



Temple Emanu-El

# **Religious School Curriculum And Policies 2020-2021**

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Temple Emanu-El's Religious School!

The 2020-2021 school year is going to be unique as we are in unprecedented times. The challenging circumstances in no way change our devotion to fulfilling the needs of every student and their families. Our entire staff is looking forward to an exciting year with amazing experiences and programs both virtually and in person when appropriate and safe. The following pages contain our school's curriculum, guidelines and other general information.

The Temple Emanu-El Religious School faculty recognizes the great responsibility parents have placed in our hands. Our dedicated staff prepares the students, from ages five through seventeen, for participation in the Jewish Community. It is our goal to familiarize our students, your children, with our Jewish history, values, language and traditions. This goal, however, cannot be ours alone. In order for us to successfully prepare your children for a lifetime in the Jewish community, we look forward to your continued participation and support.

I encourage you to read the handbook from beginning to end to familiarize yourself with our programs and policies, though not all are applicable depending on physical and worldly circumstances. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

I am looking forward to a fantastic year!

B' Shalom,

Lisa J. McNerney  
Religious School Director

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## **GOALS AND PHILOSOPHY OF TEMPLE EMANU-EL'S RELIGIOUS SCHOOL**

The goal of Jewish education within the Reform Movement is to deepen Jewish experience and knowledge for all Jews, so as to strengthen their commitment to God, their identification with the Jewish people, their involvement in the Temple, their participation in Jewish life, and their determination to live as Jews.

Furthermore, it is the aim of a Jewish religious education that every Jew should understand the history of the Jewish people, the basic concepts that unify Judaism and the various trends within it to the end that each Jew may willingly choose to be a part of that history and a bearer of the Jewish tradition.

The Principal, Rabbi, Cantor, and staff of the Religious School of Temple Emanu-El have organized our school to provide a variety of educational, cultural, and religious experiences for our youngsters. By enrolling your child in the Religious School of Temple Emanu-El, you are doing so with the understanding that your child will learn about all subject matters from the Jewish perspective. Through our curriculum including Judaic Studies, Hebrew, as well as Family Education programs, we strive to meet these goals:

- Impart knowledge of Jewish history and traditions
- Celebrate holidays, services and rituals
- Build Hebrew language skills that will enable our children to comprehend and participate in worship services
- Introduce modern conversational Hebrew
- Develop an understanding of Tanakh (Bible)
- Teach Jewish ethics, values including *tikkun olam* (social justice)
- Create an interest in Jewish current affairs in Israel and worldwide
- Develop a positive identification and commitment to Judaism

### **SCHOOL SCHEDULE**

K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade Tuesday 4:10-6:00

4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grade Monday/Wednesday 4:10-6:00

7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade Tuesday evenings 7:00-8:30

Confirmation Tuesday evenings 7:00-8:30

Special Education Wednesday 4:10-6:00

## CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM DETAILS

### Kindergarten and First Grade Two Year Curriculum

Our Kindergarten and First Grade class is a cyclical two year program. Students will be introduced to a wide variety of topics in a variety of ways over these two years. In the first year of the program the students will focus on the Jewish Holidays and Shabbat. The students will become familiar with key holiday objects, rituals, and the stories behind each holiday. In the second year of the program, the students will focus on what it is to be Jewish. They will explore different areas of their Jewish identity, such as the synagogue, Jewish symbols, Israel, and major lifecycle events. Each year the students will also be exposed to letter sounds, silent letters, names of letters, vowels, decoding, reading, writing letters, and an intro to the Four Questions.

### CURRICULUM OVERVIEW - SECOND TO SEVENTH GRADES

Beginning in the Second grade every class will have two components: Judaic Studies and Hebrew Curriculum. Each year they will focus in depth on a different topic of Judaic studies. The Hebrew curriculum consists of learning different Hebrew prayers and their meanings as well as Hebrew vocabulary. All students will participate in mini-services with the Clergy during class time to build upon their understanding and familiarity with the prayer service. Our program is also enriched by Jewish music and art. To build upon what is learned in Religious School and encourage parental involvement, Family Education programs will be held several times a year. Students are also encouraged to participate in our Temple's Youth Groups.

**Second Grade** Judaic Studies Our second grade program focuses on *Mitzvot* and *Gemilut Chasidim*. Over the course of the year the students will learn what a *Mitzvah* is, why *Mitzvot* are important, and explore different ways they can perform acts of *Gemilut Chasidim*. Hebrew Curriculum Students in second grade will become familiar with the Hebrew *Alef-Bet*. The Hebrew letters and vowels will be introduced to the students. Students will be able to demonstrate that Hebrew is read from right to left. Second graders will learn to read single syllable letter-vowel combinations and will also be introduced to a basic Hebrew vocabulary.

**Third Grade** Judaic Studies Our third grade program focuses primarily on Biblical stories, Biblical heroes, and influential Hebrew prophets. The students will be introduced to the Biblical stories as well as the weekly Torah portions. In addition they will learn in depth about the biblical characters, their families, and their influence on Judaism. The minor focus of the third grade will be the introduction to the land of Israel. Hebrew Curriculum In the third grade, the students will learn the letters and vowels of the Hebrew *Alef-Bet* as well as simple decoding skills. Students will also learn to write the Hebrew letters and vowels in block print. In addition to learning to read and write Hebrew, students will learn the prayers and blessings found on the third grade prayer list. Students in the third grade will be introduced to a variety of prayers and

blessings including, *Sh'ma, Bar'chu, Shehecheyanu*, Blessings over the candles, wine and challah, Kiddush, Shecheyanu, and the Four Questions. We will introduce modern conversational Hebrew.

**Fourth Grade** Judaic Studies Building a Jewish Identity; the goal of the fourth grade unit of study is to introduce students to the idea of Jewish community and help them to discover how our community brings us together, by connecting them to their own Jewish Identity. Students will also be introduced to the Jewish concept of time and explore the Jewish calendar and lifecycle; and how each of these celebrate important moments, providing a lifelong connection to our heritage, culture, and values. Hebrew Curriculum Over the course of the fourth grade the students will refine their letter and vowel recognition skills as well as their phonetic reading skills. Students will learn to read a variety of prayers and blessings including the full Kiddish, Barchu, Shema, and V'ahavta. We will review the previous years' prayers and continue to introduce modern conversational Hebrew.

**Fifth Grade** Judaic Studies Living Jewish Values; the goal of the fifth grade unit of study is to introduce and explore a series of core Jewish values. A series of these values will focus on the self, and a series of these values will focus on the family. For example, Individual Dignity (*K'vod Habriyot*), and what does it mean to have personal dignity. The students will explore Jewish values through the study of Jewish History. They will study The Early Israelites to American Judaism through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The students will consider how their lives compare with the lives of our ancestors, how each generation adapts Judaism to its time and place, and how the decisions of the previous generations influence our lives and our decisions. Hebrew Curriculum The students in the fifth grade will advance their Hebrew reading skills. The focus has moved away from decoding skills and will now be placed on reading accuracy and fluency. In addition to refining their reading skills the students will learn to read, chant, and understand the grade level prayer list. The fifth grade list includes: Avot V'Imahot, G'vurot, Kedusha. We will review the previous years' prayers and continue to introduce modern conversational Hebrew. Finally, students will begin learning trope.

**Sixth Grade** Judaic Studies Living Jewish Values (part 2); the sixth grade unit of study will continue and build upon Living Jewish Values from fifth grade. The sixth grade unit of study will explore a series of values that resonate with our people throughout history, in the stories we tell, and in the lives of many Jews. The current year's values will focus on our student relationships with peers. The second half of the year, the students will continue to learn about tolerance and acceptance through the study of the Holocaust. Students will discover the historical context of the Holocaust and events related to the Holocaust. The students will also carry out a group *tikkun olam* project in which they chose a way to help the community. Hebrew Curriculum While continuing to improve their reading accuracy and reading fluency, the sixth grade students will learn more advanced prayers and blessings while concentrating on the Shabbat services. The students will become more familiar with the Friday evening service, Saturday morning service, and the Torah service. The sixth grade prayer list includes; Blessing before Torah reading, Blessing after Torah reading, blessing before Haftarah reading, blessing after Haftarah reading. We will review the previous years' prayers and continue to teach modern conversational Hebrew.

**CURRICULUM OVERVIEW- JUNIOR CHAI  
SCHOOL (7th-8th grade) CHAI SCHOOL  
(9th-12th grade)**

Viewing the Bar/Bat Mitzvah as a step in the Jewish maturation process and not as the termination of one's Jewish studies, all post Bar/Bat Mitzvah students are expected to enroll in the Junior Chai School (7th-8th grade) and Chai School (9th-12th grade). Students participate in stimulating discussions of real life issues and go in depth into Jewish conceptions of these subjects. There is an important social component to Junior Chai School and Chai School in which all students eat dinner together and get to interact in an informal setting before class begins. Below is a sample schedule of a typical Junior Chai School and Chai School class:

7:00-7:30- Students eat dinner together

7:30-8:30- 7th-8th grade students participate in one class session

9th- 10th grade students participate in one class session

11th-12th grade students participate in one class session

There are times throughout the course of the school year, where all grades will be together. For example, holiday celebrations, whole school programming, and social action projects.

**Junior Chai School** The Junior Chai School class is a cyclical two year program. Over the course of the two years, Junior Chai School students will engage in and delve deeper into a variety of topics. Students will continue to be exposed to Modern Hebrew throughout the program. Israel will continue to be an area of curricular importance with a focus on Israel's historical and political forces as well as famous people that helped create the Jewish state. Students will explore and analyze how the historical and political forces have influenced the unrest in Israel, shaped the peace process, and how they affect Israel today. Students will also engage in Torah study, where the goal of the unit will be to analyze significant stories from the text, their role in our history, and how they relate to us today.

**Chai School** The Chai School yearly schedule will be divided into two sections. The learning content of one of these sections will be determined by the Principal and Rabbi (Core curriculum), and the content of the other will be selected by teenagers from an array of more 'fun' selections (electives), suggested by the Principal and Rabbi. Essentially, teenagers will have a choice of learning for half of their Chai School experience. Over the course of five years, students will engage in topics such as Israel, Teen Leadership, Social Action, Hot Topics, Comparative Judaism, Comparative Religions, Text Study, Torah, Life Issues, Confirmation preparation and study, and more. Chai School sections will run for approximately 5 weeks in length (2 core sections and 2 elective sections annually), with scheduled sessions in between for the entire Chai School class to meet, learn, and celebrate together.

**Confirmation** The students will study as a group with the Rabbi during the confirmation year. This scheduled time will be the student's elective for the confirmation year. The curriculum will cover Jewish texts, *Torah* and God. The class will have three components: seminars, independent study, and service to the community and the Temple. The culmination of the year's work will be the writing and leading of the Confirmation service on Shavuot. The structure of this class is an informal one in which students discuss and struggle with topical issues in an effort to develop their own set of morals and Jewish values. Our students round out their studies with a trip to Europe.

All students in Junior Chai School and Chai School will continue to be exposed to and participate in a variety of Social Justice programs and initiatives. One of these programs (open to 10th-12th graders) is with the Religious Action Center (RAC) in Washington DC. Other programs are incorporated into our annual yearly schedule (and some are in collaboration with FREESY and EESY). In addition, we will be engaging in a school 'twinning' program with an Israeli High School. This program will connect our school with a partner school in Israel. The goal of this initiative is to create authentic connections and relationships between our students with Israeli students.

## **RELIGIOUS SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL** – Arriving late and leaving early present serious disruptions to our religious school classes. It is important to make a concerted effort to get your child to class on time and to make sure that he/she remains for the entire session. Parents are requested to have students arrive no more than five minutes before class, and are requested to arrive promptly for pickup of students at dismissal time. All students must be transported to and from the Religious School. If an early pickup is necessary, please send a note with your child. Parents must first come to the Principal's office to sign out their child. Children cannot be dismissed until a parent or guardian arrives, and children are not permitted to wait unaccompanied outside the building. **No** child will be permitted to walk home at night. Should an emergency arise, please call the Temple office.

**ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SCHOOL** – All students are expected to attend ALL religious school sessions. Absence from a class by a student is considered excused for the following reasons:

- Personal illness
- Death in the family
- Other reasons approved by the Principal

Attendance procedures:

1. Attendance will be recorded each day.

2. A phone call by the parents to the Principal on the day of an absence is appreciated.
3. A note explaining the absence is required upon return of the student.
4. After two consecutive absences in K/1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and three consecutive absences in 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grades, the teacher or Principal will call the parent to verify the reason for absence.
5. Maximum number of absences in K/1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grades is 4/year and for 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grades is 8/year.

**MAKE-UP WORK** – It is the responsibility of the student and family to contact the school office or the teacher directly for make-up work. Absences beyond the limit set (as specified above) may also require, at the discretion of the Principal, tutoring at the expense of the parents. Make-up work for excessive absences (as specified above) and incomplete assignments must be completed satisfactorily before a student will be eligible for promotion to the next grade.

**ATTENDANCE AT WORSHIP SERVICES** – Parents are urged to accompany their child/ren to services as often as possible to reinforce what is being learned in school, and to help build a feeling of community within our Temple. It is also our experience that service attendance has a direct effect on the students' readiness and ease of preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah and for participation in the Jewish Community.

- Students in K-1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades are expected to attend at least 3 services of which a minimum of 1 must be on a Saturday morning.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students are expected to attend at least 6 services of which a minimum of 2 must be on a Saturday morning.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> graders are expected to attend at least 12 services of which a minimum of 4 must be on a Saturday morning.

In addition to Friday and Saturday Shabbat services, other services that may be counted toward the goal include Festival services (Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Purim, and Shavuot). It is our expectation that all children will attend High Holy Day services (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) so those holidays will not be included in the count.

Each student will have a card on file in a box at the Temple. At the end of each service, the student should retrieve his/her card and have the date marked with a sticker by the head greeter/usher. Then immediately return the card to the box. This card will represent the official attendance record. The attendance sheet can be kept at home for your own records and does not need to be returned to the teacher.

Services that will count toward your requirement must be attended between July 1 and June 30. All students who double their required worship attendance will be eligible for special recognition at the end of the school year.

As always, each grade will participate in one Friday night or Saturday morning service during the school

year. In addition, the whole school will participate in one Saturday morning service. It is an expectation that your child and family will be present at this service. These dates are listed in the school calendar distributed at the beginning of the school year. Please make a note of these dates.

Although it is our hope that the majority of the service requirements will be met by attendance at Temple Emanu-El of Edison, a couple of Shabbat services at other congregations may count towards your child's total. A signed note from the parents to the Principal should be submitted.

If the service requirements are not completed by the end of the school year, they must be completed during the summer AND an additional homework assignment consisting of a D'var Torah (Torah Study) for one of the weekly summer Torah readings must be presented to the Principal by the beginning of the next school year. B'nai Mitzvah service preparations will not begin until yearly service requirements (for grades 3-6) are satisfied.

**AMONG THE REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A BAR/BAT MITZVAH ARE (see Bar/Bat Mitzvah handbook for complete details):**

1. The student will have successfully completed consecutive study in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Temple Emanu-El. Any student transferring from another school/Temple, or seeking advanced placement, must present written documentation of courses taken, to the Rabbi and the Principal for review by the Religious School Committee.
2. The minimum age for Bar/Bat Mitzvah is 13 years old 3. Part of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is being comfortable in a synagogue setting. It is difficult, at best, to ask young people to lead a service that they are unfamiliar with as participants.
3. Students need to become fluent through active participation and are, therefore, expected to fulfill their services requirements as stated above.
4. In the course of our Hebrew program, the students learn to read, chant and understand the meaning of the various Hebrew prayers that are a part of our *Shabbat* worship, including: *Birkat Nerot* (blessing over the *Shabbat* candles), *Bar'chu*, *Yotzeir*, *Shema*, *V'ahavta*, *Mi Chamocha*, *Avot v'Imahot*, *G'vurot*, *Birchot Torah*, *Birchot Haftarah*, *Shehecheyanu*, *Chatzi Kaddish*, *V'Shamru*, *Nissim B'Chol Yom*, *Adon Olam*, Friday night and Saturday morning *Kiddush*.
5. A group community service project will be carried out in 6<sup>th</sup> grade with the participation of all the students with the assistance of the parents and teacher.
6. An individual community service project will be carried out by the student the year of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah under the guidance of the parents and advised by the Rabbi. Community service projects must be approved by Clergy in order to proceed.

**HOMEWORK** – As a way to reinforce what is being taught in Religious School, particularly Hebrew and prayers, teachers will assign the students weekly homework. Students are expected to complete these weekly homework assignments. Their completion will be reflected in their progress reports.

**PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFERENCES** – A progress report will be sent home twice a year. In the Fall of each year, parents are invited to Back to School Night. Parent-Teacher conferences are held after the mid-year progress report. However, parents should feel free to set up additional appointments with their child’s teacher as necessary. Students’ progress will be assessed at the end of each year to determine eligibility for promotion to the next grade.

**DISCIPLINE** – We at Temple Emanu-El believe that students are entitled to a wholesome classroom experience conducive to effective learning. The teachers will discuss appropriate rules of conduct with students on the first day of class. We encourage good communication among the Principal, the teacher, the students and the parents; therefore, parents are asked to become involved when disciplinary problems arise. The following guidelines have been adopted to deal with disciplinary situations. In cases where the situation is determined more serious, one or more of these steps may be omitted.

1. When a teacher determines that a student has gone beyond reasonable bounds of classroom behavior, the teacher will
  - a. Discuss the situation with the student.
  - b. Complete a behavior notification form about the incident, which will be given to the parent.
  - c. Inform the Principal verbally and in writing the day the incident occurs.
2. If the student continues to create a discipline problem
  - a. The student and teacher will meet with the Principal to discuss the situation.
  - b. The parents will be called by the teacher or Principal to inform them of this meeting.
  - c. A follow-up letter will be mailed home and the parent will be asked to sign and return it.
  - d. If necessary, the Principal will meet with the parents and the student to try to resolve the problems.
3. If all efforts to resolve the problem fail
  - a. The family and student will meet with the Rabbi, Principal and a representative of the Religious School Committee.
  - b. The Rabbi and Principal will recommend an appropriate action that may include, but not be limited to, the following: suspension from attending Religious School classes, suspension of the right of the student to Bar/Bat Mitzvah or Confirmation, or expulsion.
  - c. Additional independent study, tutoring at the parents’ expense, or other alternatives may also be recommended.

**CELL PHONE POLICY** – Cell phone use is not allowed in class.

**COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS** – The professional staff will make every effort to create a productive

and pleasurable atmosphere of learning for our children. Unfortunately, occasionally a situation might arise regarding areas of either a personal or an educational nature. Our aim is to encourage a positive and free flow of communication between parents and the Religious School. Accordingly, parents are asked to take the following steps if such a problem arises:

1. The parents should contact the teacher directly. The teacher will respond by telephone or in writing.
2. A conference can be arranged between parents and teachers.
3. If the situation is not resolved, the parents should contact the Principal.
4. If the problem cannot be rectified in this manner, the parents may meet with the Rabbi and Principal together.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM** – This wonderful program is for children with special educational needs. Children who are having difficulties functioning in the regular classroom because of physical, emotional, or neurological disabilities, can find a place here in our school community. This class meets on Wednesday and is taught by a special education teacher.

**TUTORING PROGRAM** – We want all of our students to be able to read Hebrew fluently and to feel good about themselves and about religious school. To this end, parents of children who have Hebrew reading difficulties during the year will be notified as soon as the problem is apparent. School tutoring by our student aides, tutorial teachers, and/or home tutoring, will be recommended in order to help a child reach grade level. If home tutoring is needed, a family will be sent a list of home tutors and it will be the parent's responsibility to contact one of them and arrange to have the child tutored at a time other than regular school hours. *If a student enters the religious school after third grade and has no previous or recent Hebrew training, it will be at the discretion of the Religious School Committee, the Clergy and the Principal to determine an appropriate plan for that student.*

**TZEDAKAH** – (The collection of funds for the needy). Tzedakah will be collected **at each session** and we hope you will encourage your child to give of their own money. The funds will be held by the school and each class will have a say in deciding which charities receive the funds. We strongly recommend all students participate in their Tzedakah Fund and the community service projects. Tzedakah and the participation in community service projects teaches the Jewish value of concern for others through sharing and doing.

**CLASS TRIPS** – When class trips are scheduled, they will be at minimal cost. We believe they enhance the students' Jewish identity and education, and are worth the time and effort involved. In case of financial difficulty, please contact the Principal or Rabbi.

**SUPPLIES** – Students must come to every class prepared for school with writing implements, loose-leaf paper, and their assigned books. Other supplies may be requested by the teachers. Parents are responsible for replacing any lost books.

**CONFIDENTIAL FORM** – Our school is concerned with the health and well being of our children. Any personal situation that could affect the attendance and performance of the child should be brought to the Principal's attention. The Confidential Form that was sent to the parents of each student prior to the beginning of school **must** be completed and signed before the child will be permitted to attend school.

**EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING** – Should the Edison or Metuchen Public School system be closed or have early dismissal, there will be no afternoon Religious School classes. Notice of school closing will be sent by email and posted to the Temple website. Please check your email and/or Temple website prior to class if the weather is questionable.

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES** We follow the recommendations of the Anti Defamation League in case of an emergency during school hours:

- School doors are locked while school is in session
- Teachers wear identification cards
- Principal carries a panic button which connects to the Edison police department
- There is an action policy in place with the Principal and teachers including evacuation if necessary
- An alternate evacuation site has been identified
- Contact information for each child is on hand in every classroom
- Water and crackers are kept in classroom closets
- Edison Police have a copy of the layout of the building and the number of students and staff.

**TRAFFIC CONTROL** – The safety of our students is our prime concern. We ask that you cooperate fully with the guidelines. Parents of the primary students (Kindergarten-Second grades) must come inside the building in order to pick up their child and children in their carpool. These children will not be permitted to leave the building unless they are accompanied by an adult. Unattended cars should not be parked at the curb. Please do not park in the fire lane or block the walkway entrance. If you are staying in your car, do not park along the curb, unless you are dropping off or picking up your child and leaving.

**REMINDER TO PARENTS!** Please remember to check the calendar and make a note of any events or programs that your child will be involved in, such as Friday night services, Mitzvah Day, Book Fair, Purim Carnival, Model Seder, holiday and end of year parties. Please complete and return the Volunteer form. Be an active part of your child's religious education. We are counting on your support!