

# Handbook 5777



**Religious School**

2016-2017 Calendar Year

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## Welcome

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Dear Religious School Families,

We are very excited to welcome you to another great year at Temple Sinai's Religious School! We have been working hard to ensure a successful year ahead. As we open our new doors for the 2016-17 school year, you will see some familiar faces, as well as some new ones. We have a weekly schedule that we hope parents and children alike will benefit from. As part of this schedule, we will be offering a weekly Mifgash on Sundays 11.30-12.00pm. Mifgash is a gathering of all of our students in which we will sing together, announce our Tzedakah (charity) project results, celebrate birthdays, award students with the Mensch Award (for exceptional act of kindness), learn from the Rabbi, singing with the Cantor, and more. We encourage parents to attend with their children, as we celebrate Judaism and community and family, embracing students' leadership.

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.

Sincerely,



Dr. Sharon Knafo  
Education & Youth Director

## **Mission Statement**

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**The Temple Sinai Religious School is an integral part of our synagogue where all students and families develop a positive Jewish identity based on Reform Jewish principals through relevant experiences within a supportive educational environment that creates a compelling reason to be Jewish.**

### **Core Values**

**Our goal is for all students to:**

- Feel a sense of pride and understand what it means to be Jewish.
- Have a positive religious school experience.
- Understand the ethics, morality and Tikkun Olam (the Jewish imperative to repair the world) upon which we build a Jewish life.
- Promote *Menschlichkeit* behavior (good character).
- Have a personal and respectful relationship with teachers and clergy.
- Begin to develop a lifelong love and appreciation for the knowledge of Jewish holidays, rituals and history.
- Have a love for and a commitment to Israel.
- Be motivated to continue Jewish studies beyond 7th grade (Bar/Bat Mitzvah).
- Have a familiarity and comfort with prayer and worship.
- Have a meaningful Bar/Bat mitzvah experience.
- Students and families make lifelong social connections.

**The Religious School provides:**

- Activities which promote informed Jewish decision making for everyday life.
- A student centered environment within which students understand Jewish values and develop Jewish identity and a connection with others.
- A balance of academic and experiential learning of Jewish traditions, rituals, holidays and history.
- Knowledge and experience of T'fillah (prayer) as it relates to each individual.
- Knowledge and exposure to the Hebrew language primarily as it is used in prayer.
- Knowledge and exposure to the modern State of Israel as an affirmation of the historic bond to it.
- Concrete opportunities to further the cause of repairing the world (Tikkun Olam).
- Occasions for all family members and students to work, study and play together as a team.
- Opportunities for families to participate in the life of the synagogue, which includes, celebrating Shabbat, annual holidays and festivals and ceremonies that mark significant occasions in our lives.

## **Curriculum**

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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 G-d. 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.

### **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.

## **Curriculum**

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### **G-D**

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

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### **Electives**

We will be offering a “chug” (elective lesson) each week which will provide each student an opportunity to experience a specialty area which will center around Judaism.

Depending on grade level, choices will include Jewish art, Israeli culture, Jewish drama, Music, and Newsletter. Our students will explore each of these *chugim* (electives) in 5 or 6 week rotations. These electives are designed to enhance our students’ learning experience, as well as their ability to work together and develop friendships.

### **Israeli Experience**

This year we will have two youth Madrichim (student aids) direct from Israel, who will be working with our students. During their time here, they will be assisting our Religious School and our temple youth group, acting as aides in their education and spiritual growth, and strengthen the connection to the State of Israel and to its people and culture.

### **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. Students will use percussions and other musical instruments to enhance the service experience. To make their temple experience more meaningful, students will also become familiar with the melodies of Shabbat and the High Holy Days.

## Youth Activities

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### Junior Choir - HaZamarim

Temple Sinai is excited to be offering a Junior Choir, led by our own Cantorial Soloist Heather Klein. HaZamarim is a group of youth, aged 7-16, who love to sing and practice g'milut chasadim (acts of loving-kindness through community service). They will be meeting weekly on Sundays from 12:15 – 1:00 after we have Sunday School. If you would like more information, please contact Heather Klein at [cantorialsoloist@templesinailv.org](mailto:cantorialsoloist@templesinailv.org).

### 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. We offer both a senior youth group for our high school students, as well as a junior youth group for grades 6-8. We will focus this year on creating more opportunities for our middle and high school teens. Monthly homework club evenings, overnight retreats, and other volunteering projects.

## Policies and Procedures

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### RELIGIOUS SCHOOL SCHEDULE

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

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 Ext 1 or [school@templesinailv.org](mailto:school@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 School, students should be dropped off at the gate facing the classrooms entrance and proceed to the Sanctuary and join their class for a short assembly. For Hebrew School on Tuesdays, 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, a parent or authorized designate (as per student registration form), must go to the Sanctuary (assembly) on Sundays, or their child's classroom (on Tuesdays) and sign him/her out.

## **SHABBAT ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to attend a minimum of Shabbat services each school year. For Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades the expectation is 6 services. For 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades it is 9 services. For 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, the expectation is 12 services for the year. This will be tracked by a sign-in in the lobby. Please refer to the registration packet for more information.

## **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 and fill out necessary forms 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. If an epipen is needed, please provide one that can be left on campus.

## **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.

## **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 on 702-254-5110 x 1. In addition, music players, electronic games, and all toys should be left at home.

## How Can You Help?

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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, at [school@templesinaiiv.org](mailto:school@templesinaiiv.org), for more information.

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Temple Sinai has an Education Committee that provides guidance, assistance, and ideas for the successful operation of our school. With so many changes underway, this committee will meet regularly and [school@templesinaiiv.org](mailto:school@templesinaiiv.org), for more information.

### **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 and exciting educational programming.