PARENT HANDBOOK

Talmud Torah & Youth Programs
2019-2020/5780
B’nai Israel Talmud Torah

MISSION STATEMENT

B’nai Israel Talmud Torah fosters a positive sense of Jewish identity by engaging children in an exploration of Jewish texts, history, practices and beliefs that are meaningful in the present and will be the foundation for a lifetime of participation in Jewish community.

We strive to:

• Develop a positive sense of Jewish identity and community
• Provide a framework for living as an observant Conservative Jew
• Develop skills, ideas and values of Jewish life
• Teach students to utilize texts such as the Tanakh, the Siddur, and Rabbinic writings for personal enrichment
• Develop a personal system of ethics founded on Jewish tradition and history
• Encourage questions and curiosity into the nature of being and living Jewishly

We have an integrated curriculum in the following areas:

- T’fillah (prayer) and Synagogue Skills
- Modern Hebrew
- Holidays and Customs
- Mitzvot, Jewish Values and Culture
- Hebrew Language
- Israel
- History and Tanakh
Who’s Who at B’nai Israel Talmud Torah

Fonda Lowe, Vice President for Youth and Education
Marcie Peters, Co-Chair, Talmud Torah Committee
Wendy Stickle, Co-Chair, Talmud Torah Committee

Moshe Ben-Lev, Education Director
301-816-5574, Moshebl@bnaiisraelcong.org
Rabbi Penina Alexander, Assistant Principal
301-816-5566, peninaa@bnaiisraelcong.org

Arielle Katzel, Family Engagement Coordinator
301-816-5567, ariellek@bnaiisraelcong.org
Sarah Jarvis, Director of Youth Engagement
240-221-2504, sarahj@bnaiisraelcong.org

Jennifer Cohen, Education Communications Coordinator
240-221-2508, Jenniferc@bnaiisraelcong.org

Leydi Solano, Talmud Torah Assistant
301-816-5576, Leydis@bnaiisraelcong.org
POLICIES, PROCEDURES & PROGRAMS

School policies are designed to meet the needs of our students while ensuring their safety. Please read this information, and share the appropriate sections with your children.

SCHOOL HOURS

- Primary Grades (Grades K-2): Sundays (9:00 AM - 12:15 PM)
- Intermediate Grades (Grades 3-6): Sundays (9:00 AM - 12:15 PM);
  - Tuesdays (4:30 PM - 6:30 PM)
- Noar B’Yachad (Grades 7-12): Tuesdays (6:30 PM - 8:30 PM)

B’NAI MITZVAH

The B’nai Mitzvah experience is made up of different components, including:

- Private lessons with the cantors
- Shabbat services
- Family education programs
- Parent classes and workshops

Becoming a B’nai Mitzvah is contingent upon completion of five years of Jewish education in Grades 3-7 (enrollment in our Talmud Torah program or Jewish Day School). Children whose B’nai Mitzvah dates fall before the end of the school year are expected to regularly attend classes through the end of the school year.

BLUMBERG-ZALIS FAMILY LIBRARY & CHOD MEDIA CENTER

Students in Grades 3–12 can use the Blumberg-Zalis Family Library for research purposes under the supervision of their classroom teachers. All families are invited to check out books for home use.

CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

All cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off and out of sight during instructional times. In some cases, teachers may collect cell phones at the beginning of class and return them at the end.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS AND HOMEWORK

Home assignments help reinforce classroom learning and are an important part of the learning process. Students from 3-6th grade may receive weekly short assignments that will be due the following class session.

It helps students who have been absent to make up missed classwork so they don’t fall behind. Teachers will assist you and your child to ensure that each child keeps up.

CLASSROOM ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is crucial to successful learning. A minimum of 80% classroom attendance is expected at each grade level. Parents are asked to call the office if a student misses more than one consecutive class session.

If a student falls below the minimum level of attendance during the first report card period, a staff member will contact the parents so that they can work together towards better attendance.

COMMUNICATION

Most School-Home communications are through email. We ask that each family provide us with a valid email address. Teachers send a regular email update reporting on material covered and any homework assignments. The Education & Youth Department sends a weekly newsletter, Kesher, on Thursdays throughout the school year. The Synagogue’s website (www.bnaiisraelcong.org) is an excellent source of information of events organized by the congregation.
To speak with a teacher or an administrator, please call the Talmud Torah office at 301-816-5576. We will be glad to set up a telephone and/or in-person conference. You can also contact your child’s teacher(s) by emailing them.

In cases of separation/divorce, it is our policy to keep all parents informed of a student’s progress and school activities unless legally prohibited to do so.

**DEREKH ERETZ - STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

Students are involved in religious education in a religious setting. **Kavod** (respect, honor) is the principle policy of our school. Students are expected to show respect for the Rabbi, Cantor, Director of Education, faculty, staff, parents, volunteers, and other students. Self-respect is the key to honoring others and receiving honor from others. Students’ actions should reflect the values and ethics of Judaism.

*Derekh Eretz* (way of the land) implies that Judaism has high standards for how we act and interact. In Torah we find commandments governing human interaction - *mitzvot ben adam l’chavero* (commandments between one human being and another).

If there is a behavior issue, the student receives two warnings. If the behavior does not improve, the teacher will contact a parent. The teacher may choose to contact the parent earlier if they feel it necessary. If the behavior persists, the student and teacher devise a behavior contract that includes an addendum specifying agreed-upon behavioral changes. Continued disruptive or inappropriate behavior will result in suspension. The student and parent will meet with the teacher and Director of Education before the suspension is activated. A suspended student will be permitted to return to school only after the student and parent come to an agreement with the teacher(s) and the Director of Education. The student is responsible for all work missed.

Any student whose behavior seriously disrupts class will be suspended and required to wait in the Education office until picked up by a parent or guardian. A student found displaying conduct dangerous to him/herself or others or destroying and removing property will be subject to immediate suspension.

Any physical violence, obscene and lewd language and behavior will result in immediate removal of a student. Bullying is a repeated pattern of aggressive intimidation of others which goes against the very core of Jewish values and ethics. Cyber bullying is also unacceptable. Any evidence or reporting of either among our students will result in immediate suspension.

**KIPPOT**

As an expression of respect, we expect that all males wear a **kippah** and strongly encourage women and girls to cover their heads as well. Regardless of your personal observance level, proficiency with Jewish prayer, or gender identity we invite you to find your personal spiritual connection with our traditions and community.

**DROP OFF & PICK-UP**

- Students in Grades K-2 must be picked up in the classroom by a parent (or another authorized adult) or an older sibling.
- Students in Grades 3 and up may be dropped off curbside in the designated area. For security purposes, parking or stopping alongside the building in non-designated areas (i.e., the fire lane or in the handicapped spaces) is forbidden. All cars must be parked in the parking lot.
- Adults **must** escort children to cars.
- For safety reasons, do not use your cell phone while driving or walking in the parking lot.
- Teens with driver’s licenses are asked to be especially vigilant in our parking lot.

**If you are delayed, please call the school office and leave a message (301-816-5576).**

A staff person will remain on duty until all children are picked up.

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Interrupting class to excuse students early compromises the continuity of class work for all students. To create a better classroom environment and decrease the number of disruptions, the B’nai Israel Talmud Torah Committee instituted these early dismissal guidelines. Should you find that early dismissal is still necessary, please follow this procedure:

a. If possible, send your child to school with a signed note indicating the need for the early dismissal request.

b. During the last hour of the day, in order to minimize disruptions, we ask parents to pick their children up **ONLY** at specified times: Sunday mornings at 11:15 or 11:45, Tuesday afternoons at 5:15 or 5:45 PM. The office will contact the classroom and have the student sent to the office for early dismissal.

**PLEASE NOTE:** A child will be released only to pre-authorized individuals. The names of ALL pre-authorized individuals must be on file in the office or you must send a note or email authorizing pickup.

If a student arrives late, students must report to the office before joining their class.

**FINANCIAL AID**
B’nai Israel is committed to ensuring that as many students as possible can participate in our education and youth programs. Please contact Hal Ossman, Executive Director, ([hossman@bnaiisraelcong.org](mailto:hossman@bnaiisraelcong.org), 301-881-6550) for more information.

**FIRE EMERGENCY AND LOCKDOWN DRILLS**
Fire emergency instructions are posted in each classroom. Fire and lockdown drills are scheduled during the school year.

**KASHRUT AND FOOD**
The Talmud Torah follows the Conservative Movement’s guidelines for Kashrut. Any questions in this area will be referred to the Rabbis.

Due to allergies and kashrut rules, students are not permitted to bring in outside food. Nut-free kosher snacks are provided for K-6 students. Alternative snacks are available for other allergy/medical needs. Nut-free dinners are provided to *Noar B’Yachad* students, with accommodations made for other medical needs.

**MEDICATION & ACCIDENT POLICY**
We are bound by Maryland State Regulations in regards to medication. All prescription medications must be brought to school in the original container with the child’s name, date, authorization label, and dosage instructions clearly affixed by the pharmacy. An adult must hand deliver the medication with written instructions, and a signed, dated release form to the Education Director. B’nai Israel personnel will not administer medication of any kind unless all these regulations are met. Students with food allergies should have a current Allergy Action Plan on file.

Parent(s) or guardian(s) will be contacted immediately in case of accident or injury. If these individuals cannot be reached, the names listed as emergency contacts in our database will be called. It is imperative that all emergency information be kept current. Your information can be updated via your Chaverweb online account.

**KULAM (Hebrew Tutoring) and KITAH LIMMUD (Inclusion Program)**
Sometimes a child cannot function in a regular classroom because of physical, emotional or other learning challenges. In such cases the school will work with the family to provide assistance that meets the needs of the child. In some cases, students who are unable to learn in a mainstream classroom setting may be tutored...
in our *Kitah Limmud* (Inclusion Class) with teachers who can offer more individualized attention and instruction that meets the learning styles of each student. Our *Kulam* (Hebrew tutoring) program for 3rd-6th grade students consists of small group learning for remedial Hebrew and for students with learning challenges. Teachers and madrichim design lessons to support student needs. For more information, contact Education Director Moshe Ben-Lev.

**TALLIT & TEFILLIN**
The practice of putting on *tallit* and *tefillin* for *davening* are coming-of-age *mitzvot* generally assumed upon becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. In the 6th grade year, we begin instruction and practice in putting on *tallit* and *tefillin.*

**VISITORS**
All visitors must sign in with the security guard at the entrance to the Lenkin Education and Activities Center. **Under no circumstances are unauthorized visitors permitted in the building.**

**WEATHER EMERGENCY POLICIES**
The B’nai Israel website will be updated if there are any cancelations of classes or programs. Please check [www.bnaiisraelcong.org](http://www.bnaiisraelcong.org). Emails are sent announcing Talmud Torah closings. The email distribution lists are set up using the email addresses in your Chaverweb online account.

**Tuesdays:** Talmud Torah closings on Tuesdays will be communicated by 1:00 PM that day.

**Youth Activities:** When Talmud Torah is cancelled, youth programs for that day are also cancelled. Any other time, parents can confirm that a program is being held by calling the Director of Youth Engagement at 240-221-2515.

**MADRICHIM (Classroom Assistants)**
This rewarding program enables 9th-12th graders to assist in our classrooms. Participants receive extensive training through our *Noar B’Yachad* program in 8th grade. After receiving training, they join teachers in classrooms as helpers in 9th grade.

**SHABBAT & HOLIDAY YOUTH SERVICES**

*Shabbat* service attendance is a crucial part of the Talmud Torah curriculum.

Our *Shabbat* morning Junior Congregation services for students only and family services reinforce and enhance the material taught in the classrooms. Participation in these services strengthen and support student Hebrew language and *Tefillah* (prayer) skills. These are teaching services designed to help participants become comfortable with all aspects of the *Shabbat* morning service. We encourage parents to come *daven* and learn with their children.

Junior Congregation runs throughout the school year for grades K-6. Twice per month, grades K-2 meet for a Mini-Minyan Service while students in grades 3-6 remain in Junior Congregation. Twice monthly we also offer a Family Learning Service. Once per month we offer a Teen Minyan Shabbat service for grades 7-12. Our Director of Youth Engagement works with the teens to create each teen-run service. All youth services join the rest of the congregation in the Dweck Sanctuary for the conclusion of services. Most weeks, all Youth Services (other than Tot Shabbat) run from 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM.

Parents of all K-6 students are asked to assist by helping to set up the youth *kiddush* outside Hayman Chapel at least once per year. Dress clothes should be worn on Shabbat and holidays to enhance the spirit of these special days.
Shabbat Attendance Recommendation: Students in Grades K-2 are asked to attend 5 Shabbat morning Mini-Minyan/Junior Congregation services, and students in Grades 3-6 are asked to attend 10 Shabbat morning Junior Congregation services. Each school year, attendance cards are outside Hayman Chapel on Shabbat mornings for students to use to label a card with their name and track their attendance. These cards are kept at the synagogue. Students may receive credit for Shabbat morning attendance at other synagogues.

Friday night services are also important. Erev Shabbat services start every Friday evening at 6:15 PM. All students are encouraged to attend at least 2 Friday night services during the school year.

Gold Kippah Honor Society
B’nai Israel’s Gold Kippah Honor Society recognizes students for achieving proficiency in various prayers. Students mark mastery of each prayer with a sticker on their personal Gold Kippah cards. Special recognition is awarded at four levels: Blue Kippah, Bronze Kippah, Silver Kippah, and Gold Kippah. In addition to receiving a special colored kippah and having their names listed in B’nai Israel’s Scroll, students will also be honored in front of the full congregation at Education Shabbat (January) or Summer Sendoff Shabbat (June). Students completing the Gold level have their names inscribed on a plaque in the Goldberg Youth Chapel. Gold Kippah Honor Society sound files on the website and Chug sessions (the 15 minutes before Junior Congregation/Mini-Minyan services) provide additional prayer mastery support for students.

Grade Shabbatot
Each grade from K-6 has one grade Shabbat per school year. On grade Shabbat, students in that grade take a larger role in leading the service in Junior Congregation/Mini-Minyan than usual. 6th Grade will lead parts of the service in Dweck Sanctuary. We also have a special breakfast for each grade on Grade Shabbatot for the families with children in that grade. On Education Shabbat, all students take part in the Dweck Sanctuary service.

EPIC Shabbat
EPIC Shabbat is a special themed Shabbat for all Shabbat Magic age groups. Past EPICs have had themes such as Nature, Harry Potter, and Star Wars.

HOLIDAY FAMILY PROGRAMS
All Holiday Youth & Family programs are on the B’nai Israel website. Upcoming programs are also listed in the weekly Kesher email.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & GRADE LEVEL PROGRAMS
Family Engagement programming is an integral part of B’nai Israel’s education program. Programs are offered during the school year. Typically, these are events where parents and children come together to learn, share, and get to know one another. These programs are offered to all B’nai Israel families, and includes grade-specific programs as well as holiday programs.

Special thanks to the Berman family for establishing the Dollye and I. Wolford Berman Educational Initiative Grant which sustains many of our Family Education programs.

YOUTH PROGRAMS
Director of Youth Engagement, Sarah Jarvis (sarahj@bnaisraelcong.org, 240-221-2515)

We view informal education as an important aspect of the overall Jewish education of our students (both our Talmud Torah and Day School students). Our Director of Youth Engagement, Sarah Jarvis, is delighted to provide you with information about these programs:
Bonim (Grades K-2)
Bonim is our youth group for students in grades K-2. As our youngest youth group, our goal is to help “build” (as the name means) friendships and a comfort level within our congregation. This energetic group meets once a month, either in the synagogue building or off-site.

Machar (Grades 3-5)
Machar is our youth group for students in grades 3-5. Our goal is to prepare these students for machar - tomorrow! This group meets on a monthly basis for social, community service, and building friendships.

Kadima (Grades 6-8)
Kadima offers middle school students social and leadership opportunities similar to USY. Members meet once or twice a month for activities, including opportunities to meet other teens, at events held with other synagogue chapters in Seaboard Region.

USY (Grades 9-12)
United Synagogue Youth (USY) offers Jewish teens the opportunity to develop leadership skills as well as lasting friendships through a variety of Judaic, social, educational, and athletic programs.

Fifth and Sixth Grade Kallah
5th and 6th graders join Rabbi Berkowitz, Sarah Jarvis, and Moshe Ben-Lev at the Pearlstone Conference & Retreat Center for a weekend full of fun, games and interactive discussions as well as opportunities to meet other B’nai Israel students.

Talmud Torah Curriculum

Through a social emotional approach to education, our Talmud Torah engages children through many modalities including art, dance, music, drama, and text. Students explore Jewish traditions though Hebrew language, Torah, rituals, history, and Middot (values). By teaching and modeling Jewish practice and learning, our goal is to inspire and motivate every child and family to continue exploring through own connections with all that is Jewish. For details on the curriculum by grade, please contact the Education Director.

Teacher Professional Development
Using a cluster grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, we are teaming up with other congregations to expand our workshops as well as offer mandatory monthly trainings for our faculty to meet the new Talmud Torah teaching expectations.

Madrichim
Our Madrichim (teaching assistants) are teens from 8-12th grade who through an extensive training program (an elective class in the fall semester of 8th grade year) assist teachers in classrooms from K-6th grade both in Hebrew and Judaic studies. They are paired with teachers on Sundays and Tuesdays. Throughout the year, our madrichim meet to discuss, learn and celebrate their amazing contribution to our community.