

Temple Beth Shalom Religious School Parent Handbook

2011-2012



Religious School Curriculum

Our Religious School classes meet on Thursdays and Sundays, and typically follow the Peabody public school schedule. Kindergarten through Grade 2 and Grade 7 meet on only Sundays from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM. In addition to attending Sunday morning classes, students in Grades 3 through 6 meet Thursday afternoons from 3:30 PM- 5:30 PM.

Jewish holidays, their significance and their customs, are taught in the classroom as well as in the school wide community setting. Students become familiar with the names of holidays, along with their related symbols, prayers, and songs. Every year, the older students join residents of Brooksby Village for a few different holiday celebrations. In fact, throughout the year, the upper grades are asked to help organize and run several of the celebrations offered through the religious school.

Biblical stories, or Torah, are a critical component of our curriculum. They are taught and discussed using age appropriate texts and methodologies. Students combine theory with practice in opportunities that allow them to act upon the Mitzvot they have studied. Central themes, such as good and evil, are reinforced, and, over time, students begin to understand the morals and meanings conveyed in Torah. This type of exploration helps students develop a sense of who the Jewish people are and understand the values our people has championed throughout history. One Mitzvah concept that receives considerable emphasis in our program is Tikkun Olam, ways to “fix the world.” In this paradigm, students learn how one person really can make the world a better place.

Another central concept in our core curriculum is monotheism, the fact that Jews believe in one God. In grade appropriate ways, students learn how a faith in one God has been critical to the very survival of Judaism.

Jewish history is one of the primary threads running through the content being taught to all grades. Students build a chronological history of Judaism, starting with the first Jew, Abraham, and culminating in what we are today, a nation strong enough to not only survive, but to prosper. We want students to make the connection between ancient events and what is happening today.

The Hebrew Aleph-Bet is introduced in Kindergarten. The program follows a grade appropriate progression of stages: Initially, students learn to recognize letters and vowels then they start to sound out words; and, by Grade 3, children learn to write script and read phrases, sentences, and even prayers. Throughout their education, all students learn to say Hebrew words in context and in the course of doing everyday activities. These abilities in Hebrew are the building blocks for our students’ mastery of Hebrew prayers and songs. This knowledge allows them to truly participate in and enjoy Shabbat services.

As students learn Hebrew vocabulary in everyday activities and contexts, they begin to acquire basic skills in conversational Hebrew. Starting in Grade 5, students begin to use a series of texts

which focuses on prayers and their meanings. This work helps them prepare for their B'nai Mitzvot at age 13. As they enter each new grade, students increase their fluency in reading and their confidence in speaking.

Israel occupies a special place in the religious school's curriculum. Students learn about the significance of reaching the Promised Land, now the state of Israel. Through beautifully illustrated books, they learn about Israel's cities, its geography and culture, its everyday life.

In Grade 6, students are introduced to a curriculum in ethics. The classroom is a safe environment to discuss such issues as *derech eretz*, in its broadest sense, "acting with consideration and kindness to one's fellow human beings." Students become proactive in helping others in our community. They learn the importance of visiting senior agencies and interacting with their residents. Judaism has so much to say about our lives and the ways we choose to live our lives. In short, students examine the process of transforming Jewish law into Jewish living.

The ethics curriculum reaches an inspiring height in Grade 7 as students become B'nai Mitzvot, sons and daughters of the commandments. The curriculum at this level complements the learning students do with their B'nai Mitzvah tutor. As such, we dedicate considerable attention to helping our young leaders master the service liturgy and the skills required to chant from the Torah. However, this is not all our students accomplish in 7th grade: Each one forges a unique relationship to Judaism's sacred texts; each embarks on a life journey of knowing and doing Mitzvot. Truly, this is the year that your children become self-assured, contributing members of the Jewish community.

The Pre-Confirmation program encompasses grades 8 and 9. It examines the impact of Judaic culture on the individual, addressing a variety of issues, including ethnicity, race, gender, family, and cognition. Students are exposed to current theory and research, as well as to effective strategies that promote learning, intercultural relationships, and self-esteem. Please note, this is a highly interactive course. Starting from personal experience and expertise, each student confronts Judaism's implications on his or her personal conception of self. Special attention is paid to helping students develop the skills they need to communicate effectively and collaborate successfully with those whose differences are more apparent than their similarities. Using the classroom as a model community, students employ several different learning modalities to study themselves and others. Through reading, writing, lecture, dialogue, class exercise, presentation, and personal self-exploration, the lenses through which they peer help them make sense of the social, cultural, and religious networks from which we all derive.

Finally, our Confirmation and Post-Confirmation programs provide an extraordinary opportunity for 10th, 11th, and 12th graders to work closely with our Rabbi. Designed to meet the needs of the young adult, this program's power resides in its casual, probing format. The curriculum guides students through a process that encourages them to wrestle with core questions of Jewish living and Jewish identity. It seeks to help them integrate these learnings into their own lives. Particular emphasis is placed on implementing Jewish living and identity in ways that pervade their lives, rather than manifest only when they attend temple services. We believe that over the course of the year, students can discover a personal relationship with God. The curriculum for these grades strives to help students really "get" Jewish sacred writings (Biblical and non-Biblical) and

invoke Jewish prayers in ways that transcend standard, or rote, interpretations. In practical terms, students develop the skills for conducting their own close readings and analyses of Jewish texts. After completing the program, students possess a highly personal, mature understanding of Judaism.

We are honored by the opportunity to teach your children. The contributions they make to our school are nothing short of magic. We also value you, your input, your participation in every aspect of our curriculum. Active parents help us ensure that our students reach their potential, and that our school reflects the changing realities of our times. We look forward to being your partners in the Jewish education of your children.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance:

Parents should insure their children's regular attendance and should avoid early dismissal as much as possible.

1. In the event that there is a conflicting activity for a student, which will preclude attendance in class for an extended period of time, the following requirements will go into effect:
 - Each class missed requires make up work provided by the teacher.
 - For more than three consecutive classes missed, students may require tutoring at the family's expense.
 - A student enrolled in an outside activity that interferes with attendance throughout the religious school year (i.e. missing Thursdays or Sundays) will need to hire a tutor to remain current with class instruction. We will make an effort to assist in the arrangements to find a tutor.

Punctuality:

Our goal is to begin class time as close as possible to the appointed hour for each session. Sunday classes will begin at 10:00 a.m., Thursday classes will begin at 3:30 p.m. It is understood that some of our students travel distances in order to be here on Thursdays after public school dismissal time. Our staff members are sensitive to the variability of these schedules and will not penalize a student for tardiness to class under those circumstances. The intent is to try to maximize the time the students are in class, and we encourage you to cooperate by making every effort to bring your child to religious school on time.

Class Preparation:

Students should come to class prepared. They should have books, pens or pencils, worksheets that have been completed for homework and anything else that is expected for the success of participation in the class.

Absences:

If your child is sick or unable to attend school, we ask that you please contact the office. The student is responsible for any missed assignments. For extended absences, please see the "Attendance" section above.

Early Dismissal:

Early dismissal requests require a note to the student's teacher. Please come into the office to pick up your child. For safety reasons **no child will be dismissed to a waiting car**. As in any absence, any work missed due to early dismissal is the student's responsibility to make up.

Regular Dismissal Policy:

Please follow this procedure when picking up your child.

It was designed with the safety of all individuals in mind.

- Cars should line up around the circle and continue along the far right perimeter of the lower parking lot.
- Please remain in your automobile. Unless you are parking to walk up to the building, remain in the carpool line of cars that are picking up children.
- When you reach the front of the building, cars can pull up to the two crosswalks and teachers will be stationed there to call for your child
- Please have a large sign in your car with the names of the children you transport.
- If your child is delayed coming out of the building, please pull up so that you are out of the path of where the students are being picked up in the carpool line.

School Closings:

School holiday and vacation closings will follow the Peabody Public Schools. Jewish holidays will be noted on the Religious School calendar.

Weather related closings will also follow Peabody Public Schools and be announced over local television stations: Channels 4, 5 and 7.

On the occasion that adverse weather develops during the day while secular school is in session and Religious School is cancelled, efforts will be made by the temple office to notify the child's secular school so that an announcement can be made to the religious school students.

In the case of a fire or natural disaster necessitating evacuation of the building, or an emergency such as power outage, loss of heat or loss of water, parents will be notified and the school will be closed.

Dress Code:

Please have your child dress respectfully for religious school. Students must dress appropriately. No short shorts. Tops must be long enough to cover midriff area.

A coat or jacket is necessary for the fall and winter seasons in case we need to leave the building during religious school hours for any reason.

Emergency Procedures:

In an emergency, the student will be brought to the North Shore Children's Hospital in Salem 978-745-2100 or the nearest hospital.

Should a child become injured or sick beyond the scope of basic first aid, every effort will be made to contact the parent/guardian. If the injury is one in which time becomes critical, a staff member will call an ambulance and send one staff person and medical information from the child's folder along with the child. Continued efforts will be made to contact the parent/guardian. In situations, which require neither first aid nor emergency procedures, our staff will await parent instructions.

Illness, Contagious Conditions and Allergies**Illness:**

- Parents/guardians are asked not to send a student to school if the child is ill. If a child becomes ill while at school, the director will contact the parent/guardian to come take the student home.

Contagious conditions:

- Students with a contagious condition should not attend school until a doctor determines that the student is no longer contagious.
- Some conditions covered by this policy include, but are not limited to:
- Mononucleosis, Chicken Pox, Conjunctivitis, Measles, Head Lice and Mumps.
- If your child has been exposed to or exhibits symptoms of a contagious disease, please notify the director immediately. We will in turn send out a notice making our families aware.

Allergies:

- **With respect to allergies, please inform us before your child begins religious school if he/she has a serious allergy to things that might be in the building environment. In addition, this information should be listed in your child's registration forms. Faculty will be informed.**
- **WE ARE A PEANUT FREE SCHOOL.**

Attitude:

The director and teachers work to their best ability to provide your child with the most meaningful and fulfilling educational experience possible. You can support us by encouraging your child to take their studies seriously, recognize the importance of appropriate classroom behavior and to be cooperative and respectful. Discipline and behavior issues will be handled according to our school behavior management policy.

Behavior Management:

Our behavior policy is guided by a commitment to **KAVOD** – *the basic respect due to each and every human being*. We recognize that we will achieve our goals only if there is mutual respect between teacher and student as well as between students.

Temple Beth Shalom is firmly committed to providing a positive climate in which all students can thrive. Effective learning results when rules of conduct are followed. In order to be proactive, positive behavior will be discussed, encouraged and reinforced within the classroom.

Derech erez: The Jewish ideal for proper behavior is the basis for our expectations of students. At the same time, no one will be allowed to hurt others, themselves or the environment. We do not expect behavior issues – rude, disruptive behavior is unacceptable. Since we place much stress on the positive and the importance and value of each individual, we expect each child to behave in a respectful way..

Behavior Expectations within the Temple building:

- Students are expected to remain in the building during school hours.
- No caps or hats may be worn in the Temple building. Students wishing a head covering are encouraged to wear a kippah.
- Electronic devices should not be brought to class.
- Cell phones must be deactivated during class time. The temple is not responsible for lost or damaged property.
- No skateboards in the classroom or on temple property.
- No laser pointer or other such devices are allowed.
- Students must be respectful of adults both in language and behavior
- Unacceptable language will not be tolerated.
- Students should be mindful of the safety of themselves and others.

Behavior Expectations within the classroom:

- Students will speak respectfully to others.
- Students should listen and follow directions.
- Students should remain seated when requested
- Students should keep their hands, feet and personal objects to themselves.
- Teasing will not be tolerated.
- Unacceptable language will not be tolerated.
- Students should come to class prepared and ready to learn.

Discipline:

Inappropriate behavior that cannot be resolved between a teacher and student will be dealt with in the following manner:

First Time: Child is removed from the classroom and will speak to the Director.

Second Time: Child is removed from the classroom and the parents will be notified by phone.

Third Time: Child is removed from the classroom. A conference will be required between the parents and the director to determine the needs of the child. Only after this conference will the child be readmitted to the classroom. The parent will be asked to attend with the child for several classes.

Class Placement:

Students will generally be placed in religious school grades corresponding to their grade level in secular school. If the student's entry level to the program does not match the abilities of the class they are entering, the student will have to work with a tutor in order to gain the necessary skills to stay with the class.

Special Needs:

Parents of children with special needs and/or abilities should contact the Director to arrange a conference to discuss the possibility of an individual Educational Plan.

Classroom Visits:

Parents are welcome to visit their child's classroom at any time. Please sign in at the Director's office prior to visiting the classroom.

Confidentiality:

All Religious School records and parent conferences are confidential. Children's records are available for review with the Director upon request.

Field Trips:

On occasion, our program may include field trips to perform a Mitzvah such as visiting a nursing home or to visit another Jewish institution in our community. Families will be notified by e-mail, and given several reminders. Children will be brought to the function by their parents or a designated adult, and picked up by the same person, unless we are otherwise notified.

Snacks:

It is understood that many of our students come right from secular school and do not have time for a snack. We will allocate the first ten minutes of Religious School for the children to have a snack and get settled in.

**Temple Beth Shalom is Peanut Free!!
Please do not send peanut products to school!!**

Homework:

Teachers will assign a reasonable amount of homework as a means of reinforcing what was covered in class. Parents are encouraged to assist children in taking responsibility for completing assignments.

Hebrew Name:

During Religious School, the student will be addressed by their Hebrew name. This helps to instill their Jewish identity. If the student does not have a Hebrew name, please contact the Rabbi and she/he will help them select one. We would then like to invite the student and their family to participate in our special Friday night Naming Ceremony.

Shabbat Worship Requirement:

Students are encouraged to attend Shabbat services at Temple Beth Shalom. See enclosed religious school calendar for Shabbat service times. Also enclosed in this packet is a detailed outline of the requirements for Shabbat service attendance by grade. Please read the information and send the bottom portion to let us know you are aware of the student incentive program.

Tzedakah:

An important component of our religious school curriculum addresses the issue of *tzedakah*. Students are encouraged to contribute coins to a class collection throughout the year. This fund will be used to support agencies that are in need of assistance throughout the year.

Along with donating funds to agencies that assist others, students will be encouraged to give of their time to help others in our community who are in need of services. As mentioned earlier, students will brainstorm to find ways to make a difference in our community.

Parent Teacher Conferences:

Families will be invited to attend a parent/teacher conference in January of the school year to discuss your child's progress and allow discussion between parents and teachers. You will receive further information from your child's teacher.