



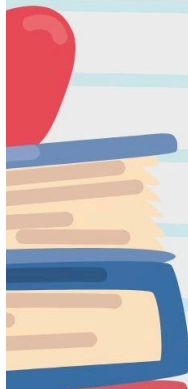
TEMPLE BETH TORAH

**MORRIS NIRENBERG
RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
HANDBOOK**



**TEMPLE
BETH
TORAH**

kindness · connection · community



Welcome Letter

Dear Temple Beth Torah Religious School Families,

We are so glad that you have chosen to be a part of the Temple Beth Torah Community! Our teachers, staff, and volunteer leaders are here to be your partners in growing and nurturing your child's Jewish identity, knowledge, and sense of pride. As a school, we strive to offer an education that emphasizes joy in Jewish practice, breadth of Jewish knowledge, and intellectual challenge.

As a small community, we make an effort to know every child and family well and to work with you to create a supportive and caring environment that benefits every child. We offer this handbook as a means to get to know us better and to answer any questions you may have. Please don't hesitate to contact us as well with any questions or concerns. Contact information for staff and volunteer leaders is listed below.

Shalom Aleichem (Wishing You Peace),

Jane Kohuth
School Principal

Contact Us

Administration

Jane Kohuth, School Principal, 774-392-2281, jane.kohuth@bethtorah.org
Rabbi Mimi Micner, 508-429-7151, rabbi@bethtorah.org
Debka Janak, Office Administrator, 508-429-6268, tbt@bethtorah.org
Elissa Washburn, TBT Board Education Chair, elissa.hardy.washburn@gmail.com
Karla Alfred and Emily Cavalier, Education Committee Co-Chairs, karla.alfred@gmail.com,
edcavalier@gmail.com
Chris Brumbach, Temple President, chris.brumbach@bethtorah.org

Teaching Staff

Torah Tots, Elissa Washburn, elissa.hardy.washburn@gmail.com
Gan/Aleph, Beth Ecker, Aleph1213@gmail.com
Bet/Gimel, Nina Gursha, ninagu@comast.net
Dalet/Hey, Jane Kohuth, jane.kohuth@bethtorah.org
Vav/K'sharim, Charli Bernstein and Jill Metzger, cbbneb@comcast.net, jmetz30@gmail.com

School Vision and Philosophy

At Temple Beth Torah, we help our students to develop a personally meaningful 21st century Jewish identity rooted in the traditions and values of our people. Our goal is to support our students in feeling both at home in synagogue and confident in their identities as Jewish people in the wider world.

We are a close-knit school with classes for children in preschool through seventh grade, as well as a program for teen classroom helpers (madrichim). Our teachers are all members of the Temple Beth Torah community with a long-term commitment to seeing our young people develop as Jews. Throughout their years with us, our students cultivate a relationship with Jewish traditions, holidays, sacred text, prayer, Hebrew, Jewish history, Jewish cultures, and Jewish values, developing a breadth of Jewish knowledge and making Judaism their own through discussion and hands-on, project-based learning.

All of our education is rooted in the values of inclusion, social justice (Tikkun Olam), respect for one another (Kavod), communal responsibility (Kol Yisrael Arevim Ze BaZeh), and loving our neighbor as ourselves (V'ahavta L'reiacha Kamocho).

As a synagogue and school, we welcome and want families of diverse identities in our community, including LGBTQ+ and interfaith families, and strive to create a supportive environment for all people.

Curriculum

The curriculum for each class is divided into a two-year cycle so that students can look forward to fresh experiences each year.

Torah Tots

Toddlers, preschoolers, and their parents come once a month on Sunday mornings for their first experience of being part of a Jewish community. Tots classes focus on joyful celebration of Jewish holidays and an introduction to the core stories of the Torah and Tanakh. Children learn through stories, crafts, and play, while parents have the opportunity to make connections with one another. Torah Tots families are encouraged to participate in Religious School-wide and Temple-wide celebrations.

Gan/Aleph

Kindergarten and first grade students are immersed in the rhythm of the Jewish year, learning the basics of celebrating Shabbat and the Jewish holidays. In addition, they are introduced to core stories in the Tanakh and begin to explore the Jewish values found in these stories. Students are introduced to the concept of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) and Gemilut Chasadim (acts of lovingkindness), focusing on the values of taking care of the earth, welcoming guests, taking care of the elderly, and compassion for animals. They are also introduced to Israel. Kindergarteners and first graders also begin to become familiar with the Hebrew alphabet and simple vowels.

Bet/Gimel

Second and third grade students continue to learn about and experience the cycle of the Jewish year and to explore Torah stories at an age-appropriate level. Bet/Gimel students focus on learning to decode Hebrew and begin to study Hebrew prayer. They learn the Shema, Judaism's central prayer, as well as the Shabbat blessings and basic prayers of the Kabbalat Shabbat (Friday evening) service. Students start to become familiar with using a prayerbook in preparation for Gimel students receiving their first siddur in a meaningful ceremony. Bet/Gimel students also focus on how to be a "mensch" (a person of good character) by studying the Ten Commandments and Jewish values, learning about Kashrut (Jewish dietary law), and learning more about modern Israel, including how to sing Hatikvah, Israel's national anthem.

Dalet/Hey

Fourth and fifth grade students learn about the Jewish calendar, undertake an in-depth study of the Jewish holidays, explore aspects of the synagogue, and delve into the history of the Jewish people from the age of the patriarchs and matriarchs through the early twentieth century. Tanakh and history study is enhanced through discussion, art and creative writing projects, and lively videos. Students embark on a year-long project of reading a work of Jewish historical fiction and studying the era in which it takes place. Tefillah (prayer) study focuses on learning the structure of the Shabbat service and focuses on the prayers of the Shema and Amidah sections of the service, with an emphasis on making the prayers personally meaningful. The class also works together on a tzedakah project, sometimes in collaboration with the work of the Temple's Social Justice Committee. In addition to their Hebrew study, students are also introduced to Yiddish language and culture through stories, songs, foods, and entertaining vocabulary activities.

Vav/K'sharim (Connections)

Sixth and seventh grade students embark on an in-depth study of the Saturday morning prayer service, including an introduction to Torah and Haftarah trope, and become familiar with the Chumash (the Torah in bound book form). Several times a year, students meet on Saturday mornings instead of Sundays in order to participate in an experiential Shabbat learning service. In addition, Vav/K'sharim students study modern Jewish history with a focus on American Jewish history, Zionism and Modern Israel, and antisemitism and the Holocaust. Students develop their Jewish ethical thinking both through studying historical and contemporary issues and Jewish thought on how to be a good person. In the lead up to their b'nai mitzvahs, sixth grade students undertake a year-long project focused on their personal Jewish identity entitled, "I Am a Jew," while seventh grade students embark on a Mitzvah Challenge with the Rabbi designed to build Jewish identity and connection through experimenting with different Jewish practices and activities.

Lifecycle Workshops

Each class explores a Jewish lifecycle ritual in a special workshop with Rabbi Mimi. These hands-on workshops include holding a model baby-naming ceremony, performing and participating in a model Jewish wedding, and, for our oldest students learning about Jewish rituals of death and mourning.

Family Workshops

Once a year, each class participates in a workshop for the whole family, where parents and students have the opportunity to learn together with Rabbi Mimi. Topics include Tikkun Olam, Gemilut Chasadim (acts of loving-kindness), the Siddur (prayerbook), God, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jewish communities, tallit, tefillin, mezuzot, and Jewish head-coverings.

All-School Tefillah

In addition to studying tefillah or Jewish prayer in class, the whole school comes together once a month on Sunday mornings to pray together in a musical, kid-centered short service, led by Rabbi Mimi and accompanied by TBT Religious School graduate Heath Banak on guitar.

Participation Services

Once a year each class participates in leading a Friday evening or Saturday morning Shabbat service, followed by a festive oneg or kiddush lunch.

Service Attendance Requirements

Gan-Aleph: One Tot Shabbat Participation Service and one other Tot Shabbat

Bet-Gimel, Dalet-Hey: One Participation Service and a Kids' Shabbat service or regular Shabbat service. Monthly musical Shir Shabbat Friday evening services are a great option!

Vav-K'sharim: Follow B'nai Mitzvah requirements listed in the B'nai Mitzvah Handbook.

Additional Early Childhood Programming

In addition to the Torah Tots program, Temple Beth Torah holds periodic Tot Shabbat services on Saturday mornings from 9:00 am — 9:45 am, led by Rabbi Mimi. The Early Childhood Committee also plans several activities and social gatherings throughout the year both at TBT and around the community.

Madrichim Program

Our teens can continue to participate in the Religious School by becoming madrichim or teachers' aides. Madrichim help facilitate classroom activities, work with small groups as well as one-on-one with students, and serve as role models. They play an invaluable part in our Hebrew program, giving students added personal attention and practice. Madrichim also meet periodically with the Religious School principal for leadership development and community building.

Teen Programs

Teen can also participate in the TBT Youth Group, which meets throughout the year for community service and social activities.

Jewish Holiday Programs

Holiday programs take place throughout the school year. Some programs are school-wide, while others are for the whole TBT community. Upcoming programs will be highlighted in the Religious School Newsletter. You can find the dates and times of programs listed on the calendar on the TBT website: <https://www.bethtorah.org/calendar/>

Library

The TBT Library has children's books available for both teachers and families to borrow. We regularly receive new books through PJ Library to update our collection. You may sign out books on the sign-out sheet in the library. Also, keep an eye out for our featured books in the TBT lobby!

Volunteering

Volunteers are welcome and encouraged! There are a variety of opportunities throughout the year to help with school and community activities. You are also welcome to join the Education Committee. If you are interested in helping in any capacity, please contact the chairs of the Education Committee:

Emily Cavalier: edcavalier@gmail.com

Karla Alfred: karla.alfred@gmail.com

Individual Student Needs

We recognize that children have various learning styles and we strive to be sensitive to your children's needs. Please contact the School Principal to discuss any learning or emotional issues that you would like teachers to be aware of, so that we can work on best accommodating your child's needs. If your child has an IEP or 504 Plan, please consider sharing this information with us to help us better understand what strategies are most helpful for your child in the classroom.

School Schedule

Torah Tots: Once a month on Sunday mornings from 9:30 am - 10:30 am

Gan/Aleph (K-1): Sunday mornings, 9:30 am - 12:00 pm

Bet/Gimel (2-3), Dalet/Hey (4-5), Vav/K'sharim (6-7):

Sunday mornings at TBT, 9:30 am - 12:00 pm

Tuesday evenings on Zoom, 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Snacks: All classes include a snack break! Please send nut-free pareve (neither meat or dairy) or dairy snacks. The school will provide snacks for any student who has forgotten to bring one from home. Please also send your child with a water bottle to minimize trips to the water fountain.

School Calendar

The Religious School calendar for the whole school year can be found on the TBT website in the Religious School section under the school schedule tab. School events are also included on the Temple-wide calendar: <https://www.bethtorah.org/calendar/>

Communication

Religious School Newsletter

The weekly Religious School Newsletter will let you know about upcoming events and programs, Religious School news, and classroom highlights.

Email from Teachers

Your child's teacher will also contact you regularly via email with information specific to your child's class.

In Case of Emergency

Please make sure to download Whatsapp on your phone and enable notifications. In case of emergency, all parents will be contacted quickly via a Whatsapp group message. Please see the Emergency Procedures section for more information.

Policies and Procedures

Drop-off/Pick-up

- **Student Drop-off:** Please drop off children at the front door or walk them into the lobby. Parents of younger children are welcome to walk them to their classrooms. All children who are brought to school prior to class should be supervised by the adult who brings them to school.
- **Student Pick-up:** Teachers will escort students to the lobby. Parents should meet children in the lobby or on the portico by the front door. We would like to avoid students walking through the parking lot on their own.

Late Arrival/Early Dismissal

- If possible, please notify teachers ahead of time if students will arrive late or be picked up early.
- When picking your child up early, please come to the classroom and walk them out.

School Attendance

We strongly encourage regular attendance at Religious School in order for students to get the most out of their Jewish education at Temple Beth Torah. Regular attendance provides students with the continuity to complete learning units and projects, as well as the opportunity to reinforce skills and develop a sense of community at school.

However, we understand that families must balance a variety of commitments. We ask that when possible, you let teachers know ahead of time when students will be absent. We will work with you to best help your child keep up when they must miss class. Please contact the

Religious School Principal and your child's teacher to come up with a plan that will work best for your family.

School Cancellation Due to Inclement Weather

On Sundays, classes will be moved to Zoom. School families will be notified via email of the change and receive a Zoom link by Saturday evening at the latest. Younger students may meet for an abbreviated session when classes move to Zoom. Tuesday classes will continue on Zoom regardless of weather.

Devices

- Cell phones and other electronic devices may not be used during class unless approved by the teacher for classroom use. If your child needs to call you, they may use the office phone.
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- TBT Religious School is not responsible for any loss or damage to devices brought to the Temple.
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- Please remember that no cell phones or electronics of any kind may be used at the Temple during Shabbat or on holidays when use of electronic devices is prohibited.

Food in School

- All classes break for a snack on Sunday mornings. Please send your child with a snack. The school will provide snacks for students who have forgotten to bring one from home.
- Please send students with a water bottle to minimize trips to the water fountain, which are disruptive to class.
- *All food brought into the school wing must be dairy, pareve, or marked kosher. All food brought into the Social Hall or Kitchen must be marked kosher.*
- We request that no nut products be brought into the school.
- Gum chewing is not allowed in the school or in the Sanctuary.

Head Coverings

The TBT Board has passed a new head covering policy for our congregation. Going forward, all people coming up to help lead or have an honor during services will wear head coverings, regardless of gender. Women and girls may choose to wear kippot or other head coverings of their choosing. TBT is currently providing headbands as well as kippot.

For Religious School, all boys must wear a kippah/yarmulke to class and to services. Other people may choose to wear a head-covering in class and during services.

Behavior

Students are expected to behave as they would in any school setting. If behavior arises that involves theft or vandalism, smoking or illicit drug-use, or interferes with the learning of other students, parents will be contacted and an effort will be made to resolve the situation. Teachers

may ask students to work separately with a teacher's aide or in the office if they are engaging in disruptive behavior.

Emergency Procedures

- **Full Emergency Procedures are posted in the Main Office, Education Office, and all classrooms.**
- **Communication:** In case of an emergency affecting the whole school, parents will be contacted via a Whatsapp group. Please make sure you have Whatsapp downloaded on your phone and notifications enabled.
- **Medical Emergency:** In case of a medical emergency, 911 will be contacted and parents or guardians called. If parents or guardians cannot be reached, we will attempt to reach emergency contacts. We have both staff and teachers trained in CPR and First Aid.
- **In Case of Evacuation:** If evacuation is necessary, students will be escorted to the front of the parking lot. If it is necessary to leave the premises, our off-site evacuation location is across the street from TBT at 2165 Washington Street.