



2016–17/5777

Family Handbook

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ברוכים הבאים

B'RUCHIM HA-BAIM

WELCOME!

Dear Families,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2016-17 school year. I am ready to do all I can to make it a good one for your children and you.

In this handbook you will find important information that will help you navigate this school year. *Please pay particular attention to the **class attendance policy and the grade-level service attendance requirements**.* School reminders and updates will be sent to you monthly via e-mail during the year in the "Notes From School," so be sure we have your correct contact information.

We are excited to start the year with some new faces, both students and teachers. We want to make sure it's an easy transition for everyone, especially our newest Hebrew School students.

A special thanks to those families who have become supporting members of Horay Sinai. This voluntary contribution allows us to offer a variety of enhancements to our students over the course of the year.

Please note that I work at the temple half-time and expect to be in the school office during the week on **Tuesdays, Wednesday afternoons and Thursdays**. Please drop in, give a call or shoot me an email. I welcome your feedback and ideas.

Best wishes for a Shana Tova for you and your loved ones.



Sue Huntting
Religious School Director

Our Mission and Vision for Learning

Temple Sinai Religious School engages students and their families in Jewish learning and meaningful experiences that inspire them to appreciate and proudly celebrate being Jewish in our community and in today's world.

We love our students.

Teaching Jewish children is sacred work. We recognize our students for who they are today and who they may yet become. Our students know their feelings and experiences are valued and that we care about them as individuals. As each child brings unique interests and skills to the classroom, we embrace these differences and create learning that is engaging and challenging. In the Reform Jewish tradition, we create an atmosphere that encourages students to reflect on and question new ideas and to find answers that work for them.

We believe Jewish learning “sticks” when it’s meaningful.

There is so much we want our students to know about Judaism and Jewish life. By helping students find personal meaning in Jewish learning, we open up the study of traditions, sacred texts, values and ethics, spirituality, history, Israel and Hebrew in ways that speak to them today. Through active learning we guide our students to discover the richness of Judaism and to develop a passion for lifelong Jewish learning and living. Our developmentally-appropriate curriculum encourages our students to apply the Jewish lessons of the past to their current lives and into the future.

We partner with families in raising Jewish children.

Whether in a classroom or at the beach, meaningful learning takes place when students and adults mutually respect and learn from each other. We encourage students to work together, as our tradition encourages us to find both a teacher to learn from and a partner to learn with. Our teachers are regularly expanding their repertoire of teaching techniques and our teenage teaching assistants serve as important role models. Because we believe parents are their children’s primary Jewish teachers, we seek to support parents in creating Jewish family time. Additionally, parents are invited to be an active and visible part of school life through volunteering, helping teachers, working behind the scenes and attending school programs.

We best experience Judaism together.

Our students’ sense of community begins in the classroom with their peers and teacher and grows as they participate in school-wide activities, worship services, and celebrations. Through participation in temple life they learn to value the importance of the synagogue. We strive to build a foundation for our students to live their lives beyond our doors as involved members of the Jewish community both locally and globally. Likewise, our students learn to navigate being Jewish in a secular community and they acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and support to live proudly as a minority in American society.

School Policies & Expectations

Our 2016-17/5777 Faculty

Kindergarten	Illene Dyrda	illenedyr@gmail.com
1st	Rachel Lenerz	Rachel.lenerz@gmail.com
2nd, Sunday Hebrew	Anne Schimberg Sarah Pincus	aschimberg@verizon.net sarahevap@gmail.com
3rd /4th, Hebrew (Sun/Wed)	Bethany Leinweber	mamabetny@gmail.com
5th	Chris Lenerz	cjlenerz@gmail.com
6th	Joni Mandel	jonilyma@aol.com
Art	Margie Silver	artedms49@gmail.com
Hebrew (Sunday)	Dobbie Linick	bookluvr1031@gmail.com
Midrasha:		
7th/8th, Sun Hebrew	Reb Ari Shapiro	rebari18@gmail.com
Midrasha: 9th/10th	Rabbi Michael Churgel	rebmc@SinaiSRQ.org

Madrichim: Mackenzie Dyrda, Melanie Saltz, Ashlyn Downey Hayes (as of 8/22/16)

Sunday Adult Tutor: George Freed (as of 8/24/16)

Class Schedule

Sundays

Grades K-6 meet 9:30 am – 12 noon

All grades start the morning in the Sanctuary.

Midrasha Academy (Grades 7-10)

7th Graders attend 9:30 am – 12 noon; Grades 8-10 attend 10:15 am – 12 noon on select Sundays
Classes have 2 45-minute class sessions with a 15-minute Hafsaka (break) in-between. There are snack and drink machines in the Youth Lounge.

Mid-week

Hebrew for Grades 3-6 meet on two days/times/locations:

On Sundays from 12:00 – 1:345 pm at Temple Sinai

On Wednesdays from 5:00 – 6:30 pm at Temple Sinai

Promptness

In respect for our teachers and our educational goals, we expect all students to be at the temple and in their classrooms when class begins.

Attendance

We know your family is juggling many demands on your time and you often are faced with the challenge of making hard choices. Trips, family commitments and illness can impact consistent Religious School and/or Hebrew School attendance.

Students who attend class regularly have the opportunity to build on learning from week to week. Please support this endeavor by doing everything to assure that your child attends Religious School and Hebrew school regularly.

Our attendance policy allows for a limited number of absences, for whatever reason, ***per semester*** of school:

Grades K-2:	3 absences per semester
Grades 3-6:	4 absences per semester (Sundays or Wednesdays)
Midrasha (Grades 7-10):	2 absences per semester

When there is an absence you can expect:

- A check-in call from the teacher just to see if everything is OK.
- Recommendation from the teacher that your child review material that was covered during the missed class.

Once your child has had the allotted number of absences you can expect:

- A call from the Director
- A conference with the Director and your child
- Hebrew homework and private tutoring may be required (if applicable)

Once your child exceeds the allotted number of absences you can expect:

- A conversation with the Director to discuss your family's commitment
- Your student will be assigned make-up work
- Private tutoring at the family's expense will be necessary

Exceptions shall be made in the case of long-term illness or at the Director's discretion.

Promotion to the next grade is left to the Director's discretion in consultation with the Religious School Committee.

Student drop off and pick-up

To ensure the safety of all our entire school family we require the following procedures be strictly followed:

Grades K - 2 students must be dropped off at their classroom by an adult or older sibling (4th grade or older). Pick up is at the classroom. Parking is available near the school entrance.

Grades 3 and older students may be dropped off and picked up at the traffic circle just outside the school entrance.

Please follow these rules. Under NO circumstances should students walk unaccompanied through the parking lot! The traffic congestion creates a potentially dangerous situation for your child.

Please Note: Temple Sinai accepts no responsibility for a student's transportation arrangements at school dismissal time.

Early Pick-up

If a child must be picked up prior to dismissal time, we ask that a note be sent from home to the school office. A teacher may not release a child without the office's prior authorization.

Late Pick-up

Children not picked up on time worry and feel forgotten. Please make every effort to pick up your child at dismissal. If you know you will be late, call the school office during school hours so we can reassure your child that everything is fine. Any child not picked up within fifteen minutes after dismissal time will wait in the Religious School Office.

Dress Code

It is important for our students to remember that their classes are held in a synagogue, and our dress should reflect our awareness that we are in a sacred space. To that effect, students may dress casually, though following these guidelines:

- Kippot (yarmulkes) are the only acceptable headgear. No baseball caps or visors are allowed.
- Shorts or jeans are acceptable. However, mini-skirts or short-shorts are not acceptable.
- T-shirts are acceptable, though not with inappropriate messages on them. Shirts must cover the midriff and shoulders. Tube tops are not allowed.
- Undergarments must not be exposed.

Students not dressed appropriately will be sent to the school office. Alternative clothing may be offered or parents will be called to bring a change of clothes.

Special Days

The mission of our school extends beyond the classroom. Participating with your family to make our community a better place is of such value that participation in the temple-wide **Mitzvah Day** is considered a day of Religious School. Thus, an absence on that day is counted toward the allowed absences for that semester. Students and their families (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) are expected to attend all **Family Programs** scheduled for your child's grade.

Likewise, as a Jewish community we value celebrating the holidays together. In the fall, we expect students and their families to attend the **Simchat Torah/Consecration service** and in the spring we expect students and their families to attend the **Purim Megillah reading**.

Student Behavior

All students are expected to behave in a manner appropriate to a classroom setting. Most incidents involving inappropriate behavior will be addressed with minimum teacher intervention. However, if the disruptive behavior persists or a severe incident occurs, the disruptive student may be sent to the office for a short time. After class the student and teacher will discuss what happened and brainstorm ways to avoid the behavior in the future.

Repeated problems will require a meeting with the Director, teacher, parents and student. If necessary, the Rabbi and Religious School Committee will be consulted.

Homework

The best way for a child to feel comfortable with Hebrew is to practice at home between classes. Therefore, and in accordance with the *brit* (contract) you, your child's Hebrew teacher and your child signed, we expect students to practice 30 minutes a week and at-home materials are available for this purpose. With your help at home, your child will make tremendous strides in the classroom.

Students are rarely asked to do Judaica (non-Hebrew) homework. Nonetheless, when teachers make a request of students it is expected that the students will comply. Teachers will make every effort to share those requests in writing with parents.

Horay Sinai

Over the course of the year there are expenses that just can't be covered by the school budget. Horay Sinai ("Parents of Sinai") is a restricted fund at the temple and families are invited to make voluntary donations to it to underwrite the cost of school community-building activities and classroom technology.

Visitors

Parents are welcome to visit classes at any time. We ask, however, that parents sit in the back, observe quietly, and not discuss anything with the teacher until the class is over and/or the teacher has a break.

Students are discouraged from bringing guests to class. Too often the guests are distracting to the teacher and the rest of the class which negatively impacts the classroom community. Please make an effort to arrange your child's schedule so that his/her weekend activities do not include guests on Sunday morning. If there is a situation that cannot be avoided, parents are asked to contact the Director *in advance*.

If a family is considering Temple Sinai membership we encourage the parents and children to visit our Religious School classes.

Communication between School and Home

Keeping open lines of communication between the Religious School and the home is important to our success. The entire school community receives monthly "Notes from School" via email that updates them on the school calendar and special events. Teachers are asked to be in regular contact, via email or phone, with their students' parents. In addition, the staff of the Religious School is always happy to meet with parents when school is not in session.

If, as a parent, you have a concern about something your child has reported about class, please contact the teacher as a first step. Your child's teacher is in the best position to discuss classroom situations and student behaviors. The Director is happy to get involved after this initial conversation has occurred.

Progress Reports for Grades K-7 are sent to parents at the end of each semester. They are meant to give you a sense, from the teacher's perspective, of how your child is learning and functioning in the class. If there has been an on-going struggle or problem you should not hear about it for the first time through a Progress Report!

Severe Weather

In the event of a hurricane, tornado, or severe weather warning, we will follow the school closing directives of the Sarasota County School District. You can obtain this information from your local media broadcasts. If severe weather strikes while Religious School is in session, we will move the children away from the windows and glass doors until the threat is over. Parents are asked to pick up their children as soon as possible at such times.

Emergency Evacuation Procedure

In the unlikely event of an emergency which necessitates evacuating both the building and surrounding grounds, we will walk the children to Suncoast Technical College parking lot and call parents from there.

Tzedakah

The mitzvah of tzedakah (righteous giving) is an important Jewish value. We have the opportunity to put our values into action by collecting tzedakah each week. The change that is collected will be donated to a worthy cause at the end of the year.

Tefillah

On Sunday mornings our Hebrew School students in Grades 3-6 will have Tefillah ("prayer") with Hazzan Abramson. Our goal is to give our students regular participation in a worship experience and the context within which they can appreciate the value of leading and mastering Jewish liturgy.

Supplies

Most of what a student needs will be provided in the classroom. On occasion, students may be asked to bring to class something from home. We ask your cooperation by helping your child to honor these requests.

Students with Special Needs

We are happy to work with you and your special needs child so that he/she has a positive Jewish learning experience. Please arrange to meet with the Director prior to the beginning of school if you have specific concerns.

Worship Service Requirements

Part of our students' education is the development of a familiarity with the worship experience at Temple Sinai. Through participating in worship over time, students become comfortable with the liturgy as we create the time and space for them to contemplate their spirituality and God. As such, we require our students to attend a minimum number of services during the school year. As you can see from the list below, our expectations build as students progress through our program so that they gradually become more and more familiar and comfortable in a Shabbat worship setting.

In order to track service attendance, a Sign-in binder is in the Sanctuary lobby. If a student does not sign in he/she will not receive credit for attendance. Please note that both students **and** parents must sign in. *We hope that parents will remain with their children throughout the service.*

Check below to see how many and which services your child is required to attend. You may want to also check the school calendar to see when there is an Erev Shabbat Family Service (the first Friday of every month) or a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service. Planning in advance which services your family will attend will help pace you as the year progresses.

When your child's class is participating in an Erev (Friday night) Shabbat service, students are expected to arrive 1 hour early prior to the start of the service for a final rehearsal.

Kindergarten

- Simchat Torah/Consecration service
- One Erev Shabbat service
- Purim service

1st Grade

- Simchat Torah/Consecration service
- One Erev Shabbat service
- Purim service

2nd Grade

- Simchat Torah/Consecration service
- One Erev Shabbat service
- Purim service

3rd Grade

- Help lead one Erev Shabbat service
- One additional Erev Shabbat service

- Participate/attend one Shabbat morning service

4th Grade

- Help lead one Erev Shabbat service
- One additional Erev Shabbat service
- Participate/attend two Shabbat morning services

5th Grade

- Help lead one Erev Shabbat service
- Two additional Erev Shabbat services
- Participate/attend three Shabbat morning services

6th Grade

- Help lead one Erev Shabbat service
- Two Erev Shabbat services
- Participate/attend four Shabbat morning services

7th Grade

- Two Erev Shabbat services
- Participate/attend four Shabbat morning services
- Confirmation service

8th Grade

- Usher/Greet at the Confirmation service

9th Grade

- Usher/Greet at the Confirmation service

10th Grade

- Lead the Confirmation service

Curriculum Overview

Hebrew

Given the limited time we have with students each week, we have chosen to focus our Hebrew program on liturgy literacy. Grades K-2 are introduced to and, gradually, learn the Hebrew letters, vowels and how they blend together to form words. Grades 3-6 transitions into using the Hebrew program *Mitkadem* (“moving forward”) in which, over the course of our four-year program, students master reading prayerbook Hebrew and come to understand the order of the service and the themes of the prayers. On average, students can complete between four and six *ramot* per year depending on Hebrew School attendance and the individual student’s motivation.

To supplement this liturgy-based program, students in grades 3-6 learn spoken Hebrew through Hebrew Through Movement, an interactive whole-class Hebrew teaching method that associates words with actions.

In most cases, students must have completed Ramah 12 in *Mitkadem* before beginning Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring with the Chazzan.

Judaica

Kindergarten students will...

- **Explore** the Torah stories of early Genesis **with an eye towards understanding how they ask questions that are relevant today**
- Celebrate **Jewish holidays** as vehicles through which we are reminded of who we are
- Learn that **the choices they make** about treating others and the environment can be rooted in Jewish teachings
- Are exposed to **Hebrew as a living language** that binds the Jewish people together and introduced to **Israel** as our homeland
- Regularly **learn with their parents.**

1st Grade students will...

- Explore the **Torah stories from later Genesis** with an eye towards understanding how they raise questions that are relevant today
- Talk about God and **how we connect to God** through blessings and celebration
- Learn about how, as a community, we can act on **the Jewish value of lovingkindness.**
- Are introduced to **Hebrew as a living language** that binds the Jewish people together and to the rudiments of Hebrew reading

- Explore **Israel** as a place that is similar to and different from here
- Regularly **learn with their parents**.

2nd Grade Students will...

- Explore the Torah stories around the Exodus from Egypt with an eye towards understanding how rules and laws structure and enrich our lives.
- Build on their growing knowledge of **Jewish holidays** and celebrations by focusing on the meanings and practices associated with each.
- Discover how **gratitude to God** is expressed in Jewish liturgy.
- Expand their knowledge of **Hebrew as a living language** that binds the Jewish people together and to the rudiments of Hebrew reading
- Explore **Israel** as a place that is similar to and different from here
- Regularly **learn with their parents**.

3rd Grade students will...

- Discover how **holiness** was understood long ago, what holiness looks like today and ways they can bring more holiness into their lives.
- Explore **all the Jewish communities of which they are a part**: families, class, temple, local, national, and the world-wide Jewish people, including Israel.
- Develop an **awareness of their class as a trust-worthy and compassionate** peer community.

4th Grade students will...

- Master the **names of the books of the Torah**
- Discover the **post-Torah evolution of Am Yisrael** (the Jewish people) into 12 tribes as well as how the tribes and their leadership functioned.
- Analyze how **Jewish prayer** is composed of both keva (fixed structure) and kavannah (spontaneous expression).
- Understand Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel) as part of our covenant with God.

5th Grade students will...

- Journey through **the Jewish lifecycle** to discover the traditions and rituals associated with life's Jewish milestones
- Discover **why giving tzedakah is a sacred obligation** of Jewish life and how it has been understood over time
- Compare personal choices and communal choices towards a decision of **where to donate the school's tzedakah** collection.

6th Grade students will...

- Explore the **20th century American Jewish experience** from a historical and sociological perspective
- Learn about the **organization of the American Jewish community, nationally and locally**

- Get acquainted with **Israel** as a place of diverse geography and urban areas
- Begin to **sort out their personal feelings about being Jewish** and how they want to live Jewishly

Midrasha Academy (Grades 7-10)

7th/8th Grade* students will...

- Learn about **the events of the Shoah (Holocaust)**, from the perspectives of the perpetrators, the victims, the bystanders, the resisters and the survivors.
- Discover how the **modern State of Israel** came to be and what it has achieved in the past 60+ years
- Find themselves and their families in **the lessons of family relationships and dynamics in Genesis**

9th/10th Grade students will...

- Begin defining for themselves **what it means to live a Jewish life**, a life aligned with Jewish values they will discuss and consider
- Learn about **Israel's place in the world** and the diverse ways of understanding the current *matzav* ("situation")
- **Develop, express and clarify personal ideas about what it means to be Jewish**

Confirmation (Tenth Grade)

In addition to class time on Sundays, our Confirmation students and the Rabbi also attend the L'Taken Social Justice Leadership Seminar in Washington, DC, sponsored by the URJ's Religious Action Center, where they learn about important political issues and present their positions to our local and state Congressional representatives.

Youth Groups at Temple Sinai

To supplement the more formal education of our students, we have youth groups that forge social connections and provide opportunities for our youth to have out-of-the-classroom Jewish experiences.

- **JOOSY** (Junior Organization of Sinai Youth) is for 6th, 7th and 8th grade
- **SAFETY** (Sarasota Area Federation of Extreme Temple Youth) is for 9th – 12th graders.

Both JOOSY and SAEFTY are associated with NFTY, the North American Federation of Temple Youth.

For more information about our youth groups, please contact Deb Bryan, Youth Advisor, at the temple.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Temple Sinai

Students preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah are expected to be enrolled and attending Religious School.

For more information about the requirements and preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, please contact Chazzan Abramson.