

*Beth Samuel
Jewish Center*



2008-2009

(5769)

Parents' Manual

September 7, 2008
7 Elul 5768

Dear Parents,

Welcome to our 2008-2009 school year. This year we begin a new Hebrew curriculum which should enhance the prayer knowledge of all of our students. We are excited to have all of the members of our teaching team returning, but some are moving to new positions. Barbara Wilson will now be with our 6th and 7th grade students while Ms. Ruthie will focus solely on the lower grades (K – 3). We have a new Hebrew teacher, Jackie Goldblum, who have over ten years of teaching experience at Community Day. Additionally, our school day has moved so that all students attend from 9 – 12.

With this change in time, it is essential that your children arrive on time and well fed. You will see that the calendar lists school as beginning at 8:45 a.m. since that is the time we expect children to arrive. Formal classroom instruction will begin at 9 a.m. and if your child is not present, s/he will miss a significant part of the class. Also, there will be no snack for the older grades and minimal snack for the younger grades, so please be sure that your child eats breakfast before arriving at religious school. Three hours is a long time for a hungry child.

Our congregation will be going through a process of reflection this year with the goal of renewing our sense of purpose and setting our direction for the future. Many of these programs will take place on Sunday mornings. We will also be offering adult education lectures on some Sunday mornings. Sunday mornings were chosen to accommodate those of you who are already here, so please take advantage of these programs and remain in the building after you drop off your child if you can participate. The growth and education of this congregation is dependent not just on our students or the members of the board, but on each and every member family.

As we study and explore our traditions together, let their teachings guide our hearts and our lives.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Stephanie

Guide to Education at Beth Samuel Jewish Center

Arrival and Dismissal Time

Every moment that we spend with our students is important and since we only have school once a week, it becomes even more essential. All students now meet from 9 a.m. until 12 noon. Students are asked to arrive by 8:45 a.m. Our new schedule will only work if this really happens. If we find that a significant number of students are still arriving late, religious school will be extended to 12:30 for 2nd – 7th grades in January.

Also, because of security, no student (Pre-K to 7th grade) will be dismissed from the building without an adult. Students will be walked by class to the social hall at dismissal time and must be picked-up inside. Parents are asked to provide a listing of the adults who regularly pick-up your child and send a note if someone special will be coming.

Early dismissals should be accompanied by a note and parents need go to the classroom to sign-out their child.

Attendance

If you know that your child will be absent for a given session, please let his/her teacher know the week before. Prolonged illnesses or extenuating family situations should be brought to the attention of the school director. Copies of materials covered in class will be sent to you when your child misses school. Please make every effort to complete these lessons before the next class session.

Behavior

Given the short amount of time that we come together each week, mensch-like (ethical, honorable) behavior is necessary to ensure a safe, enriching and positive experience for your children. Teachers, along with their students, will set up basic classroom rules, or a covenant, to facilitate a productive learning environment. When problems arise, the teacher will remind the student of what behaviors are acceptable within the classroom. If a student continues to have problems, s/he will be sent to see the Religious School Director and the parents will be contacted to help resolve the problem.

*****Please do not allow your child to bring any electronic devices to religious school (cell phones, -pod, video games, etc.).*** Children who need to make phone calls home can use the synagogue phone with adult permission. If your child must have a cell phone because of an after school event, please let Rabbi Stephanie know. These phones will be taken from the students at the beginning of the day and locked up until the end of the morning.

Calendar

At the end of this booklet you will find a calendar for the school year. Please make a special note of the holiday programs which occur for Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Chanukah, Tu B'Shevat, and Purim, and Passover as well as the First Friday Services.

Emergency Procedures

Our staff is trained in the proper procedures for emergency situations. If there is an emergency involving your child or the entire school, you will be notified as soon as possible. Please be sure that we have a signed emergency medical care release form (part of the registration) on file for your child. In cases of emergency when you need to reach us during a religious school session, call the synagogue at 724-266-5238. If there is no answer, page Rabbi Wolfe at 412-478-5005.

Holiday Programs

The holiday programs have always been an important part of our school community. These activities cannot function without parent volunteers and so we ask that each family commit to two events from the list below (although we encourage you to do more). Each celebration will need a chairperson and the religious school committee has created a folder for each event to help guide the committee through the necessary tasks. A sign-up sheet will be distributed at the parents' meeting on the first day of religious school.

October 12, 2008 Sukkah Building

This event will be held during religious school but will begin with the adults. The committee helps coordinate getting the appropriate number of adults to actually build a nice sukkah. Then, they are responsible for helping the students to make decorations for the sukkah, obtain the necessary supplies for completing the sukkah (stalks for the top, etc.) and helps with the publicity.

October 19, 2008 Sukkot Celebration

This congregational event will be co-sponsored by the religious school, the women's group and the men's group. It will be a pancake & bagel brunch with intergenerational activities for the entire congregation. The event will follow religious school at 12 noon.

October 22, 2008 Simchat Torah & Consecration

This will be our congregational celebration of Simchat Torah when we will read from the end of the Torah and then continue again at the beginning. In addition, we are changing our celebration of Consecration to honor our younger students entering religious school (instead of mid-week Hebrew). The committee will help coordinate the evening, including special treats honoring our new students.

December 14, 2008 Hanukkah Program

This committee will work with the women's group and possibly the men's group to coordinate a congregational Hanukkah celebration. The exact nature of this celebration will be decided by consensus of all the committees.

February 8, 2009 Tu B'Shevat Craft & Seder

This committee will help the students with a Tu B'Shevat craft and seder by providing the materials and food necessary for the event; helping with the craft project; and setting up monitoring and cleaning up the seder itself.

March 8, 2009 Purim Carnival

This is a fun family event that is also our biggest event of the year. Come help and be a part of the best carnival around!

May 17, 2009 Year End Celebration

A fun day to end the school year. In the past, we have bowled to music and a laser light show with pizza, snacks and a good time.

Homework

Our new Hebrew curriculum is self-paced and requires a certain amount of motivation on the part of students and their parents. Any foreign language requires practice to master. While vocabulary and prayer concepts are covered in class, the decoding skills required to fluently recite prayers can only be touched upon during our class time. The more time that your child spends at home reading and/or chanting prayers aloud, the more fluent s/he will become.

With this in mind, work at home will be encouraged for all students. Our target is that each child spend approximately 30 minutes per week practicing Hebrew outside of class time.

Judaica teachers have also been given the option of assigning occasional homework if family involvement is necessary to complete the work.

Illness

If your child becomes ill while s/he is at religious school, s/he will be removed from his/her classroom and brought to the office. We gladly dispense Band-Aids and TLC. However, we cannot give any internal medication to a student (including Advil and Tylenol). When necessary, we will contact the parent or others listed on the child's medication/ emergency release form to pick the child up.

Progress Reports

Individual progress reports will be sent home twice during the school year for all students. These reports will evaluate your child based on his/her individual ability regarding participation in class, effort and comprehension of the material. If you have any questions regarding your child's progress report, please contact the teacher or the school director.

Schedule

K & 1 class schedule

9:00 – 10:00 Hebrew/Judaica w/Ms. Ruth
10:00 – 10:30 Services or Music
10:30 – 12:00 Judaica w/Mrs. Hill

2nd & 3rd class schedule

9:00 – 10:00 Class with Ms. Kris
10:00 – 10:30 Services or Music
10:30 – 11:00 Class with Ms. Kris
11:00 – 12:00 Hebrew with Ms. Ruth

4th & 5th class schedule

9:00 – 10:15 Class with Mrs. Hill
10:15 – 10:45 Hebrew with Mrs. Goldblum
10:45 – 11:15 Services
11:15 – 12:00 Hebrew with Mrs. Goldblum

6th & 7th class schedule

9:00 – 10:15 Hebrew with Mrs. Goldblum
10:15 – 10:45 Class with Mrs. Wilson
10:45 – 11:15 Services with
11:15 – 12:00 Class with Mrs. Wilson

Shabbat Service Participation

Students will be encouraged to participate in Shabbat services according to their grade level. Each class will participate twice during the year. This is an important learning experience for the students so we hope that you and your family will attend services on these special dates:

K & 1st: Dec. 3, 2008 & April 3, 2009

2nd & 3rd: Nov. 7, 2008 & Feb. 6, 2009

Teens: Feb. 20, 2009

4th & 5th grades: Jan. 16, 2009 & April 17, 2009

6th & 7th grades: Nov. 21, 2008 & March 20, 2009

Snack

Snack will now be provided to students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. It will be a simple treat of pretzels or fruit and a cup of water or juice. Older students will not receive a snack break. Please be sure that all children eat breakfast before arriving at religious school in the morning.

Tzedakah

The practice of tzedakah (righteous giving) is an ongoing theme of our program. Children will be asked to bring money to contribute to their class tzedakah fund each week. Please arrange for your children to earn a little money each week so that s/he is really contributing part of him or her self. At the end of the year, the students will decide how to disburse the funds.

Weather Closings

During the winter, we may need to close school due to poor weather. This decision will be made by 7:30 a.m. Each family will receive a phone call before 8:00 a.m. from a teacher notifying them of any cancellation decision. In addition, the phone message on the school voice mail will be updated by 7:45 a.m.