

TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK AND CALENDAR

2006 – 2007
5766-5767

Temple Beth Sholom
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Welcome to the Religious School of Temple Beth Sholom

We thank you for trusting us with your child. Our goal is to provide the very best Jewish educational experiences for each child and family.

Our staff is extremely capable and dedicated. We've carefully chosen the texts and educational materials we use. . Our class sizes are small enough that every teacher can reach out individually and meet each student's needs. E-mails reviewing the day's activities are sent out to the parents after every class session. This year, our upper grade students will be able to go on-line to practice their Hebrew at home, and their teachers' will be able to monitor their progress. Our teenage madrichim (teachers' aides) are enthusiastic about working with children.

Our children learn Hebrew so they will be able to read, understand and feel comfortable with the prayers they will be saying in Temple and at home. They learn the lessons of Torah so they can learn to live their lives as taught by the Torah and our Rabbis. Our children experience the good feelings that come with performing mitzvot and giving tzedakah. They are encouraged to find ways to extend these mitzvot outside of our school community and into their homes and secular lives.

Our children need to know who they are, to feel anchored. Our curriculum provides

opportunities to learn the long history of our people in Diaspora and in America. We teach about our love for the Land of Israel.

There is a strong and growing commitment at Temple Beth Shalom towards educating not just the child, but also the family. We've scheduled times for our children to joyously celebrate with their families. Rabbi Bramly will be teaching classes specifically geared to parents of children in our Religious School.

The Religious School Education Committee is open to all parents. It supports our school by providing needed services and fundraising. It energizes our school by advising and enabling communication between parents and staff. The school year promises to be an exciting and fulfilling one.

We know that being Jewish today is a choice. We want your child to choose to live a Jewish life, to be actively involved in the Jewish community. We want your child to say, "I love who I am... I love being Jewish."

The Specifics

Contact Information:

The Short Version: Shelley Stern at sstern@templebethsholomaz.org or 480 897-3636

The Long Version:

Educating your child is a team effort at Temple Beth Shalom. Your child's teacher communicates by e-mail after every class session. Your child's teacher will be giving you an e-mail address he or she can be reached at. And, don't hesitate to talk to me. Send me an e-mail at the address above, or call me at the 480 897-3636. I do have one request. Please understand that during school hours my primary concern is to be with your children, so I am often not available to speak to parents. If you do need to speak with me in person, stay for a few minutes after school or come a few minutes early, or make arrangements to visit with me another day.

Rabbi Bryan R. Bramly is the spiritual leader of our Congregation. You'll be seeing him on the Bima at services, at the school greeting families as they arrive, and getting to know you and our children. Let him know what your concerns are, what direction you want your family to grow in, and what your family needs to learn to live Jewish lives.

Other members of the team are David Waldman, the Vice President of Education, and Jennifer Newman, the Education Chair. They are dedicated to our school and our children's education and put in many hours of volunteer time. They and the other members of the Education Committee welcome your suggestions and participation to make our school even better. Get to know them. Ask them how you can help. Be an active partner in our Religious School.

Attendance

The Short Version:

If your child is not sick, he or she should be at school.

The Long Version:

We understand that there are many times that family illness, obligations or vacations will keep your child home. Please try to keep these to a minimum. Missing a class, especially as your child begins to study Hebrew, means missing a lot. It is difficult to learn a language in one or two days a week. Absences only make it more difficult. That said, if your child must miss school, please read the e-mails to know what your child should be trying to learn or reviewing at home.

Each semester, those students with perfect attendance will have a special lunch with Rabbi

Bramly.

Coming on time:

The Short Version:

It is important to get your children here on time.

The Long Version:

The reality is, sometimes life happens and your child will be late. We understand, and your child will always be warmly welcomed into class. Coming in late is not a good feeling for anyone. The child who is late feels pressured to catch up, even though the teacher is accepting and understanding. Learning is disrupted for everyone. So if at all possible, please try and get to school on time, most of the time.

Pick-up:

The Short Version:

Your children must go home after school.

The Long Version:

Although we love your children, picking them up on time is a necessity. After school hours, we cannot be responsible for their safety. The office telephones are often unanswered. Please carry the cell number of another parent with you. If you are late, let that person know and ask him to pass help.

For your children's safety, all parents of children in the primary grades, Pre-K through grade 2, are asked to park their cars and walk into the Primary Building to pick up their children. Children will not be released to older siblings.

Children in grades 3 and up will be waiting for you on the patio area. You can drive your car up and wait for them curbside. However, if the line is long, please park your car and walk onto campus to get your child. Children will not be allowed to cross over into the parking lot to meet you.

Children with Special Needs

The Short Version:

Tell us what we need to know.

The Long Version:

If your child has any special educational needs or behaviors, or is on medication, please note them on your registration form. Contact the Director and Teacher to make sure that we understand how we can best optimize your child's experience here. We can modify our curriculum, adjust our physical environment, or assign a Madrich to work closely with or tutor your child. We can ask for a representative from the Council for Jews with Special Needs to make suggestions. Help us help your child learn.

Conferences:

The Short Version:

We want to communicate.

The Long Version:

We do not have an annual parent-teacher conference. What we do have are ongoing opportunities for parents and teachers to confer. Our teachers are on campus for 15 minutes before and after class and available to you. However, meeting with your child's teacher may be more effective if arranged ahead of time. Our teachers' e-mails will be given to you. Everyone – child, parents, teacher, school, Temple – benefits if the lines of communication are kept open. Do not hesitate to ask questions or give us information about your child and family. The more we know about

your child's needs, the better job we can do as educators. Parent-school communications are kept confidential and on a need-to-know.

Progress Reports:

The Short Version:

Twice a year.

The Long Version:

We really do get to know your child. Our classes are small enough that our teachers know how your child is doing. The progress reports will reflect this. Please feel free to talk to the teacher about the report.

Attending Services:

The Short Version:

10 times a year, minimum. Rewards given.

The Long Version:

The United Synagogues of Conservative Judaism has minimum standards for their member organizations. We are trying to meet their standards for students' attendance at Synagogue services. The Education Committee has set a minimum of attendance at 10 services this year, including holiday services, for students at all grade levels. Forms will be going home with the children. After your child has attended services, please fill out a form and return it to your child's teacher. In May, a special trip for all children who have met the minimum will be arranged.

Junior Congregation:

The only version: Junior Congregation will begin again after the High Holy Days.

Class Shabbats (School Shabbats)

The short version: There are several scheduled.

The long version: There are several School Shabbats scheduled for Friday evenings.

October 27

November 17

December 22

January 26

February 23

March 23

April 27

There will be at one or two more scheduled for a Saturday morning in the Spring.

Rabbi suggested what I think is an exciting format. We'd like the entire school to participate in each of these services. Each class and child will do what they can. Each class will have a particular Shabbat date assigned. The parents of that class will come in a little early to set-up and stay a little later to do clean-up duties. Every family will bring in something for the Kiddush – whether a Kosher drink or a Kosher dessert. It may not be the most elegant Kiddush, but it will work for us. Our children will get a lot of exposure to the rituals of the Friday night service and the benefits of participation. Parents will get to enjoy seeing their children grow in their abilities to "daven". More information will be coming home in the next few weeks.

Kavod

The Short Version: Respect:

The Long Version: Respect towards others and towards the facility. We expect all of our

children to treat their teachers and schoolmates with respect. We expect our children to treat Temple Beth Sholom with respect. There will obviously be differences between playground, classroom and Sanctuary behavior, but Kavod will be shown everywhere on campus. Join us in teaching this Jewish value. Kavod will serve our children well throughout their lives.

Rachmanute (Heb.), Rachmaness (Yid.)

The Short Version: Caring

The Long Version: These are words our children will be learning and using throughout the year. Rachmaness was one of the themes of this year's Maccabiah Games. The athletes were taught to treat each other with kindness, caring about them even in the heat of competition. We're going to be teaching our children about caring for each other, for those we know, and for those we may never know.

Discipline Policy

Short Version: Gentle, firm, consistent.

Long Version: We expect our children to behave in a manner that allows all our students to learn and to feel and be safe at Temple Beth Sholom. That said, a verbal warning or two from the teacher is usually more than sufficient. We consider ourselves a family, a community. Our children feel that they are part of this group. They sense the closeness, the caring, and so they usually abide by our expectations. However, we do have a discipline policy in place, just in case:

First infraction: The teacher will issue a verbal warning.

Second infraction: The teacher will issue a verbal warning, and tell the Director. The child will be sent to the Director and the parent may be notified by telephone, e-mail or in writing.

Third infraction: The child will be sent to the Director who will arrange for a mandatory conference with the student and parents.

Fourth infraction: The parent must accompany the child to class, suspension or other appropriate action.

Tzedakah:

Short Version: Yes

Long Version: Yes. Each classroom will have a Tzedakah box. Please encourage your child to donate something every day they are in school. Every little bit helps, and teaches the mitzvah. It is best if the child donations come at least partially from their own money, and perhaps a little from the parent, so behavior modeling can occur. Last year, our School won the Blue Box Boom award from JNF for collecting the most money per child. We can be very proud of our children and families.

We'll also be sending Tzedakah boxes home. It is traditional to put a few coins in each Friday before Shabbat begins. If you haven't already done so, make that tradition yours.

Supplies:

Short Version: We provide some...

Long Version: We provide some and you provide some. We're doing something a little different this year. The Education Committee is providing book bags that the children will decorate. Each bag will contain a folder and a special pencil. Please check the bag after every session to see if there are books, letters or work going home in the folder. Please make sure that the bag with all its supplies comes to school each week.

Homework:

The Short Version: Yes,

The Long Version: Yes, there will be homework. In the primary grades, it most often focuses on some aspect of ritual or holidays, maybe the basic sounds of Hebrew letters. If you don't read Hebrew, let your child teach you. That can be a powerful experience for a child. Some of the best "homework" discussions can occur in the car on the way home from school.

In the upper grades, homework is unavoidable. There is no way to learn a language in the time we have allotted to Religious School. We are asking for 10 minutes a day to review what they learn. Sometimes, they will be bringing home a practice sheet that they need to practice with an adult. These practice sheets are structured in such a way that a parent who does not know Hebrew can be of great help. Spending a few minutes at home makes an amazing difference. Any teacher can tell is a child has done so during the week. The results are obvious. Remind your child. Yes, we like to teach responsibility and accountability for one's own actions. But they are still children and will benefit from the reminder. Sometimes, your child's assignment will be to ask you for your opinion, your thoughts. Please take the time to have a conversation with them. They can learn so much from you. You can learn so much from them. From your positive approach to homework, your child learns that mom and/or dad believes Religious School is important.

New This Year: Our older children, 3rd grade and up, will be receiving CD's that they will use online, interactively, to study Hebrew. The CD's are coordinated with their Hebrew texts.

Guest Students:

Short Version: Yes and No

Long Version: Because of the increased liability, we are not able to have children bring their friends to Religious School. However, if a parent is visiting our school to decide whether or not to send their child, and we have the parent's permission ahead of time, that child is welcome. Parents, of course, are always welcome on campus and in our classes.

9th – 12th Grade Classes

The Short Version: Yes

The Long Version: Yes, they're new and will be held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday evenings. Tentatively, they are scheduled to begin in October. If you are registered, you will be getting detailed information as the date gets closer. If you know of any teen who may be interested, let them know. Why take the class? Two words: Rabbi .

Classes for Parents:

The Short Version: Yes

The Long Version: Look for details in your weekly bulletin, monthly newsletter, e-mail and in your children's folders. Why take the class? Two words: Rabbi .

Final Words:

The Short Version: Mah Tov

The Long Version: How fortunate we are to be here, to be able to freely send our children to school to learn about Judaism, about prayer, about G-d. How fortunate we are...Mah Tov.