help inspire and guide their teaching throughout the school year.

The WLP moves students toward higher-level learning, a growth mindset, and academic excellence, and we continue to develop it even now in its eleventh year.

Project Studio

At its core, Project Studio provides enrichment for grade level social studies curriculum, with integrated lessons inspired by project- and inquiry-based learning. The decision to anchor Project Studio in social studies was influenced by grade level teachers who requested that Project Studio time have a real impact on the existing curriculum. Certain Social Studies projects became a perfect fit for Project Studio. Creating topographical maps, Native American tools and structures, twelve foot tall Sumerian arches - are just a few of the learning experiences we teach in this dynamic space.

Students' relationship to information deepens when it is connected to a meaningful project. For example, students don't just learn that Sumerian arches were a challenging engineering marvel of the time - they experience it for themselves. They may even encounter some of the same obstacles and try some of the same redesigns as did the Sumerians. Students learn through making mistakes and teachers better identify where there are gaps in students' knowledge.

It quickly became clear that teaching our students how to be effective collaborators would be an essential aspect of the Project Studio curriculum. Teamwork is emphasized, modeled, and praised. Over time, kids who have struggled with group projects become more adept and better communicators. These are skills that have never been more important as they transition into higher education and eventually into professional opportunities, where teamwork is highly valued and sought-after.



Music

Students in Pre-K and first grade explored movement games and song experiences, while second through sixth grade students continued their music education using the online version of our Music Ace Maestro curriculum software program. Music Appreciation units expose them to the history of music, the great composers of old, and revolutionary artists of the present. This past year, our first and second grade students worked on their “First Song Project,” where they collectively crafted the music and lyrics to an original song, and learned how to read and play the notes on the xylophone.

While the third grade students learned to play the recorder, our fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students have a broad cross section of experiences using electronic technology programs GarageBand and SoundTrap to create their own music tracks. All of our students participated in weekly T’filah Services combining prayer and song, creating a spiritual space where we all find a meaningful, mindful place within ourselves.

Athletics

From 3-pointers and epic buzzer beaters, to long rallies and serving aces, the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade after-school intramurals were highly successful. In fall and winter we offered basketball, and in spring we offered volleyball. It was also great to welcome back our co-ed swim team for both semesters. Although we were not able to compete against other schools, the student-athletes improved their skills, socialized with their friends, and had fun in a low-pressure, competitive atmosphere!

Even with the ongoing pandemic, we were so happy to be able to return to having our students participate in in-person physical education. Both P.E. classes and recesses were made extra special with the addition of our new sports court on Faber Field, along with our award-winning gymnasium, Katz Family Pavilion!



Odyssey of the Mind

After pivoting to online for the previous year, coaches and students were elated to have the Odyssey program back in-person, with teams again meeting in Project Studio. The year understandably started with a little extra spark of excitement but little did we know that many months later, it would manifest into what became, arguably, Wise School's most successful season.

Wise School teams breezed through the regional competition but had not competed in a state competition in three years due to Covid. Then at the state level competition, our third and fifth grade teams took first place, becoming State Champions! In a highly competitive category, our fourth grade team took second place, and all three teams advanced to the Odyssey World Finals, which took place on the campus of Iowa State University in late May.

Going to world finals is a significant expense for parents and especially for the school. Props need to be shipped across the country in custom-made wooden crates and it's important that all of the coaches have the opportunity to travel with the teams. We would like to thank the Heyman family who generously supported the program in loving memory of Edward Heyman. This endowment gift will provide annual funds to help us sustain the program.

At the world finals awards ceremony, tensions were high, as everyone awaited the results. Having watched our kids achieve so much this season and compete flawlessly in high pressure situations, we couldn't help but feel that we had won already. All of the teams at the ceremony received a world ranking that places them above hundreds of other teams around the globe. When the results came in, Wise School's fifth-grade team placed seventeenth, our third-grade team placed seventh, and our fourth-grade team took second place in the world!

Robotics

Robotics is one useful way for young learners to grapple with engineering concepts and make real-world connections. Math concepts, computational thinking, prototyping, and engineering converge in the classroom as when children solve design challenges.

A key part of the enriched curriculum for all students in our Tyberg Arts and Innovation Lab are physical computing projects. By combining engineering skills, robotics, and computer programming, students created inventions and interactive games using Makey-Makey electronic kits with Scratch programming language. Students used block commands with Spike Prime and Spike Essential robotics kits to program rovers to solve robotic challenges.

Our second- and third-grade after-school robotics teams participated in First LEGO League Explore challenges. These adventures culminated with an on-campus EXPO where students share their robotic models and research with parents and friends.



Aaron Milken Center

All Aaron Milken Center classes during the 2021-2022 school year were held on campus and in person, as our children, teachers, and parents came to understand our commitment to partnership, care, and creativity in new, deep, and profound ways.

Adhering to all statewide and licensing guidelines and mandates, we continued to offer a world-class curriculum to our youngest learners while moving our classes outdoors.

In each class and at every age, we maintained our Constructivist approach to education, focusing on hands-on, experiential learning that sparks curiosity and fosters creativity. Constructivist educational philosophy encourages children to think deeply, imaginatively, and

critically as they explore their classroom environment and unravel the challenges that arise through their work and their play, and we saw that borne out every day as we made use of the entire campus to inspire our students to do incredibly meaningful work.

We encourage a love of learning by enabling children to experience their own stage of development, helping them to feel success without pressure. Through dedicated concentration on emergent curriculum, we use the interests of the children as a natural springboard to launch opportunities of in-depth, integrated exploration and study. Small- and large-group activities strengthen the children's social skills, self-esteem, and teamwork abilities.

Hebrew Immersion



We continued our unique Hebrew Immersion program

with full classes in both age levels. Scientific research in early childhood brain development indicates that children who are exposed to learning a second language between the ages of three to five are more successful in learning and internalizing that language, as well as other languages, mathematics, and music. Students enrolled in this program attended five days per week for a five-hour day. To maintain the integrity of the program, all content was taught exclusively in Hebrew by native, Hebrew speaking, early childhood teachers.

Our spirit of creativity and our ability to adapt enhanced our work, as we continued to provide our youngest learners with an innovative early-childhood educational experience tailored to the needs and expression of the whole child within an inclusive Jewish community.



Community

Our strong sense of community more than ever this year as we welcomed families back in-person. Through Back to Wise, *Kabbalat Shabbats*, our Parent Wise Speaker Series, *Hagigat Ha'Torah*, our Pre-K/TK Celebration, and sixth grade graduation, we have continued to provide our families with creative ways to come together both on and off campus. They formed deep bonds through each of these opportunities, including multigenerational programs such as our virtual *Midor L'dor*, where grandparents and family members shared our sense of community from all over the world. These bonds cannot be forged without our dedicated parent body, teachers, and administrators, who make great happen every day. These bonds—these connections to community and Judaism—are formed at an early age in our Parenting Center and Aaron Milken Center classes. They are deepened through shared experiences in the upper grades and beyond through our alumni network. These connections—this community—truly enriches our families' lives.





Alumni Spotlight: **Brandon Melamed** *Brentwood School*

What do you love most about your high school?

I love how Brentwood has such a wide range of opportunities for students to get involved in.

While I was at Brentwood, I

was able to participate in student council, orchestra, the tennis team, and BWell, Brentwood's student-led mental health initiative. Brentwood makes it easy for students to join groups that align with their interests and to even start clubs of their own, which really helps to strengthen our sense of community as a school.

What did you learn at Wise School that helped you succeed in high school?

Wise School gave me a very strong foundation of academics and study skills that prepared me well for high school. Also, at Wise I benefited from having a smaller classroom environment where I learned the importance of reaching out to my teachers when I needed support, which became a very helpful habit that I continued in high school.

If you could give advice to Wise sixth graders before they graduate, what would you tell them? I would tell Wise sixth graders to keep in touch with your classmates and with the Wise community after you graduate. Some of my Wise classmates are still my closest friends today, and those are really special friendships that I wouldn't trade for anything. I've also returned to Wise as a Camp Wise counselor and as a B'nai Mitzvah Mentor, and I love being able to stay connected to the community I grew up in.

If you could choose one teacher from Wise to thank for preparing you for your high school years and beyond, who would it be and why? Although she never taught me in class, I would like to thank Mrs. Summerville who coached my team in Odyssey of the Mind at Wise in fourth and fifth grade. Odyssey was my most memorable experience at Wise, and Mrs. Summerville always created an incredibly fun and engaging environment while also making sure to promote teamwork, creativity, leadership, and problem-solving skills among me and my teammates. These are all qualities that I have carried with me through high school as I got involved in student council and other programs, and I am so grateful that Mrs. Summerville encouraged me to develop these skills early on.



Alumni Spotlight: **Samantha Behar** *University of Chicago*

What did you love most about your college experience?

What I loved most about my college experience was how many opportunities there were.

I could take classes in any subject, join clubs, study abroad, and make great friends from all over the country and world. Every day was exciting!

If you could give advice to Wise sixth graders before they graduate, what would you tell them? Enjoy being this age and being at Wise. My friends and I still talk about our days at Wise, especially our memories from sixth. Have fun and enjoy the final part of elementary school.

What did you learn at Wise that has helped you succeed in life after school? At Wise, I learned the importance of community. We all need each other, and our family, friends, and teachers are critical for our happiness and overall well-being.

If you could choose one teacher from Wise to thank for preparing you for college, who would it be and why?

I was lucky to have many incredible teachers at Wise. If I had to choose just one, I would thank Ms. Baker, my fifth grade teacher, for preparing me for college. She believed in me as a student. She pushed me to care more about learning and challenge myself in the classroom.



Our students were all smiles after a full day of activities and obstacle courses at this year's Maccabi Games.



At the second grade Heroes Museum, our second graders celebrate the culmination of studying their heroes' special contribution to society.

Year in Review



Our kindergarteners were all smiles as they proudly accepted their first Torahs at the Hagigat Ha'Torah Celebration.



With the help of Moses and Miriam, our first graders made it to freedom! They had an amazing time reenacting the Exodus from Egypt.



We concluded the school year at the AMC where we had a chance to celebrate the Pre-K and TK students



Our 5th graders took part in an immigration simulation. This activity helped students gain first-hand knowledge of what it was like to immigrate to America during the 1910's.



Thanks to our amazing community, Wise School raised over \$1,500 at the Sova market and 6500 lbs of non perishable food items. Way to go!

Year in Review



Happy Birthday, Israel! Our students had a wonderful time visiting our "shuk" and eating delicious Israeli foods.

1,110 Shabbat Challot consumed
in the AMC and Elementary School

83
Science experiments
conducted, and the
Science Lab is still intact!

WISE SCHOOL by the Numbers

840 Hebrew
vocabulary flash
cards learned

315 drafts of
6th grade narrative,
informational and
argumentative essays

2,004 times
Will asked a parent
to "Move Forward"
during carpool

48 debate rounds
won by Wise School
debaters – even while
on Zoom

234 AMC parents
gathered on March 2 for
our in-person evening
social at Katz

15 Head of
School Office Hour
Zoom meetings with
parents – countless
conversations



6th Grade Graduates

We are so proud of our sixth grade graduates who were accepted to the following schools for the fall of 2022:

Abraham Joshua Heschel
Day School

Brentwood School

Buckley School

Crossroads School

Campbell Hall

Geffen School

Harvard-Westlake School

Marlborough School

Milken Community Schools

Sierra Canyon School

Viewpoint School

Westridge School

Westmark School

Windward School



LEARN *deeply*
BE *creative*
EXPERIENCE *wholeness*
MAKE *great* HAPPEN

aaron milk en center
at WISE

WISESCHOOL

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