

# NOTES

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Shalom!

Welcome to Temple Bnai Israel Religious School.

### **Our Mission**

At Temple Bnai Israel, our goal is to facilitate the growth and empowerment of each of our students, helping them to realize their full potential as Jewish human beings.

We nurture our students' growth in four main areas:

1. Spiritual development;
2. Torah and Mitzvot;
3. The Jewish People: our history, language, and culture; and
4. Identification with the Jewish community and Jewish people.

These goals require appropriate experiential learning; relationship-building with fellow students, teachers, parents, and Rabbi; and, of course, the acquisition of the skills and knowledge that will provide a basis for a lifetime of Jewish learning and growth. To provide these is the challenge, goal, and privilege of the Temple Bnai Israel Religious School.

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## **NOTES**

### School Cancellation Due to Inclement Weather:

Whenever the Mansfield or Willimantic schools are closed or dismissed early due to inclement weather, Temple Bnai Israel Religious School will be closed as well. The cancellation of weekend programming based on inclement weather will be decided by the Rabbi, the Religious School Administrator, and the Religious School Chairperson as far in advance as possible. Once the decision is made, an email will be sent out to all religious school families and teachers and a message will be posted on the Temple voicemail, accessible by calling (860) 423-3743. Additionally, the posting will be listed on the WFSB Channel 3 Storm Closings, visible on Channel 3 on television or on Channel 3's website at [www.wfsb.com](http://www.wfsb.com).

Regardless of the school's cancellation status, if you feel that driving is unsafe, please use your best judgment. Your safety, and your child's safety, are important to us!

### Allergy Alert:

*We currently have a student with serious allergies. Please refrain from bringing any food items containing nuts into the building.*

Please notify the School Administrator if your child has any allergies, what kind, and how severe (exposure, ingestion, contact, etc) particularly if those allergies require medical attention. A notice detailing all food allergies will be posted, and teachers will be made aware in order to protect your child. Please also make sure your child is aware of his or her allergies, and let us know if he or she needs help remembering to avoid allergens.

*We look forward to a wonderful year with you and your child(ren).  
Welcome!*

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## Curriculum Overview

### Hebrew

Our Hebrew curriculum strives to give our students sufficient skills in reading, writing, and understanding Hebrew to enable them to:

1. Experience Hebrew as a living language;
2. Read and lead Jewish prayer, including chanting Torah and Haftarah; and
3. Develop sufficient vocabulary and grammatical facility to be able to identify the themes of the Shabbat prayers and many simple Torah passages.

The Hebrew curriculum begins in our youngest grades and is integrated into the whole program. Our goal is to integrate Hebrew more and more with our other subjects to enhance student literacy and internalization of Hebrew as a part of their culture, and to send Hebrew home to families.

Explicit language instruction (i.e., decoding, vocabulary and translation) take place on Wednesday afternoons in the form of one-to-one tutoring beginning in third grade.

### Shabbat Experience

On three Shabbatot per month, our students and their families will participate in the Shabbat Experience program. Through direct participation in

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the prayers and activities of Shabbat, our students will increase their comfort and familiarity with services; will achieve a deeper understanding of the weekly parshah as well as the prayers themselves; and will, in the “in the moment” spirit of Shabbat, learn Torah, text, spiritual practice, holidays and contextual Hebrew.

#### Torah and Text

The students will encounter the entire history of Jewish text. The Lower Elementary grades (through third or fourth) will focus on the stories of the Torah and the other books of the Hebrew Bible. The older grades will focus on texts from later periods, in coordination with the Special Wednesday history curriculum. (See more on the history curriculum below.) Thus, they’ll learn rabbinic *Aggadah* (historical, theological, and moral tales from the first millennium C.E.) and *halachah* (legal writings, such as Mishnah); they’ll sample Jewish writing from Medieval and Modern Europe and North Africa, including Hassidic tales, the secular Yiddishist revival, Spanish Golden Age poets, and more; They’ll learn some of the American-Jewish classics; and they’ll discuss poems, stories and teachings from Israel and from the period of the Zionist revival of Hebrew.

#### Tefillot

Prayer is taught by immersion through attendance at services, and through closer exploration and experimentation during out-of-Sanctuary time during Shabbat Experience. Our tefillot are an opportunity for spiritual exploration, as well as for enhancing Hebrew and synagogue skills. Students will be given a prayer book beginning in third grade; the expectations is that they will use this siddur throughout their religious school training, and afterward.

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will be implemented including separation from the rest of the group, discussion with parents/guardians and the Religious School Administrator, or immediate dismissal for the day. Students who demonstrate a consistent inability to control their behavior may require a parent or guardian to attend class with him or her.

Students engaged in vandalism, bullying, or physical violence will be suspended immediately for the duration of one week and will be required to sign a written action plan detailing the ways in which their behavior will change going forward, and will also be required to make amends for their actions.

#### Bar/Bat Mitzvah and the Year Preceding:

Beginning one year prior to the date of Bar and Bat Mitzvah, students should attend **at least** four Shabbat services per month including both Friday night and Saturday morning services. The students will be given opportunities for hands-on practice with the assignment of parts to lead in some of these services; however, they should attend whether or not they are leading.

In the fiscal year in which a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is to take place, the family’s synagogue membership dues are to be paid in full by the date of the ceremony.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah requires at least two years of formal training and the education committee, with the advice of the Rabbi, may require more time if necessary.

All Bnai Mitzvah students will need to have a Hebrew skills assessment done by the Rabbi or the School Administrator and pass it at an appropriate level before setting the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.

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child to work on his or her homework throughout the week to avoid feeling overwhelmed by trying to complete it all the night before it is due.

Daily review is particularly important in learning Hebrew. From 3<sup>rd</sup> grade on, please set aside five to ten minutes, three nights per week, for Hebrew practice. It does not matter if you do not know how to read Hebrew; what matters is that your child knows that his or her practicing is important. Ask your child to teach you a letter or a word—children are very generous with their knowledge.

If your child is having difficulty understanding his or her homework, please contact the teacher or Religious School Administrator immediately so that they may intervene and help your child.

#### Disciplinary Procedures:

The Temple Bnai Israel Religious School strives to allow each student to develop and grow—socially, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—by means of our educational programs. It is our intention, and our responsibility, to protect the right of every student to fully participate in this program. The proper learning atmosphere can only be maintained if students arrive at synagogue prepared and in the proper frame of mind. We understand the necessity of establishing a strong partnership between home and school in order to accomplish these goals.

If a student disrupts the learning process during programming, efforts will be made by the teacher to settle the situation within the learning environment and through communication with parents/guardians. In the unlikely event that the behavior continues or even escalates, further intervention

#### Family Mitzvah Workshop

Whole-family learning takes place during our monthly Sunday Family Mitzvah Workshop. Over a four-year cycle, we creatively engage with these mitzvah themes: 1. Lifecycle - how we celebrate life cycle events, and our obligations to each other over the course of the life cycle; 2. The Earth is God's - Jewish teachings about how we respect the earth, take care of it, and share it with others; 3. Love Your Neighbor - the mutual obligations of respect, including Jewish speech ethics, some business ethics, and more; and 4. Let' Get Physical - the tangible mitzvot, including kippah, tallit, tefilin, mezuzah, and Sefer Torah. Programming time is *approximately* two to three hours.

#### Bnai Mitzvah

Our whole curriculum is geared toward readying our students not just to *having* a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, but to *becoming* a Bar or Bat Mitzvah—literally, a Son or Daughter of the Commandment. Our programming is designed to help our students grow into Jewish adults with the skills and knowledge necessary to accept the responsibilities and possibilities of Jewish life. Specific ritual training takes place in the seventh grade in the form of private tutoring with the Rabbi.

#### Wednesday Hebrew Tutoring

Hebrew tutoring will take place on Wednesday afternoons between 4:30 and 6:30, with the exception of holidays and school vacations (please consult your calendar for specific dates.) Your child will be assigned a regular time slot that will include 30 minutes of tutoring and 30 minutes of special community-building programming. Every effort will be made to schedule these appointments so that your child has one contiguous hour of programming time. **Please make sure**

**your child is prompt and prepared for his or her tutoring sessions.** In the interest of fairness to all concerned, students who arrive late will still be required to end their tutoring session at the end of their scheduled time slot.

### Special Wednesdays

Approximately once a month, instead of tutoring, all the students will be engaged in two-hour “Special Wednesdays”: hands-on learning activities inspired by the “special days” at Jewish summer camps. These activities will focus on a period of Jewish history, covering most of the sweep of Jewish history in a four-year rotation: rabbinic period (approximately the first millennium CE); Europe and North Africa; North American Judaism; and Zionism and Israel. (Pre-rabbinic history is covered mostly in the Bible stories of the Torah and Text curriculum.) While we won’t ignore the hardships our people have endured, our goal is to emphasize Jewish creativity and vitality, and the varied ways in which Jews have met the challenges and accepted the opportunities that were presented to them in various times and places.

Please note that on Special Wednesdays, all students will need to attend from 4:30 to 6:30 PM. Please consult your school calendar for specific Special Wednesday dates.

## **School Policy**

### Eligibility for Participation:

- Jewish children, or children who have begun the process of conversion, may enroll and attend classes. Please discuss any questions regarding the syna-

bag regularly. Appropriate, respectful language and physical behavior is expected at all times.

### Family Participation:

As a parent, you are your child’s first and most important teacher, and your input and participation are greatly valued. Our Shabbat Experience, Family Mitzvah workshop, and open-door format offer exciting opportunities for family participation, as do other learning-and-doing opportunities that will take place during the year.

Please let the Rabbi, School Administrator, and/or teacher(s) know if you have any particular concerns, ideas, or feedback regarding your child’s experience at Temple. Your teachers will formally let you know about your child’s progress using the Progress Report, but informal conversations can, and should, take place on an ongoing basis.

Families are also encouraged and expected to become involved in the religious school community, whether volunteering to help run the gift shop, assisting with planning events, or joining the Religious School Committee. Please become an active, participatory member of the community. We value your input!

### Homework:

While we do not wish to add unnecessarily to our students’ homework responsibilities, it is necessary for your child to have some homework in order to reinforce what is taught in the classroom so that he or she is prepared for the next class. Please help your child take these responsibilities seriously by assigning them the same level of importance as your child’s secular homework. Please also remind your

Progress Reports:

Progress Reports will be issued twice during the course of the school year; at the midpoint, and at the end. These progress reports will describe your child's progress, efforts, and behavior during programming sessions, and will identify both strengths and areas for development. The teacher will inform parents/guardians if the child has any particular difficulties that need to be addressed. Parents/guardians are welcome to initiate conversations at any time regarding their child's progress, and since ours is an open-door policy, we welcome you into your child's learning environment as well. Please feel free to discuss your questions with your child's teacher, with the Religious School Administrator, or with the Rabbi.

Student Responsibilities/Supplies:

It is the school's policy that all students are encouraged to wear kippot in the synagogue. Boys are required to do so. Kippot should be the only head covering worn while your child is in the synagogue - please help your child refrain from wearing baseball caps, etc. (Possible changes to this policy will be part of both adult and children's study this year.)

The religious school provides each student with necessary texts as well as classroom materials. Students have a responsibility to keep their belongings organized and in good condition, and to bring their books, bags, homework, and other materials to each Wednesday session. Students third grade and up should bring their siddurim on Shabbat. Unless otherwise announced, no bags, homework, or other supplies are necessary for Family Mitzvah Workshop. Please help your child remember to organize/clean out his or her

gogue's practices concerning Jewish status with the Rabbi.

- Students must have a parent/guardian who is a member in good standing of Temple Bnai Israel, except that students may attend for one year before their families become members in good standing with the synagogue.
- **No child will be denied a Jewish education based on financial difficulty.** A scholarship fund has been established. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to contact the President of the congregation directly to request a scholarship. The President has the ability to negotiate dues and school fees and will keep all information confidential.
- Since the purpose of our religious school is to prepare students to live Jewish adult lives, enrollment in religious educational programs other than Judaism presents a clear conflict. We require that students in our religious school are not concurrently enrolled in other religious education.

Attendance Policy (Service and Classroom Attendance) and School Hours:

**Please note that regular attendance is expected at all components of our religious school programming, including Shabbat Experience, Sunday Mitzvah Workshops, and Wednesday tutoring sessions (for grades 3 and up.)** If a child must be absent, parents should notify the Religious School Administrator and the teacher as far in advance as possible. Makeup work can be

obtained directly from the teacher for any missed Wednesdays.

Additionally, every effort should be made by parents/guardians to ensure that their child(ren) are present for the entire religious school session. Early dismissals can be very disruptive to the educational process and can change the dynamic of the instructional setting, so please try not to remove your child early from school unless it is absolutely unavoidable. If early dismissal is necessary, please write a note and submit it directly to your child's teacher or to the Religious School Administrator. **Please do not send the message in with your child.**

The following procedure for monitoring student attendance on weekdays and addressing excessive absence is as follows:

1. If a child is expected to miss a long period of classes due to injury or illness, the parent/guardian should contact the Religious School Administrator and/or the child's teacher in order to arrange for work to be sent home on a regular basis.
2. All makeup work will be due at a prescribed time in order for the student to be credited with completing the semester in a satisfactory manner.
3. Should a student's absence rate be greater than 30% of the class sessions, that student will not receive credit for the given semester unless the work is completed. If in-home tutoring becomes necessary, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to make the appropriate arrangements and to pay for the tutoring.

4. A student will only be promoted to the next grade level if he or she completes the entire school year in good standing and demonstrates satisfactory progress.

Arrival and Dismissal:

Please be sure your child arrives at least five minutes before school starts so that he or she will be present and ready to begin. On Wednesdays, your child must be escorted into the building by you or another responsible adult, and at the end of his or her session, you must come into the building to pick up your child. No child is to leave the building unescorted. The safety of our students is of paramount concern to us; please work with us to help keep your child safe. During Shabbat Experience and Sunday workshops, please bring your child into the appropriate area for programming (Sanctuary, library, or other specified location). Children are encouraged to sit with their classes on Shabbat; you are completely welcome to join them at any point during services. On Sundays, please be prepared to stay, and learn, with your child.

**Please be punctual when picking up your child. Late pickup can cause anxiety and upset in our students. Our staff does not leave the premises until the last child is picked up. The Temple reserves the right to charge a late fee to parents who are consistently late to pick up their children.**

**If you have an emergency that prevents you from picking up your child on time, please call the Temple office at (860) 423-3743.**

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