



Midway Jewish Center
330 South Oyster Bay Road
Syosset, New York 11791
516-938-8390

Religious School Handbook

School Brit/Covenant – Derech Eretz Contract

Midway Jewish Center's Religious School is committed to being a safe, inclusive, supportive, and positive learning environment where students, parents, teachers, and staff can build upon their Jewish identities. Our kehilah kedoshah (holy community) is built upon the values of kavod (respect and honor), derech eretz (common decency), achriyut (responsibility), chesed (compassion and kindness), and talmud torah (Jewish text study). We commit to living these values whenever we are with our Religious School community.

To that end, our students, parents, and staff agree to the following:

As a student, I agree to....

- Participate in classroom discussions and activities in a way that enhances everyone's learning.
- Pay attention to teachers and classmates when they are speaking.
- Use kind language and maintain a positive attitude.
- Encourage everyone to learn and allow everyone the opportunity to share and ask questions.
- Keep our bodies to ourselves.
- Treat others in a way that I would like to be treated.

As a parent, I agree to...

- Welcome other families and students into the Midway Jewish Center community.
- Continue my Jewish learning by engaging in thoughtful conversation with my children.
- Read materials sent home (via paper or email) in a timely manner.
- Treat all staff and teachers in a professional and respectful manner.
- Strive to have my children at school in a timely and consistent manner.

As a teacher or member of the school staff, I agree to...

- Create a safe and engaging learning environment in the classroom.
- Incorporate a variety of learning styles and teaching methodologies in the classroom to accommodate various learning needs.
- Treat each child and parent with respect through compassion and active interest.
- Strive to get to know each child and help them to grow into a more knowledgeable and confident Jew.
- Listen carefully to the concerns and needs of parents and students and endeavor to address them to the extent possible.

It is the responsibility of every member of this community to create a respectful environment where families can connect to one another and learn together.

If a member of our community has difficulty following these guidelines, participants will meet with the Director of Education to create a plan of action to move forward to ensure a positive and fulfilling learning experience for all of our students in the Midway Jewish Center Religious School community.

By signing this document, we agree to do our part to uphold the ideals of this brit and strive to make our Religious School community holy.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Gesher, our Pre-K program, meets **monthly** on **Sunday mornings from 9am-11:15am**.

Our **Kindergarten** and **First Grade** programs meet **weekly** on **Sunday mornings from 9am-11:15am**.

Students in **Second through Sixth Grade** attend school **twice a week: Sunday mornings from 9am-11:15am AND either Tuesday OR Wednesday afternoon from 4:05pm-6:05pm**.

Our **Seventh Grade** students attend Religious School on **Tuesday evenings from 6:15-8:15pm AND Wednesday afternoons from 4:05-6:05pm**.

CURRICULUM

Our Religious School curriculum covers a variety of topics in Judaism, including (but not limited to) holidays, middot (Jewish values), Torah, Israel, prayer, theology, and lifecycle.

Students explore Torah, Avodah and G'milut Chasadim through a different lens in each grade level. Our Gesher program meets monthly to allow students to become accustomed to the Religious School experience and to learn about the Jewish holidays throughout the year.

- Our **Kindergarten** students meet weekly to learn about the different aspects of the Jewish experience: they will learn the who, what, where, when, and how of being a Jew.
- Students in our **First Grade** class explore Torah as a guide to understand our responsibility to the earth, each other and ourselves.
- **Second Grade** students explore the stories of Genesis and Exodus.
- **Third Grade** class students explore the theme of Kadosh/Holiness as a way to frame their learning as they learn about the third book of the Torah, Leviticus.
- Students in our **Fourth Grade** class explore the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy through the lens of Kehillat Yisrael/Community of Israel.
- **Fifth Grade** students focus on the characteristics of strong individuals utilizing the stories from the second section of the TaNaKh, Nevi'im/Prophets.
- **Sixth Grade** students will explore the different forms of expression from the their component of the TaNaKh, Ketuvim/Writings and throughout the Jewish immigrant experience.
- Our **Seventh Grade** students will learn more in depth about the State of Israel and the responsibilities of becoming an adult in the Jewish community as Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Hebrew is an important aspect of our Religious School curriculum. Our Gesher Pre-K, Kindergarten, and First Grade students are exposed to the Hebrew letters through games and activities. Our formal Hebrew reading program begins in the Second Grade by studying the letters and vowels, and eventually reading letter-vowel word combinations. Our goal is that each year students will improve their Hebrew reading skills and feel more comfortable reading any Hebrew text that is shown to them. Students then build upon their knowledge of these letter-vowel word combinations to identify, understand, and recite prayer Hebrew. Our hope is that students will feel comfortable reciting, understanding, and participating in weekday, Friday night, and Shabbat morning prayer services as they move through the Hebrew program.

For the Jewish holidays, students in every grade will review the basics of each holiday and continue to explore the holiday through the grade level's theme.

TEFILAH

Students join together each week for community tefilah/worship; this time together not only reinforces the Hebrew learning, but allows our students to build community among our students, teachers, and parents. Our Gesher Pre-K, Kindergarten, and First Grade students join together at the end of each Sunday

session. Students in Second through Sixth Grade will have the opportunity to join together at the end of their weekday session. Students will learn how to behave in a sanctuary, feel comfortable in this sacred place, and begin to take on leadership roles by leading different prayers, and become familiar with the essential prayers of our service. Ultimately, these moments together will ensure that the transition into leading community worship as Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be seamless and less anxiety provoking. During our community tefilah/worship time, we will also explore music, create ruach and reinforce the learning done in the classroom.

Our Seventh Grade students will join together with the larger community once a month to participate in the daily minyan.

TZEDAKAH

Midway Jewish Center has a strong tradition of social activism and social justice. One part of our commitment to the world around us is our willingness to lend financial support to important causes. Tzedakah collection is one way we work to make the world a more just and righteous place. Students are encouraged to bring in tzedakah donations on a regular basis. Classes will discuss an organization they feel comfortable donating their tzedakah to at the end of the school year.

ATTENDANCE

We expect our students and their families to make every effort to attend Religious School on a regular basis to foster a sense of community and to solidify the learning that is happening throughout the year. Regular and prompt attendance is essential to the success of a school and your child's educational experience. Students are allowed to miss up to 6 class sessions during the academic school year. In the event of an absence, please notify the school office. In the event of excessive absences, class work must be made up. Bar and Bat Mitzvah tutoring will begin only if the child is current with the standards of the core curriculum.

SICK POLICY AND HEALTH (COVID)

To ensure the health and safety of all faculty, students, and community members, we ask that you review the health and safety protocols advised by the Nassau County Department of Health (NCDOH) the State Education Department (SED), and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) regarding COVID-19 virus and all health-related concerns. We ask that you take proper precautions when it comes to your health – if you are not feeling well, please stay home.

SERVICE ATTENDANCE

The synagogue is central to Jewish communal life. Our core curriculum is focused on having our students and their families feel comfortable participating in synagogue Shabbat and Holiday services. Being part of the Midway Jewish Center community includes participating in and attending Shabbat and Holiday services here. We ask that students and their families attend **at least 12 services** throughout the year (a combination of 7 services at Midway Jewish Center and 5 at other synagogues). Services can include holidays, High Holidays, Shabbat, main and family services.

If you attend a Shabbat service, please email religiousschool@mjc.org after Shabbat with "Service Attendance" in the subject line or you can fill out the google form that will send a link directly to the religious school. The google form can be found on the Religious School homepage on the website.

ENROLLMENT

Students in Gesher, Kindergarten, and First Grade are given complimentary family membership to Midway Jewish Center. Synagogue membership is a prerequisite for enrollment in our Religious School in Second Grade and above. For students to celebrate Bar/Bat Mitzvah with the Midway Jewish Center community, families must be a member in good standing.

Each spring, families already enrolled in the school will receive their registration materials for the following year. To create an educationally sound learning environment, class availability is contingent upon enrollment and friend requests are not guaranteed if registration is submitted after August 1.

DAY SWITCHES

We are happy to accommodate day switches from Sunday/Tuesday to Sunday/Wednesday programs for multiple weeks or months *depending upon capacity*. Please contact the Religious School office to discuss when the switch will begin and end.

SHARING INFORMATION WITH US

Our Religious School registration form includes space for you to share with us information to ensure that your child has a safe and successful year. If any of your information changes, please contact the Religious School office at any point during the year with the updated information. Please keep in mind that our registration information is confidential.

Medication: It is imperative that you include under the appropriate section on the back of our form any and all medications your child takes. This information is vital because it affects your child's learning and experiences in our school. Please note that by law we are unable to assist in administering medication to students. If medication must be administered during Religious School, we are happy to work with you to find an alternative means to do so.

Allergies: Parents of children with allergies are encouraged to disclose detailed information about any life-threatening or even dangerous allergies. There are times throughout the year when holiday food is served; we want to be sensitive to any allergies or medical conditions that may affect our students.

Your Child's Learning Style: Please help us to make this experience successful for your child by completing this section as fully as possible. We also encourage you to contact the Religious School Director to talk about your child's learning style.

COMMUNICATION

We strive to communicate regularly with Religious School families. The majority of our communication is through email. Please make sure that you notify the Religious School Office if your email address changes. We will not share your information with anyone else unless you give us explicit permission.

You can expect to receive the following emails from the Religious School throughout the year:

- Start of school welcome email with calendar
- Monthly grade-level newsletters, which share news from the classroom, pictures, and upcoming events.
- Reminders for grade-level Family Experiences programs.
- Reminders for Religious School closings.
- Mid-year and end-of-year student progress reports.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Midway Jewish Center's Religious School strives to be a holy community. The school's procedures are designed to ensure that students, parents, teachers, and staff work together to achieve a kind, caring, and safe space for learning.

CARPOOL DROP-OFF/PICK-UP:

We take the safety of our children seriously. In order to create a safe and secure environment for our community, parents must follow security procedures in the parking area during drop-off and pick-up each school day.

Parents of students in our younger grades (Gesher, Kindergarten, and First Grade) can park their cars in the main parking lot area and walk their child to the ECC building and classrooms for drop-off on Sunday mornings. Parents are invited to join together with their child at 10:30 am each Sunday for our community worship/tefilla time. Students will be dismissed from the sanctuary after this special time.

Parents of children in Second Grade and older can drive through the designated pathway located alongside the building to drop off these students at the farther end of the parking lot. Students must enter the building through the side ramp at the rear of the parking lot, entering school near classrooms 14/15. At the end of the school day, parents can wait for their child in the designated carpool lanes parallel to the main building. Students will be dismissed through the main entrance doors to locate their car. Cars will not be allowed to leave the area until all students are dismissed. Parents can opt to park in the main parking lot and walk towards main doors to reunite with your child at the end of the day. Students will not be allowed to walk across parking lot unattended.

Please note that a security team will be present during Religious School hours and will be outside during the drop-off/pick-up times to ensure that everyone is safe.

ARRIVAL/ DISMISSAL

Students are expected to be in their classroom/first location by the scheduled start of class. Students who arrive prior to the start of the school day can do homework or other quiet activities in their classroom.

At the end of each class session, teachers will remain with students until a known parent or authorized caregiver arrives and identifies themselves to the teacher. Students may not leave until the teacher has officially released each student directly to the appropriate parent or caregiver.

It is assumed that families have agreed upon arrangements for traveling to and from Midway Jewish Center. Please let the school office know if there are special circumstances regarding drop-off and pickup. If parents would like the child to leave the building without an adult, they must notify the school in writing.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Students are not allowed to leave early without written permission from the student's parent or guardian. If a parent would like their child to leave early, they may go to the Main Office and sign their child out at the time they wish to leave with our Religious School assistant. A Religious School faculty member will bring their child to the lobby to meet their parent and/or guardian for early dismissal.

LATE DISMISSAL

We kindly ask that parents let us know if they are running late or will be delayed in picking up their child. If we have not heard from you by 10 minutes after dismissal, we will call the parent or guardian's cellphone. One of our staff members will stay with your child until you can be here.

FIRE DRILLS

Fire drills will be held once in the fall and once in the spring. During these drills and in the event of an actual fire or emergency, classes will exit the building and walk to a designated safe space to wait for further instructions.

FIRST AID AND HEALTH CARE

In case of an emergency, parents will be notified immediately. If a child must go home, the Religious School office will call parents for pick-up and safe return home. Please note that school policy prohibits the faculty or office staff from administering any oral medication to our students.

INCLEMENT WEATHER AND EMERGENCIES

The Religious School follows the inclement weather school closing decision of the Syosset Public Schools. If the Department of Education cancels school, we cancel Religious School. If the weather worsens during the day and the Department of Education cancels after-school programs, Religious School will also be cancelled. For programs held on the weekend, decisions about closing the building will be made by 10 p.m. on the prior evening. When a closing does occur, an email will be sent and a phone call will be made to all families. While our school remains open in almost all weather situations, parents should, of course, use their best judgment in deciding whether or not to send their children. Please do not hesitate to call the school office if you have a question regarding whether or not school is open. In the event of an emergency during school hours, our school will follow the appropriate emergency plan (sheltering in place or evacuating as necessary). Students will always be accompanied by an adult. Parents will be notified via email or phone message in the event of an evacuation. Only authorized adults listed on the registration form will be allowed to pick up the child.

SCHOOL POLICIES

Midway Jewish Center's Religious School strives to be a holy community. The school's policies are designed to ensure that students, parents, teachers, and staff work together to achieve a kind, caring, and safe space for learning.

CELL PHONES

Cell phones and personal electronic devices are not permitted in the Religious School classrooms during class hours. Teachers will collect all electronics at the start of the class day and will be returned to students during break time and at the end of the school day. If you need to contact your child(ren), please call the school office and your message will be delivered.

DRESS CODE

We ask that all teachers, students, and parents dress appropriately when entering Midway Jewish Center. All students will be rotating through our main sanctuary for our community tefilla worship time. Please dress appropriately for a sacred space. Students wearing shirts with inappropriate messages or clothing that expose too much will be asked to change.

All students will have kippot available to wear during Religious School times. However, we encourage students to bring their own kippah to wear during class.

FOOD AND SNACK

Our synagogue building is nut-free and kosher. Any food in our building (whether provided by parents or by the Religious School) must be nut-free and dairy. We ask that students bring their own water bottle and a light snack with them to eat during the designated snack time in class.

GUEST POLICY

We recognize that students want to share their wonderful experience with friends. Guests are welcome to come and try out our school program one time with permission from the Religious School director. The student's parent and the guest's parent must provide written permission for the guest child to attend along with emergency contact information for the day of the visit at least 48 hours in advance. If a guest arrives without prior approval, the guest and the child with whom they have come will not be allowed to go to class and a parent will have to come pick them up.

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our ultimate goal is to ensure a safe and sacred community where every student has the opportunity to learn. We expect all our students, parents and staff to work to uphold our Religious School brit. In the event that a student struggles to uphold their end of the brit, they may be asked to leave the classroom and speak with the Director of Education and/or Rabbi. If a student is asked to leave the classroom multiple times, we will call the family to discuss how we can all work together to ensure better behavior going forward.

If negative behavior continues, we will create a behavior contract and then set up additional steps to ensure that a student's behavior doesn't take away from a positive learning environment for themselves or others. This will be created in discussion with the Director of Education, the student and his or her parents. In extreme cases, students may need additional support or time away from the classroom.

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

The Midway Jewish Center Religious School has a ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY for violence, drugs and alcohol, smoking, and any item or conduct that could harm another individual or represents something that could harm another individual. If a student is believed to be a threat or danger to him- or herself and/or anyone else in the school or any of the synagogue property, he or she will be removed from the classroom immediately. Any student bringing a potentially illegal substance, gun, knife, or any toy weapon into Midway Jewish Center will be immediately removed from the classroom and may be asked to leave the Religious School. Bullying and inappropriate language may also result in removal of the student from the classroom or other consequences deemed appropriate by the Religious School Director of Education.