

CONGREGATION BRITH SHALOM

**RELIGIOUS
SCHOOL
HANDBOOK**

**2020-2021
5780**

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MISSION STATEMENT

Congregation Brith Shalom is an egalitarian Conservative synagogue. The Religious School is dedicated to providing its students with a comprehensive Jewish education from Pre-K through 12th grade, instilling an appreciation for and celebration of Jewish identity, and inspiring a commitment to ongoing Jewish living and learning.

The Congregation Brith Shalom Religious School emphasizes Jewish practice, ethics and values, the study of Torah and sacred texts, Hebrew language, prayer, history, holidays, and Jewish culture. It strives to create an environment of *Ahavat Yisrael* and *Klal Yisrael* – a caring and active involvement in the synagogue, local Jewish community, Israel, and the world-wide Jewish community.

The dedicated faculty members of the Religious School bring to the classrooms expertise in and passion for Judaism and Jewish values, as well as deep regard for the individual worth of each student, recognizing the varied learning styles and abilities of individuals. The Brith Shalom clergy are an integral part of the school, through meeting with classes, leading worship services, and facilitating programs.

The school depends on parents to be active partners in their children's Jewish education by participating in worship services and class activities, home rituals, and ensuring regular attendance. At family learning days, school-wide programs, and children's worship services, parents and children have the opportunity to encounter Judaism in fun, educational, and often surprising ways.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Primary Grades: Grades Pre-K through 2

Sundays: 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Religious School: Grades 3 through 7

(CBS Membership Required for these grades)

Sundays: 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Wednesdays: 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

Saturdays: Jr. Congregation 10:30 – 12:00 noon

[One Saturday each month – see Calendar]

Kehillah High: Grades 8 through 12

Wednesdays: 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Contacts:

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SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Shabbat and Holiday Worship Services for Children and Families:

- **Junior Congregation**, often on the first Shabbat of the month, is mandatory for students in grades 3-6. Parents and grandparents are encouraged to join the service. **All students in grade 7 are expected to regularly attend services in the main sanctuary beginning one year before the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony.**
- **Mini-Minyan** is a 45-minute Friday night monthly service designed for young families. Please see the school calendar for the schedule. (5:45 pm Fridays)
- **Mishpacha Minyan**, a family-oriented service for students and families thru grade 2, is held monthly throughout the year (10:30 on Saturday mornings)
- **Friday Night Ruach:** Usually held the third Friday evening each month, this energized service which will appeal to children and adults of all ages. (6:15 pm)
- **Babysitting** is always provided free of charge during Shabbat and holiday services.

School Worship Services: Students in PreK thru 2nd grades have a musical service each Sunday, led by Rabbi Teller. Students in grades 3-7 participate in services on Sundays and on Wednesdays, led by Cantor Levine.

Special Needs: At the Brith Shalom Religious School, we pride ourselves on providing individualized attention to each student. It is essential that we have the maximum information concerning your child's special needs so that we can provide for him or her the best Jewish education possible. **Parents are urged to speak with Cantor Levine and the child's teacher before the beginning of school.**

SCHOLARSHIPS

Religious School Scholarships: It is the policy of Congregation Brith Shalom that no child will be turned away from a Jewish education as a result of a family's inability to pay. The Scholarship Committee meets each spring to award scholarships for the coming year. *Please note that awards are NEEDS-BASED and a confidential **written application is required each year.*** **The application can be found on the CBS website: www.brithshalom.org.**

Scholarships for Jewish Summer Camp: Jewish camping is one of the best ways to get kids excited about Judaism! Brith Shalom children attend Ramah Darom, Ramah Colorado, Young Judea, and many other Jewish summer camps. Each spring, the Scholarship Committee awards many partial scholarships. *Please note that scholarship awards are NEEDS-BASED and a confidential written application is required, due no later than **March 1** for the following summer.* **The application can be found on the CBS website: www.brithshalom.org.** Scholarship funds for summer camp also are available from the Bureau of Jewish Education and the Jewish Children's Regional Services.

SCHOOL POLICIES

Enrollment: In order to enroll a child in grades 3-7 of the Religious School, the parent must be a member in good standing of Brith Shalom.

In order to enroll in Pre-K, a child must turn four by September 1st. Enrollment in other grades generally is based on the child's secular school grade.

All students (except Jewish day school students) **must be enrolled** in Religious School for **grades 3-7** in order to celebrate becoming a Bar/Bat mitzvah at Brith Shalom. Day school students are strongly encouraged to attend Religious School in grades 6 and 7, in order to become integrated into the CBS community.

Academics: Parents and students should acquaint themselves with the curricular objectives for the appropriate grade. Progress reports will be mailed home twice a year. If remediation is necessary, it will be provided during school hours whenever possible. **Please inform Cantor Levine of your child's special learning, medical or developmental needs**, and we will arrange a discussion with the child's teacher.

Attendance: In case of excessive absences, the teacher, in consultation with Cantor Levine, will assign appropriate make-up work, which must be completed in a timely fashion. If a student falls seriously behind, parents may be required to provide private tutoring (the tutor must be approved by Cantor Levine).

Arrivals and Departures / Security: There is a security officer on duty whenever school is in session. Entrances to the building, as well as to the outdoor hallway, are viewed by security cameras. Parents are asked not to go to the classroom to pick up their child early. If a child must be picked up early, a parent must come into the school office to get the child.

No child will be allowed to leave the building unescorted.

Children must wait for carpool pickup in the designated area after class, where teachers will be on duty. **For the safety of all children, please do not use a cell phone in the carpool line.** Children will not be allowed to leave the area to meet a parent in the parking lot or elsewhere in the building.

Proper Attire: During all Religious School functions (Sunday, Wednesday and Shabbat), students are expected to dress in clothing that *brings honor and respect* to the synagogue and God. *Note: Baseball caps are not to be worn.* Boys must wear *kipot* at all times at Brith Shalom (encouraged for girls). Students are encouraged to bring their own *kipot* to school.

Tzedakah: Giving tzedakah is an important *mitzvah* (commandment) of Jewish life. Each class session, money for *tzedakah* (literally: "righteousness") is collected from the students. Please take time to discuss this *mitzvah* with your child, and encourage your child to give a portion of his/her own money.

Snacks / Kashrut: **All food brought into the synagogue must be kosher** and be marked with a kosher symbol (*hechsher*); no home-baked treats are allowed. On Sundays, school snacks and special holiday treats are provided by the PTO. For special arrangements, please speak to Cantor Levine.

Personalized Prayer Book: Each 3rd grade student will be presented with a personalized copy of *Siddur Sim Shalom* during the *Kabbalat HaSiddur* program (see calendar).

Homework: While we recognize the stress that many of our students feel over their busy schedules, regular practice of Hebrew is essential for mastery. Please encourage your child to take all assignments seriously. Your support, interest and encouragement will have a tremendous effect on your child's attitude towards Jewish learning.

Illness: Should your child become ill while at school, we will gladly dispense band-aids and TLC, but we will not administer any medication (including aspirin and Tylenol) *without a note from the parent*. When necessary, we will contact the parent, or others listed on the emergency form, to pick up the child. ***Make sure your emergency contact information is current on the Registration Form!***

Guest Policy / Visiting the Classroom: Parents are always welcome to visit the classroom **with prior notification**. Parents are asked to contact Cantor Levine if they wish to visit the class. If your child wishes to bring a friend or relative to class, permission must be obtained in advance from the teacher. You **must** be reachable while the guest is on the premises.

Cancellation: School Cancellation – In the event that HISD closes school OR afterschool events due to weather conditions, Religious School and Kehillah High will be cancelled for the evening. We will also make every attempt to call and/or e-mail families if school is cancelled.

CODE OF CONDUCT

PLEASE READ AND DISCUSS WITH YOUR CHILD.

Students are expected to be courteous and respectful to each other and to their teachers. **Students have a right to learn and teachers have a right to teach; anything interfering in this process is a problem.**

In all cases of behavioral difficulties, the teacher will keep Cantor Levine informed of incidents and action(s) taken. Confidential records will be maintained. The discipline procedure is as follows:

1. **First incident of misbehavior**: The teacher will discuss the problem with the student and give a warning (unless misbehavior is so severe that the child must be removed from the classroom immediately).
2. **Second incident**: If necessary, the student will be removed from the class and escorted to the office (accompanied by an adult or aide). The parent will be called to discuss the situation and possible resolutions.
3. **Third incident**: The student will be escorted to the office. The parent will be contacted. If circumstances warrant, s/he will be asked to pick up the student. A meeting will be arranged with the student, parent(s), teacher and Cantor Levine.

Certain offenses will result in immediate removal from the school:

- Theft
- Vandalism
- Smoking
- Use or possession of drugs, alcohol, harmful or dangerous objects
- Uninvited physical contact of others or the threat of such to others
- Placing self and/or other students in danger
- Extreme disregard of Religious School rules

The following items should not be brought to school and are subject to confiscation by teacher or staff:

frisbees	skateboards
skates	squirt guns / play guns
fireworks	video games
electronic toys	weapons of any kind
footballs	

Please note:

- Cell phones must be silent and not used during class (this includes no texting) unless requested by the teacher for learning.
- MP3 players must be put away and not used during class.
- Baseball caps are not to be worn during Religious School hours.
- Chewing gum is not allowed on the premises.

CURRICULAR OUTLINE: BY GRADE

PRIMARY GRADES: PRE-K THROUGH 2ND

- Classes meet on Sunday mornings.
- Mini Minyan, the Friday Night *Ruach* Service, Mishpacha Minyan, and family Havdalah events provide child-friendly worship opportunities.
- Key Jewish concepts include: God, holidays, prayer, Jewish values, Israel, synagogue, *mitzvot* (commandments), and *tzedakah*.
- Music, art, stories, conversational Hebrew, and movement are also a part of the curriculum.

Pre-Kindergarten / Kindergarten

- Learning is centered on the Jewish holidays and Shabbat, using a kinesthetic, participatory approach.
- Beautiful take-home folders cover autumn and spring holidays.
- The children are introduced to the traditions and rituals of Shabbat.
- Conversational Hebrew is presented in a natural and interactive manner, through songs, games and holiday learning.
- Through the learning of brachot, students embrace a sense of thankfulness for all our blessings.

First Grade

- Students will learn the names and sounds of the 22 letters of the *alef-bet* using the text *Let's Discover the Alef-Bet*
- Study of the Jewish holidays and Shabbat will continue with stories, songs and activities. Parents also will enjoy the colorful folders of *Let's Celebrate* for each major holiday.
- The series *Let's Discover the Synagogue* teaches the students about the people, objects and activities they see weekly at shul.
- The children will begin to explore concepts about God, and discover Israel as seen through the eyes of a young child.
- Music/prayer with the Rabbi is always an integral part of the morning at Sunday School.

Second Grade

- The Hebrew pre-primer *Journeys Through the Alef-Bet* guides students in letter recognition skills and beginning Hebrew vocabulary.
- Students are introduced to the concept of gratitude as they learn the Jewish response of blessing.
- Through the beautiful series *A Time to Celebrate*, students acquire a "Jewish vocabulary" of symbols for each holiday.
- Exploration of the basic building blocks of Jewish life, such as *mitzvot* (commandments), Bible, and synagogue symbols, strengthens the children's Jewish identity.
- *The Great Israel Scavenger Hunt* brings the land of Israel to young children in an exciting and interactive manner.
- Music/prayer with the Rabbi is always an integral part of the morning at Sunday School.

ELEMENTARY RELIGIOUS SCHOOL: Grades 3 through 7

- Children attend Religious School twice a week (Sundays and Wednesdays), and Junior Congregation services once a month.
- Learning intensifies and becomes more sophisticated in all subjects areas.
- By the end of Third Grade, students are reading Hebrew and writing Hebrew script.
- Hebrew reading and prayer remain core to the curriculum throughout the elementary grades.
- Other areas of focus include Bible, ethics and *mitzvot* (commandments), life cycle, Israel, Jewish heroes / role models, the arts, Tefillah skills and current events.
- Holidays are explored from an increasingly adult perspective, teaching the children that Jewish study is a lifelong endeavor.
- Prayer with Cantor Levine is always an integral part of the day on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Third Grade

- The students work hard but have fun as they concentrate on acquiring Hebrew reading and writing (script) skills, through the text *Shalom U'vracha*, and many classroom games, activities, and conversations in colloquial language.
- A highlight of the year is *Kabbalat HaSiddur (Receiving the Prayer Book)* ceremony: each student is presented with a personalized copy of *Siddur Sim Shalom* and a beautiful certificate.
- Students also learn and prepare to lead the Kabbalat Service for the congregation.
- Students study Torah stories with midrash and are invited to write their own midrashim..
- The textbook *My Jewish Year* conveys the joy of holiday celebrations. The story of each holiday is presented through rituals, blessings, symbols, traditions and legends.
- *Building Jewish Life: Mitzvot* folders make the doing of *mitzvot* (commandments) into concepts and practices that students will want to embrace.

Fourth Grade

- Students continue to study the meaning and language of prayers while building basic Hebrew conversational skills through games, songs and activities.
- *The New Siddur Program* teaches fluent reading and comprehension skills of the liturgy while providing opportunities for simple conversations.
- The children continue to use the *Sim Shalom* prayer books that they received last year at the *Kabbalat HaSiddur* ceremony. Students learn the Friday evening Maariv service and lead the congregation at a special service.
- *Students study the holidays through the lens of mitzvot and concrete actions*
- *A Child's Bible: Lessons from the Prophets and Writings* introduces the students to post Torah biblical stories with a focus on the values to be learned through the text.

Fifth Grade

- Students continue in their Hebrew study, focusing on Siddur vocabulary and building a fundamental understanding of the Tefillot.
- Students explore the Book of Genesis directly with a Melton based curriculum in which they discuss what the Biblical book is trying to teach us and how such value lessons can be applied to 21st century Jewish life.
- Students learn to chant the Shabbat Torah service and Musaf and lead significant parts of the service for the congregation on several occasions together with Cantor Rhodes.
- Significant milestones in a Jewish life are discussed using *Journey of a Lifetime: The Jewish Life Cycle Book*.
- Holiday studies for this grade focus on the concept of Freedom.
- Students delve into Jewish history from Biblical through Talmudic times.

Sixth Grade

- In this pre-B'nai Mitzvah year, students focus on learning Torah and Haftarah Blessings and Haftarah trope. Their Hebrew level will continue to improve through further study of the prayer-based Hebrew as well the learning of the Tefillot.
- A focus of this year is on the history of Israel, from the formation of the State to the modern day. *A Young Person's History of Israel* tells the story of our Jewish homeland through historical maps and photos, and sources from modern media coverage of Israel are discussed in the classroom.
- Students continue to explore Jewish history continuing on thru the Islamic and Christian rule up until modern days.
- Students also continue Biblical studies, this year using the Melton approach with the Book of Exodus. Each Biblical chapter will be associated with a Jewish value which can be applied to life today.
- Holiday studies focus on Biblical and Rabbinic texts related to each holiday.

Seventh Grade

- For most students, this is the year of becoming a bar or bat mitzvah, and it is doubly important for teachers and parents to emphasize that adult Jewish learning ***begins*** with this rite of passage! Students are expected to start attending adult Shabbat services rather than Junior Congregation.
- Prayer skills will focus on the Hagaddah and the Shabbat liturgy of the from Friday evening service, exploring the translations, theological meanings and their applications to our lives.
- Biblical studies continue as students explore the weekly parasha.
- During the year of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, students learn about Jewish traditions of significant moments, birth to death in a life cycle unit.
- The importance of participating in "fixing the world" will be emphasized through a series of units emphasizing specific Jewish responsibilities to those less fortunate, each of which will be followed up by a trip in which students will engage in hands-on *tikkun olam*.

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Religious School Complaint and Grievance Procedure

This complaint and grievance procedure establishes an administrative process through which students and parents may seek resolution of concerns arising from decisions made by a teacher or the Director of Education of the CBS Religious School.

Informal Process

The Religious School encourages parents, students and staff members to engage in frank, honest, respectful and constructive discussions when concerns or complaints arise. If a student has a concern or complaint, it is part of the learning process to encourage that student to speak on his or her own behalf.

Whenever an individual entitled to use this procedure has a complaint, that individual is expected to seek resolution of the matter informally. The complaint should first be addressed with the person most directly responsible for the issue involved and, if resolution is not reached, incrementally escalated in the following order:

1. Student's teacher (if involving a classroom issue);
2. Director of Education; and
3. Chair(s) of the Education Council

Formal Process

If informal efforts to resolve a complaint fail, the complaint may be formalized as a grievance. The grievance shall be presented in a written statement containing a description of the grounds for complaint and the remedy sought.

The written grievance should be submitted to the Director of Education within 30 days of the originating events that led to the grievance. The Director of Education shall notify the chair(s) of the Education Council of the grievance and report on the informal process leading up to the grievance and the respective positions of the parties.

The chair(s) of the Education Council shall investigate the nature of the grievance, review relevant records and interview the parties involved, including those who participated in the informal process. The chair(s) may engage in additional informal efforts to resolve the grievance. If an informal resolution is not attainable, the chair(s) shall issue within 21 days of receiving the grievance or as soon as practical a written decision granting or denying the remedy sought or prescribing an alternate remedy.

The decision by the chair(s) of the Education Council is final, binding and non-appealable.