

**IKAR's Early Childhood Center**  
**A Jewish Educational Model for Sustainable Global Change:**  
**Seeding an ECC in Partnership with a School in the Developing World**

IKAR is building an innovative Early Childhood Center rooted in core Jewish values: personal spiritual growth, community and social responsibility. Central to our mission: communicating to our children that their Jewish spiritual and religious commitments must necessarily be reflected in the way that they live in the world, that becoming good Jews will help them become good human beings.

To this end, we are building two schools at once. The first will be in Los Angeles – a preschool that provides a loving and stimulating environment focused on Jewish values and traditions, in which our children's growth will be supported, their characters refined, and their dreams nurtured.

And we are tithing – dedicating 10% of the money that we raise to build our school to the building of a school in the developing world. Nicholas Kristof compellingly argues that education is the single most effective way to improve children's health, to protect their dignity, and to create a more just and dynamic society. In the developing world, an education could literally be a matter of life and death, as children's literacy is one of the greatest indicators of their likelihood of survival. A relatively small amount of money, \$10- \$15k, can jumpstart a school project that could fundamentally alter the lives of hundreds if not thousands of children.<sup>1</sup>

The partnership will infuse all aspects of the life of both schools:

- The walls of our Center in LA will be covered with pictures of the children in our partner school, and their walls will be covered with pictures of our children.
- Students will use the latest technology to have regular contact with one another – including regular Skype dates -- in which they'll teach one other songs, tell stories, and begin to form lasting relationships. (Our research into new schools in the developing world indicates that technology is key.)
- ECC events and fundraisers will deepen our connection to our partner school, as we will commit to tithing every fundraiser to offer continued support to our partner school and its community.
- Our children will maintain the relationships that they build in their earliest years as they continue their Jewish education. Their b'nai mitzvah projects will be related to our partner community, and our hope is that each class of graduating high school seniors will travel to the partner community to meet the students they have now known for years, volunteer and learn about sustainability and the developing world.

**This partnership will build a commitment to justice and social responsibility into the DNA of our children's Jewish educational experience.** Our kids and their families will learn that to be a Jew means to affirm Jewish commitments and values in real and tangible ways. They will learn that they have the capacity to make sustainable change in the world, that they can touch and be touched deeply by people who live a world away, and that this is the greatest testament to their Judaism and to the power of possibility.

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<sup>1</sup> These assumptions are based on our work with the head of One Kid One World who has spent the past several years building schools in Africa.