

CONGREGATION SHAAREY ZEDEK RELIGIOUS SCHOOL



Family Handbook
2023-2024 / 5784

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Names and Numbers

Our professional staff and lay leadership look forward to your participation in your child's Jewish learning. We are here to assist in creating meaningful Jewish experiences for your family.

Congregation Shaarey Zedek
27375 Bell Road
Southfield, MI 48034
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Acting Director of Youth and Family Learning:

Rabbi Yonatan Dahlen, rabbidahlen@shaareyzedek.org
(712) 253-3397

Administrator to the Department of Youth and Family Learning:

Devorah Glanz, dglanz@shaareyzedek.org

Clergy:

Rabbi Aaron Starr, rabbistarr@shaareyzedek.org
Rabbi Yonatan Dahlen, rabbidahlen@shaareyzedek.org
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Ritual Director Saul Rube, srube@shaareyzedek.org

Executive Director

Robert Rich, rrich@shaareyzedek.org

School Hours

Sundays: 9:30 AM – 12:00 Noon (Grades PreK-7)
Tuesdays: 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM (Grades 3-7)

Attendance

One key aspect of helping your child to develop a positive Jewish self-identity is by ensuring attendance at Religious School on a regular basis. The message this sends is, "Being Jewish is important to us." There is also an immediate correlation between attendance and your child's success and happiness at Religious School. Every time your child is not with our Religious School, we miss them, and the connection with our community is broken. Consistent attendance supports an atmosphere of mutual respect for fellow students, teachers, administrators, and the learning process. It creates a feeling of community and encourages personal responsibility.

Absences: Please inform the school if your child will be absent. If your child is absent two consecutive sessions, please contact your child's teacher so that a plan can be developed to cover the material your child will miss. All work, including missed homework, is expected to be made up in a timely fashion.

Arrival/Dismissal

It is imperative that every effort is made to get children to class on time and to pick them up on time. On Sunday mornings, please escort your children into the building and we'll start in the Weisberg Lobby with bagel breakfast. Teachers will then usher the students to their classrooms. Parents are invited to join the entire school for Shirah beginning at 11:40. We will come together to sing, give out awards, and head into the week ahead with ruach! Dismissal at 12noon is by carpool line- please pull up to the Main Entrance of the building, and your student will be ushered to your car. Please be patient and watch for your child as you pull up to the building during dismissal.

Early Dismissal: If it is absolutely necessary that your child leave school early, they must present a note from a parent/guardian to the classroom teacher at the beginning of the day. The note must include the dismissal time and the name of the person designated to pick up the child. You may meet your child in the lobby for pickup. A staff member will retrieve your child from their class.

School Closings

Please check your whatsapp, voicemail, or text messages for information regarding school closings. If we intend to cancel class for weather or an emergency, expect information by sundown on Saturday night for Sunday classes. Expect information by 2:00 pm on Tuesdays for class cancellation. For regularly scheduled closings, see the Religious School calendar.

Guests

We LOVE having guests at our school, but it is important that the School Team is informed beforehand. Learners who wish to bring a Jewish guest or friend can do so, provided permission is received **ahead of time** from the Director of Youth and Family Learning and, as a courtesy, from the teacher. Guests are expected to behave appropriately at all times. We must have health and safety forms for any guest in the Religious School and a signed permission slip from the guest's parent/guardian.

Carpooling

We will be happy to help you locate families from the same area as you. Contact Devorah Glanz at dglanz@shaareyzedek.org for assistance with arranging a carpool.

Shabbat Opportunities

One of the goals of Shabbat programming at Congregation Shaarey Zedek is the development of Synagogue leadership skills. Through participation in Shabbat services, children gain familiarity with the service and are prepared for active roles in Synagogue services as *b'nai mitzvah* (Jewish adults). Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to attend Shabbat services with their children. Following Shabbat services, everyone is welcome to join in the congregational lunch. Please contact Elise Gechter at egechter@shaareyzedek.org or Jaclyn Snider at jsnider@shaareyzedek.org if you would like a Shabbat honor for your child.

Additionally, attending holiday observances, family programs, and other happenings at the shul encourages a real-world application of the principles learned in Religious

School and we highly encourage our families to participate whenever possible in things such as: High Holiday Prayground, TGIS Musical Friday Night Services, Purim Carnival and Megillah Reading, and other amazing year-round activities for families. This also helps strengthen your child's view of their community- we at CSZ see ourselves as more than a shul, but rather a family and it is our hope that your young learners grow to love this place as much as we do!

How to Support Your Child at Religious School

In order for our Religious School program to be most effective, home and school must work hand in hand and promote a close partnership. The following are a few suggestions:

- Set a reasonable bedtime the night before.
- Ensure that your child has a nutritious and full breakfast before Religious School or join us for bagels!
- There is a direct correlation between a student's attendance, and their interest, achievement, and attitude. Every time your child is absent or late, there is a loss of continuity with the program.
- Please come to Religious School on time.
- Participation in the programming beyond school helps the child see the context of their Judaism. Please join in as many programs as you can!
- Ask your child about their day. Rather than "yes-or-no" questions, try to ask open-ended questions. Review the weekly newsletter and pictures so you can be familiar with what your child is learning.
- Remember that informal Jewish education is one of the best motivators for creating a positive Jewish identity! You are your child's most important role model!

Family Education

Through family programs, class Shabbat services, and other experiences, our Religious School provides opportunities for families to grow Jewishly. Families are encouraged to participate in programs as scheduled in the school calendar.

***Derekh Eretz*: Respectful Behavior**

Congregation Shaarey Zedek hopes to help instill in our children not only a love for Judaism but also a love for learning, a commitment to the Jewish community, and a sense of fairness and respect for others.

Our behavior policy supports the right of all students to learn in a safe and inviting environment. Disrespect or any other behavior that violates the rights of others is not permitted at any time. The Congregation Shaarey Zedek Religious School Code of Conduct is included in this handbook. Please review the Code of Conduct with your child.

Families are expected to respond to communications from the school pertaining to their child and to cooperate with the staff in solving behavioral problems. Teachers and the

Director of Youth and Family Learning will make every effort to help resolve behavior problems before taking any disciplinary action.

Congregation Shaarey Zedek Religious School Code of Conduct

Congregation Shaarey Zedek's Religious School strives to help students develop a love for Judaism and a love for Jewish learning. We are committed to creating a learning community built on *derekh erez*; proper behavior towards people, good manners, common courtesy, and respect.

Students enrolled in Congregation Shaarey Zedek's Religious School are expected to help create a positive learning environment for everyone. Please read our **Code of Conduct** below:

Students will . . .

- Be on time for class and ready to learn with the correct supplies and books,
- Follow teachers' directions the first time they are given,
- Participate in class activities and stay on task,
- Raise their hand and wait to be called on,
- Complete all class assignments and homework,
- Treat all people with dignity and respect,
- Cooperate with parents/guardians, other students, all CSZ staff, and teachers,
- Be polite and show good manners,
- Adhere to the dress code, and
- Treat the classroom, the school, and the Synagogue with respect.

Students will not . . .

- Use profane, disrespectful or hurtful language,
- Vandalize, deface or destroy property,
- Disrupt the class,
- Do outside work during class, and
- Bring hand-held games, cell phones, or other personal electronic equipment to class.

If a student's behavior is in violation of the Code of Conduct:

First violation: The teacher will give the student a verbal warning identifying the unacceptable conduct.

Second violation: The teacher will give the student a second verbal warning. Should the behavior not be corrected, the teacher may send the student to the Director of Youth and Family Learning's office. The student may be asked to call their parents/guardians to discuss their behavior.

Third violation: The student's parents/guardians will receive a call from the teacher to discuss the student's behavior.

Fourth violation: The student's parents/guardians will receive a call from the Director of Youth and Family Learning. A conference may be required with the student's parents/guardians before the student is permitted back into the classroom.

Subsequent violations: The student may be suspended or expelled from school.

Dress Code

Students are expected to come to school dressed appropriately. Clothing should be clean, modest, and in good repair. T-shirts should not contain lewd gestures or language. Midriff revealing tops, short shorts and mini-skirts are not permitted at any time.

Kippot

Following tradition, boys need to wear a *kippah* (*yarmulke*) at all times while in the Synagogue and while attending Religious School; a baseball hat is an unacceptable replacement. Girls comfortable wearing a *kippah* are encouraged to do so.

Tzedakah

Tzedakah (righteous deeds; in this case, akin to "charity") in the form of small change will be collected each class session. One of our objectives is to have our students feel and act on their responsibility to *k'lal Yisrael*, the entire Jewish people. Students will decide the allocation of funds for the *tzedakah* monies raised by their class.

In Jewish tradition, the giving of *tzedakah* is seen as an obligation. Please send your children with a contribution regularly. Encourage older students to contribute from their own funds (e.g., allowance, birthday money).

At the end of the year, our students will vote on where to send the funds collected throughout the year, allowing our students to research and understand the various needs throughout our community and our world.

Snacks/*Kashrut* Policy

Our school is a nut-sensitive environment. This means that we ask you to check the ingredients of all snack items sent with your child to be sure that there are no nuts or nut derivatives, such as peanut oil. This is very important as we have students in our school with severe nut allergies. Notwithstanding our best efforts to enforce this policy, to ensure their safety, the parents/guardians of a child with nut or other food allergies shall be responsible for monitoring the snacks their child is eating.

All foods brought into the Synagogue must be dairy or *pareve* with an approved symbol indicating that they are kosher. Should you have any questions regarding acceptable *kashrut* certification or the Synagogue's *kashrut* policy, you are encouraged to contact Rabbi Starr.

Home-School Communications

Throughout the school year, the school faculty and administration will maintain ongoing communication with you. Parents and caregivers will be informed of relevant school information through email which is sent to all Religious School families on Fridays, the CSZ Religious School emails, flyers, and Synagogue bulletins.

Please communicate with your child's teacher – share praise as well as concerns. Let your child's teacher know if your child is having personal difficulties at home or at secular school that could affect schoolwork or behavior.

Problem Solving

In general, as soon as any questions or concerns arise, it is recommended that you first share your thoughts with your child's teacher. If, after discussion with the teacher, you feel that the problem remains unsolved, please contact the Director of Youth and Family Learning. Every effort will be made to find a mutually satisfactory solution and resolve the matter promptly.

Curriculum

The curriculum is divided into three key areas: Torah, Avodah, and G'milut Chassadim.

- a) Torah – Learning the Hebrew language, understanding the meaning of sacred Jewish texts, and applying sacred teachings to everyday life.
- b) Avodah – Studying and comprehending the T'fillot, the essential prayers of Conservative Judaism, feeling comfortable participating in regular synagogue services, and learning to lead synagogue services.
- c) G'millut Chassadim – Committing time and energy to acts of loving kindness and learning how to make charitable acts, such as visiting with the elder community, comforting mourners, and feeding the hungry, all parts of everyday life.

The curriculum is designed to give students a broad overview of Jewish traditions and beliefs. Learning in each grade builds upon what was learned in previous years. Please see Rabbi Yoni Dahlen for a detailed curriculum for your child's class.

Homework

Homework is a valuable opportunity for students to spend time at home, at their own pace, reinforcing what is being studied in class. Teachers, while sensitive to students' commitments outside of Religious School, are encouraged to assign a small amount of homework to their students. Assignments are limited so that they require no more than 20 minutes per week.

The practice of the oral reading of Hebrew has long been shown to be an important tool in developing Hebrew language skills. Please practice reading Hebrew with your child. No matter your Hebrew language ability, we have resources available to ensure that you can be an active participant in your child's Jewish education.

Supplies

Every child is expected to come to school equipped to do their work. This means that they are to have supplies such as all required textbooks. The Shaarey Zedek Religious School provides students with textbooks at the beginning of the year. If a student comes to school without their books, parents/guardians may be charged a textbook replacement fee.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Education Requirements

The Conservative Movement, of which Congregation Shaarey Zedek is a part, requires that all B'nai Mitzvah candidates be enrolled in an approved form of religious instruction at the time of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. All candidates for Bar/Bat Mitzvah must have completed or be completing Religious School, including Shabbat service attendance requirements, or have achieved the equivalent in an approved program of instruction.

This policy will be strictly observed except in the most extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the Congregation Shaarey Zedek clergy.

Prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah, students will receive individual instruction to guide their participation in the service.

Tutoring

Tutoring is offered for enrichment and remedial purposes. Parents/guardians are responsible to notify the school if their child needs special assistance. Through Hebrew assessments and regular communication from one's teacher, the school informs parents/guardians if their child needs additional instruction. All students have the opportunity for additional tutoring or support from our Director and our Staff. We are committed to your student's learning and have ZOOM or In-Person tutoring available to you.

Post B'nai Mitzvah Students: Madrichim Opportunity

Students in the 8th grade who have completed their B'nai Mitzvah at Congregation Shaarey Zedek are encouraged to continue their spiritual growth and Jewish learning by participating in our Madrichim teaching program. Madrichim work directly with students instructing individuals and small groups in Hebrew, T'fillah, and Chug classes.

Youth Activities

Congregation Shaarey Zedek's children and teens may participate in organized youth activities through Congregation Shaarey Zedek's youth programs. Youth activities such as Motor City United Synagogue Youth (MCUSY) provide students an opportunity to socialize with peers within a Jewish context. Additionally, students are encouraged to participate in Jewish summer camping experiences such as Camp Ramah.

PTO and Classroom Parents/Guardians and Volunteers

The PTO is an organization composed of parents/guardians and teachers who work together to support programs of the Religious School. The PTO is headed by a chairperson who coordinates programming with the school calendar, in consultation with

the Director of Youth & Family Learning. PTO is open to all families with children in the Religious School, and active participation is encouraged. For more information, contact PTO President Sara Rothenberg at cszpto@gmail.com.

You are invited to become a **classroom parent/guardian**. Classroom parents/guardians coordinate and help with activities such as snacks and special class events. If you are able to help our school by serving as a classroom parent/guardian or assisting with other school programs or activities, please contact Devorah Glanz at dglanz@shaarezedek.org

Thank you for reading through our Religious School policies. We look forward to having you in class this year!