

# CONGREGATION DORSHEI TZEDEK SCHOOL

## FAMILY HANDBOOK



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## *Dear Dorshei Tzedek Families,*

When I began working at Dorshei Tzedek, I had never worked in a synagogue formally affiliated with the Reconstructionist movement. I began to read about Reconstructionist thought, including the work of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, the foundational thinker of the movement. Although his writing can be dense, I was especially struck by the timelessness and relevance of his thoughts about Jewish education. These lines from his journal around Passover time reflect so much of what we are trying to accomplish in our school:

What Pesach (Passover) gave the Jews, it did so mainly through the ritual of the Seder. The Seder is essentially a lesson in education... it is intended to point to the spirit in which a people must learn to educate its young. If we study the Seder from that standpoint, we note that it is intended to serve as a token of three important principles. Those principles are:

1. Education can and should constitute a religious experience
2. The parental responsibility for the education of the child should be prior to that of the state
3. The most important training which any education should afford should be a training in freedom. (Apr. 14th, 1943)

While Kaplan's terminology might sound a bit dated, his ideas still speak to what we hope to achieve at the CDT school today. Jewish learning should be an experience that moves our spirits. Parents' own experiences of Judaism — how they engage with it and with their children — is fundamental to their children's learning process. Finally, as in the Exodus story that is told at the Seder, ultimately, this learning is about freedom. I interpret that to mean that the Jewish learning experience should guide our children to engage with the real issues around living a meaningful, just and ethical life.

Just as, at the Passover Seder, we re-experience the mythic Exodus from Egypt, our school on Sunday mornings and Tuesday afternoons invites parents and children to make Jewish texts and traditions their own. Our goal is for children and adults to explore what it means to be Jewish today, how we should act in the world for ourselves and for others. Together, in Z'man Rishon (our opening assembly on Sunday mornings), in students' classes, adult learning and family education, we seek contemporary meaning in our rich tradition.

It's a big task, an important one — and we manage to have a lot of fun while doing it! This handbook contains a whole lot of information about how our school works, our mission and outlook, and how we carry that out. If you have any questions, please be in touch with me. I am always happy to speak and/or meet with you.

I look forward to learning and growing with you this year!

***Rabbi Shahr Colt***

dcl@dorsheitzedek.org

## SCHOOL MISSION AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The Dorshei Tzedek Religious School is committed to engaging children and parents in meaningful Jewish study and making Jewish values, ritual and spirituality come alive.

“On three things the world stands: on Torah, on sacred service and on acts of loving kindness” (*Pirkei Avot 1:2*). Our approach to Jewish learning is based upon this Rabbinic principle. Study of Hebrew and of Torah, celebration of holidays and Shabbat, and acts of *gemilut hasadim* (loving kindness) and *tikkun olam* (repair of the world) are all essential components of our students’ journeys towards becoming committed, caring Jewish adults.

### Design Principles

The Dorshei Tzedek school is only one part of our youth’s experience of Judaism at Dorshei Tzedek. We design our programs with the following principles in mind:

1. Encourage community building and foster a sense of belonging among all learners
2. Actively involve parents and be cross-generational
3. Take place in multiple settings (classrooms, home, synagogue, outside, etc.)
4. Use multiple learning modalities
5. Be rooted in meaningful learning experiences (celebrating Shabbat, engaging in social justice work, etc.)
6. Have an experienced sense of coherence between Dorshei programs (i.e., ritual moments, Hebrew school and holiday programs feel connected)



## ★ CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The CDT School strives to provide meaningful and engaging Jewish learning opportunities for all our participants. Our program balances a commitment to grounding students in Jewish tradition, culture and ethical commitments, while being guided by sensitivity to the individual gifts and needs of our community members- both teachers and students. Teachers are encouraged to bring their full selves and unique experiences of meaningful Judaism. Working with the congregation's rabbis, inclusion coordinator and the school's curricula, teachers shape each class to meet the unique group of students. Below you will find an outline of the curricular content for each grade.

### ***Inclusion***

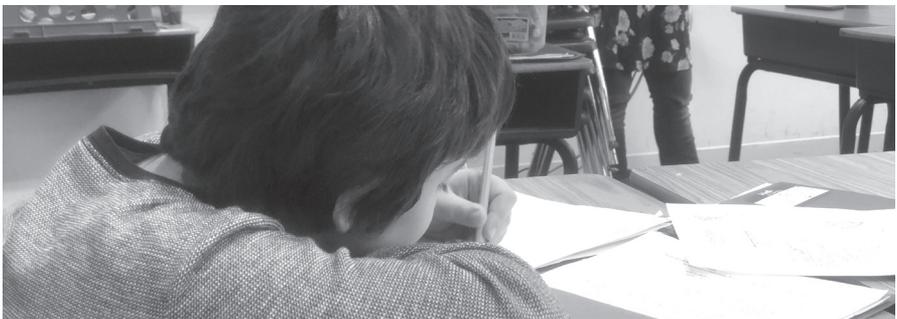
Students come to our school with a range of Jewish backgrounds and educational profiles. Our staff works with families to establish clear and attainable educational goals, and plans for meeting them, to ensure each student's pride in their Jewish learning and joy in the experience. Throughout the year, staff, teachers, parents and students work together to attune the curricular content goals with student needs and interests.

### **Nitzanim, Gan, Alef and Bet: (Age 3-2nd grade)**

The focus in these early years is to welcome young children into the CDT community, with a specific focus on warm and engaging programs to orient the children to the rhythms of Jewish life.

#### ***Nitzanim and Gan (pre-K and K)***

- "Mini-Minyan" starts the morning, a short parent-child service introduces ..... the students to basic tefillah (Jewish prayer) content
- **The Nitzanim curriculum "My Jewish World,"** introduces students to Jewish places, activities, food and symbols through song, creative arts, stories and games.
- **The Gan curriculum "Blessings"** introduces students to the concept of saying a blessing, and explores a range of activities, moments, and practices that are cause for blessing, such as doing something for the first time, sitting in a sukkah or putting up a mezuzah. Like Nitzanim, this program includes multiple learning modalities — creative arts, drama, storytelling, food, and music.



## **Kitot Alef and Bet** (grades 1-2)

- Begins with Z'man Rishon, led by Rabbi Toba, Rabbi Shahar and occasionally teachers or groups of students. Students and parents explore aspects of the morning service, upcoming holidays or other events pertinent to Jewish life.
- **The Alef Curriculum "Jewish Time"** introduces students to the cycle of the Jewish year, including the weekly cycle of Shabbat, lunar based monthly calendar, and the holidays that flow through the year. The students learn the stories and themes of the holidays, as well as the holidays' agricultural connections to the year's seasons in the land of Israel.
- **The Bet Curriculum "Jewish values"** introduces the concept of mitzvot as actions that connect people and make the world a better place. The students explore a variety of mitzvot such as welcoming guests, feeding the hungry, giving tzedakah, and caring for the elderly. This class includes several field trips to enact these mitzvot, such as volunteering with Family Table and visiting elders at Hebrew Senior Life. In Kita Bet students also begin their exposure to Hebrew letters and early reading skills.



## **Kitot Gimel, Daled, Hey and Vav** (Grades 3-6)

- Begins with Z'man Rishon, led by Rabbi Toba, Rabbi Shahar and occasionally teachers or groups of students. Students and parents explore aspects of the morning service, upcoming holidays or other events pertinent to Jewish life.
- **Sunday classes** focus on **Torah study** and creative or justice-focused projects connected to those Torah themes:
  - **Gimel-Bereishit:** Students formally begin their study of Torah by focusing deeply on the first stories in the Torah — including creation, Adam and Eve, and the Tower of Babel. They learn the *havruta* (partnership) mode of study, participate in projects focused on care for the earth through environmental activism, and help in the CDT Garden.

- **Daled-Bereishit continued / Jewish Family Tree:** Picking up roughly where the class left off in Kita Gimel, this class continues studying the book of Genesis, beginning with the story of Abraham and Sarah, and follows the stories of their children and grandchildren. The class explores the variety of characters in the family tree and their diverse experiences of God. Learning midrash deepens the students' experience of Jewish narrative process and the students engage in creative projects through drama, art or writing .
  - **Hey-Shmot: The Exodus story:** Continuing to build on their Torah reading skills of havruta learning, Torah and midrash reading, this class studies the second book of the Torah, focusing on the Israelites' experience of slavery in Egypt and the process of their redemption. The students connect their study to modern day slavery, engaging in tikkun olam projects around current labor issues such as organizing a fair trade chocolate sale and learning about the Immokalee workers' fight for fair wages.
  - **Vav-Introduction to Prophets and Rabbis:** Picking up at the end of the Torah, this class introduces students to a selection of stories from the Prophets with a view towards perspectives on leadership and justice. The fall focuses on the Israelite experience entering the land of Israel, including pictures of centralized religious life at the Temple. In the spring, the class is introduced to rabbinic figures and the transformation of Jewish spiritual orientation in the rabbinic period post-Temple. Following the theme of leadership, this class begins family programming with Rabbi Toba and Rabbi Shahar around the B'nei Mitzvah process.
- **Tuesday classes focus on Hebrew, Tefillah (prayer), and Jewish culture** through Rosh Chodesh celebration
- **Kita Gimel** students learn to decode Hebrew, and begin to learn prayers for Shabbat ritual (including Friday night home rituals and Havdallah). Students are expected to be able to decode Hebrew as they continue in the Tuesday program after Kita Gimel.
  - Cohort Tefillah focus:
    - **Daled:** Friday night ma'ariv service
    - **Hey:** Shabbat morning shacharit
    - **Vav:** Shabbat morning Torah service
  - Three components of tefillah are addressed individually through our Tuesday program:
    - *Tefillah as performance* — students learn to chant the prayers and become familiar with any particular “choreography” associated with them.
    - *Tefillah as Text* — students learn to read and understand basic Hebrew in the prayers, explore their themes, and are introduced to connections between Torah texts and the prayers.
    - *Tefillah as experience* — students explore different aspects of spiritual experience, such as modes of thanks, praise and awe, or intentionality and structure of spiritual practice.
  - *Rosh Chodesh* is observed once a month. Regular classes are suspended and students participate in cross age electives based around a theme of the new month. Electives present a variety of modalities to engage with aspects of Jewish culture, such as music, drama, dance, visual arts, cooking, or games.

## School Sustainability Project: Bambaggies!

Following on the school's progress towards creating less waste at snack, in 2019 our 3rd-6th graders worked with members of the sustainability team to make and promote "Bambaggies." These colorful cloth bags with reusable, sustainably-made dish and utensils are intended for use at kiddush and CDT meals to help the community reduce its use of disposables.



## Kita Zayin

- Students participate in weekly individualized tutoring sessions in preparation for their B'nei Mitzvah: learning to chant their Torah and Haftarah portions, lead the service, prepare a d'var Torah
- Weekly meetings on Sunday morning
  - Kita Zayin participates occasionally in Z'man Rishon, but often has their own group building over breakfast.
  - The 7th grade curriculum focuses on Jewish experience in the 20th century. Themes include diversity of Jewish life in pre-war Europe, Jewish immigration and experience in the United States, development of different strands of Zionist thought, the holocaust (Using a Facing History approach), modern Israel: cultural narratives and ethical dilemmas, movements of American Judaism.
  - Twice a year as part of the B'nei Mitzvah process, the group engages in family learning with Rabbi Toba or Rabbi Shahar, continuing the threads begun in Kita Vav.

## Tikkun Olam

Tikkun olam refers to Jews' obligation to "repair the world". Children participate in ongoing discussion and in specific *tikkun olam* projects as part of their classroom experience. These projects are designed to be an integrated part of the grade curriculum.

## Tzedakah

All grades collect money for *tzedakah* (righteous giving) at each class session. We request your help and support in teaching about the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. Our goal is to convey an understanding of *tzedakah* not as a voluntary act of charity, but as a fundamental Jewish responsibility to the community. Each class will decide where to donate the funds that they collect. This is an opportunity to begin to instill in our children an appreciation of the importance of giving as a way to help heal the world, and to help them understand the mitzvah of *tzedakah* as a central Jewish practice.

## YOUTH RITUAL EXPERIENCE

Developing a Jewish spiritual toolbox is a primary component of our youth programs. In addition to the tefillah (prayer) curricula that students experience in the classrooms, we provide students at all grade levels opportunities to engage with tefillah in age-appropriate ways. In addition to holiday programs, there are several opportunities for the students to experience Jewish prayer both during and outside of religious school:

- **Sunday Mornings:** Students and their parents in Nitzanim and Gan begin each class session with *mini-minyan*. Students and parents of Kitot Alef-Vav begin each Sunday session with *Z'man Rishon*, which often includes sections of the morning service.
- **Tuesday Afternoons:** The whole religious school participates in a ma'ariv (evening) service once a month on Tuesday afternoons from 5:15-5:45pm. As students become more familiar with the service components, they begin to take on leadership roles. Our hope is that by the end of Kita Daled, students are comfortable leading all the parts of the evening service (which they lead as a class for the whole community at All-Ages Shabbat in May).
- **All-Ages Shabbat:** One Friday a month, we gather for a potluck vegetarian dinner followed by a musical, all-ages erev Shabbat service. This service is for adults and kids of all ages (especially kids in pre-school through 4th grade). The service ends at 7:30pm with Oneg Shabbat (dessert).
- **Got Shabbat:** Approximately five times a year, Got Shabbat is an opportunity for the whole community to come together and have fun, learn together and find new ways to celebrate Shabbat. Beginning together with songs and blessings, adults and kids are then invited to choose from a panoply of activities, until we gather again to read a little Torah and close the service together. A kiddush lunch follows the service.
- **Family Meet-Up Shabbat Services:** During months when there is not "Got Shabbat," one Shabbat morning service will have an alternative, lay-led children's activity during the Torah service, as well as a variety of opportunities for children to take leadership roles in the main service.

## Service Attendance Expectations

All our students are encouraged to attend Shabbat services as frequently as they can. Attendance is invaluable in the process of becoming comfortable and confident with Jewish prayer.

In preparation for the students' leading their class service, we expect them to attend 3 services during the year prior to leading with their class:

- **Daled** – 3 All-Ages Shabbat services (first Friday of the month)
- **Hey** – 3 Shabbat morning services (not Got Shabbat days)
- **Vav** – 3 Shabbat morning services (not Got Shabbat days)

**Vav and Zayin:** Once a student is within 12 months of their B'nei Mitzvah date, the student is expected to attend Shabbat morning services twice per month.

# ★ SCHOOL LOGISTICS

## CLASS HOURS AND LOCATIONS

**Sunday** morning classes meet from 9:30am to noon at Jewish Community Day School (JCDS), 57 Stanley Avenue, Watertown.

**Tuesday** afternoon classes meet from 3:45 to 5:45pm at First Unitarian Society of Newton (FUSN), 1326 Washington Street, West Newton.

### ***When does each grade meet?***

Kitot Nitzanim and Gan (Pre-K and K) meet one Sunday morning/month

Kitot Alef and Bet (Grades 1 and 2) meet Sunday mornings

Kitot Gimmel, Dalet, Hey and Vav (Grades 3-6) meet Sunday mornings and Tuesday afternoons.

Kitah Zayin (Grade 7) meets on Sunday mornings.

## CONTACTING SCHOOL STAFF

### **Director of Congregational Learning,**

**Rabbi Shahar Colt** →

CELL: (617) 359-4871

EMAIL: [dcl@dorsheitzedek.org](mailto:dcl@dorsheitzedek.org)



### **Program Associate,**

**Lidia Prunte** →

*\*To reach the school during school hours, contact Lidia.\**

General Phone (at 2nd Church):

(617) 965-0330

Tuesday Afternoon Phone (at FUSN):

(617) 965-5443

Sunday Mornings (at JCDS):

(617) 833-9240 (*Lidia's cell*)

EMAIL: [officeassistant@dorsheitzedek.org](mailto:officeassistant@dorsheitzedek.org)



### **Inclusion Coordinator,**

**Amira Shulman-Kumin** →

EMAIL: [inclusion@dorsheitzedek.org](mailto:inclusion@dorsheitzedek.org)



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students need to participate in the program on a regular basis to achieve our educational goals, to progress in their learning and to create a cohesive educational community. We care about the well-being of your children, so please let us know if your child is going to be absent. In case of a prolonged absence, please contact us to discuss developing a plan to keep your child up-to-date in their class work.

Students are expected to attend a minimum of 75% of all classes in order to successfully complete the academic year. It is the policy of the school that if a student is absent for more than 25% of classes, they will be expected to make up missed work and to complete a special project in consultation with the Education Director.

All of our students enrolled in grades 3-6 are expected to attend the Dorshei Tzedek Religious School program for the full four hours per week. Please note that we will discuss alternative arrangements in the case of a student who has significant learning issues or needs special attention or support. We have adopted this policy for a number of reasons:

- For our congregation's educational goals, we feel that this is a minimum amount of time necessary to give our students some grounding in Torah study, Hebrew and prayer, and knowledge of Jewish holidays, practices and history.
- As a member of the Jewish Reconstructionist movement, we strive to meet the movement's standard of a minimum of four hours of instruction per week.
- Attendance of the program at the religious school is important not only for our educational goals, but also to give our children a sense of connection to their own class, to the school, and to the whole Dorshei Tzedek community. This is an intangible aspect of the program that we feel is invaluable as a community-building experience.

We aim to be as sensitive as possible to the pressures on our students from other areas of their lives. We also recognize that it can sometimes be an effort for parents to get children to religious school. We can attest to the fact that once they are here, most children are very engaged and have a very positive experience. As parents, you can assist by conveying to your children the importance of their time here and by modeling your own investment in Jewish life and learning.

Please refer to the **B'nei Mitzvah** section for further information about attendance policies.

## ARRIVING AT SCHOOL

Please make every effort to have your child(ren) at school on time. Late arrival/early departure is disruptive to the class and affects a student's educational progress. We ask that you make every effort not to schedule your child(ren) for activities and programs that are in direct conflict with our meeting times.

### **Sunday mornings:**

Students and parents can enter the building beginning at 9:15am.

- Students and parents in Nitzanim and Gan should proceed to the lower school meeting area for Mini Minyan by 9:30am.
- Students and parents in Kitot Alef -Vav should proceed to the beit midrash for Z'man Rishon by 9:30am.
- Students in Kitah Zayin meet in the Cafeteria at 9:30am.

**Tuesday afternoons:** Students may enter the building starting at 3:30pm. They should leave their coats and bags on the bench or stage in Parish Hall. Staff will be in Parish Hall as students gather, and students are encouraged to use this time to get some energy out!

## DISMISSAL AND AFTER-SCHOOL SAFETY

Please let us know if you need to pick up your child early from school, and notify the teacher when the student is leaving class.

**Children need to be picked up from religious school on time. If you are delayed for any reason, please notify the school.** You can reach the religious school office on Tuesdays at (617) 965-5443. If no one picks up, you can also call Rabbi Shahar on her cell phone (617) 359-4871.

**Parents must park their car and come into the building to get their children. For safety reasons, we do not allow students to go out to a car in the parking lot.**

On Sunday mornings, students are dismissed from their classrooms and parents should check out with the classroom teacher.

On Tuesday afternoons, students are dismissed from the Parish Hall on the first floor of FUSN. Parents should check out with the school staff member who is supervising dismissal.

Please note the following:

- If your child is part of an ongoing carpool, please notify the school, indicating which families are in the carpool.
- If your child will be routinely picked up by a babysitter, please provide the school with the sitter's name and cell phone number.
- In other cases, if a student is going to be picked up by anyone other than a parent, the school must be notified in writing (email is ok) prior to pick up. The person picking up may be asked to show identification.

## SCHOOL CLOSINGS

In case of closures due to snow, we will notify the community by email. Weather cancellations will be announced by:

- 1:30pm for Tuesday afternoon classes
- 7:30am for Sunday morning classes

Please note that for weekday classes, it is **not** our policy to automatically cancel when Newton public schools do. Because of the difference in time between when public school meets and when we do, there could be a change in road conditions, either for better or worse. It is ultimately a parent's choice whether or not to bring a child to religious school in inclement weather situations. If you think that conditions are such that it is not safe to bring your child, we are respectful of that decision.

## SNACKS

There is a snack time on both Tuesdays and Sundays.

**In the interest of reducing our communal waste, we ask that students bring a water bottle with them.** We will have some disposable cups available, but if we don't need to use them, this will greatly reduce our contribution to landfills. Water bottles may be kept at FUSN on Tuesdays, but **they must be brought each week to JCDS.**

**Sunday morning classes:** Parents take turns providing fruit and juice Sunday mornings. The beginning of the school information will include a link to the snack schedule for the year. For each family's snack week, parents will receive an email with instructions for what to bring and how to set up snack.

If you are not able to provide the snack on the date assigned, it is your responsibility to find another parent to provide it for that date and to inform the office of the change (email [officeassistant@dorsheitzedek.org](mailto:officeassistant@dorsheitzedek.org)). Parents will receive an email reminder the week before it is their turn.

*Kitah Zayin:* Students gather for a bagel breakfast and community building the first 30 minutes of class. Parents will receive information from the school office about this special breakfast at the start of the year.

**Tuesday afternoon classes:** The school will provide a mid-session snack for students in Kitah Gimmel-Vav.

**All regular snacks provided at the school are nut, wheat and dairy free.**

Sometimes there are programs or activities that includes food with wheat, dairy, or nuts in them. In such cases, all efforts are made to provide an allergen-free alternative.



## **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips can be an important and enriching part of a student's Jewish education. Different outings may be planned for the classes throughout the year. Parents will be notified of any field trips in advance and will be invited to chaperone the children or to assist with transportation. There may be fees or other costs involved in some field trips, which families are asked to pay. However, cost should not be a barrier to any child's participation. Parents should communicate directly with Rabbi Shahar about any concerns regarding costs.

## **EMERGENCIES**

In the event that your child becomes ill or is injured while at the religious school, we will make every effort to reach parents for instructions, and if unable to reach a parent, the person you designated in the event of emergency on your child's medical information form. If necessary, we will transport or have your child transported to the nearest hospital for care. Please be sure to keep your emergency information updated in the event of changes in contact phone numbers.

### SUNDAY MORNING ADULT PROGRAMMING

#### Parent Cafe

Each week, when the students go to class, adults are invited to the “Parent Cafe.” This parent-initiated cafe time is an opportunity to get a cup of coffee and schmooze with other CDT adults, catch up with a friend, or make a new one!

#### Adult Learning

The CDT School is not just for the children. Jewish learning is for everyone in the family. In fact, many of our Sunday morning adult programs are open to any adults in the CDT community, not just parents.

We prioritize adult learning alongside the children’s classes because one of the most powerful ways that children learn to enjoy engaging with Jewish life and learning is when they see their parents and other adults choosing it for themselves and enjoying it.

Over the course of the year we offer a wide range of programs for adults. Some are focused around student cohorts, to facilitate community building between parents and engage the adults around the themes that their children are encountering in the classroom. Other programs are open to anyone in the CDT community, and may be led by one of the CDT rabbis or community members. Some programs, such as Parenting through a Jewish Lens, runs multiple sessions. Other programs meet only once. Please refer to the adult learning flyers and school calendar for a listing of programs and dates.

**Note:** We expect parents to participate in the programs specified for their child’s cohort, and we hope you will find something exciting in the rest of the programs as well!

### STUDENT BEHAVIOR CHALLENGES

Jewish education is a spiritual, intellectual and social project. Our experience is that when behavior issues present themselves, they usually result from student discomfort in one of these areas. If challenging behavior arises, the teacher will consult with the assistant teacher, Inclusion Coordinator, and/or Director of Congregational Learning, as well as the student and student’s parents, to determine the core issue(s). Working together, we will determine what kinds of supports can help the student feel engaged and satisfied such that their behavior is conducive to the classroom learning for everyone.

### HOME HEBREW PRACTICE

We strive to use our limited time with the students for interaction and discussion. This works out well for Torah study and projects, but it is hard to learn to read Hebrew reading and prayers without some memorization work.

We introduce prayers and provide instruction about how to practice, but much of the practice happens at home. Teachers in grades 3-6 will notify parents of what Hebrew and prayers to practice each week. We expect 20-30 minutes of practice time a week outside of Hebrew school. If you have any questions or concerns, please be in touch with the teacher or Rabbi Shahar.

## SCHOOL/HOME COMMUNICATION

Communication between home and school is essential to a successful religious school experience. We send a Friday newsletter each week that highlights upcoming events, announcements, and links to information such as class lists.

Teachers in all grades will update parents regularly by email about class lessons and material covered, and will contact individual parents to discuss any questions or concerns they may have about your child's school experience. Likewise, parents are encouraged to contact the teacher or Rabbi Shahar with any ideas, questions or concerns about their child or the school experience in general.

## TRACKING STUDENT LEARNING

The Hebrew and Tefillah curricula build over time, so this is the area that it is most important to follow student progress. To this end, we hold parent-teacher conferences one Tuesday evening at the end of December. These conferences are short opportunities to check in about what the student has been working on, and identify any areas of concern. We track progress from there on an individual basis. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's learning, please be in touch with a teacher or Rabbi Shahar directly.

## CHILDREN'S EDUCATION COMMITTEE (CEC)

The CEC is composed of parents of students in the CDT religious school and Rabbi Shahar, the Director of Congregational Learning (DCL). The committee works with the DCL to help build and support a strong and engaged education program within CDT. The role of the committee is to support the ongoing and developing work of the school by collaborating with the DCL in three ways:

1. The CEC functions as an advisory group that supports the DCL's work by providing a parent group with whom she can discuss ideas/questions. This might be done to inform her own thinking, to collaborate on policy decisions for the school, to prepare for bringing programs into the larger parent community, or as a result of parents raising a question that needs to be considered.
2. The CEC is a venue for communication between parents and the DCL. As CEC membership is a public role, committee members may be approached with concerns that community members/parents want to discuss. CEC members also function as ambassadors to the school within the parent community, within the larger congregation and with prospective new members.
3. CEC members support the life of the school. This could include organization of social programs, facilitation of school events, logistical help, etc.

**Please contact** the CEC chairs at [CEC@dorsheitzedek.org](mailto:CEC@dorsheitzedek.org)

## CDT WEBSITE

In 2019, we were proud to launch a new version of the CDT website using a modern platform called ShulCloud. The platform is mobile-friendly and easy to navigate. Member-only areas allow users to update their profile, and pay for dues, donations, and school tuition online. Shulcloud houses the new CDT website and our database. Visit the website at our same URL: [www.dorsheitzedek.org](http://www.dorsheitzedek.org).

## ★ B'NEI MITZVAH PROCESS

### Vav and Zayin Family Learning

As families prepare for a child's becoming B'nei Mitzvah, there is a series of five Sunday morning family programs. Three programs happen during Kita Vav (6th grade), and two during Kita Zayin (7th grade). These programs guide families through the B'nei Mitzvah process, touching on themes of discerning what Judaism means to each student, what it means to become a Jewish adult, and engagement with tikkun olam. We expect at least one adult to participate in these programs alongside their child.

### B'nei Mitzvah Planning

Approximately two years before your child's 13th birthday, we will contact you to choose a date for B'nei Mitzvah. A year before B'nei Mitzvah families receive both a copy of *CDT B'nei Mitzvah Guidelines* and *CDT B'nei Mitzvah Logistics*. If you would like to review them before then, please contact the CDT office. One year before your child's B'nei Mitzvah we will contact you to start the tutoring process. All tutors are arranged through our school — please do not choose a tutor before this time.

It is important to note that families are required to be members in good standing of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek for two full years prior to the B'nei Mitzvah ceremony. Additionally, it is our expectation that a student will have been continuously enrolled in our religious school beginning no later than third grade and will have also participated in community activities, such as Shabbat services, family education programs, etc. Please refer to the *B'nei Mitzvah Guidelines* for more detailed information and for exceptions to this policy.

Please note that a student's special needs and abilities will always be taken into account; parents should contact Rabbi Toba to discuss appropriate modifications.

Also, to gain familiarity with our Shabbat morning service in general, and with the Reconstructionist service in particular, each student (along with a parent) is expected to attend Shabbat morning services twice a month in the year leading up to the B'nei Mitzvah.