

The United Jewish Center Religious School

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Daryl Bain
Director of Education

Cantor Penny M. Kessler
Senior Clergy

School Hours

Sunday

Preschool (3 & 4 year-olds)	9:00 am — 11:30 am
Kindergarten – 7th Grade	9:00 am — 11:30 am
8th – 10th Grades	11:30 am — 12:30 pm (selected Sundays)

Wednesday

2nd – 7th Grades	4:30 pm — 6:15 pm
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Table of Contents

	Page
Holiday Schedule.....	2
Welcome.....	3
Class Attendance Policy.....	4
Service Attendance Policy.....	5
Post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program.....	6
Code of Conduct.....	7
Mission Statement.....	9
School Calendars.....	10

Holiday Schedule

2021 – 2022
5781 – 5782

Erev Rosh HaShanah	September 6
Rosh HaShanah Day 1 and 2	Sept 7 / Sept 8
Erev Yom Kippur (Kol Nidrei)	September 15
Yom Kippur	September 16
Erev Sukkot / Sukkot Day	September 20/Sept 21
Erev & Day of Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah	September 27/Sept 28
Thanksgiving	November 26
Erev Chanukah (1st Candle)	November 28
Tu BiSh'vat	January 17
Erev Purim / Purim Day	March 15 / March 16
Erev Pesach (1st Seder) / Pesach Day 1	April 15 / April 16
Erev Pesach Day 7 / Pesach Day 7	April 20/ April 21
Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day)	April 27
Yom HaZikaron (Israel Memorial Day)	May 3
Yom HaAtzma-ut (Israel Independence Day)	May 4
Erev Shavuot / Shavuot Day	June 4/June 5

Welcome

“Reform Judaism maintains faith in the Covenant between God and Israel as expressed over the generations in the teachings of an ever-evolving Torah and tradition. Stirred by the mandate of tikkun olam, Reform Judaism seeks to be the living expression of those teachings. [...] It welcomes all who seek Jewish connection to pursue a life of meaning as inspired by the Divine and proclaimed in the truths grasped by Jewish teachers throughout time.”

Union for Reform Judaism

(<https://urj.org/what-we-believe/what-reform-judaism>)

Welcome back to school! We are excited for a new year of learning with our kids, along with our dedicated faculty, and have an exciting year planned with many great programs and activities.

We continue with our theme, *Yad b'Yad: Kulanu b'Yachad*, Hand in Hand: All of Us Together. This year more than ever, given the COVID challenges of the past year, it's essential that all of us grow and stay a strong Jewish community of children and grownups, (virtually) holding each other's hands, sending each other strength, courage, love, and comfort.

The overarching goal of the year is for our kids to learn how Jewish values make us stronger as individuals and as a community. As our theme song this year (written by Ellen Allard) puts it, “We are better together – together we're better *Yachad!*”

Stay safe, stay healthy, stay positive, and let's make this a wonderful year!

Cantor Penny M. Kessler

Daryl Bain, Director of Education

Class Attendance Policy

A community does not function effectively without all of its members present. It is important that each child participate fully in our religious/Hebrew school. We expect children to be present for all sessions except for illness or other urgent reasons. When absences are excessive, a child will miss significant work.

It is for this reason that we request that students attend a minimum of 80% of all classes of both religious and Hebrew school.

Students whose absences exceed 20% (for a religious school year of 30 sessions, this equals 6 days; for a Hebrew school year of 60 sessions, this equals 12 days) of or Hebrew school classes will be required to make up the work. All work will be due prior to the end of the semester in which excessive absences have occurred. This way, make-up assignments will be timely and appropriately related to the classroom curriculum. Successful completion of make-up assignments will be one of the criteria used to promote a student into the next grade.

Please call the religious school office at (203) 743-1180 to let us know when your child will be absent. In order for us to keep in close touch with our students and to be aware of any difficulties that may have developed at home, a member of the faculty will call a student's home when a child has two (2) consecutive absences. The director of education (or a member of the faculty) will notify the parents of the work to be completed so that the child will be up to date when he/she returns to the classroom.

Please be prompt in dropping off and picking up your child. Arriving late disrupts the class and prevents your child from fully grasping the materials being taught. School begins promptly at the following times: **(Please note these are in-person class times- Virtual times will vary.)**

Day	School begins	School ends
Sunday (Preschool)	9:00 am	11:30 am
Sunday (K-7)	9:00 am	11:30 am
Sunday (8-10)	11:30 am	12:30 pm
Wednesday (2-7)	4:30 pm	6:15 pm

Service Attendance Policy

Attending the UJC's religious services gives our students a familiarity with Judaism and Jewish prayer that cannot be gained in a classroom. Below are the expectations of our religious school, broken down by grade:

Grades 4 & 5

- Attend a minimum of eight Shabbat services per religious school year. These can be either Friday night or Saturday morning Shabbat services.
- Teacher will keep prayer chart in classroom to keep track of attendance at services.

Grade 6

- Attend a minimum of ten Shabbat services. Of the ten services, six should be Saturday morning Shabbat services. The remaining four can be Friday night or Saturday morning Shabbat services.
- Teacher will keep prayer chart in classroom to keep track of attendance at services.

Grade 7 (Bar/Bat Mitzvah Year)

- Attend a minimum of thirteen Shabbat services. Of the thirteen services, seven should be Saturday morning Shabbat services. The remaining six can be Friday night or Saturday morning Shabbat services.
- Students may begin attending services to meet these requirements twelve months before their bar/bat mitzvah.
- Teacher will keep prayer chart in classroom to keep track of attendance at services.
- Attendance at other synagogues' Shabbat services as well as camp services throughout the summer can be used for up to two required Shabbat services.

Post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program

Our post-bar/bat mitzvah program begins in 8th grade and continues throughout 10th grade, culminating in the celebration of confirmation. As part of this program, our students meet with Cantor Kessler and Mrs. Sarna during several Sundays throughout the year.

Why do we think continuing beyond the bar/bat mitzvah year is so important? Why do we ask our students to commit to participating in the UJC religious school beyond their bar/bat mitzvah?

For one thing, the post-bar/bat mitzvah years are a time of developing and reinforcing friendships that have been made throughout their years at the UJC religious school. We know of tens of dozens of students whose UJC high school friendships are still solid, even decades after their years here.

Beyond the social setting, once our students have become bar/bat mitzvah and are considered adults in the Jewish community, they can dive into new and exciting learning adventures:

Cantor Kessler helps our 8th and 9th grade students explore subjects that would not have been appropriate for younger students. In addition to more in-depth looks at the Jewish holidays, they include a Jewish point of view on a variety of topics of teen interest, such as relationships, current events, and health-related issues, as well as practical skills, such as coping with peer pressure and bullying.

Mrs. Sarna leads the students on local and in-house mitzvah projects. It is not unusual to see our 8th and 9th graders helping families in need in the wider Danbury community. Mrs. Sarna also helps our 8th and 9th graders develop and run the yearly Purim Carnival.

The 10th grade confirmation class – concluding with the confirmation ceremony during Shavuot at the end of 10th grade – is truly unique. Cantor Kessler guides the students to choose the topics for discussion as they begin the process of reaffirming and confirming their Jewish identities. The primary goal of the confirmation year is to help them consider Jewish adulthood in and beyond high school as they begin making lifestyle and educational choices.

Code of Conduct

At the UJC religious school, we are committed at all times to maintaining a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, respectful, and productive for our students and staff alike.

As part of this commitment, we have an established pattern of communication between the school and the home, which takes a number of forms and is used for a number of purposes. Report cards are one means of communicating twice a year. More immediately, we contact parents as needed to keep them informed about issues that may affect the learning of their child and classmates.

This code of conduct has been prepared so that all of us – students, parents, and faculty – are aware of the behaviors that are acceptable in our religious school. We have listed below the behavioral expectations of our students and staff that will ensure a healthy, safe learning environment

Behaviors that are inappropriate, hence not acceptable, include:

- calling out in class,
- name calling,
- pushing, hitting, tripping, or bullying other students,
- talking back to teachers,
- coming to class unprepared, without books or completed assignments.

While we are distance learning, please observe the SLANT guidelines:

S - Create a quiet **Space** for learning.

L - **Look** at the screen - close all other tabs, turn off TVs and phones (except when students and teachers are using the Kahoot and similar apps that require a second device), make sure the audio and webcam are on so teachers can hear, see, and interact with students.

A - **Ask** questions - either through Chat or by raising a hand.

N - **Nod** your head! Let teachers see reactions by nodding or giving a thumbs-up or sending emojis in the chat.

T - **Talk** to your teachers! Volunteer to ask and answer questions and stay on task.

Teachers will keep records of the completion of Shabbat service attendance requirements for pre-bar/bat mitzvah students. They will report immediately any verbal or physical assault on a student, as well as any observed bullying, teasing,

harassment or intimidation of a student by another student.

If a teacher sends a child out of the classroom for disruptive or inappropriate behavior, a written note will be sent to the director of education. The information may become part of the child's school folder.

A variety of disciplinary actions have been identified, ranging from in-school detention, to a call to the parent, or even to a required conference with the parent and the director of education. In all cases, written documentation of behaviors, consequences, and recommendations will be kept.

Mission Statement

The United Jewish Center Religious School



- The goal of the United Jewish Center's religious school is to help our students form a positive Jewish identity, one that is rooted in core Jewish values and beliefs.
- We want our children to see Judaism as their way of life, both in making moral decisions and in celebrating the traditions, customs and ceremonies of our rich heritage.
- Through classroom instruction and experiential learning, we communicate this basic principle to our students and help them embrace the commitment that Jewish education is a lifelong pursuit.
- Ours is a supplement, not a substitute, for a Jewish home, as we strive to inform and reinforce the identity and cultural orientation of our students.