

Religious School Policies Handbook

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I. Philosophy and Overview of Religious Education

A. Philosophy

The religious school strives to create a positive environment for a Jewish learning experience. We are committed to teaching our children the beauty of Judaism. Our curriculum is intended to help children to see the world through Jewish eyes, to make Shabbat and Jewish holidays a part of their lives, to encourage practicing Judaism in their homes, to pursue knowledge of their heritage and to ground their ethical decisions on the teachings of Torah. We value and explore the opinions of our children. We are guided by and committed to Reform Judaism and Jewish life, and we make every effort to ensure that all our children feel welcome and included.

The goals of our curriculum are for our students to:

- Express pride in our heritage.
- Observe and practice Jewish tradition.
- Be familiar with the rituals and customs associated with the holidays and Shabbat, and participate in Shabbat worship, holiday celebrations and High Holiday worship.
- Explore a personal perspective of God and spirituality.
- Have a clear understanding of the nature of prayer, what it is, and why we pray.
- Be comfortable with the structure and contents of the prayer book.
- Understand the important values and mitzvot that have guided our people for over 5,000 years, and make choices and decisions based on these values and ethics.
- Engage in *Tikkun Olam* (repair the world)
- Read Hebrew and value the language as the language that binds the Jewish people together through generations.
- Be familiar with the major life cycle events and ceremonies.
- Identify the central themes and ethical messages within Torah and key Jewish texts and integrate them into their lives.
- Develop a relationship with Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel and begin to learn its history, geography and modern life.

B. Religious School Overview

Our classes are taught by professionals and volunteers committed to Jewish education. Parents are encouraged to teach classes, and to participate as aides in the classroom. Our program teaches Hebrew and Judaics, meeting once on Sunday for Grades K through 2, and twice for Grades 3 through 7 (Sunday morning and one weekday, either Wednesday or Thursday). Our curriculum includes the teaching of Bible, holidays, life cycle, ethics and values, history and culture, Israel, liturgy and prayer book Hebrew. We believe that Jewish education at the religious school alone is insufficient, and actively encourage parent participation in education at school, at home, and through worship.

II. Administration

A. School Hours

Sunday Mornings

9:00 – 11:00 a.m. First Session (Kindergarten through Grade 6)

Wednesday Afternoons and Evenings

3:45 – 5:45 p.m. **Grades 3 through 6** (*for children who attend First Session on Sunday mornings*)

6:00 – 8:00 p.m. **Youth Community**

B. Admission Requirements

All children of Temple Shir Tikva members are welcome to enroll in the Religious School.

Students entering kindergarten must be five years of age on September 1 (to be in agreement with Wayland, Sudbury, Weston and state public school guidelines)

Students must receive 5 years of Hebrew language instruction before they can begin Bar/Bat Mitzvah training in the 7th grade.

C. Registration Procedures

Classes are offered for Kindergarten through Grade 6 during both Early and Late Sessions of Religious School on Sunday mornings.

In Kindergarten through Grade 2, children attend only on Sunday mornings. A second class is required for Grades 3 through 6 on either Wednesday or Thursday afternoons. The day of weekday attendance is linked to the time of the Sunday morning session. In other words, **children in Grades 3 – 6 who attend Early Session (9:00-11:00 am) on Sunday will be assigned to Hebrew school on *Wednesday* afternoons. Children in Grades 3-6 who attend late session (11:15-1:15 pm) on Sunday will be assigned to Hebrew school on *Thursday* afternoons.**

Registration forms are sent to families in good financial standing with the Temple during the beginning of May. Please fill out your forms as soon as possible. **Registration is done on a first come, first served basis, therefore it is advised that registration forms be returned quickly in order to get your first choice of Sunday session and affiliated weekday class.** When these registration materials are processed, you will receive a confirmation card.

A fee for books and material including field trips, and special projects is charged for each child at the beginning of the school year.

D. Class Placement

Classes are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis, based on time of receipt of registration forms. A school priority is to create classes of approximately the same size within one grade, based on the registrations received by mid-August. Sessions may be changed depending on late enrollment. Decisions regarding class size will be guided by the educational philosophy of the school and the number of registrations received per grade.

On each registration card, parents may name one child with whom they would like their child to share a class. We can only accommodate reciprocal requests for placement with friends.

E. Inclement Weather

1. When it has snowed the night before:

a. Weekday School Cancellation

School/Youth Community is always cancelled when Wayland Schools are cancelled.

b. Sunday morning School Cancellation:

Most often, several of the Wayland and Sudbury Education Directors make the decision together on Saturday night regarding Sunday morning Religious School cancellation. The radio and television stations will not take the message until 6:00AM on Sunday morning. Please listen for the message on radio station WBZ (AM/1030) or television channels 4 and 5 from 7:00AM on.

2. When it has snowed during a weekday:

a. Wednesday and Thursday Afternoon Cancellation:

A decision will be made by noon that day as to whether school/Youth Community will be cancelled or not. We ask that you **please refrain from calling the synagogue** unless you do not have access to one of the following sources of information. There are three ways in which we will alert families of cancellations on weekdays:

- Public School Announcements: Staff at Shir Tikva will call the local Wayland, Sudbury, Weston, Natick, and Framingham public schools. If you do not live in one of these towns, please make sure to depend on another source of information.
- Radio & Television: Please listen to radio stations WRKO or WBZ or television stations 4, 5, or 7 when the weather seems to be worsening during the day.
- Email: To those who have given Shir Tikva their email address through their child(ren)'s school registration cards from earlier this year, **you will receive notice via email if school has been cancelled.** If we do not have your email address (i.e. if you have not yet received any email messages from the Shir Tikva religious school or youth community), and you would like to be notified about cancellations via email, please email the Education Assistant at edassist@shirtikva.org with your email address.

Please understand that we make the best decision possible given all the information at hand. Our only concern is for the safety of each child. We encourage parents/guardians to use their best judgment and to always drive with extreme caution and patience in the event of inclement weather.

III. Requirements

A. Attendance

Regular attendance at religious school is of utmost importance; it is directly correlated with educational success. It insures continuity of learning and effective integration into the social fabric of the classroom. Families will be contacted by the classroom teacher when a student misses three consecutive classes.

We urge parents to contact either the Director of Congregational Learning or the Directory of Elementary and Family Education if attendance becomes a problem for any reason. We want to work with you to find the best way for your child to continue his or her religious education.

B. Absences

Parents are asked to contact the school if a child is unable to attend class. The school's Education Assistant may be telephoned at 508.358.9992 or e-mailed at edassist@shirtikva.org. A note will be placed in the teacher's mailbox informing him/her of your child's absence. Parents should communicate directly with the classroom teacher about classroom assignments and homework and help their child be accountable for any missed work.

C. Early Dismissal Times

Early dismissal requires that an authorized adult sign the early release book in the administrative office and escort the child from the building. The adult coming to take the child must first stop in to the school's Education Assistant. The adult will complete an early dismissal form which the Assistant will sign. The adult then goes to the child's class with the form. The adult gives the form to the teacher and retrieves the child from the classroom. Children are not permitted to leave the classroom and/or wait for an adult outside the building. Authorized adults must come in to the building.

D. Class Preparation

Students are asked to come prepared and equipped for class. Writing and reading assignments should be complete. Pencil, pen, paper and books may be stored in the classroom or should be brought to all class sessions. It is suggested that each student have a backpack or school bag to keep their Religious School materials together.

E. Homework

Purpose of Homework:

- Reinforce concepts, information and lessons taught in class, as well as prepare for subjects that will be covered in class.
- Encourage participation by parents/families in curriculum.
- Create a sense of personal responsibility by the student toward learning.

Expectations about Homework

- Homework assignments are assigned to reinforce or build on topics learned in class, and/or to prepare for subjects that will be covered in class.
- Homework is not to be given for disciplinary reasons or used as a punitive tool.
- Assignments will be reviewed and discussed in class, where appropriate.
- Assignments should be age-appropriate in terms of time required, content, and form.

Time:

- For grades three through six, 5 - 10 minutes of Hebrew study five days/week.
- In addition to Hebrew practice, approximately 10 – 15 minutes of other homework.
- Teachers can make available additional worksheets or assignments to provide extra challenges for those who want to do them. It should be clear that these extra assignments are optional.
- Homework should be assigned at least one week in advance of due date.

Communication:

- Teacher should endeavor to send homework assignments and other communication home with each child and email assignments and educational updates to parents and the Director of Elementary and Family Education soon after the assignments are given.
- Parents and/or students should provide feedback to teacher on any homework that the child was unable to complete in the recommended time or did not understand.

F. Dress Code

Because Temple Shir Tikva is a religious institution, students should dress accordingly. While casual attire is welcome in the educational environment, students are expected to refrain from wearing any clothing that could be perceived as offensive or distracting. As a general rule, if the clothing is not appropriate or allowed in secular school, it is not appropriate at our religious school.

Dress should be within reasonable limits for both girls and boys. Tops should cover well: no skin showing at the waist, no strapless tops, and no low cut fronts or backs. Undergarments should not be showing. T-shirts and hats whose slogans and pictures are in poor taste are to be avoided. We would appreciate your help in creating a comfortable atmosphere for all attending and we feel an obligation to support the limits set by parents at home.

If a child is inappropriately dressed they will be provided an appropriate cover-up and their parents will be called.

G. Guests in the Classroom

On occasion, students would like to bring guests to class. Students are to get permission from the Director of Elementary and Family Education or Director of Congregational Learning. When permission has been given, a guest pass will be given to the student and guest who will give it to the teacher. Guests are expected to be on their best behavior when visiting a class.

H. Behavior

1. Temple Shir Tikva is Our Kedusha Kingdom

We are in a Kedusha Kingdom, a sacred Jewish environment. While we are in our Kedusha Kingdom, we will act as *B'tzelem Elohim* (created in God's image), with *Kavod* (honor/respect), *Derech Eretz* (manners/proper behavior) and *Hish-tat-foot* (participation). This Brit signifies our willingness to conduct ourselves accordingly in class.

- 1) We are all *B'tzelem Elohim*, created in God's image. Because we are all *B'tzelem Elohim*, we will act and behave well with each other, recognizing that God is in each of us. We will behave just as we believe God behaves with us.
- 2) We will behave with *Kavod*, with respect and honor for ourselves and each other. We will listen to others and respect their opinions even if we don't agree. We will respect each other's differences, abilities and challenges. Out of our *Kavod* for each other, we will in turn receive *Kavod*. *Kavod* is a two-way relationship. *Kavod* is given when we earn it.
- 3) We will act towards each other with *Derech Eretz*, manners. All of us deserve to be treated properly. We will speak to each other politely, we will not touch or hurt each other, and we will treat each other with care and concern.
- 4) *Hish-tat-foot*, participation, is part of our Brit. A partnership between students, teachers and parents lives within our classroom. Everyone is encouraged to participate and share. No one has the right to interfere with the teaching and learning that goes on in our Kedusha Kingdom. Students have the right to study and learn. Teachers have the right to teach.

We understand the concepts of Kedusha Kingdom, Brit, *B'tzelem Elohim*, *Derech Eretz* and *Hish-tat-foot*. We will abide by our classroom Brit.

2. Disciplinary Procedures

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.

The following guidelines will be used to deal with disciplinary situations. In cases where the situation is deemed more serious, one or more of these steps may be omitted.

- a. When a teacher feels a student has gone beyond reasonable bounds of classroom behavior, the teacher will:
 - a) Render a verbal warning to the student;
 - b) Discuss the situation privately with the student;
 - c) Complete a Behavior Notification Form¹ about the incident that is given to the Director, who will mail it to the parent.
 - d) Inform the Director verbally and in writing the day the incident occurs.
 - e) Contact the parents about the disruptive behavior.

- b. If the student continues to create a discipline problem,
 - a) The student and teacher will meet with the Director to discuss the situation.
 - b) To inform parents of this meeting, the teacher or the Director will call the parents.
 - c) A follow-up letter will be mailed home and the parent will be asked to sign and return it.
 - d) If necessary, the Director and teacher will meet with the parents and the student to try to resolve the problem.

- c. If all efforts to resolve the problem fail, the family and student will meet with the Rabbi, Director and a representative of the Religious School Committee.

The Rabbi and Director will recommend an appropriate alternate action which may include, but need not be limited to, expulsion or suspension from attending Religious School classes.

¹ The Behavior Notification describes in as much detail as possible what transpired in class and what needs to change in the student's behavior. The teacher then hands in the behavior notification form to the Director who reviews it. The form is then mailed to the parents. The teacher is expected to inform the student that their parents will receive the form; the teacher should call the parents at the earliest opportunity.

I. Bar/Bat Mitzvah

1. Educational requirements

Educational Requirements

The requirement for Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Shir Tikva includes completing at least five years of religious school (typically starting in second grade) with a satisfactory attendance record, culminating in the completion of seventh grade. In addition, children are expected to participate in all extra-curricular programming at Shir Tikva including the Mitzvah Awareness program and the sixth grade Shabbaton. Families enter a good faith understanding with the Temple that the student will continue his/her Jewish studies after seventh grade. Students who leave the program in the middle of seventh grade or whose attendance is poor are violating this good faith agreement.

Students who are not in good standing (measured by regular attendance and active participation) are not eligible to participate in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program. Students who have not participated in five years of study at Shir Tikva may be admitted to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program if they have either (i) provided to the Director of Congregational Learning acceptable documentation showing the completion of an equivalent experience in another religious school, or (ii) completed an equivalent Judaic education that the Rabbi and Director of Congregational Learning have determined, in their sole and absolute discretion, is at least equivalent to the religious school at Shir Tikva.

If a family that is a member of Shir Tikva does not enroll their child(ren) in the religious school at Shir Tikva by second grade, the family must contact the Rabbi and the Director of Congregational Learning to discuss what alternate arrangements have been made to provide the child(ren) with an equivalent Judaic education to the religious school at Shir Tikva. It is at the sole and absolute discretion of the Rabbi and Director of Congregational Learning if such alternate education will be deemed to be equivalent to the religious school at Shir Tikva and whether such child(ren) will be admitted to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program. Even if the Rabbi and Director of Congregational Learning determine, at the time any such request for evaluation is submitted, that the alternate arrangements are acceptable, the Rabbi and/or Director of Congregational Learning can re-evaluate the alternate arrangements at any time and can revoke their approval. Moreover, each such student will also be evaluated approximately one year prior to their Bar/Bat Mitzvah date and the student has not acquired the necessary experience, the Bar/Bat Mitzvah date may be postponed.

2. Bar/Bat Mitzvah Instruction

The school program provides students with the foundation on which preparation for Bar/Bat-Mitzvah is built. Specific training for the Bar/Bat-Mitzvah service takes place, however, outside the school program. Each student receives one-on-one private lessons, normally with one of the tutors on the Temple's staff, under the Cantor's supervision. In these tutorials, the student learns his/her Torah and Haftarah readings and parts of the Shabbat morning liturgy. Lessons are generally one-half hour in length, at a regular weekly time, and they usually take place at the Temple. Bar/Bat-Mitzvah preparation usually comprises thirty lessons over the course of about eight months. Families will be billed a flat tutorial fee which covers 15 hours of lessons and 1 hour with a speech coach.

In some circumstances, parents may desire to engage a tutor that is not on the Temple staff. The Cantor must approve the selection of all outside tutors.

The Cantor monitors the progress of all Bar/Bat-Mitzvah tutoring and meets with each student several times, one-on-one, to discuss the student's progress, and is generally available to be helpful. The clergy staff will also meet to discuss the student's Torah portion and to help him/her prepare a brief essay (*drash*) about the Torah portion, to be read aloud at the Bar/Bat-Mitzvah service. In the last month of preparation, students rehearse from the bimah several times.

4. Date selection

In the fall of the 5th grade year, families will receive a letter from the B'nai Mitzvah Committee detailing the procedure for assigning Bar/Bat-Mitzvah dates. All B'nai Mitzvah celebrations will be scheduled in pairs or in "shared celebration" clusters, unless educational circumstances, as determined by the Rabbi and Director of Congregational Learning, require other arrangements

IV. Resources

A. Library

The Temple Shir Tikva Library offers many resources, as part of the Metrowest Massachusetts Regional Library System (MMRLS). The library's collection, numbering over 2000 volumes, is available to the entire Temple community and is a valuable resource for students. The library is open any time the building is open. Materials can be checked out. Be sure to visit the Temple website to see recent acquisitions and other helpful library information.

B. Youth Choir

The Youth Choir at Temple Shir Tikva is named *Shirei Yladim* or "Songs of Children" and is run by the Cantor. It is open to all 3rd through 6th graders from our religious school. The Youth Choir performs at many Simchat Shabbat, holiday services and special events around the Temple and perform each year with other Boston youth choirs at the annual Zimriyah in the Boston area. The Youth Choir practices every Sunday from 10:50 to 11:20 in the Sanctuary.

The Temple will also be offering participation in a newly-formed Teen Choir, for students in 7th grade and up.

If you have any questions, please contact Cantor Shachner at (508) 358-992.

C. Social Programming for Children in Kindergarten – Grade 6

Approximately every 6 weeks students in Grades 3-6 have the opportunity to get together in a social context. In addition: Grade 6 holds a Shabbaton at Eisner Camp (weekend), Grade 5 holds a Shul-In at TST (overnight), Grades 3 & 4 hold a pajama party from 6:00 -10:00 pm at TST. Social programs for students and families in Kindergarten - Grade 2 are held three times a year. Dates for all programs are listed in the Temple's Program Book and in the Religious School calendar. Notices of upcoming events will be emailed to families and hard copies of fliers will be distributed in class. For more information, please speak with the Director of Elementary and Family Education.

D. Students with Special Needs

Temple Shir Tikva Religious School is eager to know about a student's unique educational needs. Parents are encouraged to share information on how their child learns best by submitting any educational plans and accommodations that have been put into place in the secular school. We also encourage parents to discuss any learning style concerns with our educational staff, whether or not an I.E.P. exists for the secular school. A Learning Style

Specialist is on staff to assist the faculty in creating the most effectual educational environment for all learning styles.

V. Communication between Home and Religious School

A. E-mail

E-mail updates have become standard communication at Temple Shir Tikva. It is every family's responsibility to make sure that your current e-mail is on file with the Administrative Office. Please check your e-mail on a regular basis for important school updates.

B. Hineini and Vat's Nu

The Temple newsletter, *Hineini*, has an education update written by the Director of Congregational Learning each month. There are many features and notices of interest to our school families as well including an updated monthly education calendar.

Vat's Nu is Temple Shir Tikva's weekly electronic newsletter sent via e-mail. It contains information on the religious school schedule and events.

C. Student Progress Reports and Evaluation

Progress reports are mailed home once in the middle of the year and at the end of the school year. This is a general overview of how your child is learning. Formal grades are not given. Parents are asked to review these reports with their child. If parents have any questions or concerns, they should contact the child's teacher. If the parent believes the question or concern is beyond the classroom teacher's responsibility the Director of Elementary and Family Education or Director of Congregational Learning may be contacted.

D. Whom to Contact with Questions and Concerns

Parents are requested to address particular classroom concerns directly with their child's teacher. Classroom teachers will provide parents with contact information at the start of the school year. Parents may call the school's Education Assistant if they require assistance in contacting their child's teacher. If a parent believes that their question or concern extends beyond the realm or responsibility of the teacher, they are kindly asked to contact the Director of Elementary and Family Education or the Director of Congregational Learning directly.

VI. Health and Safety

A. Student Pick-up Procedures and Parking

When you arrive at Shir Tikva, park your car in a parking space and come into the brick lobby to retrieve your children.

Other pertinent information:

- ❖ Once you have everyone in your carpool, you are free to exit the lot! *It's that simple!*
- ❖ To keep the flow of foot traffic moving, there will be only one set of doors **IN** and only one set of doors **OUT**.
- ❖ We will encourage kids to group with their carpools so that you can easily spot each other.
- ❖ Our staff will not release students without an adult/older sibling coming in for them.
- ❖ The curb at the end of the front walkway is for active drop-off only; again, any time you need to pick up a student, you **MUST** park in a parking space and **NOT** along a curb.

How does this affect Youth Community drop-off (6 PM) and pick-up (8 PM)?

- ❖ Drop-off: Pull up to the brick walkway at the front doors to drop off your teen at 6 pm. Proceed around the perimeter of the lot and to the exit.
- ❖ If you are picking up a 3rd -6th grader at 5:45 as well as dropping off for youth community, you still MUST pull into a parking spot and walk inside the building to collect your younger student(s).
- ❖ Pick-up at 8 PM is unchanged: Park in a parking space. Either come into the lobby or stay in your car until your student finds you, and then you are free to go. The curbs are not for pick up; we reiterate that any time you need to pick up a student, you MUST park in a parking space.

Please remember that SAFETY is the shared responsibility of EVERY DRIVER. Please respect the rules of the road, follow signage and arrows, and TAKE YOUR TIME. For easier exit, park so that you can pull forwards out of your spot!

B. Medicines and Allergies Policy

1. Medication

Only emergency medications (i.e. Epipens, asthma inhalers, diabetes medications) will be permitted. These medications need to be kept with the student (preferably in a belt pack or other accessory on the student's body).

If a student requires assistance in administering the medication, the parent(s) will be responsible for training the classroom teacher, the Director of Elementary and Family Education, and the Director of Congregational Learning. Both the instructions for how to administer the medication and the indications for administering the medication should be printed and kept with the medication at all times.

The temple or religious school faculty **will not** dispense any other medications, including "over-the-counter" medications.

2. Food Allergies

If a student has a life-threatening allergy to a food, that food will be forbidden from that child's classroom. A notice will be distributed to the entire class on the first day of religious school. (If a student develops a food allergy in the middle of a school year, parents must notify the school immediately and a notice will be distributed as soon as possible. If a student enters the class mid-year, the notice will be distributed when they first attend class.) All notice distributions are to be preceded or followed by a phone call from the teacher or Education Assistant to each classmate's parents or guardians within the first week of religious school.

The allergic student should have an EpiPen available at all times in accordance with the TST Religious School Medication Policy (see section above).

If environmental precautions are necessary (such as washing down tables), these precautions will be the responsibility of the allergic student's parent(s).

C. Food and Snacks in the Classroom

1. Religious School Food Policy:

Temple Shir Tikva Religious School is Allergen Aware and does not allow any foods in the classroom that could pose a life-threatening risk to students with severe food allergies (anaphylaxis). It is the responsibility of the parents of all students with life-threatening food allergies to inform the Director of Elementary and Family Education, the Director of

Congregational learning, and the classroom teacher. This information will be provided to parents in classrooms where snack will be provided on a rotating basis and can be provided to parents in other classrooms as needed for the protection of those students with severe food allergies.

2. Procedure:

Kindergarten and First Grade

Kindergarten and first grade students are the only classes to have snack, which their parents provide on a rotating basis. Parents should be sensitive to the needs of any allergic students and provide food or drink which all students can have. Should a child be absent on the week he/she is to bring snack, parents are asked to either supply the snack, or make arrangements with another family from that class to bring the snack.

Grades 2 and above

Children in grades 2-6 are asked not to bring food into the classrooms before their Wednesday and Thursday classes. We realize that many children are coming from school and may be on tight schedules, but we ask that they please eat snacks before arriving at religious school. If it is absolutely necessary, snacks may be eaten in the common areas. Snacks eaten in the classroom can disturb the educational atmosphere.

3. Passover Policy

In advance of the Passover holiday, the Temple building is thoroughly cleaned. During the holiday of Passover, strict Kosher-for-Passover food requirements are maintained within the building. It is requested that any snacks brought into the school during Passover should be foods that are kosher for Passover and eaten only in the common areas (see above policy).

D. CORI requirements

All full-time and part-time employees of Temple Shir Tikva are subject to a Criminal Offender Record Investigation (CORI) and a Sexual Offender Record Investigation (SORI) at the time of their hire and every two years thereafter. These background checks are done to insure the safety of the children in the religious school and the entire TST community.

The Vice-President of Governance will be the individual responsible for all CORI and SORI practice at Temple Shire Tikva. A copy of the consent for CORI/SORI will be kept in the employee's file. All reports of COR/SORI checks returned by the State of Massachusetts will be kept by the Vice-President of Governance. These reports will be treated as confidential records. If a report received from the State shows any criminal conduct, appropriate measure will be taken to insure the safety of the community.

VII. Curriculum

A. For All Grades

1. Music

We all know the power of music. Music reinforces what we learn. It provides yet another learning strategy to our studies. Music conveys an emotion, an idea, a story or teaching in a way that is artistic and affective so that not only our minds are influenced by what we study, but our hearts and souls as well.

Our students have the opportunity to extend their Jewish learning through music. Our music teacher meets weekly on a regular schedule (Sundays) with each grade, teaching songs in

Hebrew and English that correlate to the holidays we are celebrating and the curriculum we are studying.

In the second semester of the year, beginning in January, the Grade 6 class has Trope class with the Cantor, instead of music class. Should the Cantor be unavailable to teach trope on a given Sunday, the Grade 6 classes will have music.

2. Tefillah

In grades 3-6, we come together in the sanctuary or Beit Midrash for a weekly half hour of community and *tefillah* (prayer). Our *tefillah* experience provides the students and faculty of our school a time to put into practice the prayers and blessings they study in class, to experiment with the concept of prayer in a variety of ways, to practice the chanting and singing of prayer melodies and songs.

The Director of Congregational Learning will lead Grade 5/6 *tefillah* while the Cantor leads Grade 3/4 Tefillah. Every Wednesday and Thursday at 3:45 p.m., Grades 5 and 6 go directly to the sanctuary and Grades 3 and 4 will go to the Beit Midrash. Tefillah concludes at 4:15 p.m. when students and teachers return to class.

3. Tzedakah

Through our Tzedakah Initiative, our students will participate in a variety of mitzvot on a weekly basis – Tzedakah, Talmud Torah, and G'milut Hasadim – to name a few. At the beginning of the school year each grade will be assigned to an organization which they will represent for the duration of the year. By engaging in hands-on projects and by studying the mitzvot which each organization represents, our students will learn about the mission and goals of their assigned organization and the importance of participating in the mitzvah of giving tzedakah.

Overarching goals of the program are to:

- Provide students with an opportunity to engage in the mitzvah of giving tzedakah on a regular basis.
- Empower students with the knowledge that they have the ability to repair the world – to do the important work of Tikkun Olam.
- Teach students about the mitzvot which their assigned organizations represent.
- Allow students the creative freedom to design unique and innovative ways to raise money for and awareness of the issues which their organization represents.

How it works:

- Students are encouraged to bring tzedakah to class each session.
- During the course of the year, each class or grade, will develop creative ways of teaching the Temple Shir Tikva community about their assigned organization by:
 - Highlighting and teaching the community about the mitzvot their organization represents
 - Presenting the organization's mission and goals to the community
 - Developing age-appropriate strategies and methods for collecting tzedakah for their assigned organization.

4. Parent Involvement

Parents are invited to attend classes, special programs, events and services. Parents' participation in school projects or activities is always desired and greatly welcomed. If you would like to get involved with the school and its varied programs, please speak with a member

of our school committee, the Director of Elementary and Family Education, or the Director of Congregational Learning.

5. Art and Holiday Celebrations,

Art: Classroom art projects are incorporated as part of the grade level curriculum for Grades K-2.

Holiday Celebrations: Many celebrations and observances including Sukkot, Tu B'Shevat (Jewish Arbor Day), Purim, Passover, and Israel Independence Day are celebrated as school-wide events. Parents will be encouraged to help in the planning and implementing of these programs. These programs are in addition to synagogue-wide observance of these holidays.

6. Shabbat Service Attendance; Family Shabbat Services and Dinners; Tot Shabbat

Shabbat Service Attendance: Students and their families are encouraged to attend regularly scheduled Shabbat services. Part of Jewish life is praying together at communal worship services. Students and their families who attend services regularly experience this important part of Jewish life.

Congregational Shabbat Dinners and Service: Shabbat is the most opportune time for families to gather together in community. It is a magnificent time to sing, pray, socialize and enjoy the sacredness of life. Families are encouraged to attend Temple's Simchat Shabbat services as a family (please check the calendar for the date) and then join their child's classmates and their families for a traditional Shabbat dinner.

Tot Shabbat : On the first Saturday of each month during the school year, a Tot Shabbat service is held from 9:15 to 9:45 a.m. This service is designed to introduce young children and their parents to Shabbat in a fun and festive manner

B. The Religious School Curriculum

For a detailed description of the curriculum, please see the copy of the Temple Shir Tikva Religious School Curriculum Description included in the Start-of-School mailing. Copies of the curriculum description are available in the office and on the Shir Tikva website.

VIII. Youth Community (Grade 7 - 12)

Every member of Temple Shir Tikva in Grades 7-12 is **automatically** a member of our Youth Community. Whether a young person is into dinner with friends, social action, innovative learning programs, student teaching, or youth group activities, there's a place for them here.

Some components of the program require advance registration, but every effort is made to have an open door policy throughout the year. All young people are invited to explore the opportunities available through Youth Community.

A. The Youth Community Credit System

The Youth community's credit system leads to the 10th grade milestone achievement of Confirmation, observed on the holiday of Shavuot each year in the spring. 7th – 10th graders need to earn a total of 48 credits by the end of their 10th grade year. The youth Community program offers many different choices (Wednesday evening classes, social justice programming, student teaching...) for participating and earning credit. As participants involve themselves in the various opportunities that Youth Community offers, they earn credits towards

Confirmation. Regardless of where a student currently stands in the program in regards to credit, we are eager to work with them to find a place for them here at Shir Tikva.

“Highlights” of the Youth Community Credit System

What is it?

- A system that awards students “credits” for involvement in youth activities at Temple Shir Tikva during grades 7-10

Why is it important?

- to provide standardized incentives for students to remain involved in the wide variety of youth activities at Temple Shir Tikva
- to emphasize our Wednesday night Youth Community program in students’ Jewish educational and social lives
- to provide alternative pathways towards the Confirmation ceremony for students who cannot make a commitment to Wednesday nights year-round

How can students “earn” credits?

- Regular participation in the Wednesday Night Program
- Student teaching with younger grades
- Regular involvement with STIFTY
- Social Action / Tikkun Olam work
- Adult Shabbat Morning Torah Study
- Tefilah – Participation in Shabbat Prayer at Shir Tikva
- Independent Study with a Rabbi or member of our Education Professional
- Equivalent Jewish Study (at Prozdor, etc.)

Goal: To earn 48 credits during the four-year period of Grades 7-10, plus attend 6 Shabbat services and a Confirmation project during the 10th grade year. Students in 7th grade can earn a maximum of 12 credits during that year.

What administration is involved in the Credit System?

- At the beginning of each school year, each student will register his/her “plan” for earning credits during that year. Every student will discuss his/her plan for the year with Adam Smith or members of the Youth Education Committee. Students will be asked to take responsibility for tracking credits during the school year; whenever students earn credits, they should speak with our Director of Youth and Informal Education, Adam Smith, and complete a standardized credit form.

Will outstanding achievement be recognized?

- Yes. The Youth Education Committee, in consultation with Adam Smith and Deena Bloomstone, may honor students in grades 8-10 each year at the Confirmation ceremony for excellent participation and outstanding achievement.

What if a student has not earned enough credits so far?

- We are eager to work with every student who wants to be a part of the Confirmation Credit Program. Call Adam Smith or Deena Bloomstone for more information.

B. The Youth Community Program Description

For a detailed description of the Youth Community program description, please see the copy of the Temple Shir Tikva Religious School Curriculum and Youth Community Program Description included in the Start-of-School mailing. Copies of the Youth Community program description are available in the office and on the Shir Tikva website.

IX. School Committee

The School Committee works with the Director of Congregational Learning and the Director of Elementary and Family Education to develop the policies and procedures for our religious school. Comments, questions, and concerns about overall school policy and procedure may be addressed to the committee (we encourage issues concerning individual students be addressed to the student's teacher and/or the Directors). We welcome new members at the start of each school year. If you are interested in serving on the committee, contact the School Committee Chair or the Education Assistant. The names of the School Committee chair and members are available from the Director of Congregational Learning or the Administration Office.

X. Publication and Updates to Handbook

Copies of this handbook are available in the Shir Tikva Main Office and on-line at the Shir Tikva website, www.shirtikva.org. Any changes or corrections to the material in this handbook will be published in the temple newsletter, *Hineini*, on-line in *Vat's Nu*, and will be available in the Main Office.