**Parents’ Perspectives**

Sinai Akiba Academy’s exchange with New Horizon Day School is a program that has had a positive impact on all 3 of our kids.  Because our kids attend Jewish day school in West Los Angeles, they have very few opportunities in their daily lives to meet, let alone interact with Muslim students.  But they do hear a lot of negative descriptions in the news every day.  This exchange offers the students the unique opportunity to not only meet, but to spend quality time with Muslim kids their own age. They learned that these kids have very similar lives to theirs, that their educational experiences are quite similar, and that of course their daily lives aren’t very different either.  They were really struck by the similarities. In addition, after learning about another religious practice that shares so much with their own, they have all expressed curiosity and interest to learn more. Our kids describe the program as “building bridges” between our two communities. As a parent, I see this exchange program as one of the most unique, progressive and thought provoking programs that Sinai offers. I am thankful that our kids have had this learning opportunity.

-Vaughan Meyer, current SAA parent

Both of my sons participated in the SAA-New Horizon Day School Exchange. I definitely believe that the program has a strong positive impact on our students.  My sons both enjoyed their meetings with students from New Horizon and they have kept up a friendship through social media. They identify with each other as American teenagers, as individuals rather than as a group of people that are different or outsiders.  In discussing their religious and cultural practices with each other they learned to respect and appreciate their differences and similarities.  I think that the program is invaluable.

-Pam Weisberg, parent of SAA alumni

The Sinai Akiba New Horizon Day School Exchange has had a tremendous impact on my daughter Sophie’s educational experience in her middle school years and beyond. It has provided Sophie with real hands-on experience learning about diverse cultures, faiths, and customs. This exchange awakened Sophie’s curiosity and interest in different cultures and has fueled her motivation for learning. She has become a passionate advocate for peace and understanding among different religions.  The Sinai Akiba Academy New Horizon Day School Exchange is a unique learning experience that fosters in young students mutual understanding, respect, acceptance, tolerance and friendship between people of different religions. This exchange is a remarkable and one of a kind learning model that elevates and develops students’ academic abilities by heightening their understanding of the world around them in an impactful and transforming way.  In essence, this exchange has enriched Sophie’s life by helping to shape her into a compassionate, empathic and caring citizen of the world.

--Nadina Szew, current SAA parent