



RELIGIOUS SCHOOL HANDBOOK

2017-2018 / 5778

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LETTER FROM THE EDUCATION TEAM

Best practices in education teach us to always begin with a goal, to identify what we want to accomplish, to define our purpose, to clarify what we want. With that in mind, the Education Team has worked diligently this summer working with returning teachers, hiring new ones, organizing supplies, cleaning and preparing learning spaces and so much more, all with this goal in mind... **The Rabbi Leslie Yale Gutterman Religious School will be a place where Jewish education and experiences are joyful, communal and accessible.**

We didn't come up with this goal on our own. These words were a direct result of the desires and dreams of our families, our leadership, and our stakeholders.

At the Rabbi Leslie Yale Gutterman Religious School (RLYGRS), we engage innovative principles to connect our students to their Jewish selves, to each other, to our Temple Beth-El community and to Am Yisrael (the people of Israel). We recognize the value of each individual child and family as an important piece of our communal whole.

We believe in creating an environment where:

- Our students are active participants, problem solvers and planners.
- Our teachers are facilitators and guides who foster critical thinking.
- Our parents are our partners
- Our community is an extension of the classroom

This is accomplished with methods including but not limited to:

Project Based Learning allows students to gain knowledge and skills by working over an extended period of time investigating and responding to questions and/or challenges. PBL has been a part of the curriculum for some of our grades for years and we look forward to utilizing this teaching method in more classes in the coming year.

Experiential Education allows our students to combine active learning with concrete experiences like our field trips and all school programs.

Youth Engagement allows our students to be involved in responsible, challenging actions to create positive social change while making decisions that affect themselves and others.

We are thrilled to have you with us on this journey.

Rabbi Sarah Mack, Director of Education
Joie Magnone, Director of Youth & Family Engagement
Rachel Mersky Woda, Educational Strategic Planning Consultant

BRIT LIMMUD – OUR LEARNING COVENANT

At Temple Beth-El, we expect teachers, students and families to treat one another with the sacred Jewish value of civility (derech eretz) which incorporates respect (kavod), honesty (emet), kindness (chesed), responsibility (achriot), learning from each other (Talmud Torah) and treating others as you would like to be treated yourself (gemilut chasadim). Our Temple is a sacred space in which we treat one another as well as the physical surroundings with respect and dignity (kavod).

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL HOURS

Sunday school will begin at 10:00am and end at 12:30pm for all students. Students will gather at 10:00am each week for a tefilah/assembly (parents welcome) before classes begin at 10:30am. Once a month, the entire school will be together while on other weeks, we will divide the students into two age appropriate groups.

SMALL GROUP HEBREW FOR GRADES 3-6

The goal of our small group Hebrew program is to be convenient enabling students to attend at times that work best for them. To better support learning, participants in Grades 3-6 study Hebrew with classmates in small groups of 3-7 students. Groups are offered on Sundays at 9am or 12:30pm, Wednesdays at 4pm OR Thursdays at 4pm. All small Hebrew groups will be offered for ONE hour.

PLEASE NOTE - There is NO Religious School on the following dates and therefore, NO SGH during that Sunday and the week following that Sunday:

Oct 1
Oct 8
Nov 26
Dec 24
Dec 31
Jan 14
Feb 18
Mar 18
Apr 1
Apr 15

FAMILY SHABBAT DINNERS & SERVICES

Join us for Shabbat dinner and services on the first Friday night of each month from November through May! The evening will begin at 5:30pm with dinner for you and your immediate family. Guests are always welcome for a small additional fee. After dinner, we will all go into the sanctuary for a service led by a different grade each month.

November 3rd – led by Grade 6
December 1st – led by Grade 5
January 12th – led by PROVTY (Grades 8-12)
February 2nd – led by Grade 4
April 6th – led by Grade 3
May 4th – led by PreK-Grade 2 for Teacher Appreciation Shabbat

5778 JEWISH HOLIDAY DATES

Rosh Hashanah	September 20-22
Yom Kippur	September 29-30
Sukkot	October 4-11
Simchat Torah	October 11-12
Chanukah	December 12-19
Tu B'Shevat	January 30-31
Purim	February 28 – March 1
Pesach	March 30 – April 6
Shavuot	May 19-20

TEMPLE BETH-EL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

CONSECRATION:

Consecration is the first Religious School ceremony to celebrate Jewish responsibility. It takes place on *Erev Simhat Torah* – **Wednesday, October 11**, when a child is in the first grade. Consecration, like *Simhat Torah*, marks a beginning. It is the first of many milestones in the course of Jewish upbringing. Consecration marks the commencement of formal Jewish education studies, just as *Simhat Torah* marks the beginning of the reading of the Torah.

KABBALAT SIDUR:

Kabbalat Siddur is a special program marking the culmination of the first year of Hebrew studies (at end of 3rd Grade). These students, having recently mastered beginning Hebrew skills, will receive their Siddurim at a festive service on **Friday, April 6th**.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH:

Bar/Bat Mitzvah, which means **a son/daughter of the Commandment** is a ceremony in the life of the 13 year old child that signifies their initiation into Jewish adulthood. It is an occasion which marks their readiness to participate, with understanding, in the adult life of the Congregation as well as their desire to assume the responsibilities and *mitzvot* that are incumbent upon every Jewish adult.

The most important and immediate acknowledgement of the increased responsibilities of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah - recognized by the Reform movement since its inception - is the continuation of one's Jewish education. Reform Judaism has continuously stressed that Confirmation be the minimal goal in the Jewish education of a child, for it leads the student toward a more complete study of the beliefs, practices, ethics and history of Judaism. Moreover, Confirmation comes when a child is more mature (15 to 16 years); when he or she is intellectually and emotionally best prepared to appreciate the values, teachings and responsibilities of our Jewish faith.

The importance which the ceremony of Bar/Bat Mitzvah has acquired in our day, comes not only because it marks an auspicious transition in a child's lifetime, but also because it offers an individual, a family, and in real sense *K'lal Yisrael* - the entire community of Israel - the opportunity to celebrate and reaffirm our centuries old Jewish heritage.

Requirements and Procedures can be found online in the B'nei Mitzvah Manual.

CONFIRMATION:

Confirmation was introduced by Reform Jews in the nineteenth century. It represents the students' "confirmation" of their Jewish identity as a culmination of years of formal studies. These students meet with the Associate Rabbi and begin to question and analyze various topics of Jewish values and their faith. The Confirmation dinner & service is held Erev Shavuot Tuesday, May 30th at 5:30pm

POST-CONFIRMATION:

Many high school students choose to continue their Jewish education through their high school graduation. Our Post-Confirmation students will meet with Rabbi Voss-Altman on a monthly basis for a study session, and also have an opportunity to become teacher aides in the Religious School. They are recognized for their commitment to Jewish education at a Post-Confirmation/High School Graduation ceremony at the end of their senior year.

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS:

We want to make each student feel valued and a part of our community when they are here. Attendance is an important way for us to connect with you and your child(ren) as well as insure their safety when they are in our care.

In order for a child to attend our Religious School, the family must be a member in good standing of our Temple. Pre-school and Kindergarten are open to non-Temple members.

STUDENTS EXCUSED FROM CLASS

Students may not be excused from class early without clearance from the office. Please send a note with your child(ren). When you arrive, please sign your child(ren) out in the main office. We will then send someone to their classroom(s) to let them know that it is time to go.

STUDENT DISMISSAL

Students in Pre-School-Grade 2 are required to be picked up in their classrooms by a parent or other responsible adult. If a child still has not been picked up by 12:45pm, then the teacher (or aide) will take the child to our Main Office where an authorized staff person will be waiting with the child until the parents arrive.

Students in Grades 3-12 are permitted to meet their parents in the lobby.

For safety's sake, parents who park their cars on Orchard Avenue across the street from the Temple should turn off the motor, cross the street to meet your child, and escort them back to the car. Because of the congestion of vehicles in the area and the fact that there is considerable movement at dismissal time, it is important as a safety measure that children in Grades 3 - 6 not be allowed to cross the street by themselves. **DOUBLE-PARKING IS NOT ALLOWED AT ANY TIME ON ORCHARD AVENUE.**

Parents who park on the Temple-side of Orchard Avenue should move their vehicles in and out of line with the **UTMOST CAUTION**. Many parents pick up their children at the parking lot entrance. Here, too, basic rules of safety are important because of the congestion that occurs in the parking lot and because of the many vehicles that have to be backed up in order to exit. In general, our children will be asked to remain in the doorway, under the canopy, or in the patio area until their parent's car has come into view.

When dropping off or picking up children, drivers are asked to bring their vehicles to a **FULL STOP** (in parking gear and/or emergency brake engaged). This is an important safety measure not only for the sake of your own children, but also in regard to others who may be moving about in the vicinity of your car.

ALL TRAFFIC MOVES IN ONE DIRECTION IN OUR PARKING LOT – THE ENTRANCE IS FROM BUTLER AVENUE ONLY.

COMMUNICATION

Temple Beth-El Religious School will communicate with parents mostly through e-mail. Please ensure that we have your up-to-date e-mail address.

The Education Team is available to you and your family – our door is always open. Please share with us when things are going well as well as when you have concerns.

STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES:

If there is anything we should know about your child to help us create a better and more positive experience for them, please let us know! The School should be fully aware of special needs prior to the start of the school year, so that the appropriate resources can be made available to your child. All information will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

We have a Coordinator of Learning Support who will be visiting classrooms to provide extra support and guidance for our teachers so that we can serve the variety of learning styles we find in our classrooms. We also offer Small Group Hebrew at Temple Beth-El for children with learning differences.

SNACK

The Sisterhood will provide snack for Pre-school, Kindergarten, and Grades 1 – 3. If teachers or students provide snacks in other grades, please be sensitive to students who may keep kosher. Temple Beth-El observes a NO NUTS policy with all food given to children.

SNOW CANCELLATIONS:

Weekday Small Group Hebrew sessions are canceled when the Providence Public Schools cancel classes. In the event of Sunday cancellations, announcements will be made on 630 WPRO (AM), 920 WHJJ (AM), 92 PRO-(FM), LITE 105 (FM), WWBB (101FM), WHJY (94.1FM), COAST (93.3FM), ABC Channel 6, WPRI Channel 12, NBC Channel 10, and www.turnto10.com. A message will also be left on the Temple answering machine and a Constant Contact e-mail will be sent to all families.

SAFETY POLICIES

Background checks (BCI) are performed on each teacher when they are hired. The Temple will use its discretion based upon information discovered from performing these checks. We ask all parents to be attentive to any unusual behavior or activity within the building. Notify the temple office if anything unusual arises.