

TEMPLE
SHIR TIKVA

שיר תקווה
Song of Hope

Youth Community Policy Handbook

Created by the Youth Committee in 2008-2009

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I. Philosophy and Overview of Youth Community

A. Philosophy

As our young people move out into the world as young adults from the Shir Tikva Community, our wish is that they will find spiritual support, joy and meaning from the knowledge and experience of Judaism, leading to a strong affective tie to being Jewish. More specifically, this means that, based on their experience at Shir Tikva, they will:

- Be confident as Jews and as individuals, drawing upon Jewish values and knowledge when they face important life decisions and as they mold their identity as adult Jews.
- Integrate Jewish values into daily life and personal relationships for example: *tzedakah/gemilut hasadim* (giving and deeds of loving kindness), *ohav k'lal yisrael* (love of fellow Jews), *ohav tzedek u'rodef shalom* (love justice and seek peace), *ohav umot olam* (love one's fellow humans), *Talmud Torah* (study Jewish texts).
- Experience Jewish learning (whether it be texts, history or any other aspect of Jewish learning) as important and relevant in their continued growth as human beings and as Jews and will therefore want to continue to learn about Judaism.
- Be proficient enough in Hebrew language to grapple with Biblical and other Jewish texts in Hebrew and to feel comfortable with the Hebrew of a worship service.
- Find worship and prayer meaningful
- Seek out and foster Jewish community wherever they may live
- Support and be involved with Jewish organizations
- Be comfortable as Jews in both Jewish and non-Jewish peer groups
- Understand how being Jewish is different from other religions and reflects on different values and beliefs and be able to communicate that to others
- Have a deep understanding of ancient and modern Israel's role in shaping Jewish life throughout our history and explore, on an ongoing basis, their relationship with the modern State of Israel.

In sum, we hope that our young people will see their Judaism as a central source of their identity which binds them securely to the Jewish community and the practice of lifelong Jewish learning and that they will give back to the Jewish community and the world through the implementation of Jewish values in their daily lives.

-Temple Shir Tikva Youth Task Force Vision Statement, created December, 1998

B. Overview

Every 7th – 12th grade member of Shir Tikva is a member of the Youth Community. Although there are milestone celebrations throughout the years which do require a student to meet minimum requirements (Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, and Graduation), every member of the community is encouraged and welcome to access the program through multiple points of entry throughout their middle and high school years. These points of entry include classes (our Wednesday night program), STIFTY (our local chapter of the regional and national NFTY groups), Grades 7-8 social programming, student teaching, teen choir, and social justice. Regardless of their level of commitment to the program, teens are always welcome for Wednesday night dinners, and Shir Tikva commits to continuing to reach out and welcome all students.

Families enter a good faith understanding with the Temple that the student will continue his/her Jewish studies after Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Students who leave the program in the middle of the seventh grade year or whose attendance is poor are violating this good faith agreement. We expect that our students will recognize that Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a signpost of beginning Jewish responsibilities, not a conclusion.

Here is an overview of the offerings:

	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
Classroom	Grade-specific curriculum offered on Wednesday nights throughout the school year; pre-registration is required					
YC Dinner	All grades welcome on a drop-in basis					
Youth Group	7 th /8 th grade Youth Group		STIFTY			
Overnight Retreats*	Bauercrest Camp		NYC	RAC (DC)	Alternates between Israel and Habitat	
Social Justice*	JCRC Social Justice Programs Walk for Hunger					
Student Teaching		Available to 8 th -12 th graders				
Teen Choir	All grades are eligible to participate					
Milestones	Bar/bat mitzvah			Confirmation		Graduation

* These programs are subject to change.

For a more detailed description of the curriculum for grades 7-12, please refer to Section VI.

II. Administration

A. Youth Community Schedule of Programs:

1. Wednesday Evening Studies: The formal studies program of Youth Community meets on Wednesdays from 6:00pm to 8:00pm for students in grades 7 through 12. The program begins with a communal dinner from 6:00 to 6:30pm. After dinner, students attend classes.

2. Student Teacher Training Program: The student teacher training program is conducted on Sunday mornings. Teens can also opt to student teach in the weekday Hebrew School. Training sessions for student teachers are required and are held on Sundays. The student teacher is required to be present in his/her assigned class during Religious School hours on Sunday and/or weekdays. See the Religious School handbook for school hours.

3. STIFTY: The senior youth group meets roughly once a month. A calendar of meetings and events is published and mailed to each teen and can also be found on the Temple Shir Tikva website.

4. Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) Telem Social Justice Programs: Will be identified and listed on the registration forms.

5. Trips and Events: Throughout the year a variety of trips and events are scheduled for every grade. Specific information about each trip is published, mailed and put on the Temple Shir Tikva website when the trip or event is announced. As trips are influenced by the need to purchase tickets and make advance reservations, deadlines for all trip and event registrations MUST be respected.

B. Enrollment

Any student in grades 7 through 12 is a member of the Youth Community. Grade 7 Wednesday night attendance is a requirement for Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Temple Shir Tikva regardless of grade at time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

C. Youth Community Fee Policy

Every 7th through 12th grade member of TST is a member of the Youth Community. Every 8th–12th grade student is charged a uniform Youth Community fee. 7th Grade billing is a separate fee due to special considerations of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah cycle. There is no opt-out provision when a student chooses not to participate in the Youth Community program.

- This fee covers Wednesday night classes, Wednesday evening communal dinners, student teacher training program, social action projects, involvement in 7th/8th grade social programming, local and regional STIFTY youth group events.
- Trips and retreats may be partially subsidized by this Youth Community fee, but there will be additional cost to participants.
- Some programs will still require nominal fees to cover transportation or program costs (such as tickets to a show, supplies, etc.)

D. Registration Procedures

Registration for Youth Community follows the same procedure as registration for Religious School. Registration forms are sent to families in good standing at the beginning of May. Those forms are due by the beginning of June. This registration packet includes Wednesday night classes, student teaching, JCRC Social Justice programs and other opportunities. There will be registrations for additional youth events throughout the school year including trips, STIFTY events and other programming. **The deadline for program registration is noted on all forms. If a deadline is missed, participation is at the discretion of the Director of Congregational Learning.**

E. Class Placement for Wednesday Evening Studies

Classes are formed to create approximately equal size classes based on the registrations received. Decisions regarding class size will be guided by the educational philosophy of the Youth Community and the number of registrations received per grade. Students may name one student that they would like to be with in class. The student needs to put such request in writing and the request must be made by both students. Class placement is at the discretion of the Director of Congregational Learning. Any request to change classes must be in writing and include a detailed explanation. This should be submitted to the Director of Congregational Learning.

F. Inclement Weather

A decision will be made by noon as to whether Youth Community will be cancelled for that evening. There are three ways in which we will alert families of cancellations on weekdays:

- Television: Please check television stations 4, 5, or 7.
- Email: Those who have given Temple Shir Tikva their email address will receive notice via email.
- Shir Tikva website: Home page will have up to date information.

We ask that you please refrain from calling Temple Shir Tikva unless you do not have access to one of the above methods. Please understand that we make the best decision possible given all the information at hand. Our concern is for the safety of our staff and our families. 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. Expectations

A. Attendance

Regular attendance at Youth Community Programs ensures continuity of learning and integration into the Shir Tikva community. The program emphasizes a high level of personal responsibility by the individual towards consistent attendance in the area(s) of the Youth Community Program he/she has chosen to participate.

B. Absences

When a student must be absent, it is the student's responsibility to contact his or her teacher and make arrangements to master the missed lesson material. If regular attendance should become a problem for any reason, students are urged to contact the Youth Educator to discuss the situation. Temple Shir Tikva will strive to work with any student to ensure the continuity of his/her Jewish education.

Temple Shir Tikva is committed to fostering ongoing Jewish learning and a positive Jewish identity in every member of our community. It is our goal to provide multiple avenues of participation for each and every individual.

-From the TST Mission Statement (June 2001)

C. Early Dismissal Times on Wednesday Evenings

Regardless of how a student arrives on Wednesday evening at Temple Shir Tikva, a student may not leave the building prior to the end of classes without first informing the Director of Congregational Learning, the Youth Educator and/or the Temple office that they are leaving early. Students are not permitted to leave the classroom and/or wait for an adult outside the building without following this procedure.

D. 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, then it is not appropriate at Temple Shir Tikva, or any youth community trip or event.

E. Guests in the Classroom

On occasion, students may bring a guest to class. Students must get permission in advance from the Director of Congregational Learning or the Youth Educator. Guests are expected to abide by Temple Shir Tikva's behavior policies and their behavior is the responsibility of the hosting student.

F. Behavior

In order to provide a safe and comfortable environment, appropriate behavior is expected of all individuals while participating in any Temple program including those at the Temple and off-site. Appropriate behavior includes being respectful of others and the Temple facilities, following teacher's instructions and cooperating with fellow students. Proper dinner etiquette, which includes singing the Birkat Hamazon without banging on the tables, is also expected.

Below is a copy of the Temple Shir Tikva Youth Community Code of Conduct.

Temple Shir Tikva Youth Community Code of Conduct

-Adapted from the National Federation of Temple Youth

- I will promote the creation of a religious youth community based on mutual respect and a sense of personal well being. I have read the following rules, designed to promote the health and safety of all event participants, and have indicated my unqualified acceptance by my signature and that of my parent/guardian.
- I will not possess, consume, or distribute alcoholic beverages, other than that served by adult leadership for Jewish sacramental purposes, even if I am of legal drinking age.
- I will not possess, use, or distribute any illegal drug or drug paraphernalia.
- I will not smoke or consume or distribute tobacco products.
- I will attend and participate fully in the entire event, unless otherwise agreed upon with the Temple Shir Tikva staff. I will arrive on time, stay until the end, and remain on the event premises at all times.
- I will not bring or use any weapons or firearms.
- I will not commit any illegal act. I understand that vandalism, disturbing the peace or other inappropriate behavior as determined by the adult leadership will not be tolerated. I understand that I will have to pay for any damage that I cause. I understand that no gambling is allowed, except for fundraisers approved by the adult leadership.
- I will abide by the event curfew announced by the leadership.
- I understand that no guests are allowed at any event, unless permission is granted in advance by adult leadership and that any unauthorized guests will be asked to leave immediately.
- I will not drive to, during, or from off-site events, unless advance permission for such a special situation is requested in writing by my parent/guardian and granted in writing by the Temple Shir Tikva staff leader.
- I agree to refrain from inappropriate sexual behavior.
- I agree to abide by any additional rules, pertinent to a specific event, which may be announced and to accept the consequences of their violation.

G. Disciplinary Procedures

In order to ensure a positive educational experience for everyone, the following guidelines will be used to deal with disciplinary situations. When a teacher feels a student has

gone beyond reasonable bounds of classroom behavior, the teacher will first give the student a warning. If the behavior persists, the student will be excused from class to meet with the Youth Educator. If the behavior continues to be a problem, the student's parents will be called and a decision will be made as to whether the student should be sent home. Any physical abuse will not be tolerated. In the event a student's behavior becomes a consistent and recurring issue, the Youth Educator, in consultation with the Rabbis, will decide whether a student should be allowed to continue in the program.

H. Students with Special Needs

Temple Shir Tikva's goal is for all students to participate in the Youth Community. The Temple's Learning Styles Specialist is available to work with special needs students and their teachers in order to create inclusive classrooms. Special consideration will be given for retreats and overnights in order to maintain appropriate student staff ratios. Any additional questions or concerns should be directed to the Director of Congregational Learning.

IV. Communication between Home and the Youth Community

The success of our community depends on frequent and open communication between home and temple. The professional staff commits to sharing information in a timely fashion through the use of mailings, email, *Hineni* and *Vats Nu*. Beyond that, it is the family's responsibility to take appropriate steps to stay informed.

A. E-mail

The Youth Community relies on e-mail to keep families informed and up to date. It is every family's responsibility to make sure that e-mail addresses on file with the Temple are accurate and to check your email on a regular basis.

B. *Hineni* and *Vats Nu*

Hineni, the Temple's monthly newsletter, has a page devoted to the Youth Community highlighting current and upcoming programs.

Vats Nu, the Temple's weekly electronic newsletter, will have information on the Youth Community when appropriate.

C. Orientation

The Youth Community holds an orientation at the beginning of the school year to provide an overview of each grade.

D. Whom to Contact with Questions and Concerns

Parents are requested to address particular classroom concerns directly with their student's teacher. Classroom teachers will provide parents with contact information at the start of the school year. Parents may contact the Youth Educator if they are having difficulty reaching a teacher.

V. Health & Safety

A. Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedure

- 6 PM Drop Off - Pull up to the brick walkway at the front doors to drop off your student. Proceed around the perimeter of the parking lot and exit.
- NOTE: Per Religious School policy, if you are picking up a 3rd -6th grader at 5:45 as well as dropping off for Youth Community, you **MUST** pull into a parking spot and walk inside to collect the younger student(s).
- 8 PM Pick up - Park in a parking space. Either come into the lobby or stay in your car until your student finds you; you are then free to exit. **Idling at the curb is not allowed, for the safety of all.**

B. Medicine and Allergies Policy

- Medication
Only emergency medications (i.e. Epipens, asthma inhalers, diabetes medications) will be permitted in the building. These medications need to be kept with the student. The Temple staff or Youth Community faculty will not dispense any medications, including "over-the-counter" medications.
- Allergies
If a student has an allergy, it is the responsibility of the parent and/or the student to notify the Youth Educator and Director of Congregational Learning, as well as monitor individual allergies. If medically indicated, the student must carry an Epipen at all times.

C. Food Policy

- To protect any students with life threatening food allergies, no food is allowed in the classrooms. Any snacks that need to be eaten while at Youth Community must be eaten in the common areas.
- In advance of the Passover holiday, the temple is thoroughly cleaned. During the holiday of Passover, strict Kosher-for-Passover food requirements are maintained within the building. Any food brought into the temple during Passover must be Kosher-for-Passover and be eaten only in common areas (see above).

D. CORI

- All full time and part-time employees of Temple Shir Tikva are subject to a Criminal Offender Record Investigation and a Sexual Offender Record Investigation at the time of their hire and every two years thereafter. These background checks are done to insure the safety of the students in the Youth Community as well as the entire TST community.

- The Vice President of Governance will be the individual responsible for all CORI and SORI checks. A copy of the consent for CORI/SORI will be kept in the employee's file. All reports of CORI/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 measures will be taken to insure the safety of the community.

VI. Miscellaneous

A. Tzedakah

Tzedakah within Jewish philosophy is not a matter of whim but an obligation. The collection of Tzedakah is required even of those who are themselves recipients of financial assistance. Youth Community students should come on Wednesday nights prepared to contribute their part of Tzedakah each week. The only way to teach Tzedakah effectively is by doing it. A Youth Community Tzedakah box will be present at each Wednesday night dinner in which students can contribute. The STIFTY Social Action chair-people will develop the process for deciding the organization to which the Tzedakah will be given.

B. Tikkun Olam

“Tikkun Olam is the process of fixing large societal problems, while maintaining a belief that our actions can have a positive effect on the greater human and divine world.”

Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Director of Education for the Jewish Funds for Justice

The Youth Community is committed to the study and engagement in Tikkun Olam. Members of Youth Community have the opportunity to engage in a variety of Tikkun Olam projects and activities.

C. Parent Involvement

Parents are invited to attend Youth Community classes and special programs. If you plan to attend a class, please let the teacher or Director of Congregational Learning know in advance. If you would like to get involved with the Youth Community and its varied programs, please speak with a member of the Youth Committee or the Director of Congregational Learning.

D. Teen Service

On the fourth Saturday of the month, Temple Shir Tikva's Youth Community gathers together to celebrate Shabbat. The goal is for our youth community to have their own unique Shabbat experience. The students will work with the rabbi to prepare for the service.

E. Registration Deadlines / Refunds

Families are given ample opportunity to register for a trip. Multiple communications are sent out with reasonable deadlines for registration and payment. Once deadlines have passed, trip arrangements are made. When a family misses a deadline, the ability to include the potential participant will be weighed by the professional staff based on numerous factors. The family must be prepared to cover any additional costs and potentially assist in logistical arrangements. As trips basically pay for themselves, refunding money is not possible.

VII. Youth Committee

A. Role of Youth Committee

The committee provides support for the directors as needed, including providing input from parents' perspective, fostering communication about the Youth Community program to the Temple Shir Tikva community, and serving as ambassadors for the program. The Youth Committee works with the Director of Educational Learning and the Youth Educator to develop the policies and procedures for our Youth Community program. The committee also proposes requests for discretionary funding to supplement Youth Community programs. 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 Youth Educator or the Director of Congregational Learning).

B. Serving on the Committee

We welcome new members to the committee at the start of each school year. If you are interested in serving on the committee, contact the Youth Committee Chairs.

VIII. Youth Community Fund and Scholarships

A. The Youth Community Fund

The Youth Community Fund is the vehicle for scholarship monies and special programming costs. Scholarships are considered with each request, based on the requesting family's need and ability to pay even a portion. Without the fund, there are no scholarships. Please consider contributing regularly to the Youth Community Fund.

B. Specific Scholarship Funds

The Study in Israel Youth Scholarship Fund was approved in Spring '08 by the Temple Shir Tikva Board of Trustees. The purpose of the scholarship fund is to provide our youth with the opportunity to live and study in Israel for an extended period of time. High school age students can choose a program of study in Israel for a high school semester or for the "gap year" between high school and college.