



Policies and Procedures for Temple Beth Israel's Beit Midrash

General Policies

Enrollment

Welcome to the Temple Beth Israel schools. We are so honored that you have chosen to entrust your children to us. We view this journey as a partnership between you the parents and the educators at TBI. Our schools are open to children of Temple Beth Israel members. In addition to the hours in school, we offer numerous family worship and learning experiences. We hope that you and your family will join us often and that you will find this a relationship of meaning for all of you.

Attendance

A community does not function without all of its members present. It is important that each child participate fully throughout the year, as many long-term themes and projects are part of our curriculum.

Regular attendance is one of the most important factors in determining the success of a child's educational experience. A minimum of 80% attendance is required. If there are times when you are aware of your child's need for numerous absences, please contact the Director of Congregational Learning in order to develop a plan to make up the work.

Tzedakah

Giving is an important mitzvah (sacred obligation) of Jewish life. In each class, the importance of Tzedakah (righteous giving) is discussed and money is collected each week. Periodically, donations are made in the name of the Religious School students to various charities. In several grades, students are involved in the distribution, learning about charities both within our community and beyond.

Schoolwide tzedakah events also punctuate the year at TBI. Food drives, holiday gift drives, and Havdalah and a Mitzvah are widely advertised throughout the school year.

School Hours

Religious instruction takes place on Sunday mornings from 9:00am-11:00am. Hebrew instruction takes place on Sunday mornings from 11:10am-12:10pm and Wednesday afternoons from 4:15pm-6:00pm.

Derech Eretz (manners)

Children are expected to respect others and themselves. Behavior should be consistent with Jewish values and the synagogue setting. *Menschlichkeit* (being a good person) and *derech-eret* (manners) are important values in Jewish life. Our discipline policy is not a set of specific rules and punishments. Rather, it is a set of beliefs that shape the way we respond to our students and help them develop into responsible Jewish adults. We believe these principles are consistent with sound psychological principles and with our Jewish values.

Principles of our Discipline Philosophy

- We love the students of Temple Beth Israel, even when they make mistakes.
 - All students, even when they have made mistakes, deserve dignity and respect.
 - Yelling and lecturing students is not a sign of love and respect, nor does it engender dignity.
- Students learn from living with natural consequences of their actions.
 - By allowing our students to live with the natural consequences of their actions, we send the message that they are capable of making decisions in their lives and learning from their successes and mistakes.
- Our role is to help provide appropriate, natural consequences, and to help our students to think through their decisions, so they will make even better decisions in the future.
- Parents are our partners in developing appropriate natural consequences and in encouraging our children to make good decisions.

Special Needs

At Temple Beth Israel we aim to serve as many Jewish children as possible. Please inform the Director of Congregational Learning of your child's special needs at the outset of the school year. We endeavor to meet the learning needs of all children but there may be some situations, which we are unable to accommodate. Special Needs forms are included with all registration materials and you are encouraged to accurately complete those forms at the time of registration. These forms are confidential, and the information is considered private.

If your child is in need of medicines while at school, please contact the school office or the Director of Congregational Learning regarding administration and storage of these medications.

Cell Phones

Cell phones must be out of sight and not used during Religious School and Hebrew School unless expressly requested by the teacher. Parents wishing to contact their children during Religious or Hebrew School are asked to call the Religious School office.

Parking Lot Safety

Parking Lot safety is of utmost concern to us at Temple Beth Israel. We will enforce a policy for parking lot safety. Signs at the entrance to our parking lot clearly delineate entrance and exit. In order to assure a smooth flow of traffic we will create two lanes in front of the building. Cones will be set-up to demarcate a pull up and wait lane and a drive through lane. Our strongest preference is for parents to pull in to the lot and park to wait for your children on the sidewalk outside of the building. Please follow the instructions of any Temple personnel in the lot. We also ask that you review parking lot safety with your children prior to the start of school. Remind them to remain on the cement walk in front of the building until instructed to leave by yourself or TBI staff. **No children are allowed to be picked up on Monticello or Dempster.**



Leaving School Premises

Students may leave school premises **only** under the direct supervision of a teacher, parent or Temple staff.

Security

Temple Beth Israel has recently undergone a significant security upgrade under the guidance of emergency personnel in our community as well as professionals we have engaged for this purpose. Our staff and faculty are trained in various security procedures and will enact those procedures as necessary.

Parent Communication

E-mail is the Religious School's primary means of communication to parents and students. Please be sure that your email information is included in the registration materials, and inform us of any email changes as they occur. We are happy to send email to more than one address so feel free to give us any addresses that will expedite communication.

Parent Involvement

There are a number of ways for parents to engage in the TBI schools. The YES Committee (Youth Education Services) is one way. Consisting of parents who represent a wide range of ages of students, the YES Committee hosts programming, discusses policy and generally supports the work of the Director of Congregational Learning.

Room parents are yet another way to engage. Room parent teams from each grade work with the school faculty and administration to aid in communication, serve as an extra pair of hands for big classroom projects and generally support the work of the classroom teachers.

Religious School Requirements and B'nai Mitzvah

The following policies apply to all TBI students:

1. It is the goal of the TBI program to ensure that all of our students have the maximum amount of Jewish and Hebrew Education prior to beginning the B'nai Mitzvah process at age 12. Those students who have started with us in pre-school or Kindergarten and progressed fully throughout our program typically find themselves in the 7th grade with a strong Hebrew and religious studies background so that the pre-B'nai Mitzvah studies can be completed without an undue amount of stress.
2. We expect all of our B'nai Mitzvah bound students to attend Hebrew School from 3rd grade (aleph) through Hebrew graduation at the end of the 7th grade (hay) year.
3. It is the policy of TBI that all students who intend on completing a B'nai Mitzvah be enrolled in Religious School at least from third grade. ***Students who fail to attend regularly will be at risk of having delays placed on the date of the B'nai Mitzvah ceremony.***
4. We expect that all students at TBI will commit themselves to continue with their Jewish studies through at least 10th grade by attending our Gesher and Confirmation program.



Homework

Most schoolwork for the Temple Beth Israel educational program is done in class. Occasionally Hebrew teachers will assign written work and reading practice on Wednesday for completion the following Sunday. We ask parents to encourage their children to practice reading Hebrew out loud every day.

Calendar

Included in this handbook is a list of the days on which school will not meet. Please place this in an easily referenced location so that you can be as informed as possible of upcoming TBI events. A detailed calendar of all TBI events will be distributed in August to all TBI member households and information is also posted regularly on the new TBI website at www.tbiskokie.org. As hard as we try to cover everything and maintain scheduled dates, sometimes there are changes. Please watch the TBI bulletin, the website and emails from the Director of Congregational Learning for changes and additions.

Inclement Weather and Snow Procedure

There are several ways to find out if school has been canceled due to inclement weather. First of all, we will send emails out to all TBI School families. We will also post to the TBI website at www.tbiskokie.org. Please be vigilant in monitoring your email before coming to school after a heavy snowstorm. The determination to cancel school will be made by Temple Beth Israel leadership and parents will be informed as soon as possible.

Sacred Moments in Child's Lifecycle

Consecration

Consecration is the ceremony that marks that official beginning of one's religious education. At TBI we hold our consecration ceremony at the start of a child's Kindergarten year. **This year's ceremony will be held on Saturday, October 7th at 10:30am.** This is a very significant event in the life of your child. They will be presented with a certificate and a small Torah that many treasure for a lifetime. Family members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Seventh Grade Siyyum

At the conclusion of kitah hay (seventh grade Hebrew School) we will hold a siyyum (ceremony of conclusion, not ending). **This ceremony is for 7th grade students and their parents will be held this year on May 23, 2018.**

Confirmation

Confirmation marks a student's arrival at a new threshold of Jewish life. We welcome students in 10th grade, regardless of past Religious School participation from 8th grade on to engage in this program. **This year's Confirmation will take place on May 19, 2018.**

Family Education

At Temple Beth Israel we are committed to the education of the entire family. Each grade level in the Religious School will have opportunities for family education program designed just for them, in concert with the curriculum for that grade level. Please watch your email



announcements for these programs and dates. We will open this year's family education with a special geniza program on Sunday, September 17th.

Parent Education

One of the best ways in which you can support your child's education is to become a learner yourself. We offer adult education programs on an almost weekly basis that are geared to appeal to learners at all stages of life. We also want parents to consider Hebrew learning themselves. To this end, we offer 3 levels of Hebrew learning on Sunday mornings to meet the needs of parents at all stages of Hebrew learning. For more information and to identify the best level for you, please contact Rabbi James Sagarin at james.sagarin@gmail.com.

Our Faculty and Teacher Recognition

The faculty at the TBI schools is a seasoned and truly devoted group of individuals. Most of the Religious School and Hebrew faculty are certified teachers and others are well-trained avocational teachers. The faculty of TBI is composed of congregational members, community educators and others who come together representing a variety of streams of Judaism. Our entire faculty participates in regular community professional development programs. Please extend them the same courtesies as you would your secular school teachers. We appreciate feedback and open communication.

We are blessed with a devoted, dedicated faculty that works very hard to transmit their knowledge to our children. We are committed to honoring the teachers whenever we can. A number of years ago we established the Teacher Appreciation Fund, which is used to send teachers to professional development classes, to buy gifts at Chanukah and the end of the year, and generally to subvent opportunities to show the teachers how much we care about them. We ask families to contribute at Chanukah time, the end of the year or any time you feel that you would want to acknowledge a teacher's special caring towards your child.

Israel as part of a full Jewish educational experience

Temple Beth Israel participates in the SKIP Program – Send a Kid to Israel Partnership. This is a three-way partnership between the individual family, Temple Beth Israel and the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. Families may begin saving for a child's Israel trip beginning in 3rd grade. SKIP allows a family to begin saving for their child's trip to Israel (to be taken anytime from 10th grade through college). Information will be sent home at the beginning of the third-grade year. Families will be billed annually to maintain SKIP participation. An accounting of all funds will also be sent to families on an annual basis. For more information on SKIP, please contact the religious school office.

At the time of Bar/Bat Mitzvah, each TBI student is presented with a \$500 certificate from the congregation which can be used towards a trip to Israel sometime in high school. Students will also receive certificates from the North American Federation of Temple Youth and JUF Chicago that can also be applied for Israel travel.



Curriculum

The curriculum of the Temple Beth Israel Religious School is in a constant state of development based on the evaluation of each program at year's end. The following is an outline of the program for the 2017-2018 school year.

There is a strong emphasis on the reading of Jewish stories and using our children's library in all primary grades. We urge parents to complement this practice through the reading of Jewish stories and legends in your homes. PJ Library, a free book subscription, is available to every Jewish child in the Chicago area. To register, visit PJLibrary.org. Your child's teacher and the Director of Congregational Learning are happy to make book and story recommendations. In the last year we have also introduced the Hebrew letters, which are reinforced progressively each year prior to the start of formal Hebrew education in third grade.

Parent/Tot-Kindergarten

Our early childhood program focuses on the comfort level of each student with the Synagogue environment and the holiday celebrations most often enjoyed in the Synagogue setting. Students will learn music associated with holiday celebrations, taste the food and create ritual objects that can be used in enhancing family celebrations of holidays. There is a strong emphasis on the telling of Jewish stories and your children will be encouraged to take books out of the TBI children's library. We strongly believe in Jewish stories as a powerful tool in the transmission of Jewish tradition.

The Chai Curriculum

The Union for Reform Judaism began an initiative in the last several years known as the Chai Curriculum. The Chai program is divided into three strands. Each of the three strands, Torah, Avodah and G'milut Chasadim, contains nine lessons and is connected to the others by a thematic thread.

Chai Curriculum Core

Each Core level contains 27 complete one-hour classroom lessons in *Torah*, *Avodah* and *G'milut Chasadim*. The CHAI lessons follow a curriculum model known as "backward design", as outlined in the book *Understanding by Design (UbD)* by Wiggins and McTighe and published by the [Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development \(ASCD\)](http://www.ascd.org). This approach, and that of CHAI: Learning for Jewish Life curriculum core, ensures that student learning will go beyond the specific classroom activities and will reach a deeper enduring understanding, which will establish the basis for later Jewish learning and living.

Enduring Understandings

Enduring understandings are the "big ideas," the concepts that provide the foundation for a lifetime of Jewish learning and living. The enduring understandings that are the framework for CHAI lessons are:

Torah

- Torah is an ongoing dialogue between the text and its students.
- Torah is real in our daily lives; it is with us wherever we are.



- Developing the skills to study Torah is essential to integrating Torah into our lives.

Level 1: I am part of the ongoing story of Torah and the Jewish people.

Level 2: The Torah teaches me how to be part of the Jewish people.

Level 3: The laws and rules found in the Torah can help us to live a life filled with holy moments.

Level 4: With the promise of a holy land (*Eretz Yisrael*), we as a holy people (*Am Yisrael*) have a responsibility to work towards becoming holy by observing the *brit* (covenant).

Level 5: The words and messages of the prophets are at the heart of Reform Judaism.

Level 6: Studying Jewish texts allows us to explore our relationship with God and reflect on the ways God is continuously revealed to others and to ourselves.

Level 7: Developing the skills to study Torah is essential to integrating Torah into our lives. My life is reflected in and reflects Torah.

Avodah

- *Avodah* is the work we do to find sacred connections to God, community, and self.
- Engaging in the work of *avodah* can bring order, beauty, meaning and insight to our lives.

Level 1: My Jewish acts help me discover the beauty and order of sacred time and my place in the Jewish story.

Level 2: Jewish stories, celebrations and rituals help me understand and express my relationship with God.

Level 3: Through *avodah* we can make our lives and the world more *kadosh* (holy).

Level 4: *Keva* and *kavanah*, the fixed order of worship and the personal intention we bring to prayer, are complementary aspects of Jewish worship, combining to help us make sacred connections.

Level 5: The practice of prayer can help me grow through personal reflection, can increase my connection to the Jewish people, and can strengthen my relationship with God.

Level 6: *Avodah* is the work we do, by exploring our personal and communal roles in revelation, to find sacred connections to God, community and self.

Level 7: The message and power of Jewish prayer can help me understand and define myself as an individual and as an authentic member of the Jewish community.

G'milut Chasadim

- We have a responsibility to perform acts of *g'milut chasadim* to make the world a better, holier place.

Level 1: I am a part of the ongoing story of the Jewish people when I perform acts of *g'milut chasadim*.

Level 2: We make the world a better place by performing acts of *g'milut chasadim* in our everyday lives.



Level 3: Each individual act of *g'milut chasadim* can make the world more *kadosh* (holy).

Level 4: We have a responsibility to perform acts of *g'milut chasadim* for the people we encounter in our daily lives.

Level 5: We are all part of *K'lal Yisrael* and have a responsibility to actively support and sustain the Jewish community.

Level 6: We can experience God in our world, in others and within ourselves by engaging in acts of *g'milut chasadim*.

Level 7: Our development as emerging Reform Jewish adults and authentic members of the Jewish community is closely linked to our ethical behavior (*middot*) and the performance of acts of *g'milut chasadim*.

Moving Traditions

This program, developed by a team of dynamic educators out of Philadelphia, provides gendered learning for girls in the guise of Rosh Chodesh (it's a girl thing) and for boys, Shevet Achim (a tribe of brothers). Special facilitators will be brought in monthly to guide our 8th graders through this special program.

Machoniks

A funny name for a very important role in our congregational community. Each year outgoing 7th graders are invited to be aides in our Beit Midrash. Students are assigned to classroom teachers and work with them as aides throughout the year. This volunteer position is a great way to give back to the TBI community, develop a volunteer resume' and gain useful experience.

Gesher

The 8th and 9th Grade program known as Gesher, which means bridge in Hebrew. Working with partners at The Response Center, we explore, over the course of the two years learning relevant to the lives of 8th and 9th graders. Topics we explore are "ripped from the headlines" and include but are not limited to gender roles, gun control, sexual identity, caring for our bodies, drug and alcohol abuse, friendships, intimate relationships and more. A parent meeting will take place at the outset of the year to go through in detail what will be covered.

Hebrew School

Our new Hebrew program begins in 3rd grade and continues through the end of the 7th grade year. The focus of the program is comfort and fluency with modern Hebrew language through continuous exposure to high frequency language. Our faculty has been trained by Alisa Shapiro Rosenberg, a TBI member and expert in Teaching for Comprehensible Input. Emphasis is placed on the learning of Hebrew as a living, modern language. We also explore the meaning and placement of Hebrew prayers. We understand that language learning is a specialized skill and that not all students adapt to the study of Hebrew at the same pace. We therefore offer onsite enhancement through the use of teachers whose sole job is to work with students who find Hebrew more of a challenge.



We also encourage parents to engage in Hebrew learning as part of their own lifelong Jewish learning trajectory. Classes are offered on Sundays whenever religious school is in session. For more information and to find a level that best fits your needs, contact Rabbi James Sagarin at james.sagarin@gmail.com.

Hebrew instruction takes place on Sundays from 11:10am-12:10pm and Wednesdays from 4:15pm-6:00pm.

