



Parent Handbook • 2022-2023 • 5784

Contact Information

Main Religious School Office: 215-646-7417

Contact Aaron Nienshultz, Director of Religious School, 215-646-5806 x232 aaron@bethor.org, for questions about curriculum, our B'nai Mitzvah program, school philosophy, inclusion, help with registration, or to share comments or feedback.

Contact Jillian Peskin, Director of Member and Youth Engagement, jpeskin@bethor.org for questions about membership

Contact Rachel Shapiro, rshapiro@bethor.org, for questions about youth programming.

Contact Sharon Carlin, scarlin@bethor.org, for questions on Bar or Bat Mitzvah scheduling.

Religious School Philosophy

We at Congregation Beth Or consider the educating of our children to be among our primary objectives. We seek to turn out sincere, committed and dedicated Jews in order to ensure the survival of the Jewish people and of our heritage.

We, as Jews, share an outstanding system of moral values and culture which have endured for four thousand years and which are as relevant to our lives today as they were when our people began. Our program transmits these ideals and ideas in numerous exciting and creative ways. By providing a loving and supportive atmosphere in which our children can learn about Judaism, we hope to instill in our students a sense of pride in what they are and a feeling of responsibility for the continuation of the Jewish people.

Parents play important role in our educational process. Our parents are given the opportunity to participate in many facets of their children's Jewish education. Through family education programs, parent specials, worship services, and home observances parents and educators become partners in the important task of creating strong Jewish identification.

School Policies

Behaving Like a Mensch

In order for all of our students to have a chance to study and grow in a Jewish environment conducive to learning, we aim to infuse our school with *derech erez* – respect, good manners, menschlichkeit. We will encourage and reward good behavior while limiting inappropriate behavior. We will try to teach our students to be responsible for

the choices they make in conducting themselves, by implementing consequences for their bad choices. Our Brit Kavod, code of conduct for good behavior, is simply a list of rules for our school. These will be discussed with the children on the first days of school. We expect our children to remember that they are in school as well as in the synagogue, and that they extend to the rabbi, cantor, teachers, and students the same courtesy and cooperation that they receive.

Beth Or Religious School Brit Kavod • Code of Conduct

I will abide by expectations, guidelines, rules and regulations established by the synagogue and school.

I will behave in a manner that does not interfere with the rights of others, including: throwing objects at others, pushing others, harassing others, bullying others or acting in any manner that may cause harm to another individual.

I will not disrupt the class with extra talking or joking and will behave properly so that all may learn as much as possible from teachers and from each other.

I will avoid using profanity and other inappropriate language.

I will dress in a reasonable and appropriate manner that does not distract others from learning.

I will behave in a respectful manner during school worship services in the Sanctuary.

I understand that it is my responsibility to see that I treat the synagogue with the dignity and respect it deserves.

I will not leave the classroom without permission from the teacher.

I will participate actively in all classroom activities and programs.

I will refrain from using any personal electronic devices during class time, including my cell phone.

I understand that I will be responsible for any damage, of any sort, that I may cause.

I have read and understand the Beth Or Religious School Code of Conduct and am willing to abide by its guidelines, realizing that if I am unable to do so, my parents or guardians may be called and I will have to meet with the Rabbi and/or the Educator.

Cell Phones

Students should only use cell phones at the express direction of their teachers. We make every effort to include technology in the classroom in a meaningful way, and if necessary, we'll collect phones so that they're not a distraction.

Food in the Classroom

Food can be a fun aspect of classroom culture, and we all know the role food plays in Jewish life. At the same time, food allergies mean that food can be a difficult question in today's classroom. Remember that we do not allow nuts into our classrooms, even though the building is **not** nut-free. We will inform you a week ahead of time if there will be food in your child's classroom.

Guidelines for Mid-Week T'filah Services

T'filah meets every week and acts as a prayer lab to give students the chance to put what they've learned into practice. T'filah is usually separated between 3rd and 4th grade, and 5th and 6th grade. We work hard to ensure that our Hebrew school T'filah services provide an opportunity for all of us to have a positive, meaningful worship experience and to build a sense of connection and community within our school. Students should follow along in their copy of *Mishkan T'filah* or in one of the blue siddurim if they don't have their own. Students should be reading and chanting the prayers and singing any songs. Students will be dismissed at the end of the service.

PA-Mandated Clearances and Training

All faculty, staff, and volunteers over the age of 16 need to complete PA-mandated clearances every five years: PA Criminal Background check, PA Child Abuse Clearance, FBI Background Check, National Sex Offender Clearance, and Mandated Reporter training. As well, we will have yearly refreshers on some topics during one of our yearly professional development sessions. Each year, all faculty, staff, and volunteers MUST attend these training sessions to maintain their knowledge of appropriate behavior.

Religious School Attendance Policy

Judaism is a central part of our children's identity and family life. Regular religious school attendance enables our students to learn and grow. Frequent absences disrupt learning and hinder our young people and our school from succeeding. Please inform the Director of Religious School if your child will not be attending class; we will reach out after the third absence to check in.

- If students miss sessions, teachers may assign make up work. Please be in touch to determine what work should be completed.
- If students miss more than 20% of class in a semester and do not make up the time they have missed, their bar/bat mitzvah date may be in jeopardy.

Registration, Placement, Eligibility for Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Parents must be members of Beth Or in order to enroll children in our school program. After parents register students through our online registration system, students are assigned to their classes. If there is a choice of sessions involved, assignments are made on a first come, first served basis. If children are registered late, and all classes are full, the professional discretion of the staff will determine placement.

If a student enters the Religious School after third grade, the student must meet with Rabbi Marx for an assessment and Hebrew placement before the student will be given a bar/bat mitzvah date.

A child must complete four years of religious school, including Hebrew and Sunday school, in order to be eligible for bar or bat mitzvah. They must attend religious school regularly – 80% of the time – for the four years prior to their date. Beth Or may, at our discretion, revoke the bar or bat mitzvah date if families do not comply with this policy.

School Closings

Student safety is our paramount concern, so on occasion it may be necessary to close school due to adverse weather conditions. School closings will be publicized using our OneCall system to email and phone, on the Beth Or website, and on Facebook.

Tzedakah

Tzedakah is a foundational notion in Judaism, and classes will collect tzedakah money both on Sundays and mid-week.

Family Shabbat

The first Friday of each month has been scheduled as Family Shabbat. Services begin at **6:30 p.m.**, early enough so young children can attend. Students should report at 6 pm for warm-up in the Gitlin Sanctuary unless otherwise notified. Our Family Shabbat dates for the year:

Friday, 3/3/2023: K, 1, 2 Shabbat

Friday, 12/2/2022: 3rd Grade Shabbat

Friday, 5/5/2023: 4th Grade Shabbat
Friday, 11/4/2022: 5th Grade Shabbat
Friday, 2/3/2023: 6th Grade Shabbat

Friday, November 5, 2021: 5th Grade Family Shabbat
Friday, February 4, 2022: 6th Grade Family Shabbat
Friday, March 4, 2022: K, 1st, and 2nd Grade Family Shabbat
Friday, April 1, 2022: 4th Grade Family Shabbat
Friday, May 6, 2022: 3rd Grade Shabbat

Family Education Schedule

The Shema, the central prayer of Judaism says: *“and you shall teach them (the mitzvot) to your children.”* Our Family Education Programs are designed to empower and enable parents to teach their own children about Judaism, just as they teach them about so many other aspects of life. We believe that Jewish learning and our way of life are valuable for people of all ages and we hope that by learning together, that we all are brought closer to God, *mitzvot* and holiness. Each grade will have an opportunity for parents and children to learn together. Family school dates may change based on discussions with grade-level teams. Changes will be communicated immediately.

Sunday, 11/6/2022: 6th Grade Fam Ed
Sunday, 12/4/2023: K Fam Ed
Sunday, 1/22/2023: 3rd Grade Fam Ed
Sunday, 1/29/2023: 1st Grade Fam Ed
Sunday, 3/19/2023: 5th Grade Fam Ed
Sunday, 3/12/2023: 2nd Grade Fam Ed
Sunday, 3/26/2023: K, 1, 2 Model Seder (students only)
Sunday, 4/30/2023: 4th Grade Naming

Early Dismissal

Students requiring early dismissal must bring a note from a parent stating the reason for the early dismissal, the time the student will be leaving school, and the person who will be picking up. This note should be brought to the Director of Religious School before class to be initialed.

Safety Procedures

The doors to our building are unlocked for a brief window during Sunday and Hebrew school. Please bring your door fobs or cards to make sure you can enter the building, and if you need a card, please contact the front office.

Evacuation Routes

In case the building must be evacuated, please use the safest, most direct path out of and away from the building. We have several rally sites for people to meet at: on the grassy island outside of the main entrance, by the ponds, and in the lower parking lot by the Center for Early Childhood Education. The last two sites are marked with metal signs that say Evacuation Assembly Area.

In case we need to vacate the synagogue campus, students will follow their teachers to the Horsham Clinic, and Beth Or administrative staff will dismiss students directly to parents from the Horsham Clinic’s gym.