



Parent Handbook
Chapel Hill Kehillah
Religious School
2009-2010
5770

Chapel Hill Kehillah
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Dear Parents:

Welcome to the Kehillah Religious School. I hope this parent handbook will be useful to you as a reference throughout the year. The handbook contains the philosophy, general school policies, information about tefillah (prayer), and the curriculum for each grade.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at relschool@chkehillah.org or 919-942-5817 with any questions you may have. I look forward to a productive and rewarding year!

B'shalom,

Dina

Dina Schiff
Interim Director
Kehillah Religious School

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Philosophy

Mission Statement: The Kehillah Religious School is committed to participating in an educational journey with its students and their families. The school aims to instill in the students the joys of being Jewish, to inspire them to learn more about Judaism, and to encourage students to increase their participation in Judaism and in the Jewish community. The school works toward building a strong and cohesive Reconstructionist community and welcomes the diversity of its families. Great emphasis and importance are placed on parental involvement (as leaders and volunteers), consensus decision-making, and family programming. With the sense of community and the high level of familial involvement and inclusion, the school hopes that even after completing the program, students and their families will continue their quest for Jewish learning and their involvement in the Jewish community.

Tenets of Reconstructionist Education: The Kehillah holds fast to several tenets, including: (1) egalitarian participation in the Jewish community and gender-neutral language; (2) mitzvah both as commandment and as social action; (3) Torah as the ongoing, creative, and sacred story of our people's experience; (4) diversity of the conceptualization of godliness and spirituality; (5) Israel as the Jewish state and the Jewish people; (6) Hebrew as the language that unites all Jews; (7) tradition as meaningful but as something that can be modified as daily life changes; (8) community of members with mutual respect and consensus decision-making; and (9) diversity within the community as accepted and welcomed.

Educational Approach: The Kehillah provides a learning environment in which (1) children receive individual attention; (2) classes are small; (3) teachers use a differentiated approach for learning at varying speeds; (4) hands-on activities are an important part of the curriculum; (5) students study significance and meaning and do not simply memorize; (6) activities are child-focused and sometimes child-directed to promote engagement and investment of students; and (7) lifelong Jewish learning and participation is encouraged.

Getting To and From School

School Hours: For children through second grade, religious school is held on Sundays from 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. For children in third through seventh grades, religious school is held on Sundays from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. We may be offering optional chugim (electives) on Wednesdays; we'll send information about that at a later date. It is important that children arrive on time, as children who come in late are disruptive to the class, take away from class time, and miss instruction and activities.

Drop-off: Parents of children through second grade should accompany their children to their classrooms. If you are dropping off older children, please pull into a parking space before dropping off your child. Please use the visitor or preschool parking spaces.

Pick-up: Children in second grade and under should be picked up from the classroom. Older children may wait in the courtyard. No students will be allowed into the parking lot without adult supervision. If school has already been dismissed when you arrive, please pull up next to the Education wing and wait behind the car in front of you so that you form one line of traffic. For safety reasons, do not pass the cars in line in front of you. When picking up your child, be aware of the possibility of traffic, and allow plenty of time to get to the Kehillah. **Parents should be on time to pick up their children. Parents who are late will be assessed a late fee.**

General School Policies

Attendance: We ask that you take seriously the commitment to attend school and have your children arrive on time and miss school only when it is absolutely necessary. Teachers will notify the director and contact you when a child has missed more than two days in a row. Any student may be dismissed from school for having more than five unexcused absences in a semester. Excused absences include illness, death in the family, and attendance of out-of-town life cycle events.

Behavior/Discipline: It is expected that students will conduct themselves as they would in any school. In each classroom at the Kehillah will be posted the 4 Derech Eretz Rules:

1. Exhibit *kavod* (respect) for all people by using appropriate tone of voice and language.
2. Maintain the *kedushah* (holiness) of the Kehillah by taking care of all physical property.
3. Be students of *Talmud Torah* (study of Torah) by following directions and positively contributing to the learning atmosphere.
4. Uphold *Shmirat Ha'Guf* (protecting the body) by keeping hands and feet to oneself.

Children who do not follow these rules will receive consequences in accordance with the discipline policy (Appendix A).

Communication: You will receive weekly “Religious School News” emails from the director. If you do not receive the emails, please email relschoool@chkehillah.org to be added to the list. These emails include information about the school, about what your child is doing in class and about Jewish topics of interest. You will also receive an email from your child’s teacher about once a month. This email will include more detailed information about what is being covered in class.

Electronics in School:

There will be no cell phone use or playing of video games during class or recess. If such items are brought to Religious School, they are expected to be turned off and stored out of sight while at school. Violations of this policy will be considered violations of the Derech Eretz policy of respect.

Enrollment: We plan for each school year in early summer and encourage families to enroll their children early. Although we will attempt to accommodate all students who apply, space is not guaranteed for applications received after June 15. Families may be asked to hire a Hebrew tutor if their children are enrolled after school has started, or if their children are working below grade level in Hebrew.

- If a child enrolls and then withdraws from school prior to the start of school, the tuition will be reimbursed minus a \$50 administrative fee.
- If a returning child enrolls and then withdraws from school within the first two weeks after school begins, tuition will be reimbursed minus a \$100 fee. After the first two weeks of classes, tuition will not be reimbursed.
- If a new student enrolls and then withdraws from school within the first four weeks after school begins, tuition will be reimbursed minus a \$100 fee. After the first four weeks of classes, tuition will not be reimbursed.

Evaluations and Conferences: Student evaluations will be sent out in December and in May. Please speak to your child’s teacher if you would like to set up a conference.

Food: We follow the Kehillah's kosher guidelines; foods need to be made with ingredients that contain NO meat or meat products (i.e., lard, animal fat). Each family hosts a holiday celebration. When it is your turn to host, please bring food that is relatively healthy (low in sugar and hydrogenated oils). Hosting instructions will be sent to you approximately three weeks before the event. Traditionally, because

Jewish learning is considered to be sweet, certain celebrations and achievements are marked with a sweet treat. Sweets are not used in the classroom as a bribe or reward for good behavior. Non-food rewards for achievement are utilized whenever appropriate.

Food Allergy Policy:

Recognizing that food allergies are a serious health issue for many children and holding the health and safety of the children of the Kehillah as the highest priorities, the following policy has been created:

- 1) Peanuts and tree nuts will not be used in the preparation of foods served in the religious school. However, we are unable to guarantee that there will not be trace amounts of allergens in foods prepared in volunteers' homes or trace amounts not included on product labels.
- 2) Foods prepared by volunteers for religious school celebrations and potlucks should be labeled with the ingredients of the item whenever possible.
- 3) All food allergies will be made known to the school director and the student's teachers and assistants. Volunteers preparing food for holiday celebrations will be informed of all food allergies in the instructions for volunteers sent out 3 weeks before the event.
- 4) Any special treatments required in the event of accidental ingestion will be explained to the school director and all staff involved in teaching the student. A written copy of these instructions will be kept in the religious school office and posted in the student's classroom.
- 5) Religious school snacks (eg. challah) will be certified nut free if such is available.
- 6) The following foods are included in the definition of tree nuts: Mixed nuts; artificial nuts (can be peanuts that have been re-flavored with another nut, such as walnut or almond) almonds, cashews, filbert/hazelnuts, chestnuts, pecans (Mashuga nuts), walnuts, pistachios, Brazil nuts, hickory, macadamia nuts; pine nuts (also called Indian, pinon, pignoli, pignon, pignolia nuts); *mandelonas* (peanuts soaked in almond flavoring); marzipan/almond paste; nut butters; natural nut extracts; nut piece; nut meat; nut meal, nut oil; nut paste; pesto (contains pine nuts, but often other nuts are substituted); Gianduja (hazelnut chocolate); caponata (Italian dish made with pignolia nuts); pralines and nougat.
- 7) The following foods often contain peanuts: ground or mixed nuts; baked goods, such as cookies and pastries; ice cream and frozen desserts; energy bars; cereals and granola; grain breads; and marzipan (a molding confection made of nuts, egg whites and sugar). Less obvious foods may contain peanut proteins. Some examples include: nougat; salad dressings; chocolate candies; nut butters (such as almond butter) and sunflower seeds are sometimes processed with equipment also used for peanuts. Foods sold in bakeries and ice-cream shops may come in contact with peanuts Arachis oil, another name for peanut oil
- 8) The religious school is making every effort to avoid nuts/peanuts, but the school does not guarantee that any food prepared by volunteers is in fact nut free. In addition, the general Kehillah is not nut free, and the policies described above do not pertain to non-Religious School communal meals and celebrations.

Grievances: Parents should discuss classroom issues with their child's teacher. If there is no resolution, parents should contact the religious school director. If a parent disagrees with a policy decision made by the director, the parent should write or email the chair of the religious school committee detailing the grievance within 30 days of the occurrence. The committee will meet with the parent within 14 days of the receipt of the letter to consider an appeal. Within 7 days of this meeting, the committee chair will inform the parent of the committee's decision.

Guests: Given class size and other educational concerns, religious school students should not bring guests to Religious School. For special exceptions, please contact the Religious School Director.

Inclement Weather: If there is inclement weather, or if the Chapel Hill public schools are closed, it is likely that religious school will be canceled. Please check your email for information; you will be sent email by 8:30 a.m. on Sunday or by 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday. If you do not have access to email, please call 942-5817. There will be a voice mail message with school closing information. If you are still uncertain, call your child's teacher.

Independent Learning: Students are encouraged to participate in Jewish learning and experiences outside the classroom. Some students may be assigned homework. We request that parents: ask children if they have homework; participate in the homework as appropriate; and work regularly with their children on Hebrew-reading skills. We will have a Hebrew word of the week. The words will be supplied in the weekly parent email newsletter with one word for grades Prek-2 and one for grades 3-7. Please discuss these words at home as part of family learning.

Lost and Found: Students often leave items in their classrooms or on the playground. All found items will be brought to the administrative wing. Please come to claim these items as soon as possible. All unclaimed items will be donated to charitable organizations at the end of the year.

Parental Involvement: When parents demonstrate the importance of Judaism in their own lives, students react by embracing Jewish learning and values. So, parents are required to participate in religious school by hosting a holiday celebration and by serving on a committee or volunteering for at least three activities, such as substituting, reading stories, or driving on field trips. If you have a special skill, please contact your child's teacher or the director.

Raising Children Jewishly: The school believes that children benefit from knowledge of other religions. At the same time, the school feels that raising children in a household that fully celebrates two or more religions can be confusing both to the child and in the context of the classroom. Thus, children will not be allowed to enroll in the school if they attend non-Jewish religious services on a regular basis or if they are enrolled in non-Jewish religious schools.

Room Parents: Each class has one or two parents designated as the Room Parent(s). An important link between the teacher and the parents, room parents coordinate various activities and events. They are responsible for: calling the members of the class for school closings when appropriate; helping coordinate drivers for field trips as needed; assisting with special class activities; organizing 1-2 class get togethers during the year; and counting and donating the class tzedakah at the end of the year.

Shabbat Services: The Kehillah also offers several types of Shabbat services, which are held throughout the school year. **Students are asked to attend a minimum number of Kehillah services per year equal to the number grade of their class;** for example, students in Kitah Hey (Grade 5) are asked to attend a minimum of five services.

- Tot Shabbat: for children age 0-5. Includes simple prayers, movement, music, and stories.
- Shabbat Shirah: for all ages. A songful, interactive service with guitar and singing.

Special Needs: The school encourages the enrollment of all Kehillah members' children, including those with special needs. We will make every effort to fully integrate children with special needs into the classroom. Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to individualize education beyond a certain level. If your child has special needs, please arrange a meeting with the director prior to starting school to discuss your child's needs and the school's ability to make accommodations. In certain cases, a parent may need to attend class with a child. In other cases, the program may not be able to accommodate a child.

Tzedakah: The school program teaches the importance of tzedakah, or acts of goodwill to those in need. On Sunday, tzedakah will be collected at Tefillah and on Wednesday it will be collected in the classroom and added to the money collected at Sunday Tefillah. At the start of the year, each Tefillah group will decide as a group how to distribute the funds they have collected. At various times, the school will also host or support tzedakah projects and will collect canned and non-perishable goods, clothing, and/or other items to be donated to those in need. Students are encouraged to participate in these opportunities.

Religious School Curriculum

Below are subjects that will have been covered by the end of seventh grade. Each grade level is also listed separately with information about what is learned in that grade. Although certain material will be covered in each grade level, it is understood that in each class, students will need to work on many tasks at their own pace. Students' progress will be checked regularly so that appropriate materials will be provided for them. We respect differences in the learning speeds, learning styles and educational backgrounds of our students. We aim for all students to be challenged and for none to be overwhelmed.

Activities: In addition to regular classroom activities, during the year, each grade will participate in Israeli dancing, music sessions, and cooking activities.

Holidays/Celebrations: Students will study (1) Jewish holidays, including Shabbat and Havdallah; (2) Jewish life cycle and rites of passage; (3) the role of the Jewish home; and (4) modern-day and Reconstructionist thoughts about various holidays.

Jewish Values/Ethics: Students will learn about (1) mitzvah both as commandment and as participation in social action; (2) Jewish heroes and heroines; (3) modern-day ethical dilemmas; (4) how to make choices based on Jewish values; (5) ethical laws in various Jewish texts; and (5) the importance of family and Jewish community.

Torah/Bible: Students will explore (1) the Tanach, including the Torah, Prophets, and Writings; (2) other Jewish texts, such as the Mishna/Pirke Avot; (3) lessons from Jewish texts that pertain to modern-day life; and (4) the role of godliness in the Torah and in other Jewish texts.

Hebrew: Students will learn (1) Hebrew letters and vowels; (2) how to read Hebrew; (3) Hebrew vocabulary and the meaning of words they read in prayer.

Prayer/Spirituality: Students will explore (1) the people and parts of the synagogue; (2) Hebrew prayers from Shabbat services; (3) the meaning, history, and modern-day relevance of prayers; (4) the difference in prayers among Jewish denominations; (5) diversity of spiritual experience; (6) their own conceptions of God and Godliness; and (7) Reconstructionist thoughts on God.

History/Israel: Students will explore (1) the life and customs of Israel; (2) Jewish history; (3) Jewish American history; (4) Jewish historical figures; (5) the modern-day struggles in Israel; and (5) local and international Jewish community and culture.

Curriculum by Grade

Bonim (Builders)—Pre-Kindergarten

Pre-Kindergarten students learn through physical movements and the five senses. They participate in music, dancing, role-playing, imagination exercises, crafts, and stories. The students: explore the holidays; learn about mitzvot as general rules of conduct; experience Torah stories; begin the introduction to Hebrew blessings, language, and letters; and appreciate the importance of the Jewish family and the home.

Gan—Kindergarten

Kindergarten students: explore specific mitzvot and Jewish values; learn more vocabulary and rituals associated with each holiday; appreciate the Jewish connection to Israel; study the basic geography of Israel; explore stories from all parts of Torah; learn the Hebrew letters; learn more Shabbat prayers and what they mean; begin to explore the human connection to God and the divine; and explore the synagogue as the place of worship for the Jewish community.

Kitah Alef—First Grade

For first graders, lessons alternate between hands-on activities, discussions, and reading/writing exercises. First graders: investigate the holidays; explore mitzvot that focus on behavior towards people and animals; learn about Torah portions and the lessons they teach; begin to combine Hebrew letters and vowels; learn more Shabbat prayers and explore their meanings; explore godliness and the connection between God and prayer; learn about the people living in Israel; and appreciate the importance of the family and the Jewish home.

Kitah Bet—Second Grade

Second graders: expand their holiday understanding and vocabulary; explore several mitzvot through discussion and experiential activities; become familiar with many Torah portions and with the cycle of Torah reading; explore the ethical lessons associated with the Torah stories; recognize and start to read several prayers and everyday words in Hebrew; learn several more prayers from Shabbat services; explore godliness and human connection to the divine; and complete special units on Havdallah and life cycle.

Kitah Gimel—Third Grade

Third graders learn more Hebrew than in previous grades, and there may be a wider variation in Hebrew reading ability. To accommodate this difference, third graders work in small Hebrew learning groups. Third graders also: explore the Jewish calendar and its connection to the timing of holidays; deepen their understanding of Jewish holidays and celebrations; cover ethical, ritual, and observance mitzvot; study readings and explore characters from Prophets and Writings; learn to read simple Hebrew words and phrases; continue to expand their knowledge of Shabbat prayers and parts of the prayer service; consider personal views of godliness; explore prayer as a way to experience holiness; learn about the people and places in Israel; and complete a special unit on the synagogue and prayer.

Kitah Dalet—Fourth Grade

Fourth grade students have longer attention spans and are able to work more independently than younger students. However, they still enjoy participating in hands-on activities (i.e. cooking and more sophisticated craft projects). These students: explore each holiday's significance for modern-day Jews; study the Jewish calendar; focus on godliness and on partnering with God to make a better world; study the people in the Torah and the messages that can be used in daily life; begin to read full blessings and prayers in Hebrew; learn several new prayers from the Shabbat services and explore their meanings; continue to examine the role of prayer and spirituality; explore Jewish immigration to the United States; and become familiar with the local Jewish community.

Kitah Hey—Fifth Grade

Fifth grade students may have developed a true sense of history and time. Therefore, they begin a series of units on Jewish history, Jewish heroes/heroines, and the contributions of various leaders to Judaism and to the larger society. In addition, the students: discuss how historical events relate to holiday observance; explore the responsibility of adults in the Jewish community and Jewish responses to ethical dilemmas; study Prophets and Writings with a focus on the characters and their lives; practice and improve Hebrew reading with a focus on reading and singing prayers; continue to learn the Shabbat evening and morning services and their structure; and complete special units on Havdallah and Jewish life cycle.

Kitah Vav—Sixth Grade

Sixth graders continue to expand their academic abilities and can discuss ethical issues, think abstractly, and accept new ideas and concepts. These students: fully explore several “more serious” holidays (i.e., Yom Ha’shoah, Tisha B’Av); appreciate differences in holiday celebrations; study Jewish-American history; relate specific mitzvot and values to Jewish-American immigrants who lived by them; study Pirke Avot and its lessons for modern life; hone Hebrew reading skills by reading prayers; continue to work on prayer competency with a focus on the Torah Service; continue to explore personal conceptions of godliness and how spirituality can fit into everyday life; and complete a special unit on the Holocaust.

Kitah Zayin—Seventh Grade

During this B’nei Mitzvah year, seventh graders learn the importance of being active in Jewish life and of accepting the responsibility of Jewish adulthood. They: explore many of the Torah and Haftarah portions pertaining to Jewish holidays; study Jewish law and mitzvot; study the weekly parshot; appreciate the variety of Jewish sources, including the Mishnah and Talmud; understand the meaning of the prayers and the structure of the Shabbat services; understand the role of godliness and spirituality in prayer; study Jewish and Israeli current events; and complete a special unit on B’nei Mitzvah.

Appendix A Discipline Policy

Background & Purpose

The Kehillah Religious School wants to ensure that children in religious school engage in appropriate behavior while in school and that all our students are safe from verbal and physical aggression. Since we are all created *b'tzelem elohim* (in God's image), the way in which we treat each other is central. Our discipline policy reflects mutual respect and responsibility. Teachers are responsible for implementing a management plan that responds appropriately to both positive and negative behavior. Children are responsible for following the rules of *Derech Eretz* (literally "the way of the land;" signifies "politeness, etiquette, good/respectful behavior"). These rules are intended to diminish disruptive, disrespectful and violent behaviors, as such behaviors are detrimental to other children and disturbing to the class as a whole.

Students will learn the following Derech Eretz rules, remember them and be able to identify which they did not follow at any given time.

1. Exhibit *kavod* (respect) for all people by using appropriate tone of voice and language.
2. Maintain the *kedushah* (holiness) of the Kehillah by taking care of all physical property.
3. Be students of *Talmud Torah* (study of Torah) by following directions and positively contributing to the learning atmosphere.
4. Uphold *Shmirat Ha'Guf* (protecting the body) by keeping hands and feet to oneself.

Policy Description

- If a student breaks rules 1, 2 or 3 during the course of a school day, the consequences are as follows:
 - First offense in a day: the teacher reminds the student of the rules.
 - Second offense in a day: the teacher talks to the student and records the event.
 - Third offense in a day: the teacher talks to the student, sends a note home to the parents and records the event.
- If a student violates Rule 4, the above steps will be skipped. The teacher will record the event, and there will be an immediate conference with parents.
- If a student has two third offenses during a two week time period, the Religious School Director will hold a teacher/parent conference, which will result in an action plan for the future, such as instituting a behavior contract.
- If a student has another third offense within two weeks of the conference, the student will have a one-day suspension. During the suspension, s/he will make up all work missed AND will write a paper on the rule violated. S/he may return to school only when the work and paper are completed and when s/he is accompanied by a parent (if the parent's presence ameliorates the situation). The parent will accompany the child until it is mutually agreed (by teacher, school director, parent and child) that the behavior has changed sufficiently to permit the child to attend without a parent present. If a parent's presence does not ameliorate the situation, or if the parent declines to attend school with the child, a child may be asked to leave the program.
- After two one-day suspensions, the child may be asked to leave the program.

adapted from Derech Eretz Policy from Oseh Shalom, MD.