

Beth Haverim Shir Shalom
Religious School
Home Handbook



The mission of our school is to graduate young adults who have the tools they need to form their own Jewish identity. Our aim is to enable families to pass their own traditions “from generation to generation” and help students build strong bonds within their community and with the world, both Jewish and secular. We hope our graduates will feel comfortable in their Judaism wherever they go in their lives – and above all, be “mensches,” good people.

By creating a rich curriculum, beginning in kindergarten and concluding in grade twelve, we provide our students with knowledge about Judaism, experience in the practices of Judaism in the home, school, synagogue and community, and a positive feeling about being Jewish.

We inspire our children to begin, and continue a meaningful journey of faith in the Jewish religion according to the traditions of Reform Judaism. Our religious school emphasizes the meaning of Reform Judaism and the role of the Jew in the modern world.

We take pride in instilling a sense of Jewish identity through a curriculum encompassing tradition, customs and celebrations. The program also includes Torah study, history, ethics, Hebrew, prayer, music and B’nai Mitzvah preparation.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

This handbook is a guide to our policies and procedures for parents and guardians of our religious school students. It is the result of hours of work by both professional and lay leaders, as well as volunteer parents who are becoming even more involved in their children's Jewish education. Every aspect of our religious school program is constructed to help students not only become an integral part of our own "House of Friends," but also the wider Jewish community and ultimately the world they will venture out into in years to come.

Good communication between school and home can make a huge difference in how successful our students are. We will not hesitate to contact you if we sense your child is struggling. Please do not wait to contact us if you feel there is a problem. We want to find a solution that will work for everyone concerned. There are enrichment and practice materials available, particularly in the area of Hebrew study. Even if you cannot read Hebrew, we can guide you to resources on the Internet or send home phonetic transliterations of your child's homework so that you can listen to that all-important reading practice.

Even as we strive to help your children understand the many facets of Reform Judaism and their personal connection to it, we want them, and you, their guardians, to hear us say that overall there must be an abiding sense of respect for self and others. Our policies and procedures are in place to give us structure even as we hold our staff and students to the highest standards they can attain.

- Rebecca Bernstein McVeigh, Director of Education

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Our Education Committee consists of a group of volunteers who work in concert with the education director and rabbi to maintain the standards set forth in our mission statement and is one of the most active committees in synagogue life. Among other things, the committee creates and enforces policies and provides classroom assistance during holiday celebrations. The committee meets as necessary to resolve issues brought to it by the rabbi, the educator, or a religious school parent. In addition, the Education Committee works closely with the Ritual Committee to establish standards for B'nai Mitzvah preparation. If you have policy questions, please contact committee chair Lauren Einhorn at laureneinhorn16@gmail.com.

CODE OF CONDUCT

While our school is primarily a *Beit Midrash*, a House of Study, and is devoted to religious studies, it is also a House of God. As such, we encourage an attitude of respect from our students for our building, our staff, and their fellow students. If a student deliberately damages synagogue property, the family will be informed and an invoice for the necessary repair or replacement will be issued. Students in Grades Four through Twelve, as well as their parents, are to read, discuss, and sign the “Covenant of Conduct” that accompanies the school registration form. Parents of students in Kindergarten through Grade Three should sign after they have explained it to their children. A student who disrupts a school activity with behavior deemed unacceptable by a member of our staff will be asked to leave the class. If the behavior persists, the student and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) may be required to meet with the director of education and a member of the Board of Trustees before returning to school.

DRESS CODE

We ask that students refrain from wearing clothing to religious school that is inappropriate to a house of worship.

Although sports uniform clothing is acceptable, sports cleats may not be worn in the building; if your child will be attending a practice directly before or after school, please plan for him/her to bring a change of shoes.

SCHOOL CLOSING

If the school is closed due to inclement weather, there will be a message on the religious school’s phone (menu option 6), a notice will be on the front page of the website, and an email message will be sent to the email address we have on file for you. We will do our best to notify you as soon as we make a decision in the event of a school closing due to weather. However, the fastest way to find out is www.cancellations.com. You can “subscribe” there to receive an email directly from them whenever we post.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL POLICY

Drop-Off:

1. Children must be dropped off at the school entrance (rear doors), or you may park and walk your child in.
2. Please do not drop your child off earlier than 10 minutes before class starts. There is no supervision for students before that time, and our teachers are busy preparing their rooms.
3. If a student is more than 10 minutes late, he/she should check in with the school office in order to not be marked as absent.

Pick-Up:

1. When possible, back into designated parking spaces to avoid accidents when leaving the parking lot. **You must park your car and come in.** Do not stop your car in front of the school entrance.
2. No student will be allowed to leave the building without an adult.
3. Students in kindergarten, first and second grade should be picked up directly from their classrooms.
4. If you will be late picking up your child, please call.
5. If a child is being picked up early, you should call/email the school, and the student must be signed out. **Only a school staff member can take students out of class.** We must have notification/permission for the early dismissal **from each child's parent/guardian.** If you're the driver and you're picking up YOUR own child, YOU need to let us know. If someone else is picking up YOUR child, YOU need to let us know. If we do not receive prior notification, there may be a delay in dismissal.

Please note: Picking up students early from class for extracurricular activities is greatly discouraged. This causes disruptions with instruction and may result in a partial absence being added to the student's attendance record.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES (Cell Phones, etc.)

All electronic devices brought to religious school must be turned off before class begins, and put away; otherwise they will be held by the teacher until dismissal. If you need to reach your child while he/she is in school, please call the office.

OTHER PERSONAL ITEMS

There is no “show-and-tell” at religious school.* This includes toys, pets, stuffed animals, etc. Please leave all personal items at home. **If your child has a diagnosed condition that requires him or her to carry a particular object,** please contact Rebecca McVeigh prior to the start of school. Thank you!

*Unless a teacher requests that specific items be brought in (i.e. family Judaic items)

FOOD IN SCHOOL

Chewing gum is not allowed in the school. Please refrain from sending candy to school with your child. The fourth and fifth graders who attend school on Tuesday afternoons have a snack break. This is not meant to be a full meal, and we ask that you remember this when you or they pack for religious school. On Monday evenings, Kadimah students enjoy a pizza break, and on Sunday mornings Family School families have a bagel break. Other than these times and during some holiday celebrations, we do not serve food in school. For a lesson that will include food, we will notify you (by email). Let us know if you will be sending in a food (like gluten-free matzah) that is safer for your child, and we will be happy to serve it to him/her. Of course, parents and guardians are welcome to come and be here for the celebrations yourselves!

Like many schools around the country, we endeavor to be a safe place for children with food allergies. In keeping with this, **parents and students may not bring any food product that contains nuts into the school, and food cannot brought in from outside to be shared for birthdays, etc.** Please read labels carefully!

ATTENDANCE POLICIES (beginning in Grade Four*)

1. There is a requirement of a minimum of four consecutive years of religious school attendance beginning with the fourth grade year before there can be a Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony at Beth Haverim Shir Shalom. If you have questions about when your child should start, please call the school office.

****Note: If a student will be 9, turning 10 during third grade, he/she should start school in third grade in order to receive a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date near his/her 13th birthday.***

2. The Education Committee believes that students' regular attendance in the religious school is a necessity in order to attain a well-rounded education and to become a part of the community that they will eventually lead in prayer. Students may be absent a maximum of ten times a year. Leaving early or arriving late may also result in a partial absence. Excessive absences will result in a decrease in the leadership role your child takes during their bar/bat mitzvah; how much of a decrease will be determined by the rabbi, cantor and educator.

HEBREW CLASS PLACEMENT

Students will be placed into classes taking into account their aptitude and comfort level. The placement of your child in a leveled Hebrew class (Grades 4, 5, & 6) is based primarily on an evaluation procedure. After the first few sessions of school, if you and/or your child feel that they have been inappropriately placed in a Hebrew level, please contact the school office.

If you feel your child is struggling with Hebrew, discuss his/her situation with your child's Hebrew teacher. Once it is determined that you wish to engage an outside tutor, suitable individuals can be recommended. The person you hire must keep us informed of your child's progress. ****YOU MAY NOT hire a tutor as a substitute for sending your child to religious school regularly,** nor may you hire an employee of Beth Haverim Shir Shalom's religious school without first receiving our permission.

*****This policy does not pertain to supplemental B'nai Mitzvah preparation tutoring.***

T'FILAH

An important aspect of the religious school curriculum is prayer. Worship services during the religious school session as well as attendance at our congregational services give the children a chance to put their classroom learning to use. Please help us instill in your children a sense of respect for our *Bet Kneset* (sanctuary).

TZEDAKAH

Our *Tanach* (Bible) tells us: “They that turn the many to righteousness (*tzedakah*) shall shine like the brightness of the skies.” (Daniel 12:3). One of the values most highly regarded in the Jewish community is that of *tzedakah*, righteousness, or more popularly, the giving of charity. Our religious school offers students many opportunities over the year to participate in this *mitzvah* (commandment) by bringing in a contribution to their class *tzedakah* fund. Over the year the children may also be asked to bring in other items to help those in need.

SUPPLIES AND BOOKS

Textbooks and other necessary materials will be distributed during the first weeks of school. Students are expected to take appropriate care of their books and all materials that are handed out. All books must be brought to class each session. It is strongly advised that your child have a backpack or tote bag separate from his/her public school bag to avoid confusion.

KADIMAH

Kadimah means “moving forward” and that is what our students in grades 7 through 12 do on Monday nights! They learn from their teachers and each other through discussion in grade-level core classes and, after a pizza break, electives that run the gamut from Jewish cooking and humor to current events, conversational Hebrew and Holocaust study. In Grade Ten they become confirmed, and graduation is celebrated as they finish secular high school.

Seventh grade is a required year of attendance.

PRESCHOOL CLASS

Approximately once a month, our 4 year-olds and 5 year-olds (not yet in Kindergarten) get together with Miss Terry to enjoy an hour and a half of stories, crafts, music and cooking. The class is open to members and non-members alike (call for fee.) This class is a terrific introduction to Jewish traditions and holidays for the younger students.

FAMILY SCHOOL

Our congregational mission statement emphasizes the importance to us of lifelong learning; we are “...dedicated to the never-ending process of Jewish learning.” As a jewel in the crown of our educational programming, the Family School stands as a testament to what we believe in. From our original fifteen families of *chalutzim*, pioneers, the Family School now engages over forty families each week in this unique program where every participant benefits. Each one is a student, and each one is a teacher. When these families leave our building, they have had richer, deeper conversations about what their Judaism means to them. And these conversations continue – into the rest of Sunday, into the rest of the week, and into the rest of their lives.

FAMILY EDUCATION

Please participate in our grade-level Family Education offerings! These programs are offered approximately once per year and are different from the Family School program. There is no assumption of prior knowledge.

Family Education programs are designed for a child to work with an adult, so your child should be accompanied by an adult, or join with another family, on Family Education days. If you have any questions, please contact Sharon Halper (leave a message in the religious school office or send an email to sharondin@aol.com.)

HOME – SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

If you have a question or concern regarding your child's education, please, call or write at any time! We are a home-school team; communications regarding students will be shared among the teacher, educator, and parent. Calls/emails will not be returned from Friday at sundown through Saturday at sunset.

Please keep us informed of any changes in your contact information and let us know as soon as you know your child will not be able to attend school! The office telephone number is 201-512-1983, and the school's menu option is #6.

We sometimes send home notices with your children, and, when necessary, we will call you, but usually we use emails, the synagogue's website, and the weekly congregational e-news. Voice mail messages will be checked as often as possible; however, email messages are checked more often, and provide an excellent way to communicate with the school.

RSVPs to our special programs are not just good manners; they are integral to our ability to plan and purchase materials.

OTHER ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

Beth Haverim Shir Shalom's **youth groups** offer wonderful opportunities for students to perform community service, socialize with each other and youth from other congregations (in the case of the senior youth, BHSSTY, through NFTY, the North American Federation of Temple Youth, and through Menschmakers (grades 3, 4, 5), Junior Youth Group (grades 6, 7, 8) and participate in the administration and organization of their own activities. Youth group programming is available to students in grades 3 through 12. Please contact our Director of Informal Youth Programming, Brittany Silverman if you have questions about these worthwhile organizations. Her email address is bsilvermanbhss@gmail.com.

The **Junior Choir** is open to religious school students beginning in Grade Three. This enthusiastic group of singers performs at selected family and musical-themed services throughout the year. The Junior Choir Coordinator, Lisa Lamster, can be reached by email at lisalams@optonline.net or by leaving a message in the school office.

FINAL NOTE TO PARENTS

Your child's Jewish education is important. The clergy, director of education, teaching staff and the Education Committee all work diligently to improve and upgrade the quality of our school.

You are your child's most significant Jewish role models and influential teachers. Judaism is a religion of doing as well as learning, and only through practice of rituals and holidays can the religious school's educational process become a meaningful and lasting part of your child's life. You should also:

- Participate in school programs and Family Services.
- Be certain that your child attends school regularly and arrives on time, and with the necessary books and supplies.
- Schedule time for regular oral Hebrew reading practice.

With the close involvement, cooperation and commitment of the synagogue, the school, the students and the families, our children will grow to be responsible, caring, knowledgeable and committed Jews, who will make a difference in the world and fill all of us with pride.

QUESTIONS?

Call BHSS at 201-512-1983 or write us at:

Rebecca McVeigh, Dir. of Education – schoolatbethhav@optonline.net

Rabbi Ilana Schwartzman – rabbischwartzman@gmail.com

Cantor David Perper – canterperper@earthlink.net

Religious School Schedule 2018 - 2019

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
September 2018	16	17	18 No School
	23	24 No School	25
	30		
October 2018		1 No School	2
	7 No School	8 No School	9 No School
	14	15	16
	21	22	23
	28	29	30
November 2018	4	5	6 No School
	11 No School	12 No School	13
	18	19	20 No School
	25 No School	26	27
December 2018	2	3	4
	9	10	11
	16	17	18
	23 No School	24 No School	25 No School
	30 No School	31 No School	
January 2019			1 No School
	6	7	8
	13	14	15
	20 No School	21 No School	22 No School
	27 No School	28	29
February 2019	3	4	5
	10	11	12
	17 No School	18 No School	19 No School
	24	25	26
March 2019	3	4	5
	10	11	12
	17	18	19
	24	25	26
	31		
April 2019		1	2
	7	8	9
	14 No School	15 No School	16 No School
	21 No School	22 No School	23 No School
	28	29	30
May 2019	5	6	7
	12	13	14
	19	20	21

Grades K, 1, 2:
Monday, 4 - 5:30 PM

Traditional Grade 3:
Monday, 4 - 6:00 PM

Traditional Grades 4 & 5:
Tuesday, 4 - 6:30 PM

Traditional Grade 6:
Sunday, 9 - 11:30 AM

Kadimah:
(Grades 7 - 12)
Monday, 6:45 - 8:30 PM

Family School :
(Grades 3 - 6)
Sunday, 9 - 11:30 AM

Enrichment Available

Monday class for those enrolled in Prek, K, 1, & 2 from 5:30 to 6:00 p.m
Nominal Fee

IF a student is leaving school before dismissal, we MUST have notification from THAT child's parent/guardian (phone/email.)

You are required to PARK your car for pickup. If you are unable to come in, call and we will walk your child out to you.