



The Journey

Magazine

A Family AFFAIR

The Davis Academy provides a community that embraces the entire family. » PAGE 4

Dear Davis Academy Family:

With the 2015–2016 school year underway, we have every reason to be excited! It's another milestone year for The Davis Academy.

For starters, our \$7.5 million Next Stage Capital Campaign has officially launched! The Davis Academy's last capital campaign raised funds to build the Middle School almost 12 years ago and now, with your generosity, long-awaited enhancements such as a new Performing Arts Center, Community & Spiritual Gathering Space, and (finally!) a dining hall and kitchen will soon become a reality. We have great confidence that our parents, grandparents, alumni families and caring community supporters will give generously in support of the next stage of the school's growth, for today's children and for the generations to come. We're about to make history together!

While less tangible than new construction, but just as important to our growth, this fall we are completing a reaccreditation process which occurs every 5 years and involves a visiting team of experts through SAIS (Southern Association of Independent Schools) and SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools). Our year-long reflective self-study and this formal review of all aspects of school operations will help strengthen our school for the future.

At the same time, we celebrate the daily experiences and milestones of each child while keeping an eye on the over-all vision. To that end, the administrative team and faculty is focused on bringing that special Davis spirit to the classroom, the sports field, the art room and more each day while members of the Board of Trustees continue to partner in long-range "big picture" strategic planning that ensures that our numbers are strong and the future is bright. You, our parents and supporters, play an important role as well, by volunteering, giving, sharing your expertise and perhaps most importantly, telling your stories and sharing your personal Davis "wow" moments with others. After all, you are our most important ambassadors, so please spread the Davis *ruach*.

Exciting things are on our horizon and happening every day. Thank you for your continued support that keeps our school strong. Together, we are an amazing *kehillah!*

B'Shalom,

Amy Shafron
Head of School

Debbie Kurzweil
President, Board of Trustees



Amy Shafron



Debbie Kurzweil

Save the Date!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE
2016 DAVIS ACADEMY MUSICAL:

The Lion King, Jr.

Performances:

Sunday, March 20 at 1:00 and 7:00 pm

Monday, March 21 at 6:30 pm



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Eighth-graders reenacting the Second Continental Congress.

HAPPENINGS



Photo courtesy Greg Gimpelich

Magical Melodies Open for Braves: Davis Academy's very own Magical Melodies chorus opened the Atlanta Braves game on Sunday, September 13 (against the Phillies) with spirited singing of The Star Spangled Banner. Twenty-five 4th and 5th grade girls and boys are in this year's chorus. The Magical Melodies will also sing the national anthem at the Hawks game on November 15 and perform, (along with The Davis Academy's Decibelles and fusion bands) in the school Winter Concert.



Sports: The Davis Academy Lions started the fall sports season with great results from the cross country, soccer, softball and volleyball teams. The basketball season kicks off in October. Cross Country team members pictured here celebrating after a strong race. Go Lions!



Kinders in the Garden: Kindergarten started the year studying life science, learning what plant parts do and which plant parts can be eaten. Students discussed their favorite foods and determined if they were eating roots, stems, leaves, flowers or fruit for meals. They also planted a fall vegetable garden of lettuce, brussel sprouts, broccoli, onions, beans and more!

Capital Campaign Launches

Davis Academy's \$7.5 million Next Stage Capital Campaign has publicly launched. The funds will add a 600+ seat Performing Arts Center, a Spiritual & Community Gathering Space, new Adaptable Learning Spaces and a new Dining Hall and Kitchen.

In the first capital campaign since building the Middle School 12 years ago, the new project is designed to position The Davis Academy to continue to be among the very best of Atlanta private schools by enhancing the learning environment to include communal and interactive learning spaces. Groundbreaking is expected to take place in the spring of 2016 with an anticipated completion of the projects in December 2016.

Everyone is encouraged to participate in this exciting opportunity. Visit davisacademy.org/capitalcampaign for more information and to download the pledge form. At the same time, it is critical that all families continue to donate to The Davis Fund, our annual giving campaign, which supports our general operating budget.



When parents choose a school, they want to be sure it's a good fit for their child. When parents choose The Davis Academy, they soon realize that they have selected a place that goes beyond the education of the student, providing a community that embraces the entire family.

For starters, The Davis Academy truly values parents as partners in their child's education, a relationship that ultimately produces the very best outcome for the child and the family. From day one, teachers embrace each child, and his or her parents, like extended family. Proactive communication is a priority. In addition, teachers and staff actively support each child's general, emotional, social and academic growth, as well as help parents through their child's specific growth patterns and needs. Not only do students receive individualized support, but parents have access to a wide range of expertise, as well as

their own learning opportunities led by faculty, counselors, technology specialists and expert professionals who bring knowledge and care to relevant parenting topics. Recently, for example, parents and students had a chance to learn about digital citizenship and cyber ethics from one of the most knowledgeable sources in Atlanta, Savvy Cyber Kids founder Ben Halpert.

Joint student-parent learning opportunities are especially meaningful at The Davis Academy. Each year, fifth graders do an in-depth study on the civil rights movement that culminates with a class day trip to Birmingham,

where they visit the Civil Rights Museum and landmark historic sites. Prior to their trip, students and parents gather together with the fifth grade teaching team for a unique session during which they discuss difficult questions about this topic including their thoughts about the future of civil rights in America. "It was a stimulating and emotional experience to talk with our children about such important issues," said Miriam Haviv, who attended last year with daughter Amalia. "They showed such maturity and wisdom, and I was filled with pride. I left that evening knowing that the future of America is in good hands!"

When a family joins The Davis Academy, they are stepping in to a multi-generational experience. Grandparents are always welcome to join their grandchildren for lunch, deepen their school connection through classrooms or committees, or attend special learning or

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Going beyond the education to provide a community.



social events designed just for them. Each year grandparents are able to socialize and participate in activities with their grandchildren during Grandparent & Special Friends Day, which will be held this year on October 30.

It's also not uncommon for parents to say that their own Jewish identities are strengthened through Davis experiences: the joy of being with their children each week during Kabbalat Shabbat; participating together in a Passover Seder; celebrating with the school community such milestone experiences as Second Grade Siddur presentations or b'nai mitzvah Torah services; or doing acts of tzedakah together.

Davis parent Dan Russotto, who often attends Rabbi Micah's adult education sessions, says that he considers The Davis Academy his Jewish community. The monthly sessions, says Russotto, are "thirty minutes of reflection, comfort,

and spirituality. I always get something out of this time, both from the Rabbi and the parents. For me, it is one of the most impactful hours of the month."

Family experiences are the norm at The Davis Academy. The school hosts an array of events and activities, from sharing a Shabbat picnic together at school to a gathering of hundreds of parents and students sharing a festive Sukkot at the Great Wolf Lodge in North Carolina.

Evidence of the enduring way that The Davis Academy impacts its families can be seen in the many friendships and lifelong relationships that are formed, beginning in kindergarten and lasting long past 8th grade graduation. Says alumni parent Melanie Zucker: "We met so many wonderful families during our years at The Davis Academy. We and our boys truly made life-long friendships. In many ways, The Davis Academy was our family."

The Kabbalat Shabbat service is more than special. Being in a setting where kids actually enjoy the service is incredible and has definitely rekindled my connection to Judaism.

—Davis parent Dan Russotto

LEARNING & DISCOVERY

Professional Development Corner

Davis Academy faculty routinely reflect on the most innovative teaching strategies. As a result, students become critical thinkers and invent unique solutions to modern day problems. One example is the Maker Movement through which students have the opportunity to engage in engineering, design, and technology often with the goal of solving a pre-existing problem and encouraging unlimited creativity.



Last summer, 20 Davis faculty members attended (and nine presented at) the Martin Institute for Teaching Excellence in Memphis, and others attended programs focusing on topics from technology to service learning to

innovative writing and reading approaches. Some Davis Academy faculty are learning from the well-known book, *Invent to Learn* by Sylvia Libow Martinez & Gary Stager and throughout the year will be sharing their own inventive creations. This year's other Davis faculty-led professional development topics include: The Power of Storytelling, Visualizing and Verbalizing, Discover Your Inner Warrior & Become a Tech Scout!, Teach Like a Pirate, and Trenducation- a strand that explores other creative new educational trends that enhance student experiences.

Uniquely Mechina

They might be the school's youngest students, but the four and five-year olds in The Davis Academy's Mechina: Kindergarten Prep program are engaged in every aspect of school curriculum—from literacy and math to Hebrew—just like the big kids. A “dream team” approach involves dedicated guidance counselors, learning and technology specialists, the school psychologist, in addition to two Mechina teachers per class, all of whom bring a wealth of early childhood development experience.

Now in its 12th year, the Mechina program has become so successful that there are more applicants than ever, resulting in two Mechina classes this school year. While carefully guided academic, social and emotional growth take place during this pivotal year before Kindergarten, a visit to a Mechina classroom shows that the “work” is both challenging and fun. During the year, for example, Mechina students will take field trips, interact with their fifth grade mentors, re-enact the Pilgrim's Mayflower voyage, and star in their very first movie!

Teachers and parents observe that Mechina students transition to Kindergarten with tremendous confidence and a solid foundation for the full Davis experience. They note that the benefits build as the years go by, and at graduation students who started in Mechina are so proud of competing ten years at The Davis Academy!

Exploring With CLIMB

The eighth grade CLIMB program is a year-long, uniquely designed experience in project-based learning, challenging students to become experts in topics they are passionate or curious about through an intensive exploratory process. Starting with brainstorming sessions, each student crafts a question that guides their research including both print and live sources (such as interviewing experts) and other methods. Students have tremendous freedom to develop a topic of interest and share their learning in creative ways: videos, prezis, illustrated texts, 3D models, among other creative expressions of their learning. Examples of project topics include: How does food impact emotion, motivation and memory in adolescents? How can technology help build safer cars? Can boosting cancer patient morale help with healing? The project culminates in a CLIMB Fair which allows 8th graders to share their expertise and passion through displays of their formal writing, creative projects, and in live discussion with visitors.

photo gallery





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A Campaign for The Davis Academy

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