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**Ohr Chadash Academy opens new preschool, launches a new science program, and revamps the integration of the Judaic and general studies curricula**

**Baltimore**—Ohr Chadash Academy (OCA), an elementary school in Pikesville, has kicked off its fourth school year with record enrollment, since being founded in 2010 by a few dedicated and passionate parents, with some new and exciting developments. The school launched a new preschool for three and four year olds and a new science program for grades K-5 with an experienced science teacher.

To accommodate its growth, OCA moved to a larger, more efficient school space in the building owned by Temple Oheb Shalom, at 7310 Park Heights Avenue. The preschool opened its doors to over 25 children, with a focus on play-based learning, and inquires for next year have already begun.

In continuing its mission of excellence in education, OCA has introduced a new science program this year for grades K-5, taught by Ms. Ariella McCown. Students are taking care of pets, performing experiments, taking field trips, and exploring nature first hand by planting and growing a community garden. OCA has partnered up with local science centers, farms, and other places to come in and speak with the children and show them things of their expertise. For example, when the students are learning about bees, an apiarist will be coming in to show the children different bees and how they produce honey.

“OCA's beautiful, new science lab features room to experiment, explore, and learn in a hands-on way,” Mrs. Randi Orshan commented. “The students are encouraged to ask questions, use their senses, and research to find out more about topics. Additionally, being responsible for and watching OCA's garden grow helps foster responsibility and ownership amongst the students.”

“The science program at OCA will have a strong emphasis on our local ecosystem, starting with our own OCA garden and ending with the Chesapeake Bay watershed,” says Ms. McCown. “It is my hope that the students become as passionate about the world around them as I am. One of the best things about teaching elementary school aged students is their ability to work together, and their eagerness to participate.” The school is also pairing with Blue Water Baltimore to work on community projects together.

Another advancement in the school's curriculum is the integration of the two curricula - Judaic and general studies. OCA emphasizes the inherent holiness of both Judaics and general studies. The mission states that they seek to instill an appreciation for and commitment to a life of Torah, mitzvot

(commandments), and productivity. For example, when the children are learning about bees and honey in science, not only will they be learning how bees make the honey, but why honey is symbolic in the Jewish religion, which will then lead into a discussion about symbolism in Judaics class. Local Rabbis will come in to speak with the children and show them different symbols in Judaism to further the discussion.

“Every part of the curriculum is integrated so the children are constantly aware that we live a life of Torah,” says Mrs. Randi Orshan, who was hired this summer as Director of Teaching and Learning. In this capacity, Mrs. Orshan will refine and manage curriculum implementation with ongoing feedback from the faculty, design professional development, and work closely with the faculty to support them as they utilize best practices in education such as differentiated instruction and blended learning. She will also work with the teachers to assist them in integrating the Judaic and general studies curricula in the classrooms and has scheduled weekly meetings between the Judaic and general studies teachers to plan their lessons together.

*Ohr Chadash Academy is an Orthodox Jewish school located in Baltimore, MD for Preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. OCA provides excellent Judaic and general studies education in a warm, vibrant environment. OCA encourages both individual accomplishment as well as participation in a caring community.*

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