

Congregation Beth Israel - Youth Engagement Program

HANDBOOK OF POLICIES AND INFORMATION

The handbook is designed for those connected to CBI's Youth Engagement Program (YEP). In it you will find basic information about who we are, how to participate, how to communicate with us, and how the program is managed.

The handbook is created to evolve. It will change as necessary. We seek to create a warm, communal experience for our students, families, and our synagogue community.

IN THIS HANDBOOK:

OUR MISSION, CLASS STRUCTURE AND SCHEDULES.....	2
FACULTY, COMMUNITY COFFEE, COMMUNICATIONS.....	3
DROP-OFF, STUDENTS NEEDING TO LEAVE EARLY, PICK UP.....	4
STUDENT ATTENDANCE, HOMEWORK, PROGRESS REPORTS.....	5-6
USE OF CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES, FOOD & SNACK IN CLASSROOMS.....	6
DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES.....	7
TZEDAKAH, LOST AND FOUND.....	7
SAFETY AND SECURITY, FIRE DRILLS AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES, SNOWWEATHER AND OTHER CLOSINGS, CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL'S PRIVACY POLICY.....	8

The Youth Engagement Program of Congregation Beth Israel

OUR MISSION

Our curriculum encourages exploration of Judaism weaving together God/Spirituality, Torah, and Israel:

GOD/SPIRITUALITY: diverse values and traditions from prayer to prophetic call to the notion of covenantal relationship.

TORAH: Jewish texts and stories from every generation and their meaning for contemporary living.

ISRAEL: the Jewish people, the Jewish land, and the Jewish state, from both a historic and a contemporary perspective.

These explorations support the development of Identity, Family, Community

IDENTITY: supporting each child in their development of a strong Jewish identity.

FAMILY: opportunities for generations to engage together.

COMMUNITY: a strong YEP community as an integrated part of CBI's spiritual and social community, and a sense of the world's Jewish community.

CLASS STRUCTURE AND SCHEDULES

Our classrooms have a combination of teachers and student assistants (Madrichim). Classes start promptly to allow students to maximize their learning time.

Grades PK-2 meet on Sunday mornings from 9-11:30 AM.

These grades have a dedicated classroom, and meet in that classroom or are escorted to other areas of the synagogue for worship, music, dance and other special programs.

Grades 3-6 meet on Sunday mornings from 9-11:30 AM and mid-week for Hebrew. Mid-week choices are Tuesday at the Farmington Library, Weds at CBI, or Thursday at the JCC West Hartford.

Sunday is divided in two periods, from 9:00-10:15 and from 10:20-11:30. All students study Hebrew throughout the year, and two separate Judaic Studies classes. The classes are separated by a music or Israeli dance period.

Wednesday meets from 4:30-6:00 PM. Hebrew, t'fillah (worship) and small group work.

Tuesday (Farmington) and Thursday (JCC) has 45-minute Hebrew only classes for grades 3-6. These sections are offered based on enrollment.

Bnai Mitzvah students meet on Wednesday 4:30-6pm for small group study, t'fillah and liturgy review. Details are sent to all students entering their Bnai mitzvah year.

Grades 7, 8 and 9 meet on Sunday mornings from 10-11:30 AM.

These three grades comprise our 'Journey Onward' program. Students meet at CBI and in the community. Journey Onward is a bridge program between "Religious School" and Confirmation. Many activities are student directed. 7th grade students are invited to attend the "breakfast club" from 9:00-9:55am, which will be a supervised, breakfast and social time for 7th graders.

FACULTY

Our faculty comprises a team of wonderful people dedicated to Judaism today and tomorrow. Many are members of our own synagogue. Some are career teachers, and all come to us with a passion for helping young Jews to fully participate in Jewish life now and into their adulthood.

COMMUNITY COFFEE

We encourage each family to spend some time before school on Sunday in our lobby. Bagels, baked goods, hot and cold drinks are available. The New York Times, Hartford Courant and Boston Globe are available for your reading pleasure. Community Coffee stops serving students at 8:55 to allow them time to arrive at class ready to learn.

COMMUNICATIONS Our primary method of communications is via email. Please update the Director if your email changes during the year. Here is how we stay in touch:

1. **Teachers are expected to send email to families once per week**, providing a glimpse into the learning done in each class, and sharing homework (following the Homework Policy). These emails will be concise. Teachers are expected to be in regular email contact with the Director for individual questions.
2. **Parents are encouraged to respond to teacher emails**, to follow up on information provided, to ask for more information, and to remain informed about what is going on in their children's classes.
3. **A weekly "newsletter" email will come out from the Director.** The email may contain **changes**, as well as **reminders** about upcoming events. Parents are encouraged to read these newsletters closely. Please be aware that if you opt out of the emails you will miss critical information such as weather closings or schedule changes.
4. **Occasionally, parents may also receive emails or regular mail pertaining to their children's grade or special events.**

CONTACTING THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Lauren Benthien, Director of Youth Engagement

- lbenthien@cbict.org
- 860-233-8215 ext. 2330 - main synagogue line
- 860-920-5686 - direct office line

POLICIES OF THE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

DROP-OFF

Sunday: Farmington Avenue front door and back parking lot door will be *unlocked between 8:45-9:15am. Before and after these times the back doors are locked for security of those in the building, at which times your member 'key fob' will be the best way to enter.* All parents and grandparents are encouraged to come into the building for drop-off. Have a coffee and baked goods at Community Coffee or spend some time in the Learning Center. *Teachers and madrichim are expected to be in classrooms by 8:45am.*

Sunday: Grades PK thru 2 must be escorted to their classroom by parent/guardian.

Sunday: Grades 3 through 9 may be dropped off at either the front or rear entrance to the building.

Wednesday: Grades 3 through 7 may be dropped off at either the front or rear entrances.

Please be aware that the back parking lot can be crowded at drop off and pick up times. Please drive slowly.

Please note: The 2014-15 school year will begin with some construction in the lower level child care space. Please use caution and read all emails regarding drop off and pick up locations.

STUDENTS NEEDING TO LEAVE EARLY

We take student safety seriously and require any students that need to be dismissed early are to be picked up only from the School Office, and signed out.

Planned: Students will be released from class only with a signed note, and must come to the School Office. The adult picking up the students will sign the student out in our Early Dismissal Binder.

Unplanned: If there is a last-minute early pick up, the adult picking up the student should come to the School Office. The Director or a volunteer will record the dismissal and facilitate the child's release from class.

Please note: All Family Units of the synagogue should receive two 'key fobs'. Additional fobs are available for a \$10 from the Main Office. Using your key fob will make drop off and pick up a much smoother process for everyone.

PICK UP

Grades PK thru 2 must be picked up at their classroom or location of last activity for the day by a parent, guardian, or older sibling with parent permission.

Grades 3 through 9 may be picked up by meeting parents/guardians at the front (Farmington Avenue) or rear (parking lot on Fenway) entrances of the building. Students are not permitted to walk away from the entrance to the street without an adult escort.

Please note: that students are expected to be picked up on time from YEP. We understand that occasionally you may be delayed. If so, please call the Director to let her know the expected time delay. An adult will stay with any children who have not been picked up in a timely manner.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance in classes is part of building a strong community and learning about Judaism. Consistent attendance is critical for students who are studying Hebrew. Parents are strongly encouraged to call or email if they know their children will be absent. The teacher or Director will contact you if your child has missed a number of classes or is consistently tardy.

In addition to regularly scheduled classes, students are encouraged to attend their Grade Level Shabbat Service, which occurs once per year. Please see the YEP calendar for all important dates.

Attendance at other Shabbat and Holiday services, and other general activities of the synagogue and Jewish community, is strongly encouraged as a way of developing Jewish identity and values. The Ritual Committee maintains records for attendance at services for all grades as part of Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. Information can be obtained from the Ritual Committee (see B'nai Mitzvah handbook at <http://www.cbict.org/lifecycles/barbat-mitzvah/>).

PARENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

Visiting and volunteering in class: Parents and grandparents are invited to visit and volunteer in their children's classrooms. We ask that you coordinate with the classroom teacher in advance about your desire to visit or volunteer in the classroom. Please copy the Director on any written communications about visiting or volunteering so that we can check the calendar for any conflicts.

Family Participation: These are special classes with Rabbi Pincus when parents are invited to join their children in class for part of the morning. Parents are invited to attend, dates are announced at the beginning of the year on the YEP calendar. The lesson is oriented toward family learning.

HOMEWORK

Hebrew classes are **expected to assign weekly homework**. Students are expected to do the homework in order to progress in Hebrew. Parents are asked to engage with students in the homework, and ensure its completion. *In some grades, Hebrew homework will frequently require online computer access.* Please let us know if you do not have online access at home. We will help make alternative arrangements.

Judaic Studies (non-Hebrew) classes are **expected not to hand out homework**, with the exception of suggested topics for discussion at home, or questions to ask about family traditions.

PROGRESS REPORTS

All students in grades PK-6 will receive evaluations based on their studies and engagement in the classroom.

Grades PK-2: Progress reports will be completed by teachers based upon classes twice per year. These reports are intended as an opportunity for teachers to communicate with parents about their children, classroom experiences and engagement with teachers, madrichim, and other students.

Grades 3-6: New in 2014-15 school year, parents will receive regular email communications about their child's individual Hebrew progress, as they become proficient in a 'level' or unit of work. These communications will be in lieu of report cards. These emails will include notes about the student's progress in learning Hebrew letters/vowels, sounds, decoding, fluency, vocabulary and prayer skills and meanings. Since students will be working at an individualized pace, the email communications will reflect that pace and progress.

USE OF CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are expected to turn off cell phones and other electronic devices while in class. On occasion, teachers may ask them to use their electronic devices as part of their learning. Some teachers may collect electronic devices before class, to be returned after class.

FOOD & SNACK IN CLASSROOMS

We provide a snack each week to grades Pre-K through 2. We make every effort to use nut free products. Parents are also encouraged to bring a healthy snack to class, with prior approval of the teacher. Teachers may request that parents take turns with making this donation. However, no other foods shall be brought into the classroom without prior consultation with teachers and the Director, since we have some students who are highly allergic and we want to keep everyone safe. *Please notify the Director prior to the start of the school year if your child has any food-related allergies.*

Breakfast: Students, teachers, and madrichim are expected to eat breakfast before class. Any breakfast foods brought from home or purchased at Community Coffee need to be consumed before entering the classroom. Community Coffee will not be served to students PreK-6 after 8:55 AM.

Snack: Any snack foods brought into the classroom need to be approved in advance by the Director. All snacks must be acceptable under the allergy-free guidelines.

Food in the curriculum: In classes where food may be brought or cooked as part of the curriculum, the foods need to comply with allergy-free needs of that particular class. Parents are usually notified in advance of the foods and ingredients.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

We are a small, community school. We want every student to have every opportunity to participate fully in an environment of kindness and positive behavior. As a result, it is important that all students behave respectfully, to each other, to teachers and madrichim, and to all who enter our building.

Parents are asked to inform the Director and appropriate teachers about a student's needs that may affect behavior in the classroom. Accommodations made in secular school are helpful in providing

the best learning experience for your child. The Director has experience with Special Education and IEPs. In addition, many of our teachers have experience with students with special needs. Your information will be kept confidential.

Behavior Based

All students in grades 2-9 are asked to sign a **Behavioral Covenant** at the beginning of the year, acknowledging their responsibilities as a student. The Covenant for grades 7, 8 and 9 (Journey Onward) is more sophisticated based on the higher expectations of students who have achieved Bar/Bat Mitzvah and because of the different style of programming. Both covenants are kept in confidential student files.

Teachers are to report every behavioral incident in the classroom to the Director.

Behavioral issues that are managed in the classroom but are ongoing will be brought to the attention of the Director. Reportable behavior includes but is not limited to:

Inappropriate and distracting behavior including but not limited to inappropriate use of synagogue space, rooms or materials, or use of games, toys, cell phones, electronic devices.

Inappropriate behavior or language between students (e.g. bullying or teasing), or directed at Clergy, Teachers, Madrichim (student teachers), the Director or other adults.

Responses to inappropriate behavior, if a child is removed from the classroom, include:

A. On the first occasion: the student will be asked to reflect on their behavior and write a note before returning to class. A copy of the note will be inserted in the student's file in the Director's office.

Depending on the severity of the behavior, parents may be informed at this stage.

B. On the second occasion: the student will be asked to reflect on their behavior and to write a note to their parents and their teacher and any other individual(s) affected by the behavior. A copy of the note will be inserted in the student's file, and parents will be contacted and invited to consult with the teacher(s) and the Director.

C. If there are subsequent issues: significant consultation with parents and the Director will follow. The Senior Rabbi may be brought into the discussion where appropriate.

TZEDAKAH

Students are encouraged to practice the Mitzvah (good deed, obligation) of *Tzedakah*, (righteous giving to those in need), by bringing coins or dollars to class each week. Teachers will collect Tzedakah during first period for each student. Our school does not require a student to bring Tzedakah, but they may be encouraged by teachers. Students will vote on the recipient organization(s) of our Tzedakah collections.

LOST AND FOUND

Items left in classrooms or school spaces will be placed in a basket inside the School Office. Items not picked up by the last day of the school year will be donated to a local charitable agency.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

STUDENT PERSONAL ISSUES

We recognize that children may have personal issues (e.g. emotional upset, change in attitude, a minor injury or sickness) from time to time. Responses to personal issues may include providing safe/comfortable space for the student, which is often the School Office, and contacting parents. Basic first aid supplies (band aids) are available in the School Office. We will log any student who comes to the office for First Aid. We are not equipped to store or administer Epi-pens or other medications.

FIRE DRILLS AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of a fire drill or a real emergency, the building will be evacuated. Exit information is posted in each classroom, and provided to teachers in the packet with their attendance. The Directors will work with faculty and volunteers to ensure communication with parents in the event we need to evacuate the premises entirely. Fire drills will be practiced twice yearly, unannounced, per the Town of West Hartford requirements.

SNOW/WEATHER AND OTHER CLOSINGS

It may be necessary to cancel classes due to weather or other unpredictable issues.

Tuesdays: *All classes will be canceled if Farmington Public Schools are closed.* If public schools are open, but storms continue into the afternoon, a decision will be made by 2 PM and you'll be notified by email.

Wednesdays AND Thursdays: *All classes will be canceled if West Hartford Public Schools are closed.* If public schools are open, but storms continue into the afternoon, a decision will be made by 2 PM and you'll be notified by email.

Sundays: Decisions will be made by 7 AM on Sundays and you'll be notified by email, tv and radio postings.

Special Events on other days: Decisions will be made and communicated as quickly as possible.

Look here for notices: All emergency closings will be announced via email, on our CBI website, and by posting on CBS Radio, WFSB, WNBC Connecticut, and WTNH TV stations.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL'S PRIVACY POLICY

The CBI Youth Engagement Program follows the Privacy Policy of Congregation Beth Israel. Please see <http://www.cbict.org/about/privacy-policy/> for complete listing of our policy. We may use photos on our website, in email communications, and on event flyers.