

Handbook 5772



Religious School

2011-2012 Calendar Year

Table of Contents

Welcome	1
Mission Statement	2
Curriculum	3
Experiential Learning	5
Youth Groups	5
Policies and Procedures	6
How Can You Help?	9

Welcome

Dear Religious School Families,

It is my great privilege to welcome you to another exciting year at Temple Sinai's Religious School. We have some awesome things in store for you, and many wonderful things on the horizon. This year, you'll see some new faces (and some returning ones), brand new family programs, an enhanced communications system, and incredible interactive programs.

This handbook contains pertinent information about our Religious School curriculum, faculty, school policies, and the numerous ways that you can participate in the considerable transformation process that has begun to take hold at Temple Sinai's Religious School. Please take some time to review this handbook, as it contains important changes and key information about the school year.

Our school philosophy is threefold:

Engage – Our students attend secular school all week long, so their Religious School needs to stand out, offering an array of engaging and exciting approaches to learning. The knowledge our students receive and the skills they acquire should be made relevant to their lives.

Measure – All of our lessons, activities, and programs are based on measurable educational objectives, utilizing assessment tools that gauge what our students have learned.

Inspire – We can make our school and synagogue a place where students wish to be. The time they spend here should be both meaningful and enjoyable. We want to see smiles, hear laughter, and produce an atmosphere that builds young Jewish identities and creates fond and lasting positive memories of their Religious School experience.

Sincerely,

Avigail Eisenberg
Religious School Director
avigail@templesinailv.org

Mission Statement

The Temple Sinai Religious School, an integral part of our synagogue, welcomes students and families in developing a positive Jewish identity through a supportive, respectful, and nurturing educational environment.

BELIEFS

We believe that all students will:

- Have a positive Religious School experience;
- Begin to develop a lifelong love and appreciation for Jewish studies, rituals, and traditions;
- Feel a sense of pride and understand what it means to be a Jew;
- Have a love for and a commitment to Israel;
- Have a personal and respectful relationship with teachers and clergy;
- Understand that ethics, morality and Tikkun Olam (the Jewish imperative to repair the world) are the foundation upon which we build a Jewish life.

GOALS

- Students are motivated to continue their Jewish studies beyond 7th grade;
- Students are provided the opportunity to learn to read Hebrew fluently;
- Students will have a familiarity and comfort with prayer and worship;
- Students and families will increase Jewish practices in the home;
- Students will know about the history, land, people and culture of Israel;
- Students will embrace Shabbat and holidays;
- Students will have a meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah experience.

Curriculum

There are seven strands (subject areas) in our curriculum:

HEBREW

Our students will learn to read and write Hebrew. We wish for students to understand Hebrew as the special language of the Jewish people. Emphasis will be placed on prayer-based Hebrew, with basic conversational vocabulary as a supplement. Students will gain a meaningful understanding of the tefillot (prayers) and berachot (blessings) that we wish to see them use throughout their lives. Students will build Hebrew proficiency through regular classroom instruction, prayer services, and special activities.

TORAH

Our students will gain familiarity with biblical, rabbinic, and other sacred texts, and will come to appreciate the Jewish value of lifelong study. They will recognize how Torah connects them to one another, to the land of Israel, and to Jewish communities around the world and throughout time. Students will be introduced to themes, characters and episodes in the Torah, which will strengthen their understanding of early Jewish history; convey the importance of the Bible's lessons and values; and demonstrate the influence that these stories have had on Jews and people of all faiths to this very day.

AVODAH

Students will see Avodah (worship) as an important way in which we communicate with God. They will learn and find meaning in Jewish prayers and rituals, concentrating on those that are part of communal worship at Temple Sinai. In the younger grades, students will become familiar with the rituals of Shabbat and many of the Jewish holidays. Over the course of the curriculum, students will explore the meaning of individual prayers with the goal of being able to feel comfortable and participate in all types of services at Temple Sinai, as well as other synagogues.

Curriculum

G'MILUT CHASADIM

Our students will recognize how mitzvot (commandments) and g'milut chasadim (acts of loving-kindness) enrich the spirit and help us to do Tikkun Olam (the Jewish imperative to repair the world). We will show our students, through the study of texts and through our own words and actions, why g'milut chasadim are an essential part of Jewish life and how they contribute towards the strengthening of relationships and the building of a caring society. In particular, students will learn how to lead an ethical life and will discover the meaning of being a role model.

GOD

Our students will explore Jewish understandings of God and be encouraged to develop a personal relationship with God. We will introduce them to the idea of the covenant between God and the Jewish people as it has been experienced throughout history. They will continuously explore the concept of God as a creator, source, and destination, learning how we come to understand ourselves better and achieve our true potential through bringing God into our lives.

JEWISH HISTORY

Students will explore the history of the people and land of Israel, learning how history informs our actions, and recognizing the ancient Jewish bond with the holy land. We will show our students the achievements and obstacles of the Jewish people throughout the centuries, as well as how our people have survived and thrived in the many lands of our dispersion.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

The Synagogue and our Religious School represent more than a place for worship and the study of texts. We want our students to understand and appreciate that Jewish life is comprised of many facets, including: customs; ideas; rituals; life cycle events; study; communal gatherings and celebrations; family traditions; and artistic expression, just to name a few. Our students will know what it means to be a member of, and will develop the skills to contribute to: our Religious School; Temple Sinai; the Reform Movement; Las Vegas' Jewish community; and the global Jewish community. Students will come to appreciate the many contributions that the Jewish people have made to the arts and sciences; music; education and literature; and a host of other areas that have benefitted the world. In the end, our goal is to create young Jews who are proud of their heritage and who develop a strong Jewish identity.

Experiential Learning

Electives

We will be offering a “chug” (elective lesson) each week which will provide each student an opportunity to choose a specialty area which will center around Judaism. Choices will include Jewish art, Israeli culture, Jewish drama, Year Book/Newsletter, Choir, and Community Service. These electives are designed to enhance our students’ ability to work together and develop friendships.

Family Programming

To encourage family participation in life long Jewish learning, the Religious School offers school events, family days, and thought provoking discussions lead by the Rabbi. These program offerings are designed to provide our Temple Sinai families an opportunity to share the learning experience with their children and create a strong Jewish bond based on family values.

Israeli Experience

This year we will have a youth Madricha (student aid) direct from Israel, who will be working with our students. During her time here, she will be assisting our Religious School and our temple youth group, acting as an aide in their education and spiritual growth.

Music

The music program will provide our students with a strong sense of Jewish identity, joy and pride. Students will learn to love and embrace the world of Jewish music and its rich heritage. They will learn Hebrew through song, and will grow to appreciate the values of Judaism through their knowledge of contemporary, traditional, and Jewish Camp music. To make their temple experience more meaningful, students will also become familiar with the melodies of Shabbat and the High Holy Days.

Youth Groups

Temple Sinai’s youth groups serve as a home away from home for our students, where young people come together and participate in fun and educational informal activities. Youth groups help young people develop a strong sense of Jewish identity, and help create socially active, conscientious Jewish adults.

Policies and Procedures

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Sundays 9:30am – 12:00pm (Pre-K-7th grade)

Sundays 12:30 pm – 1:30pm (Grades 10-12)

Tuesdays 4:30pm – 6:00pm (Grades 3-9 only)

ENROLLMENT

In order to enroll a student in Temple Sinai's Religious School, the student's immediate family must be members of the congregation.

ATTENDANCE

Religious School students are expected to attend classes regularly throughout the year. Parents will be notified if absences become problematic. Classes will begin promptly at 9:30am on Sundays and 4:30pm on Tuesdays. We request that parents call or email the Religious School office when a child will be absent or tardy at: (702) 254-5110 or avigail@templesinailv.org. Please make every effort to get your child to school on time. Every minute counts since instructional time is limited and we have much to accomplish. When a student joins his/her class late, learning is disrupted for all students. Parents will be notified if absences or tardiness becomes an issue. In addition, please plan for your child to remain for the duration of Religious School.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

For safety reasons, we must limit the ways our students enter and exit the building. Upon arrival for Sunday and Tuesday school, students should proceed directly to their assigned classrooms. Because your child's safety is of our utmost concern, upon dismissal on both Sunday and Tuesday, parent or authorized designate (as per student registration form), must go to their child's classroom and sign him/her out.

SHABBAT ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend six to twelve Shabbat services each school year. Guidelines for attendance will vary by grade level.

Policies and Procedures

ILLNESS

Please do not send your child to school with a fever or contagious condition. We will notify you if your child becomes ill. As we are preparing for a potentially challenging flu season, our school will regularly clean and disinfect areas and items likely to have frequent hand contact. We ask that you speak with your children about the following:

- Covering their mouth when they cough with their upper sleeve;
- Properly disposing of tissues and other soiled items;
- Asking permission to wash their hands whenever necessary.

MEDICATION

Parents must inform the Religious School office if their child requires medication during school hours. No medications are permitted in the Religious School without prior notification. Please inform the Religious School office of any chronic conditions or illnesses that may require special attention.

RESPECT

Every student is entitled to a safe, peaceful environment in which they are assured the opportunity to learn and thrive. Any individual who intentionally disrupts this environment infringes upon the rights of other students and is in violation of the following discipline code:

- Follow established class rules;
- Do not bring food, drink, or gum into the building;
- Treat others with common courtesy;
- Treat synagogue property with respect;
- Walk; do not run, while in the synagogue.

Policies and Procedures

POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS ITEMS

Any item that poses the risk of causing harm to one's self or another is not permitted in Religious School, and the possession of such an item may be grounds for immediate dismissal. Other potentially dangerous items, such as skateboards, rollerblades, and bicycles are not allowed in the building without clearance from the Religious School office. These items will be appropriately stored for the student if necessary.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

In the event of a discipline problem, the teacher will make every effort to resolve the problem in the classroom. When necessary, the child may be removed from class. Parents will be contacted when the director deems it necessary. Infraction of class rules includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Acting or speaking disrespectfully towards others;
- Classroom disruption;
- Inappropriate language;
- Calling out in the classroom;

CELL PHONES

Cell phones are to be turned off and stored away at all times during instructional hours. In the case of an emergency in which a student must be contacted by a family member, please call the Religious School office. In addition, music players, electronic games, and all toys should be left at home.

How Can You Help?

Are you interested in volunteering your time? Temple Sinai could use your help to create a Religious School program that's second to none. You can assist in numerous ways:

Our school is changing - and we've got some incredible programming on the horizon. We need your help to produce a Jewish educational experience for our students that's engaging, meaningful, and fun. It's easy. All you have to do is volunteer to help out.

By volunteering, you can help Temple Sinai to instill a sense of Jewish pride and identity in your child, creating fond and positive memories of Religious School that will last a lifetime. Please contact our Religious School Director, Avigail Eisenberg, for more information.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Temple Sinai has a Religious School Committee that provides guidance, assistance, and ideas for the successful operation of our school. With so many changes underway, this committee seeks to expand and provide even more support for the Religious School. Please contact Religious School Committee Chair, Rick Hollander at rickhollander@cox.net.

SPREAD THE WORD

Tell your fellow congregants all about the exciting changes at the Religious School. When students come home raving about their day, spread the word. Let people know that Temple Sinai is dedicated to providing its Religious School families, and all of its congregants, with first-rate, stellar educational programming.