

February 28, 2017
2 Adar 5777

Dear AJA Community,

It is my great and humble pleasure to write to you for the first time as your new Upper School Judaic Studies Principal. I am delighted to be joining the talented staff at Atlanta Jewish Academy. During my visit to AJA in January, I had the privilege to sit down with many of the faculty in the Upper School and begin to learn from their collective experience and wisdom, their insights about the school and its future. The highlight of my visit was an open conversation with students from the Upper School who shared with me their thoughts and ideas for what they would like AJA to be, how they envision the school growing and developing. Partnering with Rabbi Leubitz, Debbie Bornstein and the rest of the Educational Leadership Team, I am eager to embrace the challenge and opportunity of continuing to REIMAGINE AJA!

I have met some of you, the many stakeholders in AJA, and I hope to have the opportunity to connect with all of you. I seek your ideas, concerns, hopes, and dreams. I seek your partnership and support in building a stronger, more vibrant Judaic Studies program and in shaping the lifelong learners we hope will emerge from the brand new walls of the Beit Midrash. There is nothing more important to me than the growth of our students; I want them to learn textual and practical knowledge and skills, to prepare them to enter Yeshivot, Seminaries, Colleges, and ultimately the workforce. Focusing on each individual, their passion and creativity, and charting their path to success, academically, socially, and emotionally, is paramount to building the vision for and embarking on the future of AJA. You have entrusted us with the future leaders of the Jewish people, and it is my goal to help mold and sharpen their minds, provide an environment where they can develop their personalities, and imbue within them the courage and strength to stand up for their values and beliefs.

I am looking forward to this next chapter, for me and for AJA, and I cannot wait to meet and get to know all of you.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Allan Houben

Judaic Studies Principal, AJA Upper School

Rabbi Allan Houben

Originally from Boston, MA, Rabbi Allan Houben is a graduate of the Maimonides School and Yeshiva University. He holds an M.S. from the Azrieli Graduate School and received Semicha from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University. He was a participant in the inaugural YU Lead (now YOU Lead) leadership training program and has since served as a cohort mentor and a teacher. He has taught Professional Development courses through Yeshiva University and Prizmah including: Furthering Your Career, From Teacher to Leader, Classroom Innovation in the Judaic Classroom, Revitalizing Jewish Education with Project-Based Learning: PBL in the Judaic Classroom.



Rabbi Houben is currently Assistant Principal at SAR High School in Riverdale, NY, where he has spent the last three years. Prior to joining SAR High School, Rabbi Houben spent nine years at the Weinbaum Yeshiva High School (now the Katz Yeshiva High School) in Boca Raton, Florida, where he served as a Judaic Studies Teacher and the Assistant Director of Student Activities. Rabbi Houben spent 11 summers at Camp HASC in Parksville, NY, most recently as the Director of Recreation, retiring after the 2015 summer.

Rabbi Houben is a creative educator and a collaborative leader. He is passionate about 21st century, student centered learning with a specific penchant for Project Based Learning and effective technology integration in the classroom. He believes that every student brings a unique voice and perspective to the classroom community as well as a natural curiosity. “Our role as educators is to nurture that innate curiosity and help students find and use their voice. We must guide and facilitate learning for each individual student at his/her level while steering our classes as a whole to reach for greater heights in understanding, analysis, collaboration, and communication. We must develop practical skills that will allow our students to be lifelong learners while preparing them for a collaborative workplace and to face the complex world they will enter.”

Rabbi Houben is an Eagle Scout, has completed two ING Miami Half-Marathons, but he considers his greatest achievement to be his family- his wife Lisa and their four daughters Leah, Zehava, Talya, and Avigail.