

LARRY ACHEATEL'S RESPONSE TO BEING HONORED AT THE *EVERY CHILD*
CAMPAIGN PRESIDENTS' DINNER – DECEMBER 6, 2009

In his book, Good to Great and the Social Sectors, Jim Collins wrote:

“Do whatever you can to get the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people into the right seats.... **Greatness** flows first and foremost from having the right people in the key seats, not the other way around.” “**Greatness** flows first and foremost from having the right people in the key seats, not the other way around.”

Jim Collins is so right.

The reason that San Diego Jewish Academy is so far down the road in its journey from “Good to Great” is because it is so fortunate to have the right people in the right seats. What are these seats? Who have been, and are, the “right people”?

Well, let's start with the Presidents of SDJA Boards and their fellow Board Members who have worked tirelessly and with complete dedication to ensure that the school thrives, grows and continually seeks excellence. They have carried out their work and responsibilities with an eye towards setting sound policies, giving broad direction and serving as strong ambassadors for the institution. Their leadership and vision has set the course over the past 30 years.

Then, SDJA has been truly blessed with donors and philanthropists_who are committed to the mission and values of this school. I am continually in awe of and amazed by the generosity and purposefulness that our donors exhibit. It so incredibly evident that SDJA's benefactors believe in building and sustaining a high quality, Jewish, educational institution for our community, a school that will ensure the Jewish future by graduating students who are not just well educated; but well grounded and proud of their heritage and faith. These young people also understand their obligation to use what they have learned and been blessed with, to improve their community and to make a difference with their lives. Our donors understand, believe in and exhibit these very values through their actions and generosity on an ongoing basis.

The administrators, faculty and staff also occupy KEY seats on SDJA's bus. These are the people who interact with, create programs for, and teach our students on a daily basis. They are the ones who are responsible for transmitting the vision, mission and values of our school and of all of us. They make our dreams come true. I cannot express, how proud I am of the over 110 individuals that are part of the SDJA employee team. They are led by a talented, skilled and dedicated group of leaders – these individuals are not just administrators or managers – they are truly leaders – they inspire, they motivate, and they bring out the best in their colleagues, students, and our families. They bring creativity, innovation, and passion to their work.

It is because of this team of key players ... dedicated lay leadership, generous donors, talented employees, that San Diego Jewish Academy is so highly regarded in San Diego and beyond. With everyone's continued support, hard work and dreaming – GREATNESS is just around the corner.

Let me conclude with a personal reflection – I have been blessed for the last 10 years to serve as the Executive Director of SDJA – a little more than ¼ of my professional career in education.

Prior to coming to SDJA I was fortunate enough to lead several California school districts as their Superintendent; to chair the San Diego/Imperial County's Supt organization; to serve as President of the state-wide City Superintendent's Association; and to serve on the Governor's Educational Advisory Committee for 7 years.

I can tell you with all sincerity, that while I have been incredibly fortunate to have enjoyed every day of my prior, public sector, professional life, and to have had the extremely good fortune of feeling fulfilled by my work, none of those experiences came as close to fulfilling my desire to give purpose to my life ... as has the last 10 years at SDJA.

I attribute my sense of fulfillment today, to the work and vision to which we are all dedicated at SDJA, and to the incredible people with whom I have worked, with whom I have become friends and for whom I have the utmost of respect and appreciation.

Thank you all – for giving me the greatest gift ... the opportunity to work and create something truly meaningful with all of you.