

Temple Sholom of West Essex 2023-2024 Religious School Parent Handbook



"We're more than a congregation, we're a family."

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Mission Statement

Our Educational Mission Statement

At Temple Sholom, we are committed to educating our children so that they will:

Be proud to observe Jewish traditions and learn Torah

Enjoy celebrating our holidays (*Avodah*)

Be responsible and care for others (*Gemilut Chasadim*)

Educational Goals

JEWISH IDENTITY

- To feel pride in their Jewish heritage
- To integrate Judaism into their daily lives
- To engage with practice and the people of Judaism throughout their lives

GOD

- To form a personal understanding of God that reflects Jewish teachings
- To value the connection between God and the Jewish people

TORAH

- To understand that the *Torah* is the key narrative of the Jewish people
- To identify central themes and messages and integrate them into their lives
- To become connected to the Torah by learning about our Jewish ancestors

KLAL YISRAEL (the Jewish community)

- To build connections to the land of Israel
- To participate and engage in programs and activities that connect them to the Jewish people around the world

HOLIDAYS

- To understand the Jewish calendar through the study of Shabbat and holidays
- To become familiar with the rituals and customs of Jewish holidays
- To learn and comprehend Jewish ritual symbols
- To participate and celebrate Shabbat and holiday observances both at home and in the sanctuary as part of our community

JEWISH VALUES

- To understand the important values and *mitzvot* that have guided our people in the past and to make choices based upon that value system
- To understand the unique Jewish view that *mitzvot* are the commandments that help us repair the world (*Tikkun Olam*)

FAMILY

- To participate in congregational activities and become a vital part of our community
- To be active partners with the school and encourage Jewish learning at home

HEBREW and PRAYER

- To achieve competence in prayer reading
- To become familiar with the structure of the Shabbat services
- To attend and participate in Shabbat services several times a year
- To value and practice prayer (*Tefillah*)
- To find ways to feel personally connected to prayer

Staff

We welcome and appreciate your partnership in our children's education. Please see below the contact information for our staff. If you have an urgent matter that requires an immediate response, please contact the school office at 973-239-1321 or email [Shari Rothstein](mailto:Shari.Rothstein@sholom.net).

Cantor Wright	Tefilot, B'nai Mitzvah	cantor@sholom.net
Rabbi Groffman	J*Connect: Confirmation	rabbi@sholom.net
Shari Rothstein	Director of Congregational Learning	educator@sholom.net
Juliet Barr	6th Gr Hebrew, PREP Online	juliet.barr18@gmail.com
Alex Solomon	2nd Grade	veritas204@aol.com
Meryle Handler	7th Gr Jewish Studies	tayktwo@yahoo.com
Boaz Kimelman	4th & 5th Gr Hebrew & 4 th Gr Jewish Studies	boaz@boazdesignllc.com
Gabi Levin	3rd Gr Hebrew & PREP Online	gabifaye22@gmail.com
Cara Moroze	4th & 5th Gr Hebrew & 5 th Gr Jewish Studies	cara.moroze@gmail.com
Jillian Reich	Inclusion Coordinator	jillianmreich@gmail.com
Jacob Savitt	7th & 8th Gr	jdsavitt@aol.com
Debbie Weiner	K/1st & 4th & 5th Gr Hebrew & 4 th Gr Jewish Studies	dakossonweiner@gmail.com

Youth Groups:

TaSTYKef! (fun!) — K-5th Gr Youth Group

Gabi Levin gabifaye22@gmail.com

Club 678 — 6th-8th Gr Youth Group

Juliet Barr tastyjr@sholom.net

Temple Leadership

Josh Burch	Co-President	jwburch@yahoo.com
Laurie Levin Goodstine	Co-President	laurieleeelevin@gmail.com
Sarah Blaine	VP of Education	sblaine@rac.org

Religious School Hours & Calendar

K - 3 rd Grade	Tuesday 4:00 to 5:45pm
4 th & 5 th * Grade	Wednesday 4:00 to 6:00pm
6 th ** & 7 th Grade	Wednesday 6:00 to 8:00pm
8 th Grade	Gesher meets 2x/month on Wednesdays 6:00 to 8:00pm
9 th -12 th Grade	J*Connect meets at various times depending on program/class
12 th Grade Confirmation	Wednesday 6:00 to 8:00pm, Dec - March

* 5th Graders also have a 20-minute Online Hebrew Lesson outside of Wednesday from Jan-May (see 5th Grade)

**6th Graders also have a 20-minute Online Hebrew Lesson outside of Wednesday nights (see 6th Grade)

Our Religious School calendar can be found in Google by [clicking here](#) and it is downloadable.

Parent Lounge

When K-5th Gr Religious School is held in person we have a Parent Lounge on Tuesdays 4:00 to 5:45pm and Wednesdays 4:00 to 6:00pm.

Parents are welcome to hang out, relax, work on a laptop and/or socialize with other parents. Come stay the entire time your child(ren) is/are in Religious School or just for a bit before pick-up time. There is coffee available.

Education Committee

This committee partners with the Director of Congregational Learning, clergy, and lay leadership to examine and enhance our current offerings for youth learning and engagement. Together we will ensure the success of our K-12 Jewish education programs while supporting the work of the Religious School and the youth programs. Committee responsibilities may include strategic planning, family programming, social action, event planning, policy evaluation and fundraising. This committee meets monthly. To get involved contact the [Director of Congregational Learning](#).

K-5th Grade Hebrew | עברית

Hebrew is the sacred language of the Jewish People. The goal of our educational program is to enable each child to engage in prayer with confidence and understanding.

Kindergarten - 2nd Grade

- Our youngest students can see Judaism as something that invites their senses coupled with physical movement to engage with Judaism in a natural inviting way. **Hebrew Through Movement** (HTM) introduces Hebrew in a playful and meaningful way, creating a positive first link between children and Hebrew. Students participate in Tefillah/Shira (prayer and singing) with our Cantor.

3rd - 5th Grade

- We engage our students in learning the alef-bet and prayers using a variety of digital and print materials, including music and videos and interact through mediums that they enjoy. We strive to enhance learning and help students make meaningful connections. During Religious School they participate in Tefillah/Shira (prayer and singing) with our Cantor.

Home Practice

As is the case with learning any new skill, successful Hebrew learning requires regular practice. To maximize the students' Religious School experience, we offer the following guidelines regarding home practice:

- Studies indicate that brief and frequent review is most effective in leading to success with language learning. Students in 3rd – 6th grades should spend at least 15 minutes, 3-4 times per week, on their Hebrew studies.
- Attendance with your child at Friday night or Saturday morning services will also go a long way in reinforcing what your child is learning, as well as put it into context and practice.
- Even if you cannot read Hebrew, you can still listen to your child read and give encouragement. You could even ask your child to help you learn to read Hebrew.

Resource for Home Practice

- [Hebrew Practice @Home](#)

K-5th Grade Jewish Studies

We offer a fresh approach to Jewish education by using technology, short videos, music, texts, stories, and activities to make the learning engaging for our students. Throughout the year students will learn about the holidays, Torah, history, and Israel all through the lens of Jewish values (see below).

Our students will:

- Be empowered to live meaningful Jewish lives by connecting lessons to real-world scenarios, helping them apply Jewish learning to their daily lives.
- Develop a positive Jewish identity, allowing them to explore their own personal connection to our heritage.
- Acquire important tools and develop social-emotional skills that they can apply in all of their interactions.

Kindergarten - 2nd Grade Jewish Values

Jewish Values	הכרת הטוב Hakarat Hatov Recognizing the Good	הכנסת אורחים Hachnasat Orchim Welcoming Guests
בקור חולים Bikur Cholim Visiting the Sick	תודה Todah Thanks	צדקה Tzedakah Giving to Help Others
ארץ ישראל Eretz Yisrael The Land of Israel	כל תשחית Ba'al Tashchit Do not be wasteful or destroy	אומץ לב Ometz Lev Courage of the Heart
שלום בית Shalom Bayit Peace in the Home	השבת אבידה Hashavat Aveyda Finding Lost Objects	בצלם אלהים B'tzelem Elohim In God's Image

3rd-5th Grade Jewish Values

Curriculum Values						
						
Teshuvah תשובה	B'tzelem Elohim בצלם אלהים	Gevurah גבורה	Achrayut אחריות	Hakarat Hatov הכרת הטוב	Koach Hadibbur כוח הדיבור	Shalom שלום

6th Grade Program

6th Grade

Wednesdays, 6:00-8:00pm; with pizza dinner; Plus 20 min PREP Online outside of Wednesday nights

Jewish Studies

- The 6th graders spend the majority of their Jewish Studies class learning about the Holocaust.
- In addition, classroom experiences will relate to the life issues of a pre-teen as they prepare for becoming B'nai Mitzvah.

Hebrew

- Students participate in a weekly Hebrew class where they will discover the meaning of prayers and how relatable they are to their lives.
- Tefillah with our Cantor is also part of the 6th grade program on Wednesday nights
- **6th Grade PREP Online** (PREP = Payer Reading Experience Personalized)
All 6th graders have a 20-minute personalized ONLINE Hebrew lesson weekly to work on reading and chanting prayers. These lessons are in addition to Wednesday nights and help the students:
 - ▶ Build confidence
 - ▶ Polish the skills needed to be prepared to work with our Cantor for B'nai Mitzvah lessons
 - ▶ Benefit from personalized lessons that meet their learning styles

7th Grade Program

7th Grade

Wednesdays, 6:00-8:00pm; with pizza dinner

Jewish Studies

- The 7th grade program focuses on Israel: the land, the culture, the art, the history and the language.
- In addition, 7th graders focus on the social, spiritual, and emotional elements of becoming a teenager: including, peer pressure, gender norms, self-esteem, and social responsibility. This curriculum integrates Jewish wisdom into lessons specifically designed for the developmental milestones that occur during 7th grade.

Hebrew

- Students continue their Hebrew studies with individual appointments with our Cantor.
- On Wednesday nights, students participate in Tefillah with our Cantor.

Gesher: 8th Grade Program



Gesher for 8th Grade

Wednesdays, 6:00-8:00pm; with pizza dinner

- Gesher (the Hebrew word for bridge)
As our middle school students bridge from B'nai Mitzvah to High School, we offer them Gesher which meet 15 times a year, approx. twice a month. Most of the time Gesher meets at Temple. On occasion they will meet at a different location.
- The 8th graders may cook some Jewish favorites, work on a Mitzvah or art project together and engage in important conversations around relevant events and issues happening in our world today.
- **MADRICHIM:** 8th Graders have the opportunity to work as Madrichim Teen Leaders in the Religious School, guiding our younger students toward a positive Religious School experience. The Madrichim provide assistance in the classroom and act as mentors to our younger students. Madrichim can also assist with Tefillah, work in the office or shadow a student with a disability or learning challenge. Leadership training, supervision and resources are provided. Students can be paid or earn community service hours. Madrichim work on Tuesdays 4:00-5:45pm or Wednesdays 4:00-6:00pm.

8th Graders can also participate in many of the J*Connect programs, see below.

J*Connect: 9th-12th Grade

J*Connect, a teen Jewish Experience for 9th Grade-12th Grade

Meets on a variety of days/Times (depending on the program)

J*Connect, is TSWE's teen Jewish experience focused around the values of Leadership, Social Action, Education, and Community.

- Teens have the choice to participate in a variety of programs offered throughout the year.
- Programs, classes, and events will take place both inside and outside of the temple and online.
- **CONFIRMATION FOR 12TH GRADERS** Seniors will spend time preparing for college as a Jewish student. Class meets Dec-March for approx. 15 weeks. They will learn about Zionism, the creation of Israel and some of the major issues Israel faces. They will look at the meaning of Jewish prayer and how they relate to prayer as they prepare to lead Confirmation Shabbat services in the spring.
- **MADRICHIM:** J*Connect teens have the opportunity to work as Madrichim in the Religious School guiding our younger students toward a positive Religious School

experience. The Madrichim assist in the classroom and act as mentors to our younger students. Madrichim can also assist with Tefillah, work in the office, or shadow a student with a disability or learning challenge. Leadership training, supervision, and resources are provided. Students can be paid or earn community service hours.

Madrichim work on Tuesdays 4:00-5:45pm or Wednesdays 4:00-6:00pm.

Our J*Connect offerings can be found by [clicking here](#).

Madrichim Teen Leadership Program

Madrichim for 8th-12th Graders

Teens have the opportunity to work as *Madrichim (plural)* in the Religious School. A *Madrich (male)*, *Madricha (female)*, or *Madricheh (non-binary)* is a student who guides younger students toward a positive religious school experience by demonstrating their involvement, their skills and their initiative. The *Madrichim* provide assistance in the classroom or online and act as mentors to our younger students. In addition to working in a classroom, *Madrichim* can assist with Tefillah, work in the office or shadow a student with a disability or learning challenge. Leadership training, supervision and resources are provided. Students can be paid or volunteer for community service hours.

Non-Binary	Feminine	Masculine
מַדְרִיכָה	מַדְרִיכָה	מַדְרִיךְ

Trips

Judaism is not just a classroom experience at Temple Shalom! Students and parents are invited to join us on excursions to places of Jewish interest.

Grades	Dates	Trip
4 th & 5 th Graders with parents	Sunday 10/29	Jewish Museum, NYC
6 th & 7 th Graders with parents	Sunday 11/19	Ellis Island, NYC

J*Family

We know that some of the most powerful, lasting Jewish memories children have are made with their families. J*Family was created to offer memorable, enjoyable, educational and celebratory programs for families.

Grades	Dates
K-3 rd Grade	Tuesday, 01/30, 5-6:00pm
4 th Grade	Saturday 03/16, 4-5:30pm
5 th Grade	Saturday 02/10, 4-5:30pm
6 th Grade	Wednesday 10/25, 6-8pm Wednesday 03/16, 6-8pm,
7 th Grade	Wednesday 01/10, 6-8pm

Youth Groups

TaSTY Kef! (fun!) | Temple Sholom Temple Youth

Grades: Kindergarten through 5th

Fun for our elementary school aged students. A chance to join together with their peers for social events with a Jewish theme.

Contact: [Gabi Levin](#)

Club 678

Grades: 6th, 7th, & 8th

Middle School students can connect with their Jewish peers by attending events and programs.

Contact: [Juliet Barr](#)

Jewish Summer Camp

Temple Sholom of West Essex is affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ). The URJ has regional and specialty summer overnight camps. First time campers at URJ or other Jewish overnight camp are eligible for a \$1000 camper grant through [One Happy Camper](#), sponsored by Greater MetroWest Federation. In our region, we have [URJ Camp Harlam](#), and the URJ specialty camps, including [URJ Six Points Creative Arts Academy](#), [URJ Six Points Sci-Tech Academy](#), and [URJ Six Points Sports Academy](#). You can also [click here](#) (to search for many wonderful overnight camps. Please contact [Shari Rothstein](#) if you want to talk more about Jewish overnight camp.

Communications

E-blasts

The Religious School sends out a weekly email to keep families informed. This email includes updates about upcoming events such as family programs and Family Shabbat services. In addition, the email features holiday information, current Jewish community events and helpful links.

Communication Hub

Each grade has its own Communication Hub hosted by Padlet. Religious School teachers post weekly communication through this hub and share the details of what your child is learning. They may pose questions that you can discuss at home and Hebrew teachers will post home practice. The Communication Hub has key contact information, a class roster which contains parent contact information for each student in the grade (great for connecting with other families), a link to our calendar, zoom links helpful links and documents. Please check for updates regularly.

[Kindergarten & 1st Grade Communication Hub](#)

[2nd Grade Communication Hub](#)

[3rd Grade Communication Hub](#)

[4th Grade Communication Hub](#)

[5th Grade Communication Hub](#)

[6th Grade Communication Hub](#)

[7th Grade Communication Hub](#)

[8th Grade Communication Hub](#)

[J*Connect \(9th - 12th Grades\) Communication Hub](#)

Temple Website - www.sholom.net

Please check the website for information regarding all of our activities and worship schedule.

Texting From TSWE

TSWE will be texting important information from this number: 973-834-8568. Please put this number in your phone as TSWE.

Social Media

The Temple has a public Facebook page AND a private Facebook group in which we post pictures from the Religious School, Youth Group events and more, throughout the year! Like our page and to join our private group, please search for "**Temple Sholom of West Essex**" on **Facebook** and click on "**Join Group**." In the private group, your request to join must be approved by our administration and anything that is posted remains private.

Progress Messages

All parents will receive Student Progress Messages twice a year via email. These progress reports are designed to let you know how your child is doing in Religious School.

School Closings

Whenever inclement weather forces the cancellation or early dismissal of classes in the Cedar Grove, Montclair and/or West Essex Regional Schools, the Religious School may be closed, or we may go online. An email will be sent to all families.

B'nai Mitzvah Meeting for 6th Grade Families

6th grade families are invited to join the Saturday morning service twice a year. The Saturday morning service begins promptly at 10:00am. Following the service, families will meet with Rabbi Groffman and Cantor Wright to further understand the meaning of Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Please remember you will be attending a service, and therefore, should be properly attired. The program should conclude by 12:30pm.

A reminder: these programs are a required part of the B'nai Mitzvah preparation.

Parents and students are expected to attend together. Dates will be announced during the school year.

Tzedakah | צדקה

One of the many *mitzvot* (commandments) we are commanded to fulfill is *tzedakah*. *Tzedakah* means “justice” and it is the collection of money or goods for charity that we regard as an important Jewish obligation to the community. The Religious School has the privilege of collecting donations to many different organizations. When Religious School is in person, we collect *tzedakah* weekly in Religious School.

Pasta Dinners

Several times a year, families join their child(ren) for a complimentary pasta dinner, immediately following K-5th Grade Religious School. This dinner, sponsored by the TSWE Brotherhood, gives everyone a chance to enjoy a meal together and socialize so we can enjoy the opportunity to be a community that gets to know each other and hear about each other's lives. You have the option of sponsoring a dinner for a special occasion, such as your child's birthday, etc. For 6th grade and up it is in place of pizza dinner. Dates will be included in our weekly email.

Hang Out @Home Shabbat

A chance to share Shabbat and a meal in the comfort of our homes! Families volunteer to host other families in their home for Shabbat. Together we sing Shabbat blessings, enjoy a pizza dinner, and get to know one another.

Shabbat & Shabbat Attendance

The first Friday of the month is our Family Shabbat Service which begins at 6:30pm. Each grade will participate in leading services with the Rabbi and the Cantor during the year. There will be a Congregational Dinner following each of these monthly Shabbat services. Our other Shabbat evening services begin at 7:30pm the rest of the month.

Grade K, 1, 2, 3	12/8 & 3/1
Grades 4 & 5	1/5 & 5/3
Grades 6 & 7	2/2 & 4/19
All Grades	10/6 Simchat Torah Family Shabbat
All Grades	11/3 Family Shabbat & Consecration of NEW Students

At Temple Sholom, we want our students to be comfortable at services and increase their appreciation for meaningful worship. As part of our Religious Education program, students are expected to attend *Shabbat* worship services either on a Friday night or a Saturday morning. Attending services helps to reinforce the prayer curriculum in our school by allowing the children to practice what they are learning, as well as provide an opportunity for students to join in as part of our Jewish community. Please see below for grade-specific attendance expectations:

Grade	Service Attendance Expectations
K/1 st	Attend a minimum of 1 service this school year
2 nd	Attend a minimum of 2 services this school year
3 rd	Attend a minimum of 3 services this school year
4 th	Attend a minimum of 4 services this school year
5 th	Attend a minimum of 5 services this school year
6 th	Attend a minimum of 6 services this school year
7 th	Attend a minimum of 7 services this school year
8 th - 12 th	Continue to join our community for worship through and beyond <i>b'nai mitzvah</i> preparation, complementing our TSWE worship experiences with NFTY <i>Shabbat</i> worship at weekend events.

High Holiday services & Hang Out @Home Shabbat do not count towards the completion of this expectation.

When you attend services, students/parents should fill out a Shabbat Attendance Form using the QR Code to get credit for attending the services.

Inclusion

We strive to create an inclusive learning environment within our mainstream Religious School classrooms. In-class support and additional help outside of class is available to our students who need alternative accommodations. *Madrichim*, teen teaching assistants, serve as one-on-one support as needed for individual students, and our Inclusion Coordinator will work with parents to provide modified instruction whenever possible.

Handheld Electronic Devices

Cellular phones, iPods, etc. must be turned off or silenced, and in some cases, placed in a basket on the teacher's desk until dismissal. The use of cell phones may be permitted if a teacher instructs the students to use them during class as part of their learning experience.

Text & Supplies

Your child may be given textbooks at the beginning of the year. If your child needs to bring them home for home practice, please be sure to return them to class the next meeting. If a textbook is lost, a fee will be charged. Students should come to class ready to work—this means that they should come with a pen, pencil, and notebook if necessary, and any other materials the teacher has requested.

Attendance Expectations

We look forward to seeing each student at every session. Class attendance is a vital element to learning and creating a sense of community. Students who do not attend regularly will have difficulty keeping up with the curriculum and the social component.

Please help us by notifying the [Religious School](#) via email, in advance if you anticipate an absence and notifying the [Religious School](#) via email as soon as possible of any anticipated absence, such as an illness.

Arrival & Dismissal

Arrival/Dismissal

All families are encouraged to park and come into the building to drop off and pick up their children. Please be aware that the only access into the building is through the front, main door.

Late arrival and early dismissal

While we realize that there may be times when it is necessary for your child to arrive late, or to leave early, please understand that this can be disruptive for the rest of the class. Whenever possible, please try to make other arrangements.

If your child must leave early, we ask that you send a note to the teacher or email the office indicating the time that you will be picking up your child. Please park your car and come to the office to sign your child out. For safety and security purposes, it is necessary that adults come into the building when picking up early.

Please help us ensure your child's safety:

- We request that parents park in the designated parking spaces in the parking lot.
- Please do not leave children in the car when coming in or out of the building.
- Please supervise your children on their way to and from the cars.
- ***Children should not be in the parking lot without an adult.***
- Please REDUCE SPEED coming in and out of the parking lot.

Behavior Expectations

Philosophy

We believe that each individual has:

1. The right to learn without interference from others.
2. The right to work with students and teachers in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.
3. The right to have one's personal property respected by others.
4. The right to be protected from physical harm.

Expectations of Behavior

"Do not unto another that which is hateful to yourself," taught Rabbi Hillel as noted in the Talmud, Shabbat 31a. As this is the basis of our discipline policy, we ask all of our parents, students and teachers to work together to support these expectations:

1. Students will be ready to participate in class activities.
2. Students will not disrupt any other student's participation in class activities.
3. Students will not touch other students in a manner that could be considered offensive or disruptive or use language that could be considered offensive or disruptive.
4. Students will not abuse the property of Temple Sholom or the facility, itself.
5. Students will behave in accordance with the spirituality of our sanctuary at all times.
6. Students will remain *in the building at all times*, from the time they are dropped off, until the time they are picked up. This means they cannot leave the school grounds at any time. If a student is discovered leaving the campus, parents will be notified *immediately*.
7. The following are prohibited: rudeness, stealing, vandalism, dishonesty, profanity and vulgarity, and fighting.