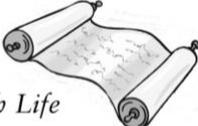


Congregation Shalom Religious School



Inspiring a Love of Jewish Life

Parent Handbook

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CONTACT INFORMATION

CONTACT	POSITION	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL
Congregation Shalom		978-251-8091	Website: www.congregationshalom.org
Dale Norman:	Director of Education and Lifelong Engagement (DELE)	978-251-8091	eddirector@congregationshalom.org
Shoshana Perry	Rabbi	978-251-8515	rabbi@congregationshalom.org
Joanna Myers	Temple President		president@congregationshalom.org
Elana Newman	School Committee Co-Chair		edchair@congregationshalom.org
Heidi Lazar	School Committee Co-Chair		edchair@congregationshalom.org
Sandy Moore	Office Administrator	978-251-8091	edassistant@congregationshalom.org office@congregationshalom.org
Bonnie Nojeim	Bookkeeper	978-251-8091	bookkeeper@congregationshalom.org

HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

This handbook was developed by the Congregation Shalom School Committee to assist your family in preparing for your child's religious school experience. The information contained in this handbook highlights the guidelines and procedures followed by the Congregation Shalom Religious School.

Providing your child with a positive Jewish educational experience is the major goal of Congregation Shalom's Religious School. The teachers are committed to helping your child develop a positive Jewish identity, as well as providing the knowledge that is necessary for Temple involvement and participation in Jewish life. However, as parents, you are your child's most significant teacher. By providing your child with the support and encouragement needed to get the most out of Jewish education, he or she will be more likely to have a successful and positive experience. There will be opportunities for parental involvement and enrichment activities throughout the year and we encourage parents to get involved.

The School Committee welcomes your feedback and is available to answer any questions you may have.

DECLARATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXCLUSIVITY

The Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) has a policy that all children who attend religious school in Reform synagogues are being raised as Jews and are not being formally educated in any other faith. This also means that all life-cycle ceremonies that the child participates in must be exclusively Jewish. Registering your child in Congregation Shalom's Religious School is an acknowledgement that you will abide by this principle.

SCHOOL HOURS

Please see the school calendar on the Congregation Shalom website for exact dates of all sessions, as these change yearly. The school calendar is based upon the following schedule.

CLASS	AGE/GRADE	DAY	TIME
Preschool	Ages 3 – 5	Sunday (bi-monthly)	8:30 AM – 10:15 AM
Religious School	Grades K – 4	Sunday – 1 st session	8:30 AM – 10:15 AM
	Grades 5 - 7	Sunday – 2 nd session	10:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Hebrew School	Grades 3 – 7	Wednesday	4:15 PM – 6:00 PM
Chai School	Grades 8 – 10	Wednesday – dinner (optional)	5:30 PM – 6:00 PM
		Classes	6:15PM – 8:15PM
Post Confirmation	Grades 11 – 12	Tuesday (monthly)	7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Kavod

The word *kavod* is generally interpreted as **respect, honor and dignity** and so one who lives a life of *kavod* is then **one who acts with respect, honor and dignity**. All behavior will be brought back to the question: Did the person act with or without *kavod*?

At Congregation Shalom Religious School the key component of “Inspiring a Love of Jewish Life” is striving toward consistently acting with *kavod* – Honor, Respect and Dignity in all aspects of our lives. When we as parents, teachers and students live a life of *kavod*, we not only inspire others to open the door into a loving Jewish Life, but we inspire them to love themselves and one another ...and but for the commentary, is that not the essence of Jewish life itself?

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our discipline policy will be guided by a commitment to *kavod* – the basic respect due to both teachers and to other students and to our physical space. In addition, we are keenly aware that we will only achieve our education goals if there is respect and cooperation between teacher, student and parents.

Every student has the right to a learning environment free from bullying and intimidation and to feel safe and happy in school. Each student has a right to be treated fairly and with dignity. The same applies to teachers, as the school is their workplace. It is the student’s right to learn and the teacher’s right to teach. No one has the right to interfere with the teaching/learning process.

- Parents have a responsibility to help students develop positive attitudes toward study and the value of Jewish learning in conjunction with the teachers.

Positive behavior will be encouraged and reinforced in each classroom, but techniques may vary with each situation. *Physical punishment or inappropriate language is never used and is never acceptable.* “Unacceptable” behavior is defined as any behavior, which is disruptive to the class or harmful to students and/or the teachers.

The following guidelines will be used to deal with disciplinary situations. In all instances listed below, a note will be filed in the student’s academic file. In cases where the situation is deemed more serious, one or more of these steps may be utilized.

- Render a verbal warning to the student.
- Discuss the situation privately with the student.
- Inform the Director of Education and Lifelong Engagement (DELE) verbally and/ or in writing.
- Contact the parents about the disruptive behavior in consultation with the DELE.
- The student and teacher may meet with the DELE to discuss the situation.
- The teacher or DELE may call the parents to inform them of this meeting.

The DELE and teacher will meet with the parents and the student to try to resolve the problem.

In extenuating circumstances, the family and student will meet with the DELE, the Rabbi and the School Committee Chair to determine next steps that may include but are not limited to suspension or expulsion from attending Religious and Hebrew School classes.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Congregation Shalom is committed to a safe environment for all students, free from harassment, intimidation or bullying. Bullying in all its forms, whether verbal, physical, or psychological, is completely unacceptable. Bullying, by definition, can be any single incident or pattern of behavior directed at another person that results in that person feeling intimidated or harassed, or results in the physical or emotional injury of the person.

Bullying can take many forms including: slurs, rumors, jokes, innuendos, demeaning comments, cyber-bullying of any kind, pictures, pranks, gestures, physical attacks, threats, or other written, on-line, oral or physical actions.

If a student engages in any form of harassment, intimidation or bullying, as determined following a reasonable investigation by the teacher or DELE, the teacher or DELE may take the following actions:

1. The teacher will remind the student of the rules of proper behavior in the classroom.
2. The teacher will take steps to resolve the situation in class.
3. The teacher will ask the student to report to the DELE.
4. The teacher and/or DELE will contact the parents if deemed appropriate.
5. In cases where disruptive behavior continues or in cases where the behavior issue is severe, the DELE will request to meet with the parents and the student to discuss the situation further. Parents may be asked to attend future classes with the student and/or a sign a behavior contract along with the student.
6. The DELE, in consultation with the Rabbi, Chair of the School Committee and/or the President, will have the right to engage in additional remedial action as is deemed appropriate, including removal of the student from the class on a temporary or permanent basis or expelling the student from the school.

As appropriate, the DELE in consultation with the Rabbi, Chair of the School Committee and/or the President, reserves the right to skip any of the above-mentioned steps and respond more directly or strictly to more serious conduct issues.

Our teachers are committed to treating all students with dignity and respect. Our expectation is that students will treat their teachers and classmates in the same manner in an out of school.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Arrival and dismissal procedures are designed to ensure the safety of all of our children.

- At drop off time, the supervising adult must park in a designated parking spot and accompany their children into the building.
- The supervising adult must park in a designated parking spot and come into the building lobby to retrieve their children from the child's classroom at the end of school.
- The supervising adult must wait in the lobby, as not to disturb classes that may still be in session.
- The supervising adult must pick up their children from their classroom.
- Parking or dropping off children in the fire lane alongside the building is not allowed.
- No student should have a parents' key card at any time. This is a safety issue. Any key card found will be taken from the student and a parent will need to collect it from the Education Director.
- If a student is to be dismissed early, parents are to notify the teacher before class starts, if possible. In the rare event of early dismissal, the parents must go to the child's classroom to escort them out of the building. Parents are strongly encouraged not to dismiss students early, except in the case of an emergency, as it disrupts instruction and can cause safety issues regarding student supervision. In the case of an emergency, students can be reached by calling the temple's phone line at 978-251-8091.
- If you know you will be delayed in picking your child up, please call the DELE at 978-251-8091 who will inform your child. Being late for pick up can cause extreme anxiety for your child. Please make every effort to be on time.
- Chai School parents can line up at the curb for pick up at 8:15 pm only.

REMINDERS: Please remind your children of the above procedures. In addition, make sure your child understands that each time they exit the building—it must be done through the lobby doors. Please also remind your child that under no circumstances should they be walking around the building, or down the driveway. We will do our best to monitor and avoid these situations, but we need your help.

STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to dress appropriately for a house of worship. If a Child comes dressed inappropriately the DELE will contact the family to address this concern.

Electronic devices, including but not limited to mobile phones, music players, and game systems, are not permitted during class time, unless expressly allowed for the practice of Hebrew, or in a class where the teacher has expressly allowed the technology and is using it for the furtherance of education. If a student is found using an electronic device for purposes other than stated above, the teacher will remove the device and a parent needs to pick the item up from the DELE's office.

Every effort will be made by the teaching staff and DELE to help your child have a successful school year. Communication between parents and the teaching staff is essential to helping your child succeed in religious school. Attendance, quality of classroom participation, oral and written assignments all play a part in determining successful completion of the required material for each grade level.

ATTENDANCE

Parents are asked to have their child in class on time and to pick him or her up promptly at the conclusion of class. If your child will be absent please contact the teacher and DELE. Students are responsible for making up work missed due to absence.

CS RELIGIOUS & HEBREW SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Congregation Shalom is committed to a program of excellence for our students. It is therefore expected that students will attend Religious and Hebrew school regularly. This will help to guarantee continuity of learning and solid integration into the classroom and religious school environment. Prompt and regular attendance is essential for the proper education of your child and effective operations of the school. Students will be expected to make up all missed work.

The Board of Trustees has established that a minimum of 80% attendance and/or satisfactory completion of course work, be required annually in order for students to matriculate to the next grade level. The Rabbi and the DELE have the authority to withhold matriculation and/or Bar or Bat Mitzvah if the child does not complete the work agreed upon.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

A Student Health Form is to be submitted at the time of registration including any special restrictions or medical situations. This form needs to be updated annually and as any changes in the child's health status occur. Please feel free to discuss any special needs with your child's teacher and the DELE.

Children with symptoms of illness should **not** be sent to school (including but not limited to a fever of 100 or above). If a child appears too ill to function normally in the classroom, or develops symptoms of illness while at Religious School, parents will be asked to pick up their child from school.

In the event of illness or emergency, the school will contact the parents at the phone numbers listed on the registration forms. If the parents cannot be reached, the school will contact those listed as emergency contacts on these forms. If any numbers where you might be reached are to change, please notify the school in writing immediately at eddirector@congregationshalom.org or call 978-251-8091.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Hebrew School: Progress communications are sent out approximately three times over the course of the academic year. These are personalized emails, which include the level at which your child is working, what homework is being completed, and in-class expectations.

Religious School: Early in February 2019, there is an individual Parent/Teacher conference-time planned with your child's teacher during Religious School hours. Closer to that time, a schedule will be sent out with time slots for parents to meet with teachers. During Parent/Teacher conferences the DELE and Rabbi will have interactive programming prepared for students in both Sessions 1 and 2. Additionally Religious School teachers will send class-wide academic updates on a regular basis.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Congregation Shalom's School cancellation policy is NOT linked with the Chelmsford Public School's closing announcements. This means that you cannot assume that classes are cancelled just because Chelmsford has no school. We will decide to cancel school if weather conditions warrant by 1:30 PM on a weekday, or by 7:00 AM on Sunday. Religious School closing announcements will be sent via email and will be broadcast on Channel 4, Channel 5 and Channel 7. There may be unforeseen reasons in which an announcement may not appear via one of the methods listed above. Please check more than one source if you feel it necessary. When deciding whether to drive to school in inclement weather, please use your own best judgment.

COMMUNICATION

It is our goal to provide effective and timely communication to the families of our congregation.

Email is our primary means to send out announcements and upcoming events. Please let us know if you don't use email, if you do not check your email frequently, or if your **email address has changed**. If you are not receiving email, please notify us immediately. All class lists and other important information are sent via email.

If your e-mail address has changed, please notify the Temple Office at office@congregationshalom.org

Other methods of communication used include:

- The Temple newsletter
- School reminders
- Temple updates.
- Frequent class summaries/updates/reminders/notifications from the teachers.
- Congregation Shalom website.
- TV in the lobby

SNACK GUIDELINES

Food allergies are a major problem in this country. They claim over 200 lives and cause over 30,000 emergency room visits each year, nationwide. In particular, we have been made aware of the serious risk someone allergic to peanuts or nuts can face from even the smallest taste of peanut butter or exposure to a piece of nut. The consequences can be life threatening and may require immediate intervention with medication, hospitalization or even life support. Health and safety of our children have always been top priorities for us, so we take this very seriously. We want parents to do everything possible to help us reduce the likelihood of such an occurrence at Congregation Shalom.

Therefore, because even a trace of an allergen can possibly trigger an allergic reaction, it is our intent and policy to restrict peanuts and tree nuts from the entire building during school hours. Please ***do not send any*** peanuts, tree nuts, peanut butter or foods made with nuts or nut oil to the temple during school hours (as opposed to foods which are "processed in a factory with nuts," which are allowed). Please check the ingredients list on all food labels to make sure the foods are nut-free. Our ability to provide our children with a safe nut-free environment depends on your attention to and compliance with this policy. Students are expected to eat any snacks before Hebrew school begins on Wednesdays.

Similarly, we want to protect all of our children who suffer from any food-related allergies. If your child has a specific food-related allergic condition, you must notify the DELE in writing about the condition so that we can take appropriate action to reduce the risk of exposure of your child to such food items.

If a student does bring an allergenic food to school, it will be taken from them and a safe alternative snack will be provided.

While we cannot guarantee that Congregation Shalom is a nut-free or allergen-free zone, it is our intent to diminish the possibility of allergic reactions. Our ability to do so depends on every parent taking these food-restriction policies seriously. We all want students at Congregation Shalom to be safe. With this in mind, we ask that no parent bring in any food or snack for the entire class without either the DELE, the Office Administrator, or a teacher checking the ingredients, as we do not want to risk exposing any child to an allergen that could be life-threatening.

BAR AND BAT MITZVAH REQUIREMENTS

1. Regular attendance in religious school beginning in third grade as well as five years of Hebrew study in the Congregation's Hebrew program. All students are expected to attend a minimum of 80% of all classes and complete a minimum of 80% of all required work to be promoted to the next grade level. A successful completion of an individual course of study with a tutor is also required prior to becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It is required that all B'nai Mitzvah will continue in their religious school program, regardless of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah date, through the completion of the school year. It is expected that all B'nai Mitzvah will continue in the religious school through at least the Confirmation year [10th grade].
2. Each Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate will attend a minimum of six Shabbat evening services, accompanied by parents, at Congregation Shalom during the year prior to his or her becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. They can attend services at another synagogue, but must confirm this with the Rabbi. The student must also write about these experiences in a mitzvah journal.
3. Each B'nai Mitzvah candidate will perform 13 mitzvot during the months preceding his or her becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The Mitzvot should be divided into the following three categories: Torah – Study & Knowledge, Avodah – Observance, and G'millut Chasidim – Acts of Loving Kindness. A journal describing his/her experiences must be kept. Throughout the year the Rabbi will monitor efforts and discuss journal writings. This part of the program will be explained in greater depth during the 6th Grade Family Education activities laid-out below. The Rabbi will offer your child and you many resources from which to choose mitzvot to pursue.
4. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Workshops for 6th Graders and their Parents. These workshops, led by the Rabbi, are an invaluable tool for families to address issues pertaining to their child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The series include at least two sessions, which focus on the history and significance of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, values clarification, as well as practical planning issues. Additional sessions may be scheduled depending on parental needs and interest.
5. Attendance at the 6th grade Kallah is required by all 6th grade students. This is an all-day retreat held on a Sunday, typically in May (or the end of April) when school is in session. During the course of that day, 6th graders will participate in programs exploring the meaning and significance of this life-cycle event in their lives. There is a fee to attend this event and scholarships are available on an as-needed basis.
6. Families must be in good financial standing with the Congregation, or have made appropriate arrangements with the Financial Commitment Committee in order to participate in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program.
7. Approximately 9-11 months prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, each student must begin preparation. Throughout the process your child will work with our synagogue's B'nai Mitzvah tutor. Families will be asked to fill out forms indicating availability for tutoring. The Temple also provides a rehearsal instructor to prepare your child for the ceremony itself. Your child will meet with the rehearsal instructor weekly for 6 weeks in the months leading up to his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah. There is a fee for both of these services, which will be billed to your account, and must be paid in advance of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date.
8. It is understood that the Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate does not participate in religious education outside of Judaic study.

IN CONCLUSION...

The School Committee hopes you found this handbook helpful. It is designed to assist families in preparing for your child's religious school experience at Congregation Shalom.

As a reminder, you, as parents, are your child's most significant teacher. We are honored to be able to support you as you guide your children through their Jewish education