



# MOUNT SINAI COLLEGE

## CONNECT B'YACHAD

December 2015 ■ [www.mountsinai.nsw.edu.au](http://www.mountsinai.nsw.edu.au) ■ Connect with us on Facebook [here](#)

To update your details with us please contact the office at [info@mountsinai.nsw.edu.au](mailto:info@mountsinai.nsw.edu.au) or call 9349 4877

### President's Message

Dear All

With the promise of a new year ahead I am encouraged as I look at the opportunities that await our future at Mount Sinai College.

Our school, as you know, has always been an intimate environment – something that will definitely not change. Our Principal Phil Roberts talks about excellence and what it means in the Mount Sinai context. Quoting from our new prospectus:

**“Excellence is about:  
Caring more than others think is wise  
Risking more than others think is safe  
Dreaming more than others think is practical  
Expecting more than others think is possible**

African proverb

**Excellence** – the one word that is least well defined and understood. We are guided by the proverb above – it informs our purpose.

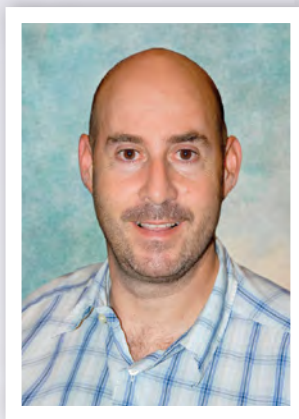
**We care** – about our students becoming Learners for Life – their overall development, care about our school, care about our families, care about each other and we care about the wellbeing and development of our staff.

**We Take Risks** – Risk is essential if we want to challenge ourselves and be the best. Our College continues to innovate and lead – The Feuerstein Centre, Apple Distinguished School, Visible Thinking School – only calculated, vision and risk leads to reward.

**We dream** – about what and who we can be and how we can get there. We create a vision and then connect this vision to the detail. We are guided by a clear message: ‘Vision without action is a daydream, action without vision is a nightmare’.

**We expect** – so much more of our students than they expect of themselves!”

Our students have proven their excellence the world over – our featured graduate, Sarah Knopman is testament to that as are so many others that I can name, however, I’ll save this for future editions of *Connect B’Yachad*.



As the world changes, with technology driving so many advances, education too is changing rapidly to meet the demands of 21st century learning – both from an educational prospective and physical classroom and building perspective.

Mount Sinai College is innovating in the most extraordinary ways as we use technology to enhance teaching and learning. This has been reflected in the College’s designation as an Apple Distinguished School – an achievement reserved for only a few schools in Australia.

Just as importantly, the recent opening in 2015 of the Feuerstein Centre has seen interest generated among educators, therapists and parents around Sydney. This magnificent initiative is built on the principle of neuroplasticity but the words of Dr Reuven Feuerstein himself are what most impresses as a fundamental belief:

**“Intelligence is not a static structure, but an open, dynamic system that can continue to develop throughout life!”**

Over the next 18 months we will further consolidate our position as the most cost-effective, leading school. I look forward to sharing with you, some time soon, our College Masterplan. Future design involves multiple upgrades including changes to learning spaces and changes to the buildings externally.

The Board seeks to maintain Mount Sinai College as the unique and special place it is, with a continued focus on creating learners for life – a focus which has seen considerable reward for many a student who has had the fortune to pass through its classroom doors

Warm regards  
**Tim Greenstein**  
President

## Do you remember Sarah Knopman?



When approached to feature in this article we received this beautiful response:

**“Lovely to hear from Mt Sinai! I have such fond memories from there.”**

## Where is she now?

Sarah moved to Israel in 2005 after completing her BA. Hons. in Media and Communications at UNSW. She met her Israeli husband, Eli, who is an accomplished jazz musician, on a trip to Israel when she was 21. Eight days after they met, Eli proposed and Sarah said yes. Sarah completed her Master's Degree in Israel in Diplomacy and Conflict Studies. Articles about Sarah and her family have appeared in Israel's #1 women's magazine and in *Time Out* Israel, among other places. Sarah has been building a successful career in PR, Media Relations and communications in Israel. She was Deputy Editor of *Time Out* Israel English magazine and then Marketing and Communications Director at Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHSI) for a number of years and simultaneously co-founded Lapid – the Coalition for High School Age Programs in Israel and headed it as Director of Communications. She has stepped down and now sits on the Lapid Advisory Board. She considers the evolution of Australian Year 10 programs to Israel – something she has been an integral part of – a great personal and professional accomplishment.

For the last year Sarah has been the Director of Media Relations at University of the People ([www.uopeople.edu](http://www.uopeople.edu)) – the world's first non-profit, tuition-free, accredited online university, dedicated to opening access to higher education globally.

## Something interesting about Sarah's family

In a recent article that appeared in *Ha'aretz*, the *Australian Jewish News* and *Plus 61 J*, Sarah discussed how her son is most fluent in Arabic. The article read as follows:

My two-and-a-half-year-old son is trilingual (Hebrew, English, Arabic). The thing is, neither my husband nor I (nor anyone else in our extended family, for that matter) understand his third language, which, funnily enough, has turned out to be his most fluent.

My son's three languages are all his mother-tongue languages. I have always spoken to him in English, my husband has always spoken to him in Hebrew, our eldest son has always spoken to him in a mixture of the two, and, well, this is where it might seem strange, but his caretakers at his daycare have always spoken to him in Arabic.

Yes, I get it – it's unusual. I get it – it's not the done thing around here. If it were, our son would not be the only Jewish kid at a “mixed” Christian and Muslim, Arabic-speaking daycare, 10 minutes away from the heart of Tel Aviv. I will admit I surprised myself, too, when my husband and I decided to send him there from the early age of 5 months old (you can call it a social experiment of sorts). At this daycare, he would learn about and celebrate all the holidays, with all the accompanying customs and rituals, music and food, whether they be Hanukkah, Purim, Tu Bishvat, Independence Day, Easter, Christmas, or Ramadan. He would also be totally immersed in Arabic for approximately 50 hours per week for two years.

This scenario seems to be a lightning rod for discussion. Sometimes the reactions are positive, with people saying



complimentary things such as we're pioneers or that we're brave, and we're leading the way for how the next generation of Israeli children should be brought up. At other times it sparks a prejudice that I want nothing to do with, but which I find hard to avoid.

From the outset, being trilingual wouldn't seem like such a strange thing in certain countries, or under certain circumstances. My Russian-born mother, for example, who moved to Poland at age 6 and migrated to Australia at age 12, is trilingual (Russian, Polish, English). However, I am not living in Europe, among open-minded, progressive people, where multilingualism is common. Nor am I living today where I was raised, in easy-going Australia, where if you're going to learn another language, it might as well be French or Chinese or Japanese, or something understandably pragmatic or useful for business. No, I live in politically-charged Israel, where, for the past 10 years of my life, I have carved out a fairly peaceful and fulfilling home for myself and my husband and now our two sons in liberal Tel Aviv, among tolerant (on the whole), albeit opinionated, Israelis. Israelis, who, for the life of them, cannot understand why on earth we would want our son to learn Arabic. "What possible good would it serve him?" they ask.

We have been told off (oh yes, more than once), and our parenting techniques have been questioned. Sometimes, when people are so quick to jump to conclusions that we are "ruining the child," "confusing him," "giving him an identity crisis," "delaying him developmentally," or God forbid – for the non-dramatic among us – "sending him straight to Hamas," I just feel like shouting to these people, "Shalllllomm, have you not noticed what region of the world we live in?" Arabic is only the fifth-most-spoken language in the entire world, with 295 million speakers worldwide, not to mention that it's one of the six official languages of the United Nations. No, he is not learning Arabic so that it will help him in business in the ultra-globalized world of his future (although who knows?). It runs much, much deeper than that.

For a country in which 21 percent of its population of 8.35 million is Arab, and in which Arabic is the second official language, adorning street signs and used by public institutions and government offices everywhere, I have always found it strange that so few Israelis speak Arabic. Rather, Arabs are expected to learn and understand Hebrew. For me, this screams of astounding self-imposed segregation.

Perhaps it is fortuitous that there is a new legislation being proposed wherein the Education Ministry plans to roll out a program aimed at improving Arab students' Hebrew-language skills, starting in kindergarten. Likewise, a Knesset member has proposed a bill requiring Israeli pupils to study Arabic from first grade onward. "Just as it cannot be that Arab citizens complete 12 years of school without knowing Hebrew, the existing situation, in which Jewish citizens complete 12 years of school without knowing Arabic, cannot continue," wrote the Knesset member.

I honestly believe that knowing Arabic will help my son to better understand Israeli Arabs' culture and social codes – and vice versa. Knowing the language of the other is the basis for

understanding and mutual respect, which are sorely needed in the current situation in Israel. It's not rocket science to realize that knowing the language and being able to communicate with different people can increase our sense of security and serve as a bridge between people, as well as narrowing social gaps. If we want our children – all the children of Israel – to respect others as equals, regardless of religion and race, we must recognize this: It all starts with dialogue.

## About Sarah's best friend

Michelle Kraindler and Sarah were in the same year, together at Mount Sinai Kindergarten, Mount Sinai College, Moriah College and UNSW.

They worked at the same job twice, and then both married Moroccan Israelis and made Aliyah and settled in TLV. They have been friends for 30 years, and live 10 minutes away from each other. Their children are born two months apart.

They continue to remain very close friends.



## Still six degrees of separation

Sarah's niece, Eve Knopman – daughter of her brother Alex, is currently at Mount Sinai's Early Learning Centre.

## On the horizon

Sarah will be back in Sydney as a keynote speaker and guest of honour for the Young Women's Division of Keren Hayesod – the United Israel Appeal of NSW ("UIA") annual fundraising event.

## Principal's Message



We have played host this year to many schools, national and international, who are interested in seeing one thing – the integration of technology. In reality though, visiting educationalists will inevitably see more than that – even though they may not initially be looking for it.

What they are really seeing is that which many have seen over the years – excellence in teaching and learning. The technology side of it is simply the enabler – the tool. When I reflect back to the earliest years, we have always been an innovative school. We were one of the first to have the Apple2E's (remember those anyone?) and we did some really interesting work in the old computer room days.

The 1:1 iPad program has seen us develop a refulgent reputation and attracted considerable attention for the innovative ways we are encouraging teaching and learning. On one of these visits, I spoke to a group of 6 in October who came from another independent school and I asked them what they noticed as they walked from class to class. One of the teachers said that what most impressed her was the "level of student engagement". That was music to my ears!



For quite some time, as I have 'lived and breathed' Education, I have been concerned about the diminishing levels of student engagement. And who can blame students? We simply can't be the school our parents experienced. We aim to avoid the education regurgitation of content mindset as we actively shift to an inquiry mindset. The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn't need to be reformed, it needs to be transformed, which is precisely what people come

to see. The key to this transformation is not to standardize education, but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of children, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.



However, (and it is a big 'however'), schools are now places that nurture character and support the emotional and social development. We are a College that encourages critical and creative thinking as well as creative arts. The beautiful, evocative canon of Jewish songs you grew up with still winds its way through the corridors, whilst the festival and commemorative days continue to define who we are and provide the fertile ground for Jewish learning. The warmth that permeates the Friday shule as Rabbi Yossi delivers his weekly parshah and speaks to the children, the Kabbalat Shabbat – are as cherished now as ever. I guess, in short, we are about embracing change, but honouring our rich tradition.



If you haven't visited the College for a while, or not at all, please set aside some time. The highlight of my role is to show you what others are experiencing and what makes Mount Sinai unique.

**Phil Roberts**  
Principal



## Mount Sinai Feuerstein Centre

In June this year, our College launched the Feuerstein Centre, a cognitive learning program based on a model developed by world renowned Professor Reuven Feuerstein. The Feuerstein Program focuses on helping learners to process information more effectively.

“The various “instruments” used require the learner to use particular cognitive functions that help them develop thinking techniques that not only enhance information processing skills but enable them to function as independent learners. The program focuses on how children learn, rather than just what they learn,” said Principal Phil Roberts.

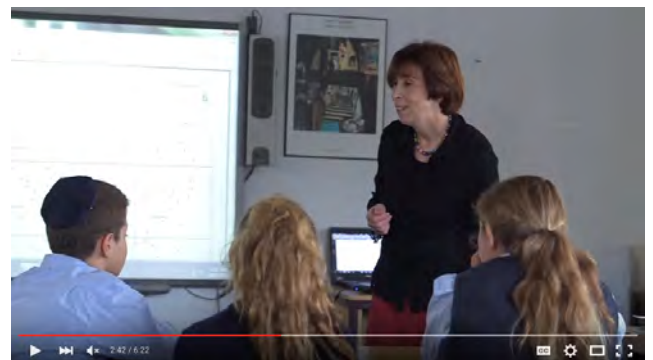
The Feuerstein Centre is currently catering primarily to children with:

- Cognitive challenges
- Expressive and receptive language difficulties
- Impulsivity (ADHD)

Led by Helen Meyer and Hannah Briand-Newman, both accredited Feuerstein mediators who have undertaken extensive training both locally and internationally, they are already seeing results in current students including:

- Enhanced concentration and decision-making skills.
- Increased confidence in their abilities to achieve their potential.
- Improved problem solving skills and flexible thinking in the classroom.
- Improved ability to plan and organise which is significantly impacting learning outcomes across a wide range of subject areas.

For more information please contact Helen at [hmeyer@mountsinai.nsw.edu.au](mailto:hmeyer@mountsinai.nsw.edu.au) or call 9349 4877 for a confidential discussion.



[Click here to watch video](#)

## Grandparents and Special Friends Day

Earlier this year we hosted our Grandparents and Special Friends Day. Our students performed for our guests and a beautiful morning was enjoyed by all.



## Year 6 Interfaith Program – Teaching Tolerance – In Its 9<sup>th</sup> Successful Year

Year 6 represents the culmination of seven years of education at the College. The leadership team and staff promote good values and acknowledge these to be the strength of the College and one of the main reasons as to why people are attracted to the school. The College fosters and develops ethical behaviour derived from the Jewish moral and spiritual heritage.

The College entered its 9th year of the Interfaith Program which brings Jewish and Muslim schools together. This program, delivered and designed by staff and Together for Humanity, has been a resounding success. Our students participate in a range of activities aimed at unpacking prejudice, looking at strategies regarding living with diversity, commonalities and differences and how to deal with difference.



## Mount Sinai College leader in "best practice" technology

On Tuesday 24 November Mount Sinai College played host to a leadership team from Bishop Druitt College, Coffs Harbour. The team travelled to Sydney to learn specifically about "Best Practice" technology integration, visiting two schools – Knox Grammar in Wahroonga and Mount Sinai College.

The visiting team experienced various aspects of technology integration at the school including the Ipad program in action and how teachers innovate in this area with programs for our students. Some of the key programs presented were blending, flipping and helping to drive STEM initiatives; eBooks, QR codes and Aurasma; Maths in Action creating interactive games using Futaba and looking at student work samples and teacher experience including Book Creator Science Journals, Keynote and iMovie.



This year alone, Mount Sinai has had over 40 schools visit to view and experience their iPad program. "Any school can roll our iPads, but real integration is a great challenge for many schools. We are happy to open our doors and to share what has worked for us," concluded Principal Phil Roberts.

*Mount Sinai College is an Apple Distinguished School.*

## Mount Sinai End of Year Concert – Home is Where the Heart is

On 17 November we held our end of year school concert. Every student participated and performed on stage – making it a most memorable evening for our teachers, students and everyone in our audience.

