

PARENT HANDBOOK

5781/2020-2021

*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

<https://www.nssbethel.org/learn/cohen-religious-school>

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 adhering to CDC and state safety procedures for Covid-19. As a school housed in the synagogue, we believe in a strong family link between synagogue, school, and the home. We hope to be able to make 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 (music, library), and *Halomdim* (an enrichment program that offers accommodations for students with different learning styles and interests.)

Our school - whether hybrid or online - provides a safe place for your children to develop friendships and seek each other for help, study, and cooperation. Being a part of 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. Our teachers are continuously being trained to make accommodations to the curriculum in order to ensure your child's success. Online teachers have been trained in best practices to keep students engaged and interested.

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

We are asking for your cooperation in following all safety instructions (outlined throughout this document). 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

- Hebrew is the key that opens many locks. It has the power to unravel our past and connect us with the people of Israel. Our students learn to read Hebrew fluently. By learning to write basic as well as typing in Hebrew allows our students to pen pal with children in Israel. Simple Hebrew vocabulary is being taught through Hebrew songs, prayers and salutations.
- *Tefilah*, and in *Yiddish*, *davening* – is the pulse and heartbeat of Jewish spiritual life. Our students master the reading and chanting of *Tefilot* (prayers) as well as gaining an understanding of the main ideas behind each *tefilah* (prayer).
- Students celebrate *Shabbat* and the Jewish holidays within their class community, school community and the larger Beth El community.
- Students gain an understanding of Jewish history to strengthen a national Jewish identity and foster a sense of pride.
- Students learn to translate Jewish values into *Mitzvot* (commandments) and make sound decisions which promote social justice.

Students participate in activities that foster a love of Israel (*Ahavat Israel*) and the feeling of kinship with other Jews around the world (*K'lal Yisrael*)

▪ **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

A. *Beyt Sefer* (Religious School)

- *Ganon, Gan*, and *Alef* - (Pre-K, Kindergarten, and 1st Grade)– Sundays at the synagogue
- *Bet* through *Zayin* (2nd through 7th Grade) – Sundays online, and choice of Tuesdays or Wednesdays at the synagogue for the hybrid track
- *Bet* through *Zayin* (2nd through 7th Grade) – Sundays online, and choice of Tuesdays or Wednesdays virtually for the online track

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 (virtual library visits & videos)
- (*Musikah*) Music

D. *Mishpachah* (Family)

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

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. Please make sure your child participates fully either in the hybrid program or in the online program. **If your child is ill, please call the School Office at 847-432-8924** and text the teacher.

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

Regular School Hours - At the Synagogue, as well as online classes		
Sundays	9:00-12:00 am	<i>Ganon</i> (Pre-K) through <i>Zayin</i> (7 th Grade)
Tuesdays	4:00-6:00 pm	<i>Bet</i> (2 nd Grade) through <i>Zayin</i> (7 th Grade) OR
Wednesdays	4:00-6:00 pm	<i>Bet</i> (2 nd Grade) through <i>Zayin</i> (7 th Grade)

Enrichment (with Stacy) Hours - to be arranged with her	
Tuesdays and Wednesdays	4:00-6:00 pm
Sundays	9:00am-12:00 pm

The online sessions over Zoom will include necessary breaks to alleviate Zoom fatigue.

In addition, religious services for all students and their families – see next page.

ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Even during this time of COVID-19, it is important that students “virtually” attend services via ZOOM. 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 be a part of religious services:

1. *Tot Shabbat* –*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 December 5, December 12, January 16, January 23, February 6, February 20. Families attend six (6) of the six (6) services. These services are led by the students, and a luncheon will follow the February 20 service.

Junior Congregation - for Beth El youth in Grades 2nd through 6th, from **10:30 a.m.** to 11:30 a.m. every *Shabbat*. over Zoom. This service is designed to promote the integration of day-school students and the Cohen Religious School students. ** 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.

3. 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.

HOMEWORK

Students are expected to complete homework assignments sporadically. Practicing Hebrew reading on a more regular basis is highly advisable.

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 – PLEASE READ THIS WITH YOUR CHILD!!

- 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.
 - f) Leaving the building or classroom without teacher's permission or parent escort is prohibited.
 - g) Respect people with disabilities.
 - h) If you are studying online, be present and respect your teachers and your peers

- 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 during class. **Dress modestly and appropriately.** Boys must wear *kipot* at all times.
 - c) The use of the chat feature during online class to offend, bully, or display inappropriate material is strictly prohibited.

- 3) ***Ha'sha-a chashuvah* - Time is important!**
 - a) **Arrive at school on time. This is especially true for COVID-19 safety measures.**
 - 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 or be taken out of the Zoom call. If the behavior persists, parents to be informed about the students' inappropriate behavior. . Parents will be called to pick up the student from school, if necessary. For disruptions during virtual learning, the Director of Formal Education will contact the parent. .
- 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 call the religious school office to make arrangements. The phone number for the school office (Rayna) is 847-432-8924. **NO CHILD WILL BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT CONTACT IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE.** In order to keep children safe, teachers have been instructed not to release a child from the classroom unless 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. Parents bringing their children to school after school started should call Rayna in the main office. Rayna will let the child in the building and escort him/her to the classroom.

ILLNESSES AND EMERGENCIES AT SCHOOL

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; parents are urged to pick up their children as quickly as possible. Please make every effort to be available during Religious School hours.

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.

Our teachers will regularly update Google Classroom with school reminders and homework. Teachers will also be using the app REMIND to communicate with parents. **Please make sure your correct e-mail address and cell phone numbers are on file in the School Office.** Do not hesitate to call the School Office at 847-432-8924 if you have any questions.

If a need arises, we encourage parents to call the teacher(s). Any parental concerns should be first addressed with 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. **During this time of COVID-19, no parents or adults will be allowed in the school building.** 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. Additionally, the grey doors separating the school area from the rest of the building will remain locked during school hours. **Please remind your child to follow these safety procedures, and please adhere to the following rules when dropping off or picking up your child:**

- Due to COVID19, drop off and pickup procedures will be sent to you later on when school registration is complete and we know exactly how many children will be in the building on any given day.

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. As a general rule, the Director of Formal Education will be available to meet throughout the week and on Sundays **except** during school time. **No meetings will be scheduled during school time.**

LOST AND FOUND

Please e-mail the school office to check the Lost-and-Found for lost items:

Rayna = rsoffice@nssbethel.org. Anne = aloshbough@nssbethel.org

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 *tzedeck* (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 this year will be encouraged to perform *mitzvot*. However, due to COVID 19 **we will not be collecting money from children who attend classes in-person.**

FIELD TRIPS

Due to COVID-19 safety precautions the field trips will be virtual this year.

VISITORS

Visitors and parents are asked not to enter the synagogue during the COVID-19 until further notice.

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 <https://www.nssbethel.org/learn/cohen-religious-school/>

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

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

All students who attend school in the synagogue will be given a baggie with individual school supplies - such as pencils, scissors, a notepad, etc. - which will be kept in the schoolroom. School supplies will not be shared between students or between teachers and students

SNACKS/FOOD

All students will need to bring their own snacks every day in a non-reusable bag. These must be kosher, nut-free. **No sharing** will be allowed, and teachers will not help students open packages.

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

ZOOM ETIQUETTE –

Parents – please go over these suggestions with your child(ren). Learning zoom-meeting etiquette will help make calls with classmates more fun!



- **Have Materials Ready**

Be ready for your zoom meeting. Gather any materials you need, go to the bathroom, and grab a glass of water before the zoom starts.

- **Stay in One Spot during the Zoom**

Resist the urge to introduce your friends to your pets, or give them a house tour!

- **Don't Use A Fun Background**

It might be fun, but this makes it very difficult for others to see you, or to concentrate.



- **Know When and How To Mute**

The mute button is your friend! Turn on mute and keep it on until it is your time to speak.

- **Find a Quiet Spot**

To avoid distraction for everyone, find a quiet spot in your house.

- **Be On Time**

Log into the call a few minutes early to make sure your device is working properly.

- **Wait Your Turn**

Teachers will probably give you a signal to use, like raising your hand, if you have something to say.

- **Be Presentable**

Take a few minutes to get dressed!

- **Be Respectful**

Overall, act like you would in your class at school. If you wouldn't chew gum, crunch on snacks, or talk with your brother during a class at school, don't do it here!



THANKS! ENJOY YOUR CLASSES!