

PARENT HANDBOOK

5778/2017-2018

*North Suburban
Synagogue*

Beth El

בית כנסת בית אל

Jack and Mildred Cohen Religious School (CRS)

1175 Sheridan Road
Highland Park, IL 60035

847-432-8924

<http://nssbethelschools.wixsite.com/cohenreligiousschool>

Dear Parents,

Bruchim Habaim! – Welcome! We look forward to welcoming you and your family back to our school this fall. We are very excited to continue providing our students the highest quality education while allowing for greater flexibility in our families' busy schedules. As a school housed in the synagogue, we believe in a strong family link between synagogue, school, and the home. Families will be invited to participate in many school activities, such as services, field trips, family programming, adult education classes and *Shabbaton*; we hope all will take advantage of these opportunities for family participation throughout the year.

We are eager to guide your children in their development as they deepen their understanding of Judaism through the study of Jewish liturgy, rituals, customs, Hebrew language, life cycle events, Jewish holidays, and Jewish history. CRS offers a comprehensive program that involves academics, enrichment (art, music, library), field trips, *chugim* (elective classes), *Halomdim* (enrichment) program that offers accommodations for students with different learning styles and interests. We also offer after-school activities such as *Café Kef* prior to school hours.

The school provides a safe place for your children to develop friendships and seek each other for help, study, and play. Attending class regularly is therefore a good mechanism to ensure that children not only keep up with the academic portion of the program, but also continue to cultivate friendships. We are committed to educating children with special needs and different learning styles in our *Halomdim* program. Our teachers are trained to make accommodations to the curriculum in order to ensure your child's success.

If you would like to discuss your child's educational needs, please contact Alicia Gejman at 847-432-8900 x227 or agejman@nssbethel.org to set-up an appointment before the school year begins.

Please mark your calendars: Curriculum Orientation Day will take place on **Sunday, September 17** (More information will be forthcoming).

We are asking for your cooperation in following the traffic security instructions (outlined on Page 9 of this document) during drop-off and pick-up times. We want to keep everyone safe.

We also want to keep the lines of communication open and available between your home and our school. It is our hope that you will never hesitate to contact us for questions, updates, or concerns.

All of us at the Jack & Mildred Cohen Religious School look forward to welcoming you in September.

North Suburban Synagogue Beth El Cohen Religious School Mission Statement

The Cohen Religious School is committed to offering a high quality Conservative Jewish Education. The goal of the educational program is to nurture students spiritually, intellectually, and artistically while deepening an understanding of what it means to be Jewish and to live a Jewish life. The school offers a comprehensive curriculum for students from Pre-K through 7th Grade, blending learning with practice. In partnership with our families we strive to strengthen students' faith in G-d, study of Torah and the Hebrew language, love of Israel, and connection with the people of Israel.

Cohen Religious School Goals

- Learn to read, write, speak and understand the Hebrew language. Hebrew is the key that opens many locks. It has the power to unravel our past and connect us with modern Israel.
- Master the reading and chanting of *Tefilot* (prayers) by gaining an understanding of the main ideas of each *tefilah*, its origins and the order of *tefilot* in the *Siddur* (prayer book).
- Celebrate *Shabbat* and the Jewish holidays.
- Become familiar with Jewish history to strengthen a national Jewish identity and foster a sense of pride.
- Translate Jewish values into *Mitzvot* (commandments) and decisions which promote justice.
- Support and participate in the life of the synagogue as a way of strengthening the fabric of Jewish life and ensuring the future of Judaism and the Jewish people.
- Prepare children to become responsible Jewish adults and assure that they continue embracing and learning Judaism throughout their lives.
- Foster a love of Israel (*Ahavat Israel*) and develop a sense of kinship with the people of Israel.
- Foster the feeling of kinship with Jews (*K'lal Yisrael*) by actively seeking the welfare of Jewish people throughout the world.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

A. *Beyt Sefer* (Religious School)

- *Ganon, Gan, and Alef* - (Pre-K, Kindergarten, and 1st Grade)– Sundays
- *Bet* (2nd Grade) – Sundays and Wednesdays
- *Gimmel* through *Vav* (3rd through 6th Grade) – Sundays and choice of Tuesdays or Wednesdays
- *Gesher* (7th Grade) – Sundays and Wednesdays

B. *Noar* (Youth Groups)

- M&M Club (Kindergarten through 1st Grade)
- Shalom Club (2nd through 5th Grade)
- Kadima (6th through 8th Grade)

C. *Ha'asharah* (Enrichment)

- (*Sifriyah*) Library
- Author events, library visits, use of available technology in the Susan Fisher Glick Research Center
- *Omanut* (Art)
- (*Musikah*) Music
- *T'nuah* (Movement) – every other week for the younger grades
- *Café Kef* on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 3:30 – 4:00 pm in the Youth Lounge

D. *Mishpachah* (Family)

- Family Education Programs
- Family *Shabbat* Services
- Beth El *Shabbaton*

E. *Mevugarim* (Adults)

- Adult classes - Navigating the *Siddur*, Melton Core Curriculum: The Ethics of Jewish Living, and Hebrew
- Hebrew - This Hebrew literacy class is designed for adult students with no prior knowledge of the language and no Hebrew reading skills. At the end of the year-long course, students will be able to read short stories, and will have acquired a basic vocabulary on a range of topics. The course will focus on literacy rather than conversational Hebrew. (Sundays from 11-12 noon)

MADRIKHIM (TEACHER ASSISTANTS)

The Religious School has a core of dedicated *madrikhim* (teacher assistants) that assist in several classes, and in the school office. These *madrikhim* constitute an excellent support system for the teachers as well as the students.

SCHOOL GUIDELINES

The nature of Jewish education requires group interaction, in which students learn to become part of the community. Independent studying and tutoring are not satisfactory substitutes for class attendance. Missing a day of religious school is the equivalent of missing a week of secular school. To maintain the continuity of the curriculum, students will be expected to complete make-up assignments when they are absent. **If your child is ill, please call the School Office at 847-432-8924** and leave a message prior to the beginning of class. Please send a note to the teacher in the event of a planned absence and contact his/her teacher to discuss make-up work.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE *Make your study of Torah a fixed engagement, Shammai, Mishnah: Avot*

Regular School Hours		
Sundays	9:00-12:00 am	<i>Ganon (Pre-K) through Gesher (7th Grade)</i>
Tuesdays	4:00-6:00 pm	<i>Gimmel (3rd Grade) through Vav (6th Grade)</i> OR
Wednesdays	4:00-6:00 pm	<i>Bet (2nd Grade) through Gesher (7th Grade)</i>

Enrichment Room Hours	
Tuesdays	4:00-6:00 pm
Wednesdays	4:00-6:00 pm
Thursdays	4:00-6:00 pm
Sundays	9:00am-12:00 pm

In addition:

1. Students in *Gimmel* (3rd Grade) thru *Vav* (6th Grade) need to attend **chugim** (activities) for six consecutive weeks once a year in the fall, winter, or spring (more information will be forthcoming).

2. Religious Services for all students and their families – see next page.

ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES

It is no coincidence that the Religious School is located in the building that houses the Synagogue. Synagogue life and what children learn at religious school are intrinsically intertwined. Worship is an integral part of Jewish life, particularly on *Shabbat* and Jewish holidays. At school we familiarize the students with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in the experience of *tefilah* (prayers) on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov* (holidays). This preparation should not be a substitute for the actual participation in the experience of prayers at the Synagogue. In school, the students experience *limmud* (practicing and learning) while they study *tefilah* (prayers). It is only when students attend services with (or without) their families that they can apply what they have learned in class. All the services listed below are age-appropriate and family-friendly.

We offer many opportunities for students and their families to attend religious services:

1. *B'Yachad* –*Shabbat* morning service beginning at **10:45 a.m.** every *Shabbat*. This service, run by parent volunteers, is for families with babies through 1st Grade children.

2. *Shabbat* services for *Hey* (5th Grade) / *Vav* (6th Grade) students and their families, beginning at **10:30 a.m.** Students will read from the Torah during these services. *Hey/Vav* Services will be January 20, January 27, February 3, February 10, February 17, and February 24. Families attend six (6) of the six (6) services. These services are led by the students.

3. Junior Congregation, for Beth El youth in Grades 2nd through 5th, beginning at **10:30 a.m.** every *Shabbat*. This service is designed to promote the integration of day-school students and the Cohen Religious School students. This year the Junior Congregation will combine with the *Hey/Vav* Services (as listed above) on those service days. *Bet* (2nd Grade) through *Dalet* (4th Grade) students are required to attend Junior Congregation services four (4) times a year, and they may read from the Torah if they wish. Junior Congregation services are led by *Hazzan* Barbara Barnett.**

4. Jewish Holidays - Families are encouraged to partake in these community holiday services on each Jewish holiday. Please see the NSS Beth El website for information on these holidays. Family-friendly services and activities are planned for each one of them.

** We strongly encourage students to volunteer to read from the Torah during these services. If your child is interested, please contact *Hazzan* Barbara Barnett at bbarnett@nssbethel.org.

HOMEWORK

Students are expected to complete homework assignments, especially, but not exclusively, weekly Hebrew reading. As with any other skill, the more the child practices his/her Hebrew reading, the more comfortable s/he will feel reading prayers and Hebrew text.

CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

- 1) *Kavod* - Respect for yourself, others, and the Synagogue building.
 - a) Respect the Rabbi, Director, Staff, Teachers, and other students at all times.
 - b) Respect the Synagogue building and grounds.
 - c) Listen to your teachers and follow their instructions.
 - d) Refrain from engaging in actions that could harm yourself and others.
 - e) Leave objects that could disrupt learning at home. **If you bring a cell phone to school, the phone must be turned off during school hours unless the teacher tells you otherwise.** You may use the office phone if necessary. **If a cell phone is used for any reason, including text messaging or making phone calls during class, the phone will be confiscated and held in the School Office.** Students can reclaim their cell phones from the office at the end of the school day.
 - f) Leaving the building or classroom without teacher's permission or parent escort is prohibited.
 - g) Respect people with disabilities.

- 2) *Al tedaber lashon ha-ra* - Avoid unkind talk; words can hurt.
 - a) Use of hurtful talk such as name-calling or profanity and bullying is strictly prohibited and constitutes a violation of the teachings of our Torah.
 - b) Clothing with offensive language or images is not acceptable in a religious setting and should not be worn to Religious School. **Dress modestly and appropriately.** Boys must wear *kipot* at all times.

- 3) *Ha'sha-a chashuvah* - Time is important!
 - a) **Arrive at school on time.**
 - b) Be prepared with classroom materials/books and homework.
 - c) Come ready to learn and enjoy the teachings of our rich Jewish heritage.

In case of disruptive behavior:

- The teacher will first redirect a disruptive student. If the disruption persists, the student will be asked to leave the classroom and speak with the Director of Formal Education. Parents will be called to pick up the student from school, if necessary.
- Repeated disruptive or inappropriate behavior will require a meeting with the parents.

Early dismissal:

If it is necessary for your child to be excused early, please call the office or send a note to your child's teacher. For your child's safety, the person picking up your child must come to the religious school to sign the child out. **NO CHILD WILL BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT THE PARENT HAVING SIGNED THE CHILD OUT IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE.** In order to keep children safe, teachers have been instructed not to release a child from the classroom unless s/he has been signed out and a staff member comes into the classroom to notify the teacher and bring the student to the School Office. Students leaving early will have their attendance marked "early dismissal" by their teacher.

Arriving on time and remaining in school for the entire session:

Children who arrive late to school have a more difficult time acclimating to the daily routine. This also makes the teacher's job more difficult in trying to integrate the late-comer into the class activity. Students arriving late to class will have their attendance marked "tardy" by their teacher.

In order to avoid scheduling conflicts, please do not schedule any sports or other leisure activities for your child during Religious School hours.

ILLNESSES AND EMERGENCIES AT SCHOOL

Each family must fill out the Doctor and Emergency Contact Information on the online registration form. This authorizes a physician or 911 squad members to render emergency treatment to a child in the absence of a parent. Please email the School Office of any changes to the Doctor or Emergency Contact Information. If a child becomes ill, the parent or emergency contact will be called and asked to pick up the child. As the Religious School staff cannot care for sick or injured children, parents are urged to pick up their children as quickly as possible. Please make every effort to be available during Religious School hours. If your child has any communicable conditions, please contact the Director of Formal Education at 847-432-8900, Ext. 227.

SCHOOL/HOME COMMUNICATION *For Jewish education to work, parents must be supportive and reinforce Judaism at home and in life.* Gil Mann, 1996.

Both parents (*horim*) and teachers (*morim*) share the significant responsibility of teaching children. Our educational program relies on your commitment to help make our programming strong and successful. At the Cohen Religious School we encourage parental participation in a variety of school events: family programs, class *Shabbat* services, holiday celebrations and commemorations, field trips, classroom visits, etc.

The school will send out weekly announcements via e-mail on school happenings and reminders, as well as weekly class updates from your child's teacher. **Please make sure your correct e-mail address is on file in the School Office.** Do not hesitate to call the School Office at 847-432-8924 if you have any questions.

Curriculum Orientation Day on **Sunday, September 17** is an opportunity to meet the teachers, meet other parents, and learn about the curriculum.

Progress forms will be e-mailed to parents twice a year: in January and again in June.

If a need arises, we encourage parents to call the teacher(s). Any parental concerns should be first addressed to the teacher(s). If it is not satisfactorily resolved, the parent is encouraged to contact the Director of Formal Education. If there still is no satisfactory resolution, the parent is encouraged to talk to the Vice President of Education.

Parents are encouraged to share information pertaining to the child's learning style and emotional development with the Director of Formal Education and teacher(s). This will help the staff to plan more effectively in order to reach every child. Also, please share events in your child's life that may have an impact on his/her learning and behavior. Please let the staff know if your child is taking medication and possible side effects of such medication. Note that the above-mentioned information will be used only by the Director of Formal Education and the student's teacher(s).

PICK UP AND DISMISSAL POLICY

The safety and security of our students is of utmost importance to all of us in the Cohen Religious School. For security reasons, all doors to the school wing are locked during school time, except for approximately 15 minutes before and after each school session, when a security guard will be present at the school entrance. Anyone arriving when the doors are locked can ring the doorbell located to the left of the inside doors. Additionally, the grey doors separating the school area from the rest of the building will remain locked during school hours. Students will be allowed to go through these doors when attending an activity (for example: going to the Cultural and Learning Center or to the Art Room). On those occasions, students will be escorted by their teachers. **Please remind your child to follow these safety procedures, and please adhere to the following rules when dropping off or picking up your child:**

- Please wait patiently in line as you drop off or pick up your child.
- Do not block Sheridan Road. On the north end of the parking lot, there is a sidewalk that goes down the street. Cars are asked to pull up all the way down to the end of the sidewalk by Sheridan Road to wait for their children who will come down the sidewalk to enter the car. **The purpose of extending the pick-up area is to ensure that cars are not blocking traffic on Sheridan Road. Additional lighting will be placed along the sidewalk going to Sheridan Road in the winter months.**
- If you do not wish to wait in the pickup line, you are asked to park in one of the center lanes. If you park your car, you will need to come to the sidewalk to pick up your child. **No child will be allowed to enter the parking lot without a parent during this busy time, regardless of age.**
- **Parents of students in the Ganon, Gan and Kitah Alef (Pre-K, Kindergarten, and 1st Grade) must pick up their children from their respective classrooms.**
- Please discuss these safety issues with your child. Everyone's cooperation is needed to ensure the safety of the children.

APPOINTMENTS

Parents desiring to meet with the Director of Formal Education should contact Dr. Alicia Gejman at 847-432-8900 x227, or agejman@nssbethel.org to schedule an appointment.

As a general rule, the Director of Formal Education will be available to meet with parents throughout the week and on Sundays except during school time. The Director of Formal Education will be supervising the Religious School when school is in session and therefore no meetings will be scheduled during that time.

LOST AND FOUND

Please check the Lost-and-Found area in the School Office for lost items. Articles left unclaimed by the end of the school year will be donated to *tzedakah*.

TZEDAKAH “If an opportunity to do a mitzvah presents itself, do not delay it,” Rashi, Exodus 12:17.

Tzedakah, from the Hebrew word *tzedek* (righteousness, fairness or justice), is an important *mitzvah*. Caring for others who are less fortunate than we are is a fundamental principle of Judaism. Our students are encouraged to contribute to the class *tzedakah* collection, which in turn will be donated to various worthwhile organizations at the end of the year.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips and other special programs may be scheduled to enrich a topic being learned in school. Students who do not attend a field trip will be marked absent for that day. When a class has a special project or field trip requiring different hours, advance notice will be given.

VISITORS

Parents and guests wishing to visit classrooms must first obtain permission from the Director of Formal Education.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS AND DRILLS

Information on school closing due to inclement weather will be posted on the school page on the NSS Beth El website at <http://nssbethelschools.wixsite.com/cohenreligiousschool>

A fire drill will be conducted at the beginning of the year to familiarize students with the safety rules of evacuation.

SNACKS/FOOD

The Cohen Religious School will organize the distribution of snacks during school. This will serve a two-fold purpose: 1) to make sure that each child has a snack in school; 2) students will have an opportunity to recite the *brachot* (blessings) for different types of foods.

As a reminder: the religious school area is a NUT-FREE ZONE.

If your child has a birthday and you would like to send a special snack to school, please let the Director of Formal Education know. **All snacks sent to school for special occasions must be Kosher and nut-free.** Any snack sent from home must have a kosher symbol (*hecksher*). Please look for the following product symbols:



We are looking forward to instilling the joy of Judaism in your children. Thank you for being our partners in the Jewish education of our children!

To reach us, call the Synagogue office at 847-432-8900, and ask for the appropriate extension:

Dr. Alicia Gejman, Director of Formal Education, ext. 227

Rayna Forman, Coordinator of School Administration, or Anne Loshbough, ext. 225

The direct line to the school office is 847-432-8924