



2475 West Atlantic Avenue
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Religious School Student & Parent Handbook

2016-2017
5776-5777

Rivka Felsher, Religious School Director
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Welcome

Dear Students and Parents,

Bruchim HaBayim! (Welcome!) to the 2016-2017 (5776-5777) school year at Temple Sinai Religious School. It is going to be a great year filled with learning, games, song, activities, holiday programming, and family fun.

The purpose of this handbook is to give you an overview of the Religious School policies and procedures and familiarize you with our educational program. It may be supplemented from time to time with additional material. If and when any policies change, you will be immediately notified via email and it will also be posted on the school website at: www.templesinaireligiousschool.com.

As the year progresses you may have ideas to share, want to learn more about the program, volunteer your time, or even question a policy that is not clear to you. My contact information is listed below, on the Handbook's cover page, and on our website. Please feel free to contact me at any time with comments, concerns, questions, and suggestions.

B'Shalom,

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Mission

The mission of Temple Sinai Religious School is to foster a solid Jewish identity in our students, give them the tools to engage in Jewish learning now and into the future, support their spiritual exploration and expression as Reform Jews in the Diaspora, and encourage their involvement in the Jewish and non-Jewish community locally and globally. We strive to help our students find personal meaning in all areas of Jewish life and learning. We fulfill our mission by providing fun and engaging lessons and family programming in Jewish culture, history, values, law, ritual, text interpretation, liturgy, prayer, and Hebrew reading fluency in the *minhag* (custom) of Reform Judaism. The themes of Torah, *Avodah*, *G'milut Chasadim*, *Tikkun Olam*, Jewish Life in the Diaspora, and Israel are central to our curricula.

Philosophy

At Temple Sinai Religious School we welcome students from diverse family backgrounds. We believe that all students are able to learn and feel the spirit of God in our world. Our program is designed to help our students develop a strong sense of Jewish identity, guide them toward Hebrew reading proficiency and prayer leadership in preparation for bar or bat mitzvah, continue guidance toward Confirmation, and develop in them a desire to be lifelong learners who find the lessons of the Torah at their disposal each and every day.

Respect for All People

The culture of Temple Sinai Religious School is one of utmost respect for all peoples, as well as each other. Bullying of any kind will not be tolerated. We have a Zero Tolerance policy for disrespectful, intimidating, hostile, threatening, violent, or other inappropriate behavior and language. Students, faculty, and volunteers who violate this policy will be removed from the School and a disciplinary process with possible sanctions will ensue.

Temple Sinai is a drug and weapon free environment.

Registration

A completed Registration Form and payment in full (or payment plan) must be submitted to the Director for each child attending Temple Sinai Religious School prior to the first day of school each year. In order to register your child, your family membership (if applicable, grades 4 and up only) and all financial obligations must be current. The School does not process payments or approve payment plans. Limited scholarships are available, please contact Co-Executive Vice Presidents, David Cotton and Lynne Weinstein, to apply for a scholarship.

School withdrawals must be made in writing (email acceptable) to the Director as soon as possible prior to the student withdraw date. Refund requests should be directed to the Temple Sinai Presidents. The School does not process refunds.

Sunday School Daily Schedule

9:00 am:	Teacher arrival and set-up
9:15-9:30 am:	Student arrivals (directly to Sanctuary for t'filah)
9:30 am:	Morning t'filah (Mock Shabbat)
10 am:	Classes dismissed to their respective classrooms (Confirmation Program madrichim got to each assigned classrooms to support instructors)
10:05 am:	Warm-up activities, attendance, tzedakah collection followed by Hebrew or Judaics lesson
11:00 am:	10 minute snack break (w/ Shabbat table prayers)
11:10-11:55 am:	Hebrew or Judaics lesson (Confirmation Program madrichim go to Rabbi's Study for lesson 1x/month – see School calendar)
11:55 am	Clean-up / Line-up
12 pm	Dismissal

Drop-Off & Pick-Up Procedures

Drop-off and pick-up is permitted only at the front entrance of Temple Sinai. Please form a single line facing the east exit of the Temple with your vehicle. You will have to circumvent the parking lot to get into line. School staff and/or volunteers will assist you for the first 15 minutes of drop-off and pick-up. Drop-off may begin as early as 9:15 am. Please drop your child off no earlier than 15 minutes before class begins. Students who arrive earlier must wait in the Youth Lounge under staff supervision. **Kindergarten and 1st grade students must be walked into the building and students brought to their teacher or school staff member.**

Dismissal is at 12 pm. All students are walked to the Temple lobby and then car loop by their teacher or member of the madrichim team who will wait outside with the students until they are picked-up. **Kindergarten and 1st grade students must be picked up in the lobby, students in these grades will not be dismissed outside in the car loop.** Please be prompt when picking up your student(s) and do so no later than 12:15 pm. If a child has not been picked up by 12:15, they will be brought back in to the School Office to wait with the Director or her designee until a parent arrives. Consistent late pick-up will result in a Parent-Director conference. In case of an emergency causing late pick-up please notify the director at (561) 276-6161, x119.

Any parent/grandparent/guardian requesting to pick up a student early must notify the School Office and wait for a School staff member to bring the child to the lobby. Parents are not permitted to come directly to the class to get their children.

Readiness

Please provide your student with a lined spiral notebook, small binder with folders for loose papers, writing utensils, and labeled school bag. Students should arrive each week with these materials. Flyers are occasionally sent home in student bags, as is work for review or special projects (please see Homework section below). *Please check your student's bag at home each Sunday afternoon for important materials.*

Readiness is also a mental state of mind and physical state of being. Please ensure that your child has eaten breakfast before coming to Religious School for an alert mind and sound body.

Dress Code

Appearance and appropriate dress in Religious School is important to comfort and lessening distraction from learning. It also demonstrates tzniut, modesty, within the wider range considered acceptable by Reform Judaism. The general rule for dress is the same for regular non-uniformed public school dress codes, and during services, business casual is recommended. Suit jackets and ties are not necessary unless attending a bar or bat mitzvah. During services exercise clothing and flip-flops are never permitted. When entering the synagogue, shoulders should be covered. Please have a shawl or jacket for such circumstances. A tallit is NOT an object of clothing and is not to be worn to cover bare shoulders. Students who fail to dress appropriately will be sent to the School Office. Parents/grandparents/guardians will be called to bring in appropriate dress before the student may return to class.

Attendance and Tardiness

School starts promptly at 9:30 am on Sundays. Late students should go directly to the Sanctuary, and quietly settle into the t'filah program. Late attendance is recorded and consistent tardiness will result in a parent/grandparent/guardian conference with the Director.

Continuity is an important factor in both a student's learning process and socialization with his/her peers in the classroom environment. Encouragement of class attendance also teaches the student that Jewish education is a priority in his/her family. As a one day per week religious school, it is imperative that students attend at least 75% of the school year to help ensure that they make good progress. Attendance records are a part of student files. Students who miss 8 or more sessions, consecutively or not, and fall behind in their expected progress for their ability, may result in the student not being promoted to the next class level and/or required extra-curricular Hebrew tutoring at the parents/grandparents/guardians expense.

In cases of excessive absences due to factors beyond your control, the teacher, in consultation with the Director, will assign appropriate make-up work, which must be completed to the satisfaction of the teacher and Director by the end of the school year to guarantee promotion to the next class level.

Students with exemplary attendance and learning progress are honored by their teachers at the end of the school year.

Please note: 3 or more late pick-ups during any 3 month period will result in a charge of \$54 as a donation to the School!

Service Attendance

Worship at Temple Sinai is an integral part of the Religious School educational program as it reinforces classroom lessons on t'filah (prayer) and liturgy (order and meaning of the service). Family participation at services adds value to what we are trying to achieve and can be a meaningful way to share quality family time and reinforce a sense of Jewish identity and values. Regular participation in services also reinforces the skills required for bar and bat mitzvah and adult participation in Jewish life.

Below you will see the service attendance requirements by class. Student service attendance is a part of student files and is recorded by the Director at services and via weekly attendance sheets.

All students are required to attend Family High Holy Days Services in addition to the requirements below:

All new students are also required to attend the Consecration Service (this service may count toward the requirement below).

Grades K-4: *6 Shabbat or Holiday Services.*

Grades 5-9: *8 Shabbat, Holiday, or Shabbat Morning Torah Services.*

Grade 7 (B'nai mitzvah preparation year): *and 4 additional services, within 6 weeks of a bar or bat mitzvah date for a total to 12.*

Books and Materials

Hebrew and Judaics texts and workbooks are distributed in the first several weeks of school. ***Should a text or workbook be lost, a replacement fee of \$30 must be satisfied before a replacement will issued.***

Many of the books and materials that your student(s) uses in class will be permitted and/or required to be brought home for Hebrew review. Many students leave their books at home hampering progress in the classroom. Students who are found to be particularly forgetful about bringing in their materials and/or are not practicing their Hebrew at home and slowing down the progress of their entire class, also jeopardize their ability to prepare for their bar and bat mitzvah without last minute stress.

Homework & Review

In a one-day-per-week educational program it is challenging to get students to commit to Religious School homework. We recognize and respect that many of our students have regular homework from school, including preparation for state testing or advanced placement/honors coursework, and extra-curricular activities. It is our policy to reduce the academic pressure our

students face on a daily bases by reducing homework to mostly that of daily Hebrew review with occasional home assignments designed to be fun that contribute to the year's curricular plan. For students to progress in Hebrew daily review is required. Daily Hebrew review should be 10 minutes long, or the family may opt to try 3 days per week for 20 minutes. This guideline was recommended directly by the education specialists at the Union for Reform Judaism. Students reading from the Mishkan T'filah siddur or Tanakh may have copies of materials sent home for review. Other students may have worksheets, workbooks, or texts. If you have Hebrew reading skills, please support your child's review. If not, please come talk to the Director or your student's teacher, and we can find online resources to support at home review.

Overarching Curricular Strands

Our curriculum is based on three strands: Torah, Jewish Living (Avodah/G'milut Chasadim), and Israel. By studying Torah, learning to make our own choices about living Jewishly, and learning about our Jewish homeland in Israel (including age appropriate Holocaust studies for students in grades 5 and up), we affirm our Jewish identity for ourselves and future generations.

Monthly Curricular Themes

Our monthly curricular themes are designed to use the Jewish year and holidays to guide lessons on major Jewish values that every student can simultaneously participate in at age appropriate levels.

August/September – New Beginnings. This theme stems from the High Holy Days and includes forgiveness, self-reflection, growth, and fresh starts.

October/November – Harvest Bounty. This theme incorporates the fall holidays of Sukkot, Simchat Torah, and the American Thanksgiving and explores the bounty of wisdom offered by the Torah and the bounty in our lives as represented by nature.

December – Miracles. This theme uses the concept of the miracle, as depicted in Hanukkah legend, to help us explore the many miracles in our own lives.

January – Ecology. This theme expands upon the Tu B'shvat holiday. Lessons focus on how we must be stewards of the earth, both nurtured by and nurturing of the planet and all living creatures.

February – Friends & Neighbors. This theme helps students develop a sense of respect for others, an appreciation for diversity, and an understanding of the complex nature of our world and how Judaism helps us to create pathways to peace for all peoples. The story of Purim is an allegory for the challenges Jews have faced again and again throughout our history and how we have met those challenges with wisdom, grace, and pride.

March/April – Tradition. This theme uses the traditions of Purim and Pesach to anchor the exploration of the wide variety of Jewish traditions: family-based and personal, Ashkenazi and Sephardic, ancient and contemporary, spiritual and material.

May – Israel. This theme is a capstone to the year-long curricular strand focused on Israel. Students will celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut in the Sanctuary, during our Israel Day celebration, and out in the community as we participate in our own Israel Day and other community events.

Lower Division Grade-by-Grade Curriculum

The curriculum for kindergarten through grade 4 focuses on developing a sense of Jewish identity, learning Jewish symbols, holidays and the Jewish lifecycle, the concepts of tikkun olam, derech erez, and other age appropriate Jewish values through Torah stories that focus on respect for others and the environment. Class lessons include Shabbat and Yom Tov observance and short blessings, music, drama, and arts and crafts. Students will share holiday celebrations and learn basic rituals, foods, and aspects of Jewish culture in America and abroad. Students will also learn to identify the land of Israel, the Israeli flag, and what it represents to the Jewish people.

Students new to aleph-bet at any grade level are taught aleph bet symbol recognition, pronunciation, syllable drills, and beginner writing and move into word recognition and pronunciation. By fourth grade, students learn to read complete sentences, including complete short prayers and blessings. The Reform siddur, *Mishkan T'filah*, is introduced through morning t'filah. In early, pre-reading grades, students first learn these prayers and blessings orally through chant and song, and then build their reading skills upon this base.

Upper Division Grade-by-Grade Curriculum

The curriculum for grade 5 through 7 builds upon the early prayers and blessings taught in lower division grades to prepare students for bar or bat mitzvah, and Confirmation. Torah and Haftarah discussions help develop the understanding of text study from a Reform Jewish perspective. Deeper nuances of the Holidays, the Jewish lifecycle, and the geography and cultures of Israel and Jews in the Diaspora are also taught. A very early and delicate introduction to Shoah studies begins in these grades as well from the perspective of hope and survival. Modern Israeli life and the “situation” in Israel and efforts toward a peace solution is discussed.

Hebrew Assessment

All students are formatively assessed in the beginning, middle, and end of our school year for the purpose of instructional adjustment. Assessments are not graded and students are not expected to study or otherwise prepare.

Beginner Hebrew for Upper Division Students

Pull-out Hebrew for beginners may begin in any grade level, with the expectation that students will return to the classroom once they have gained enough reading fluency to piece together short words. Pull-out instruction is provided by classroom teachers, volunteer instructors, and upper-division student tutors in group and one-on-one settings based on student needs. Individual tutoring for an additional cost may be necessary.

Student Progress & Reporting

Periodic assessments are built into the curricula to gauge student progress. Hebrew assessments will be performed to create a benchmark for student progress reporting, assign books and materials, and make any needed placements for tutoring. If you would like to see the results of your student(s)' assessments, please ask to meet with the Director for a conference.

Aside from the formal reports, teachers will periodically provide you with information on the progress of your child in Religious School. Occasionally you will receive an email, letter, or newsletter that will update you on the activities of the class. Please make sure to read this important information. Our desire is to increase communication with you as a means of empowering you as our partners in providing a high quality Jewish education for our students. During the year, you may occasionally be called with a progress update or special event information.

Students with Special Needs

You are not required to report if your student has a diagnosed (and therefore identifiable and labeled) special need with regard to their learning and development and/or an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) with their public or private school; however, reporting this information helps us help your child. If a student has a disclosed IEP, the teacher will be informed and will meet with the Director to discuss how lessons need to be adapted for the student.

B'nai Mitzvah Program

Our b'nai mitzvah program begins in 5th grade with a Student and Parent Orientation, one-on-one meetings with the Director and Rabbi (individually), assignment of dates (requires financial obligation and approved and signed Agreement, please see B'nai Mitzvah Handbook for details). Students begin tutoring with Andrew Arnold, our B'nai Mitzvah Instructor 10 months prior to a scheduled bar or bat mitzvah to refine the Shabbat morning Torah service prayers and learn the Torah and Haftarah portions and blessings in Hebrew. B'nai mitzvah instruction will not begin until the b'nai mitzvah contract is completely paid in full 10 months in advance of the scheduled date. Students are required to fulfill 13 hours of mitzvah work. They are guided by the Rabbi regarding their mitzvah project and the writing of their own speeches which tie in their years of education, preparation toward bar or bat mitzvah, Torah and Haftarah portions, and mitzvah work. Students also prepare additional blessings, psalms, and songs and rehearse the order of service under the guidance of Cantorial Soloist, Margaret Schmitt.

Confirmation/Midrachim Program

The Confirmation/Midrachim Program for students immediately follows their bar or bat mitzvah and is a combination of advanced Jewish learning on ethics, role models, and leadership and classroom work-study. Rabbi Bass will lead monthly lessons on special topics. The 9th graders "graduate" by leading a Confirmation Service close to the holiday of Shavuot. *Please note: Students need not have formally become a bar or bat mitzvah to enroll in our Confirmation Program.*

Family Programs

Family programs scheduled throughout the year require advanced planning, additional fundraising, and support from volunteers, parents, and students. Parents on the School Committee play a particularly crucial role in the success of our programs. Most events are scheduled during regular School hours, and some immediately following. Parents are encouraged to attend these events and lend a helping hand, and spend time with their children to join in the fun, socialize with other parents, and connect with the synagogue while students are learning and having fun.

Please note: Per the religious school registration form, 5 hours of volunteer work is required per family. This is easily fulfilled during a Sunday morning of volunteering, or at a holiday service and oneg celebration. Please see Rivka when you are able to lend a hand.

Family Services

Family services are great ways for students to share their learning. Students will be participating by making several honors throughout these services for prayer, singing, and reading (in English or Hebrew) on the bima, and creative additions to a service. Attendance at Family Services helps fulfill student service attendance requirements (please see the Service Attendance section).

Collecting Tzedakah

We collect tzedakah funds weekly. Students are educated in the mitzvah of giving tzedakah funds and encouraged to participate weekly, or as they and their family are able. They should recognize the importance of their contribution in helping to repair our world (tikkun olam). Teachers begin the year with a lesson focused on tzedakah, and make weekly collections while attendance is taken throughout the year. Please encourage your students to donate a portion of their weekly allowance, compensation for chores, or good behavior rewards to tzedakah. A recommended range is \$0.50 to \$1 per week per student.

Other Costs

The B'nai Mitzvah Program of Instruction and Preparation has additional costs for which a signed contract is required. Please see the B'nai Mitzvah Page of the school website for specific costs associated with the bar/bat mitzvah process.

Snacks

Snack time is a deliberate, planned, and brief (no longer than 10-15 minute) break between lessons, unless the lesson itself is focused on food preparation, kashrut, Shabbat, or culture and requires food manipulation and tasting. ***Please note, due to severe student and teacher allergy, we are a nut-free school.*** Snacks will be provided by the school. Parents should notify the School Director if their child has any food allergies. These students may need to provide their own snack.

Student Conduct & Discipline

Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that reflects respect and concern for the rights, well-being, and safety of others, inside and outside of the classroom. Students are expected to share the responsibility of maintaining a safe and clean environment, showing respect for the property of the Religious School and the individuals who work, volunteer, study, pray, learn, and play here.

Disciplinary Steps for Disruptive Students

1. Student receives a reminder of classroom expectations and a simple verbal warning.
2. If disruptive behavior continues, student's name is written on the chalkboard, where he/she can see it clearly.
3. If disruptive behavior still continues, student is redirected and may be moved to another seating or activity within the classroom.
4. With 3 disruptions to classroom instruction on a given day, upon the next disruption, the student will be immediately removed from the class and sent to the School Office. The Director may call the student's parents at that time.
5. Should any disruptive behavior continue in the following week's class, the student will be immediately removed from the classroom and brought to the School Office. The Director will then call the student's parents to request an immediate parent conference.
6. Students will be permanently removed from school enrollment for any of the following severe behavioral violations: repeated bullying, hostile behavior, physical violence, or bringing a weapon or dangerous substance to School.

Other Student Concerns

Some apparent learning delays may not be the result of a special need with respect to student learning and development, but to trauma, family dysfunction, bullying, illness, or other stress. If a student reports anything unusual to a teacher, the teacher is obligated to report it to the Director immediately for her immediate follow-up with parents/grandparents/guardians. All such reports will be handled in the utmost confidential and respectful manner. In an effort to support our students and their families, referrals (suggestions for follow-up by the parents/ grandparents/ guardians) to third parties including law enforcement, school officials, and counselors may be made by the Director. The Religious School will not mediate family conflicts (please see Incidents section for information on when law enforcement or emergency medical responders may be contacted by the Director) but may refer the family to the Rabbi for pastoral counseling.

General Safety Policies

General safety policies include:

- No gum chewing in class
- No running in the hallways
- No flip-flops permitted
- No cooking or lighting a flame in the School

- Internet may only be used related to class lessons and only under the direct supervision of an Instructor
- Parent permission for alternate pick-ups
- Director permission required for student guests in class

Incidents

Should a student get injured, even something as minor as a small bump or bruise, teachers are trained to inform the Director immediately and complete an Incident Report Form to be given to the parents/grandparents/guardians upon pick-up. Serious injuries and/or incidents (e.g. a physical altercation, use of an object as a weapon) will be immediately addressed including communication with local law enforcement and emergency medical services.

Classroom Evacuations

In the event of an emergency, exits, exit routes, safe evacuation, and safe return procedures are distributed to instructors. Classrooms are evacuated to the nearest safe exit by instructors upon hearing the alarm or instructions from the Director or Director's designee.