

Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom



Parent and Student Manual for Religious School

2011-2012

Dear Parents,

The teachers and I would like to welcome you and your children to Religious School at Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom.

As a synagogue, we share 5000 years of history, culture, theology and values. We are entrusted with the responsibility of giving our children a quality education. Our opportunity to do so is limited by the number of hours we have contact with our students.

Formal religious education and home experiences are a partnership in developing a child's religious identity and education. You are the key factor in motivating your children to attend school on a regular basis. Being involved in their classes, helping them with their homework assignments, encouraging them to participate in special activities and attending services with them will serve to reinforce and support the class instruction that we provide. It is our role to expose the students experientially to what it is and what it means to be a Jew. It is your role to communicate to them the beauty of Jewish family life.

We look forward to seeing all of you once school has begun. If we can be of any help, please feel free to call us at the synagogue to arrange a time to meet.

Sincerely,

Judy Synnamon

Religious School Administrator

PLEASE NOTE: No handbook can cover every situation. Any special cases or oversights will be considered by the Rabbi, Administrator, and Religious School Committee on a case by case basis.

Dear Parents,

It is a pleasure to welcome you for another year of religious school at Reform Congregation Oheb Shalom.

It is our hope that this handbook will provide you with some of the basic information and policies of the Religious School. Please take the time to read the manual and to speak with Judy Synnamon or myself if you have any questions.

We look forward to an exciting, educational and fulfilling school year.

L'Shalom,

Brian I. Michelson

Rabbi

Mission Statement

“You Shall teach them (the commandments) to your children...” This quote, found in the Torah and in our Prayer book, commands us to teach our children. Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom values the education of our children.

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom provides a well rounded liberal Jewish education. It offers a balanced program of instruction in Jewish religious concepts, Hebrew and basic Reform religious practices.

Religious School Goals

- To provide our Religious School students with a Comprehensive Jewish education, in accordance with the teachings with Reform Judaism.
- To instill a love of and pride in Judaism through our Religious School curriculum and instruction in the areas of history, theology, liturgy, and cultural acts.
- To create pride in our heritage and strengthen Jewish identity so that our children will practice Judaism throughout their lives.
- To teach values, ideals and ethics that are the foundation of a Jewish way of life.
- To provide Hebrew language instruction to our students with the goal of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and comprehending basic Hebrew prayer for life as an educated adult Jew.

RCOS Jewish Studies Curriculum

Each grade has a distinct curriculum as described in the next few pages. For such topics as holidays, Israel, mitzvot and Torah, we employ an educational technique known as a spiral curriculum. This means that some form of the subject is taught every year – examining different aspects of the subject in an age appropriate way. Some years, depending on enrollment, two grades may be combined and the focus topic will be adjusted accordingly.

Pre-K & Kindergarten

These introductory years, with classes meeting twice a month, allow young students to explore and express their Judaism in a wide variety of ways. Over the two years they will study the Jewish holidays and mitzvot at an age appropriate level.

1st Grade – Students will explore the building blocks of Jewish life including life-cycle events, Israel, mitzvot, Jewish symbols, and the synagogue. The **Chai** curriculum will be implemented in this class supporting the themes of Torah, Avodah and G'milut Chasadim.

2nd Grade – focuses on Torah. We learn how a Torah is created, how we treat it, its stories and commandments, and how to incorporate them into our daily lives.

3rd Grade – Whether it begins at a wedding, a Bat Mitzvah or a grandparent’s funeral, children have questions about life-cycle events. In third grade, students are led on a tour through the most significant milestones in a Jewish life.

4th Grade – Israel is not just a country, but our spiritual homeland. Students will explore all aspects of the land of Israel, from its founding as a state to its modern day situation. Students will study the diversity of cultures and geography in this sacred land. The fourth grade Israel strand of the Chai curriculum will be implemented in this class.

5th Grade – The study of Torah will be revisited this year, as students are better able to examine its values and lessons in a more in-depth manner. In addition, Prophets and the weekly Torah portion, Parashat ha Shavuah, will be incorporated.

6th Grade – Students will continue their journey through the Hebrew Bible concentrating on the prophets. This will be incorporated into a voyage through Jewish history beginning in Jerusalem in the first century C.E. through the end of the twentieth century.

7th Grade – The curriculum this year will be divided between a study of American Jewish history from Colonial times to the present day, and the Holocaust and its impact on world Jewry.

Sixth and Seventh graders will also learn about mitzvot or commandments. They will expand their knowledge about these commandments on a mature level. The goal of this class is to transmit the essence of Jewish values and practices.

Art and Music Curriculum

Art and music can be a very powerful way of expressing and exploring our Jewish heritage. Student-Cantor Josh Finkel will provide our music curriculum. Age appropriate art experiences will be provided in the classrooms.

Library

Every two weeks, children will have library time during which they will select Jewish themed books to borrow. Books will be due two weeks later at the next library session. Parents are encouraged to purchase a book for the library in honor of a special occasion. This enables the schools library to grow. Parents are also encouraged to visit our library with their children and check out books together.

Hebrew Curriculum

Hebrew is incorporated into our Sunday morning program at all levels. In the **younger grades**, Hebrew is taught in an informal manner through songs, games, and prayer. Beginning in **second grade**, students are taught in a more formal manner concentrating on identifying the letters and knowing their sounds

Grades 3 and 4 will have the bulk of their Hebrew language instruction on Tuesday afternoons. Beginning this year, grades 6 and 7 will have their Hebrew language instruction on Sundays, and split their religious school curriculum between Sundays and Tuesdays.

In **third grade**, students add a second day of instruction on Tuesdays. Each class builds on the material learned the year before. Upon completion of the Hebrew series we are using, students will be able to:

- Read fluently from the Siddur
- Translate key prayer vocabulary
- Identify important roots, prefixes and suffixes
- Explain the theme of each of the prayers
- Connect the prayers with Jewish values
- Understand the sequence of the service and participate comfortably in the service
- Chant from the Torah using trope

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom believes that education is a necessary part of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah process. The earlier a student starts learning about his or her religious background the more meaningful the Bar/Bat Mitzvah. A minimum of three successfully completed years, not including the year of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, of Jewish education is required of all Bar and Bat Mitzvah candidates.

Any synagogue Religious School (including Hebrew) or full-time Jewish day school education may be applied to this requirement. During the fifth grade year, the rabbi will meet with all potential Bar/Bat Mitzvah families to introduce the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process, its requirements, and expectations.

Confirmation

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom values the continued religious education of our students during the teenage years. We expect all students to continue their education through Confirmation. Confirmation is not a reward for having a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Rather, it is a continuation of the Religious School curriculum for eighth, ninth, and tenth graders. Students must have successfully complete the seventh grade curriculum before enrolling in Confirmation.

This year, confirmation will continue to be a two part program. For the majority of class time we will be participating in the communal Gratz Jewish High School program Sunday evenings at the JCC. We believe that this is an exciting opportunity for our students. It will allow students from the entire Jewish community to gather and learn together. The Gratz program is open to students in grades eight through twelve. Information and registration forms for the Gratz program are available through the Jewish Federation.

In addition, to maintain the link and foster interaction between the rabbi and the students from RCOS, the rabbi will meet with all RCOS students once a month before the Gratz program. Dinner will be provided and there will be a short program for the Temple's students. This program, hosted at the same location where Gratz is meeting, will meet eight times for approximately an hour. Registration for the supplementary program is through the Temple's Religious School.

The climax of the program is the Service of Confirmation held around Shavuot every year. The service is created and directed by the students. Students are required to participate in both programs to be eligible to be confirmed at the end of the tenth grade.

Homework

Homework may be assigned in moderate amounts on both Sunday and Tuesday. Homework assignments are part of the curriculum and will benefit your child in the learning process. Students should also practice reading Hebrew at home.

Please remember that Jewish education is a collaboration between the family and community. Your participation is *essential* in your child's education. Please discuss assignments and studying with your child and make sure that all work is completed by the appropriate date.

Students should arrive at each religious school or Hebrew class with all necessary books, folders, notebooks, and pens or pencils.

Progress Reports

Each student will receive a written progress report from his or her teacher(s) at mid-year and at the end of the year. Please go over the reports carefully with your child and feel free to contact the teacher(s) or religious school administrator with any questions or concerns.

Special Concerns

The atmosphere of a student's home molds the child's attitude toward religious education. A positive parental attitude will greatly enhance his/her religious school experience. We feel that the best atmosphere for the education of our children is one that fosters freedom of expression, positive interpersonal relationships and mutual respect for teachers and peers. In order to support the teachers' efforts, please advise them of any special conditions that might have an impact on your child's behavior (for example, a learning disability, family disruptions, etc.)

Discipline

If a student breaks the rules during a particular class session, the teacher will take the following action:

1st and 2nd occurrences

Verbal warning is given along with attempts to individually discuss alternative behavior.

3rd occurrence

The child will be sent to the office. The child's parents will be notified.

If a student is continually disruptive, the religious school administrator will have a conference with the teacher and the student to determine the problems that exist and mutually resolve them. Issues that cannot be resolved in this manner may be referred to the Religious School Committee and the Rabbi for further action.

Attendance

Continuity is an important factor in a student's learning process and we therefore require regular attendance. Students must attend at least 75% of both Sundays and Tuesdays.

Students who do not meet this requirement must make up assignments during the school year or over the summer for the school year to be considered successfully completed. It is very difficult for children to keep up with the curriculum if they are not regularly attending.

Exceptions to this policy will be considered on an individual basis by the Administrator, Rabbi and Religious School Committee chair.

Please help our school run smoothly. School is in session from 9:00 AM to Noon on Sundays and 4:15 to 6:00 PM on Tuesdays. Having your child here on time is essential. Children may be dropped off up to fifteen minutes prior to the start of class and should be picked up promptly.

Dress Code

The primary responsibility for appropriate dress and grooming lies with parents and individual students. The Religious School of RCOS aspires to a standard of good grooming that will reflect in a positive way upon the student, his/her home, and the synagogue. Students are required to dress and groom themselves in a manner which meets standards of safety and health and which does not cause disruption to the educational process.

Hats, bandanas, or clothing that contain words or symbols that are profane, obscene or sexually explicit or make reference to drugs or alcohol, or which by their nature disrupts attention from the educational process of the school are not considered appropriate attire. Please remember there is a short service as part of the curriculum on Sunday mornings. Students should be appropriately dressed for a service and the sanctuary.

Snack

There will be a Haf'sekah (break) on both Sundays and Tuesdays. If you wish, you may send a snack with your child to be eaten during this time. Snack will be available for purchase on Tuesdays during Haf'sekah. The price of snacks will be \$.50 each.

Service Attendance

Jewish education is more than learning in the classroom; it is about being part of a community.

As a congregation, we come together most frequently for worship services. Therefore, it is highly recommended that students attend at least eight Shabbat services over the course of the academic year. For our young students (Pre-K thru 1st) attendance at Tot Shabbat may also be counted.

All of the students who have attended the minimum requirement of eight Shabbat Services by **May 20th** will be invited to a celebration Breakfast with the Rabbi.

All grades will be leading a Shabbat service during the year. Grades 1-4 will lead an early service (6:00 PM), after which there will be a pot-luck dinner open to the entire congregation. Although RSVPs for the dinners are made through the office, parents from the class are responsible for any necessary coordination of the dinner. Grades 5-7 will lead a service held at the regular time (7:45 PM), after which there will be an Oneg for the congregation. Families from these grades are expected to organize the Onegs.

Children are expected to behave not only at the service, but during the dinner/oneg. Running in the hallways and playing in the bathroom are not permitted. We ask parents to monitor their children's behavior.

**** WHEN YOUR CHILD ATTENDS A SHABBAT SERVICE PLEASE ASK THEM TO SIGN IN ON THE APPROPRIATE PAGE IN OUR SHABBAT ATTENDANCE BOOK LOCATED IN THE BACK OF THE SANCTUARY. THIS WILL ENABLE US TO TRACK SHABBAT ATTENDANCE.**

Tzedakah

One of the goals of our religious school program is to help students understand Jewish values such as G'milut Chasadim (acts to make the world a better, holier place).

Every classroom has tzedakah box and we encourage every child to bring in tzedakah weekly. The organizations that have benefited from our tzedukah in the past are: Food Bank of Berks County, Meals on Wheels, Opportunity House, Family Promise and Haitian Relief.

In addition to collecting money, classes will participate in other tzedakah projects during the year. Please lend your support and encouragement to facilitate your child's participation and increase his or her understanding of the meaning of tzedakah.

Communication

Nothing ever works perfectly. It is vital that any concerns you may have be addressed in an appropriate manner. Your first contact should be your child's teacher. If your concerns are not addressed, please feel free to speak with the school administrator or the Religious School Committee chair. Please remember that change can take time. We are all here to make your child's Jewish education the best it can be.

Inclement Weather

In the case of inclement weather, we will follow the Wyomissing School District closings. Example: if the Wyomissing School District cancels all classes on a Tuesday, we will also be closed. If they delay morning classes, we will be having class. If you are unsure about a Sunday class, please call the synagogue number 610-375-6034. If we will not be having class, there will be a message on the synagogue voice-mail by 7:45 AM.

**School Starts
September 11th**

See you then!

**REFORM CONGREGATION OHEB
SHOLOM**

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610-375-6034
www.ohebsholom.org

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

President	Scott Davis
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Secretary	Alan Seltzer
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Rabbi	Brian Michelson
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Religious School Committee Chair	Jeff Weizer

