

קהילת אהבת אהים

The Dorothy Solomon Ross School of Jewish Studies of the Jewish Congregation of New Paltz, NY

CURRICULUM Policies and Mission Statement Parent and Teacher Guide



Revised Summer 2013

Statement of Educational Philosophy

We are a Reconstructionist synagogue, dedicated to keeping Jewish tradition alive both as a way of life and as a body of knowledge. We believe that Jewish civilization is as intrinsic to our lives as is our modern American civilization, and that both of these civilizations can helpfully inform one another. We are committed to a strong pursuit of education for our children, one which embraces secular studies, Jewish studies and other body and spirit building activities. We are aware that these aims may often conflict with one another. Therefore, we plan the religious school schedule cognizant of these many demands.



The school atmosphere we seek to create is one of joy, pride and excitement. We believe that a strong foundation in Jewish study and practice is integral to developing a positive Jewish identity. Therefore we strive to deliver a curriculum of rigorous content, taught in an environment that is warm and nurturing.

We expect parents to commit themselves to their children's Jewish education to the extent of insuring regular attendance of classes for the full meeting time, and routinely dedicating time for family enhancement and enrichment of religious school lessons at home. We believe parents' support and enthusiasm regarding their children's Jewish education will ensure that it will be a richer and more meaningful experience. To help facilitate this, we have established a practice of family education in which families come together for study and discussion. We believe bringing school lessons into home practice and regular participation in other aspects of Jewish community life is integral parts of a Jewish education. Towards this end, we have established a community service requirement and a Shabbat services attendance requirement for each grade level.

The community we are building is one in which adults and children are as involved as possible in all dimensions of our synagogue's programming: public events, lectures and discussion groups, committee work, and certainly religious services.

Introduction to the Curriculum

Our curriculum provides the young people in our congregation an opportunity to acquire a strong foundation in Jewish study and practice so that they may proudly identify with their Jewish heritage and its culture. Over an eight-year period, Hebrew School students learn about a range of topics in an engaging and supportive atmosphere. The material covered in each class builds on skills and knowledge from previous years, becoming more comprehensive and in-depth as students grow and advance. Teaching and learning extends beyond the classroom to include a variety of approaches:

- Stories, guest speakers, workbooks, projects, the arts, and multi-media.
- Direct involvement with traditional Jewish texts, such as Siddur, Haggadah and the Bible.
- Field trips.
- Regular attendance at Shabbat and Holiday services.
- Participation in Holiday celebrations.
- Family Education.
- Both individual and class community service projects.
- Weekly homework assignments and practice of class work.

Curriculum Overview

Our primary goals in creating this curriculum are the formation of positive Jewish identity in our children and fostering their moral and spiritual development. Each is taught in a developmentally appropriate manner (see grade-by-grade outline).

1) Hebrew: focus upon liturgy, with some very basic conversational ability

- a) phonetic reading of Hebrew with an emphasis on traditional texts
- b) a small vocabulary, emphasis on liturgy and spirituality
- c) facility in reciting/chanting liturgy – building a repertoire of familiar prayers by adding new prayers each year and reviewing those learned in prior years
- d) all classes lead Children's services and participate in a Shabbat Attendance Program

2) Judaica

- a) use of Bible as major vehicle for the study of Jewish values and history: truths in mythic form; theology and spirituality; morality and maturity; life-guidance; Biblical history
- b) post-Biblical Jewish history: Medieval Jewish history; Modern historical periods: Jews in America; Modern Israel; Holocaust
- c) other aspects of Jewish culture: Jewish calendar & holiday cycle; the Sabbath; the synagogue; life-cycle observances; being a Jew in a non-Jewish world; community service requirement.

Student Outcomes

The Hebrew School Program is designed so that all students who participate in and complete the Alef/Bet through Bar/Bat Mitzvah program of studies:

- Develop a sense that what they learn in Hebrew School has purpose and a relationship to their lives individually and to the Jewish community as a whole.
- Gain a practical ability to actively participate in our Shabbat and Holiday services and in Jewish rituals of daily life.
- Meet curricular goals.
- Continue to participate in synagogue life following their Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

Student Responsibilities

Hebrew School students have the responsibility to:

- Contribute positively to the learning environment in the school.
- Put forward their best effort on assignments.
- Behave respectfully towards teachers and classmates.
- Utilize school facilities and materials in a responsible way.
- Attend Shabbat and festival services regularly as described in the curriculum.
- Perform community service as described in the curriculum.
- Come directly into the Hebrew School building when dropped off by a school bus or private car and not leave the building until they are dismissed at the end of class when they are picked up by a parent or other adult (as designated by a parent).

Shabbat Services

Regular attendance at Shabbat services is a key component of a Jewish education and a Hebrew School requirement beginning in Gimmel. Students keep a record of the services they attend using a Shabbat Services Attendance Card. Teachers strongly encourage progress in meeting this requirement. The Rabbi and Rachel will monitor attendance. Students are expected to attend a minimum number of services during the school year as outlined below:

Gimmel	Dalet	Hey	Vav	B'ney Mitzvah
15	18	21	24	27

Younger children and their families are strongly encouraged to regularly attend monthly Friday evening Children's services. Grades 3 through 7 are expected to attend monthly Junior Congregation (see below). Vav and B'ney Mitzvah students and their parents are expected to attend the monthly Shabbat Morning Family Education classes which are followed by services; these Saturday morning services provide an excellent opportunity for all students to celebrate Shabbat and fulfill their Shabbat service attendance requirement. Bar and Bat Mitzvah services, at our congregation or others, are also a good way for students to fulfill the attendance requirement and are particularly appropriate for older students.

Junior Congregation is our special monthly Friday evening service for students from Gimmel class through B'ney Mitzvah. This service meets in the community center simultaneously with a regular service meeting in the Shul. Chaperone Guidelines: arrive at 7:15; bring Oneg - challah, juice, cups, napkins, snack for 25-30; set up food; stand near children during service, be visible, help keep the peace; politely direct students to be quiet during the service; encourage students to listen to each other; clean up.

Each grade of our religious school actively participates in conducting one Friday evening family Shabbat service during the course of the year. For those students who have completed the course of study, a special moving up ceremony is held on a Shabbat evening at the end of the school year.

Progress Reports and Teacher/Parent Communication

Progress reports are sent home twice each year to inform parents of their children's accomplishments and of which areas require more effort. Parents and teachers should maintain effective communication with one another throughout the school year. The Hebrew School Committee encourages the involvement of all families in the Hebrew School. Parents with suggestions or questions regarding their child's classroom activities should discuss them directly with their child's teacher. Also, parents should feel free to contact the Hebrew School Committee.

Parents of Hebrew School students have responsibilities to:

- Ensure their child arrives for class no less than (5) minutes before class is scheduled to begin and is picked up on time at the end of class (teachers are not expected to be able to stay late with students).
- Inform the school/teacher in advance if their child is going to be absent.
- Check the monthly Sh'ma for Hebrew School news and to determine when their child should be attending regular classes or special events.
- Attend services and other synagogue activities regularly with their child(ren).

Community Service

A focus on the mitzvah component of a Jewish education is an integral part of the curriculum for our children. Students begin in the earliest grades by participating in teacher or parent-guided class projects which lead to individual service requirements in the older grades. Vav students are responsible for accomplishing 10 hours by the end of term. B'ney Mitzvah students are responsible for accomplishing 20 hours.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Requirements

A Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a celebration of young Jews reaching the age wherein they are, on their own and not for the sake of their parents, members of the Jewish community. The celebration implies a commitment to Jewish life and is therefore a beginning and not the culmination of involvement in the Jewish education. The Jewish Congregation of New Paltz has a policy that in order to be considered for a community Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration a child *must have attended religious school classes for at least three years, or the equivalent*. Equivalency is determined by the Hebrew School Committee. In some cases students may not be able to celebrate their B'ney Mitzvah in the most customary manner. Please see "Tutoring and Special Needs."

Enrollment

The Hebrew School offers classes for grades Pre-K through B'ney Mitzvah. Students are expected to complete the entire program. It is the intent of the school to keep students with their public school peers. To enroll their children in the school, parents must be members in good standing of the Congregation.

Attendance

Regular attendance at Hebrew School is of vital importance to each child's Jewish education. Parents should avoid scheduling other activities during Hebrew school hours. Any child who misses more than two classes in a row may need to be tutored to catch up with the rest of the class. Missed assignments must be completed before the next Hebrew class.

Field Trips

The Vav and B'ney Mitzvah classes generally join together for a field trip. These trips coordinate with the history studied (American Jewish history and Holocaust studies) and may consist of a trip to one of the NYC area museums, and possibly the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Occasionally, we are able to include field trips for the younger grades as well.

Scheduling and Cancellations

The Hebrew School will follow the New Paltz Central School District schedule regarding school closings and cancellations. On days when the district is closed, dismisses early due to bad weather, or cancels after-school activities, Hebrew School classes will be cancelled. Parents and students can listen to local radio stations or **call the School Closing HOTLINE at 256-4099** or **visit the New Paltz School District Homepage, www.newpaltz.k12.ny.us/newpaltz** or **call the JCNP office at 255-9817**, to determine whether or not there will be class.

Behavior Policy

At the beginning of the school year, teachers and students discuss appropriate classroom behaviors and expectations, and why the behaviors and expectations are important. The behavior management strategies that teachers employ are constructive and positive. Confidentiality is strictly observed and children's feelings are respected. Parents are kept informed of any disruptive behavior and are involved in the process of creating strategies to meet the needs of their child.

Tutoring and Special Needs

We are committed to providing a Jewish education to all of the children in our community. The Hebrew School makes every effort to accommodate children with special needs. Parental assistance or private tutoring may be required in order to help the child reach his or her goals, including the celebration of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah in a manner commensurate with their abilities. If a child is not yet reading independently or has any learning or physical disabilities requiring special assistance, the parent should inform the teacher, the Hebrew School Committee Chair and Rabbi prior to the beginning of the school year. We are an inclusive community and value each child for his or her own unique gifts. There are many alternative ways to celebrate B'ney Mitzvah if the typical Torah-reading format is not possible.

Grade-by-Grade Curriculum Outlines

Designated Hebrew School Committee members will meet regularly with teaching staff to discuss lesson plans and strategies designed to best teach the course outlines below. The Hebrew School Committee will periodically review the Hebrew School curriculum and its execution in order to maximize the school's effectiveness, while maintaining its commitment to the perpetuation of a joyful atmosphere in the classroom. Below and on the following pages can be found a grade-by-grade breakdown of topics studied, as well as textbooks used.

CHAVERIM ARTS

pre-K through first grade

LANGUAGE: seasonal greetings, very basic vocabulary for Sabbath, Holidays, Judaica (*oral*)

LITURGY: a variety of blessings and parts of common prayers, esp. through song (*oral*)

CULTURE & VALUES: prayer, family, tzedakah through story telling, song, dance, art projects, cooking and other crafts

HOLIDAYS: Sabbath, basic introduction to major holidays

BIBLE: Bible Stories to tell or read aloud, then discuss

BET CLASS usually 2nd grade HEBREW	BET CLASS <i>JEWISH VALUES, HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, BIBLE</i>
<p>LANGUAGE: expanding Arts vocab; reading & writing</p> <p>LITURGY: Blessings for snacks, bread, wine, candles (Shabbat & Hanukkah); sitting in sukkah, lulav & etrog; 1st line of Shma; Barchu; Modeh Ani; Four Questions</p> <p>LEADING A CHILDREN'S SERVICE</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>Ready, Set... Go Alef Bet!</i></p>	<p>CULTURE & VALUES: prayer, family, tzedakah; hope, return (penitence), Shabbat attendance, dance, Judaica craft, cooking</p> <p>COMMUNITY SERVICE: special class project(s)</p> <p>HOLIDAYS: Sabbath; Holiday stories told in the context of calendar appearance (e.g., the Exodus at Passover)</p> <p>BIBLE: Bible Stories to tell or read aloud, then discuss</p>

GIMMEL CLASS usually 3rd grade HEBREW	GIMMEL CLASS <i>JEWISH VALUES, HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, BIBLE</i>
<p>LANGUAGE: Additional Sabbath & Holiday, Judaica vocabulary; basic modern vocabulary</p> <p>LITURGY: SEE BET, PLUS: Sh'ma 2 verses Lecha Dodi; blessing for Megillah; abb. Avot; Amidah <i>chatimot</i></p> <p>LEADING A CHILDREN'S SERVICE SHABBAT ATTENDANCE PROGRAM: 15</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>Alef Bet Quest;</i> (various prayer study booklets)</p>	<p>CULTURE & VALUES: basic values through class discussions based upon use of text below</p> <p>COMMUNITY SERVICE: special class project(s)</p> <p>HOLIDAYS: Sabbath; Holiday stories told in the context of calendar appearance (e.g., the exodus at Passover)</p> <p>BIBLE & HISTORY: texts of Creation through Exodus, using textbook below</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>Explorer's Bible, vol. 1</i></p>

DALET CLASS usually 4th grade HEBREW	DALET CLASS <i>JEWISH VALUES, HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, BIBLE</i>
<p>LANGUAGE: Basic liturgical vocabulary & Jewish heritage words; the "shoresh" (Hebrew word-roots)</p> <p>LITURGY: SEE BET, GIMMEL, PLUS: blessing for new things; 4 verses Lecha Dodi; V'shamru; V'ahavta</p> <p>LEADING A CHILDREN'S SERVICE SHABBAT ATTENDANCE PROGRAM: 18</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>Kol Yisrael, volume 1: Jewish Prayer, Blessings and Rituals for the Home</i> various prayer study booklets)</p>	<p>CULTURE & VALUES: basic values through class discussions based upon use of text below</p> <p>COMMUNITY SERVICE: special class project(s)</p> <p>HOLIDAYS: customs, foods, traditions throughout the calendar year</p> <p>BIBLE & HISTORY: Sinai through establishment of the Nation of Israel paralleling texts from biblical books in Prophets and Writings</p> <p>TEXTBOOKS: <i>Explorer's Bible, vol. 2</i></p>

HEY CLASS usually 5th grade HEBREW	HEY CLASS <i>JEWISH VALUES, HOLIDAYS, HISTORY, BIBLE</i>
<p>LANGUAGE: Basic liturgical vocabulary & Jewish heritage words; the “shoresh” (Hebrew word-roots)</p> <p>LITURGY: SEE BET, GIMMEL, DALET, PLUS: Ahavat Olam; eve Mi Chamocha; Avot; Morning Brachot</p> <p>LEADING A CHILDREN'S SERVICE SHABBAT ATTENDANCE PROGRAM: 21</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>Kol Yisrael, volume 2: Prayers of the Synagogue;</i> various prayer study booklets; <i>Siddur Shir Hadash</i></p>	<p>CULTURE & VALUES: basic values through class discussions based upon use of text below, current events, Bible sources</p> <p>COMMUNITY SERVICE: special class project(s)</p> <p>HOLIDAYS: customs, foods, traditions throughout the calendar year</p> <p>HISTORY: the diaspora, early modernity through the return to the land: Modern Israel</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>A History of the Jewish People, vol.2</i></p>

VAV CLASS usually 6th grade HEBREW	VAV CLASS <i>JEWISH VALUES, HOLIDAYS, HISTORY & JEWISH SACRED LITERATURE</i>
<p>LANGUAGE: liturgical vocabulary & Jewish heritage words; “Shoresh: Hebrew root words; modern vocab. via “<i>Shimon Omer</i>” and other games</p> <p>LITURGY: SEE BET, GIMMEL, DALET, HEY, PLUS: Birchot HaShachar; Mi Chamocha; full Avot; Gevurot; Torah Blessings; Aleynu; Adon Olam</p> <p>LEADING A CHILDREN'S SERVICE SHABBAT ATTENDANCE PROGRAM:24</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>Kol Yisrael, volume 3 (prayers of Shabbat morning service);</i> various prayer study booklets; <i>Siddur Shir Hadash</i></p>	<p>CULTURE & VALUES: Basic life-skills, from a Jewish perspective, as taught through selected passages from the Bible via text.</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>The Topical Bible</i></p> <p>COMMUNITY SERVICE: <i>Class projects, and at least 10 hours individual work</i></p> <p>HOLIDAYS: customs, foods, traditions throughout the calendar year</p> <p>HISTORY: <i>in regular weekday classes, see below</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">VAV & B'NEY MITZVAH HISTORY</p> <p>Also see: VAV & B'NEY MITZVAH SHABBAT FAMILY CLASS</p>

VAV & B'NEY MITZVAH HISTORY

TOPICS ALTERNATE BY YEAR

EVEN YEARS (e.g. 5774, 5776, 5778) **HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN AMERICA**

From the pre-revolutionary period to modernity: Sephardic, Northern & Eastern European Jewish immigration; Jewish institutions; contributions to American life **TEXTBOOKS:** *Let Freedom Ring;* and *The Other Side of the Hudson*

ODD YEARS (e.g. 5775, 5777, 5779) **HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST**

Review of medieval antisemitism; emancipation; Zionism; Jews in Germany 2000 years; modern forms of antisemitism; WWI and the German crisis. From 1933: rise of the Nazis to power; chronology of events 1933-1945; aftermath **TEXTBOOKS:** *The Holocaust, a History;* and *Yellow Star*

MONTHLY VAV & B'NEY MITZVAH SHABBAT FAMILY CLASS
(WITH RABBI, FOLLOWED BY SERVICES)

TANAKH: DISCOVERING THE BIBLE

Using the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*), we explore the structure, contents & organization of Torah, Prophets and Writings; we learn how the Bible was written, edited and canonized; how continuing study and Midrash keep the text alive. We use a variety of small group/large group projects to learn the art of Torah Study. In addition, all students in the B'ney Mitzvah class will also facilitate a specific study of their own Bar/Bat Mitzvah portions.

B'NEY M CLASS usually 7th grade <i>HEBREW</i>	B'NEY MITZVAH CLASS <i>JEWISH VALUES, HOLIDAYS, HISTORY & JEWISH SACRED LITERATURE</i>
<p>LANGUAGE: liturgical vocabulary & Jewish heritage words; “<i>Shoresh</i>”: Hebrew root words; modern vocab. via “<i>Shimon Omer</i>” and other games</p> <p>LITURGY: SEE BET, GIMMEL, DALET, HEY, VAV, PLUS: prayers, blessings and structure of the Torah/Haftarah service; Hatzi & Full Kaddish; Yotzer; blessing for tallit;</p> <p>LEADING A CHILDREN'S SERVICE SHABBAT ATTENDANCE PROGRAM:27</p> <p>TEXTBOOK: <i>Siddur Shir Hadash</i>; various prayer study booklets</p>	<p>CULTURE & VALUES: BAR/BAT MITZVAH VALUES: terminology & history, puberty & adulthood, rights & obligation; KASHRUT; GEMATRIA; LIFECYCLE; JEWISH “EQUIPMENT:” inc. tefillin, and esp. tallit: history; tying own techelet fringes</p> <p>COMMUNITY SERVICE: <i>Class projects, and at least 20 hours individual work</i></p> <p>HOLIDAYS: Mathematics of the Jewish Calendar system, & deeper study of holidays</p> <p>HISTORY: <i>in regular weekday classes, see previous page</i> VAV & B'NEY MITZVAH HISTORY</p> <p>SIDDUR: DISCOVERING THE PRAYERBOOK using our own <i>Siddur Shir Hadash</i> we explore prayer structure, contents & organization; how the traditional siddur came to be written & edited; divergent traditions; interpreting meanings.</p> <p><i>Also see:</i> VAV & B'NEY MITZVAH SHABBAT FAMILY CLASS</p>

- All B'ney Mitzvah students, on an individual basis, also see the Senior Teacher for tutoring of their specific Torah portions (usually weekly for six months before date), as well as the Rabbi for text study of those portions (usually three meetings).
- Parents and students also meet with the Rabbi to discuss the specifics of their event.
- This is all in addition to the B'ney Mitzvah Parent Meeting held with Rabbi and Senior Teacher at the beginning of the school year (usually October).