



The Park School of Buffalo Kadimah Scholars Program - FAQ

Is this a merger between Park and Kadimah?

No, it is not a merger. Kadimah is closing its school after the 2018-19 school year, and approached Park about exploring a partnership that would allow them to hold onto their identity and maintain their mission in some capacity. This partnership will allow Kadimah families to become members of The Park School community by enrolling their students fully as Park students, using the regular Park admissions process. Kadimah will live on as an independent scholarship program at Park.

Should these families wish to pursue it, they have the opportunity to join the Kadimah Scholars program, which involves participants enrolling in Hebrew and Judaic Studies classes that will be supplemental to Park's curriculum. Park will hire the teachers for these classes, and the Jewish Federation will fund the teachers' salaries. Both Kadimah and the Federation have committed to funding this model as we build the program. It will not cost Park School anything financially, and will not change Park's mission, policies, or curriculum. It is a voluntary program that families (including non-Kadimah, non-Jewish families) can opt into at their choosing.

Is Park becoming a religious school?

No, Park always has been and will remain a secular school. The Judaic Studies courses will be offered as a supplemental addition to Park's curriculum. The classes in Hebrew Language will be added in as part of our World Languages curriculum. These programs will be open to all interested students (Kadimah or otherwise).

Will Kadimah students be a separate group within Park's community?

No, Kadimah students will be Park students, and will be subject to all of the same policies, expectations, and community norms as all other Park students. As is the case with all members of our community from different backgrounds, Kadimah students will be welcomed and included into all things Park. Kadimah students who choose to apply to Park will follow all of the same application, financial aid, and enrollment processes as any other Park applicant, and successful Kadimah applicants will graduate with a Park diploma.

Will Park students be required to pray, wear religious clothing, or abide by religious customs?

No, enrollment in the Kadimah Scholars program is voluntary. Acceptance of a Kadimah Scholarship will require morning prayer, and that students enroll in Hebrew and Judaic Studies. Kadimah Scholarship recipients will be asked to wear a traditional head-covering during the Hebrew and Judaic classes, and all Park students are welcome to wear religious clothing daily at school.

Whether or not a student enrolls in the Kadimah program does not affect their acceptance as a Park School student. Non-Kadimah Scholar students will not be held to such program-specific expectations.

Currently, a group of Christian students at Park have asked for time and space to pray together before they eat lunch, on occasion. We have gladly accommodated them, and have done so for Muslim students in the past as well. In this case, we would provide time and space for Jewish prayer, as requested, outside of our regular academic and social programming.

Why would Park commit to this partnership?

First, partnering with Kadimah and the Jewish Federation allows us to help a part of our community that needed assistance. Our missions, despite being secular and religious schools, are closely aligned along the principles of Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, and Kindness.

Second, this partnership has opened up new enrollment opportunities for Park, both from the Kadimah community, and also from wider communities (Jewish and otherwise) who see our work as inclusive, globally-minded, and innovative.

Third, this will serve as a pilot partnership of sorts, allowing us to experiment with a model Jeremy Besch has been developing that collaborates with other community organizations who might be similarly willing to fund program development and staffing needs in a similar way. Park will maintain control of that development and its implementation, further broadening our status as a globally-minded, innovative school. This has potential benefit in enrollment, marketing, and grant opportunities.

How will this change Park?

Park's culture, structures, curriculum, and mission will all remain unchanged by this partnership. We will be joined by a number of Jewish students (likely between 15 and 20 students across grades K through 9), Hebrew will be offered to all students as a world language option, and Judaic Studies will be added as an elective to our program. Park will likely add two faculty members in support of the Hebrew and Judaic Studies classes, and The Buffalo Jewish Federation will secure the funds to cover the associated costs.

Why is this partnership focused on only one religious partner?

This partnership is a pilot version of a broader program that will ideally involve multiple religious, cultural, and international groups. Kadimah and the Jewish Federation emerged as our first partners because Kadimah faced a risk of closing completely. Based on what we learn from the partnership as it evolves over the next year, we'll begin exploration of additional partners under the same model.