

BETH-EL CONGREGATION

Religious School

2017-2018 • 5777-5778
Parent's' Handbook

**A Spiritual Journey
Through the
History of Our People**



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Remember the days of
old; reflect upon the
years of other gen-
erations. Ask your
father and he will
tell you, your elders
and they will inform
you.

Deuteronomy 32:7

Dear Parents/Guardians and members of our Religious School,

I welcome you with a personal commitment to a year that is going to be interesting, stimulating, and full of excitement. We embark on this journey with a pledge to you, our students and parents, that this will be a year of engaging, meaningful, and rigorous work in our classrooms and school. The 2017-2018 themes is

A Spiritual Journey Through the History of Our People

We both value and need your involvement and support! We hope this year will be filled with family time, where parents get to know each other and the children.

Ilana

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BETH-EL CONGREGATION

Religious School

Jewish people have been growing, changing, and adapting to the world around them, and so is our curriculum. Every year we work hard to evaluate our curriculum/activities and theme and make the changes according to our students and family member's needs. We hope our students will grow to be able to make informed Jewish choices, become literate Jewish adults and view their learning as relevant and meaningful to their lives today and in the future and to love it. For these reasons and more, we are focusing this year on the theme:

A Spiritual Journey Through the History of Our People

**Important, meaningful and
exciting changes at Beth-El Religious School.**

Other changes include:

- We found professional and dedicated new teachers who care about teaching Jewish children and making a difference. (See teacher bio's on the website)
- Torah curriculum for our 2 year olds, Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade students, filled with engaging and practical interactive tools for teaching Torah, holidays and Jewish values for young students. This curriculum brings to life our Torah and Jewish tradition through age appropriate games, songs, yoga, and activities that children adore.
- Innovative and highly experiential and project-based curriculum for 3rd – 7th grade.
- 6th grade will be offered a trope (chanting) class during Religious

school.

- A cantorial intern will be teaching 6th grade in order to make sure our students will understand, relate, and connect with the B'nai Mitzvah service, meaning, process, and ideas.
- Afternoon Hebrew school classes will have a tutorial program for new students and those who need extra help.
- Two special needs teachers, one specializing in teens to support the 7th-9th grade classes. Students become part of the group and can have one-on-one personal time when needed. We expect to create a better classroom community where all students respect and connect to each other.
- 8th and 9th grade (post B'nai Mitzvah) will participate in a spiritual prayer curriculum filled with music, thought-provoking discussions, debates, art and more (11:00-12:00). We are hoping for a better understanding of prayer and a stronger connection to Judaism in a more personal and spiritual way. This innovative curriculum will introduce our students to the world of rabbinic thought and literature in order to challenge their Jewish beliefs. Using primary texts from Torah, Talmud, Midrash, and other rabbinic writings, the 8th and 9th grade students will explore the history and main characters of this literature while developing the skills and knowledge to read and understand the text. They will be encouraged to respond to these texts from their own insights and personal experience in order to apply these texts to their own lives. This curriculum will be taught using methods of small group discussions, court settings for debate, as well as discussing what these famous rabbis' stories can teach us about Jewish living and more.
- Confirmation (10th grade) class time with Rabbi Z. from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM.
- In order to create a respectful and happy learning environment in our school, dress code and a cell phone policy will be enforced!
- Dress code: Whatever is considered appropriate dress in your child's school is considered appropriate in our Temple.
- Cell phones: Used only during break or with teacher's permission.

Nurturing Jewish Minds, Inspiring Jewish Actions and Igniting Jewish Spirit.

Our parent handbook is intended to help answer questions and inform you about Beth-El Religious School. Please READ all the changes done for this year especially the policies concerning cell phones and new curriculums.

We hope you will make plans to join us on the first day of school on Sunday, September 10, from 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM (we will have Hebrew School from 12:15 to 1:00 PM).

We also hope you will join us Sunday mornings (when you can) for cookies and coffee, good friendly conversation with other parents, adult Education class or just reading the paper in a place we can all call HOME and people we can call FAMILY. I look forward to seeing you on September 10 and every Sunday.

EDUCATION VISION

“Find yourself a teacher; get a friend to learn with you.” —*Pirkei Avot*

Beth-El Religious School strives to provide an inclusive, meaningful, engaging and innovating educational learning experience for all ages and levels of observance that connect us to our traditions, to each other, to Torah and makes us proud of who we are. We hope our students will reflect upon how their Jewishness impacts their daily lives and express the feeling that the Temple feels like home and the congregation like family.

We appreciate the extent of Jewish experience and culture, and recognize that there are many paths that lead each of us to spiritually fulfilling lives. We seek learning that inspires us, that matters to us, and that affects how we live each day. We are committed to creating an environment that is comfortable and welcoming for all learners



MISSION STATEMENT

We see our school as a place to be motivated, engaged and help our children learn through an experiential and educational approach; teach Jewish spiritual concepts using critical, and creative thinking. We hope our students will grow to love and be proud of their heritage, of being Jewish and always feel “at home” when they are at our Temple.

The goal of our curriculum is to build a positive Jewish identity on a solid Judaic knowledge base so that our students will be able to actively live a Jewish life.

We aspire to:

- Provide our students with the skills and knowledge to meaningfully participate in personal and communal Jewish practice, including Hebrew and prayer skills.
- Foster within our students a love and respect for Torah.
- Foster Jewish literacy and lifelong Jewish learning.
- Deepen our students’ commitment to acts of loving-kindness (*gemilut hasadim*) and to repairing the world (*tikkun olam*).
- Encourage our students to explore their relationship with God in a safe and loving environment.

STRUCTURE

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 2/3 year olds – 3rd | 2 ½ hours weekly |
| 4th – 6th | 4 hours weekly, including Hebrew School |
| 7th – 9th | 2 ½ hours weekly |
| 10th | 2 hours weekly (Confirmation) |

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL HOURS

| | |
|--------|--|
| Sunday | 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM (2/3 year olds – 9th) |
| | 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM (Confirmation) |
| | 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM (Once per month Tinokot/Baby program) |

HEBREW SCHOOL

| | |
|--------|---------------------------------------|
| Sunday | 12:15 PM – 1:30 PM (4th – 6th grades) |
|--------|---------------------------------------|

MEETING SPECIAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS

We understand that learners have different styles and needs. We are committed to meeting the needs of all learners.

We have two special needs teachers, one of which specializes in teens to support the 7th-9th grade classes. Students become part of the group and can have one-on-one personal time when needed. We expect to create a better classroom community where all students respect and connect to each other.



SPECIAL FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The congregation is planning children's services at least once per month for our students and parents. Please join us. If you would like to volunteer for any of these programs, please call Ilana at 817-332-7141.

For a complete list of all the special Friday night services for children and their parents, please go to:

http://bethelfw.org/education/religious-school_calendar

ATTENDANCE

Because continuity and consistency are important in building education and the life-long love of Jewish learning, we hope our students will do their best to attend at least 75% of scheduled classes each year.

After two absences, the child's teacher will contact the family with an informal "we missed you" phone call or email. If a child misses three or more consecutive classes, the office will contact the family to ascertain if there is a problem.

Each situation will be treated on an individual basis and determined by the Director of Education and/or the Rabbis.

APPOINTMENTS

Parents are welcome to call, send an e-mail or set an appointment with the Director to discuss any issues relating to their child's Religious School experience. Please always feel free to let the Director know of any concerns. We welcome compliments as well!

Ilana Knust, Education Director
817-332-7141 (Religious School) • ilanaknust@bethelfw.org

BEHAVIOR

Beth-El Religious School prides itself on the high character of its students and teachers. It is our preference to spend our time and energy on learning, developing Jewish relationships, and having a positive Jewish experience. Rarely have we had discipline issues. On the off chance there are issues, the Religious School Committee has set forth the following standards by which we act in matters of discipline. All discipline matters involving the student, Education Director, and/or Rabbis are confidential.

Teacher discussion with student:

- Speaking rudely or disrespectfully to others (name calling, derogatory statements, obscene gestures, racial slurs, profanity)—first offense.
- Refusing to participate in class work—first offense.
- Talking while the teacher is leading the class—first offense.
- Disrupting other students—first offense.
- Throwing things—first offense.
- Violating safety rules—first offense.

Teacher discussion with student and parent and bring to the attention of the Director:

- Speaking rudely or disrespectfully to the teacher (name calling, derogatory statements, obscene gestures, racial slurs, profanity)—second offense.
- Refusing to participate in class work—second offense.
- Talking while the teacher is leading the class—second offense.
- Disrupting other students—second offense.

- Bullying—first offense.
- Throwing objects—second offense.
- Violating safety rules—second offense.

Teacher will inform the Education Director to handle immediately with parents:

- Any destructive or violent behavior—first offense
- Bringing contraband into school: e.g. laser pointers, matches, lighters, hazardous material—first offense.
- Any learning issues that the teacher discovers and was not informed about.
- Any illegal behavior—first offense.
- Violating safety rules—third offense.
- Vandalizing Temple and private property—first offense.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

Each class will participate in enrichment activities regularly during Religious School.

CLOTHING / DRESS CODE

Beth-El prefers to focus on learning in class and bonding Jewish kids to one another. There are times, however, when people may become distracted due to another person's attire. Whatever is considered appropriate dress in secular or private school is considered appropriate dress in our Temple. In cases where a student is dressed in a manner distracting to others, the Education Director or assistant will provide clothing that the student will put on for the class duration. The following is considered inappropriate: skirts and shorts whose length is too short, camisoles, bare midriffs, pants or jeans so big that they fall well below the waistline, sneakers with rollers, ripped or torn T-shirts or any offensive words on clothes.

DROP OFF AND DISMISSAL

Please drop off and pick up your children at the Religious School wing entrance. Parents of Two/Three year-olds through second grade students must drop off and pick up their children at the door and they will be safely directed to their classrooms. If you choose to walk them to class, park in the Temple lot and walk them safely to their classroom.

If you arrive after 9:45 AM, please ring the bell and wait to be let in or come to the main entrance as the Religious School door will be locked for our students' safety.

WEATHER POLICY

If a decision is made to cancel Sunday Religious School, it will be announced on NBC/channel 5 or www.nbc5i.com. If we are unable to be on this list, every effort will be made to contact you. Also, you may call Ilana Knust at 817-294-9387.

FIRE DRILLS

Fire drills are held at least once per year. Evacuation routes, alert procedures, locations of fire extinguishers, and other safety matters will be presented to teachers during their orientation. Evacuation routes are posted in every classroom.

SUMMER CAMP AND CAMP RETREATS **(URJ GREENE FAMILY CAMP)**

Beth- El Religious School highly supports the Greene Family Camp and strongly recommends students participation in its programs.

Jewish summer camping is a fun and natural extension of our curriculum. Go to www.greene.urjcamps.org to learn more about what a wonderful time your child could have! Applications for all events and for the summer will be available at the Temple. For scholarships, please contact Ilana Knust or Rabbi Zimmerman.

TEACHERS, MADRICHIM (TEACHER'S AIDES), **AND VOLUNTEERS**

Our teachers, teachers' aides, and volunteers are warm, loving and professional. They bring not only their personal commitment to our Religious School but also many skills and talents. They create a positive learning environment that is both engaging and enjoyable. Outside the classroom, our teachers regularly attend workshops and conferences that enhance their skills to help our students create personal meaning of their Jewish heritage.

Madrichim, (Teachers' Aides), are our 11th and 12th grade students. Many of our high schools students help as *Madrichim*, which means "those who show the way."

SNACK

Beth-El Congregation desires to maintain a healthy and safe environment for all students attending Religious School. Parents are asked to inform the school of any allergies or medical conditions that affect their children. Teachers are given this information at the beginning of the year. Please note, however, that Beth-El and the Religious School cannot ensure that all foods within the school are allergen free for your child. We are an “allergy-aware” school, but cannot ensure that all foods within the school come from nut-free facilities or vendors. If your child has allergies, be sure to include this in the Registration form and speak with your child’s teacher and/or the Religious School office personnel to determine which snack items are best for your child.

Please carefully read our snack policy, which is applicable to all grades.

Snacks will be provided each week by Beth-El. Staff (or designated volunteers) will purchase nutritious snacks for our students, as well as supervise distribution on a weekly basis. No other snacks will be allowed in the classrooms or in the Religious School wing. On special occasions such as Jewish holidays, Beth-El staff (or designated volunteers) may provide students food to highlight the holiday or celebration.

Afternoon Hebrew School Exception: If a parent desires to provide a snack or lunch for his/her child between Sunday School and Hebrew School (from 12:00 to 12:30 PM), it must be provided to only their child, and consumed in the Beth-El café located near the Gift Shop or a designated eating area as defined by the Religious School Staff. Please note that Beth-El does not permit shellfish or pork to be brought into the building.

HANDHELD ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Electronic devices such as mobile telephones, personal digital assistants, iPods, laptops, iPads, cameras, and videogame players are not permitted to be used during the hours of Religious School or Confirmation, unless specifically directed by the Faculty. Parents are encouraged to keep game items at home. If students choose to bring any electronic device to the Temple, the following policy will be enforced:

The power switch on the device must be turned “off” from the moment the student arrives at the Temple until the moment the student departs, unless directed by the Faculty. These devices may not be turned “on” for any purpose (to make phone calls, to take photographs, etc.), unless directed by a Teacher or Administrator. If a student chooses not to follow this policy, the device will be kept in a special basket in the Religious School office until it can be returned to the parents’ possession at dismissal.

TZEDAKAH AND TIKKUN OLAM

One of the many lessons we strive to teach our children is our role in repairing the world, *Tikkun Olam*. One of the methods we use to teach this is by asking children to bring *tzedakah* each week. *Tzedakah*, meaning “justice,” is often referred to as a gift of money given to a fund, which will aid in bringing justice to all. Each student, young and old, will bring *tzedakah* to help the class *tikkun olam* project and as a class, we will do *tikkun olam* projects inside and outside the Temple.

BETH-EL RELIGIOUS SCHOOL CURRICULUM **HANDS-ON, BRAINS-ON, HEARTS-ON**

“The study of Torah is equal to all the Mitzvoth because it leads to them all.” ~Mishnah

We at Beth-El Congregation seek to create innovative learning experiences for all ages and levels of observance that connect us to our tradition, to each other and to Torah. We believe in exploring the relevance of each subject learned to the lives of our students. Wherever possible we employ hands-on activities and the use of primary sources in the search for personal meaning about being Jewish, and how they connect to God and the Jewish people.

Through active life-long engagement with our texts, history, rituals, music and arts, we aspire to grow continuously as individuals, as members of the Jewish community and as citizens of the world.

By approaching Mitzvot within the context of studying and understanding, our actions become more meaningful and purposeful, and foster our desire to learn more. Mitzvot strengthens our connections to Judaism, and enlivens our homes, infusing them with the sights, sounds, and tastes of our traditions.

We appreciate the breadth of Jewish experience and culture, and recognize that there are many paths that lead each of us to spiritually fulfilling lives. We seek learning that inspires us, that matters to us, and that affects how we live each and every day.

Our learning roots us, and excites us, but it also challenges us to think critically. We respect diversity of thought and our approach to learning reflects Beth-El’s egalitarian Reform philosophy. We are committed to creating an environment that is comfortable and welcoming for all learners. For a complete list of the curriculum for all ages and classes, please go to:

<http://bethelfw.org/education/education1/curriculum>

HEBREW PROGRAM

All students 4th through 6th grades are required to attend Hebrew school if they wish to have Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony.

Hebrew is an ancient and sacred language spoken by Jews around the world and through the ages. Learning Hebrew is one way to connect with our heritage and understand what being a Jew means. Hebrew links Jews of all places and generations. We hope to foster love and appreciation of Hebrew as a living language as well as the classic language of prayer and Torah.

Student Goals:

1. Learn the Hebrew alphabet and vowels—orally and in script writing.
2. Master prayers (main goal), which means that a child can read a prayer fluently and error free, understand key words and concepts, and understand the general meaning of the prayer and where it fits in the service.
3. Understand the structure of Friday night and Saturday morning services.
4. Strengthen students' Hebrew reading fluency by learning decoding skills and associating the words of prayers with stories and pictures.
5. Learn Shabbat and Holiday blessings.
6. Use their Hebrew names.
7. Use simple conversational Hebrew (reading and writing) using booklets called *Ulpán*.

For a complete list of the Hebrew curriculum for all ages and classes, please go to:

<http://bethelfw.org/education/hebrew-school>