



Parent Handbook 2023-24 / 5784

Shaare Tefila Congregation
16620 Georgia Ave Olney, MD 20832
www.shaaretefila.org

Dear Friends,

Welcome to another year of religious school at Shaare Tefila! We are so happy to have your child(ren) back with us for another year of Jewish learning and living. It is our goal to provide an enriching and engaging experience for all involved, ultimately strengthening each student's Jewish identity and sense of community.

My door is always open if you have any questions or concerns.

B'Shalom,
Babette Cohn, Director of Education and Programming
bcohn@shaaretefila.org
301-593-3410 x106
703-593-5834 (during school on Sundays)

Faculty 5784

Emily Keehn - Kitah Katan Alef
Tzophia Leibtag & Doniella Zak - Kitah Na'ahroot
Sonya Leikin - Kitah Gimel
Leora Rothschild - Kitah Alef
Talia Shapiro - Kitah Bet
Adrienne Suson - Music

Education Committee

This committee provides guidance and support to our school. Contact: Elissa Wolf, Education VP elissa.beekman@gmail.com

Class Schedule

Grades K-2: Sundays 9:30-12:00

Grades 3-7: Sundays 9:30-12:00, plus 30-45 minutes of Hebrew tutoring online each week.

Teens: Sundays, 9:30-12:00, twice a month for classroom topics and field trips.

Special Needs and Tutoring Program

At Shaare Tefila we do our best to meet the needs of all students. We work with parents, students, and teachers to integrate every student into our school. If your child has a special need of any kind, let us know so suitable arrangements can be made. We strive to provide all our students with an enriching and meaningful Jewish education.

MISSION STATEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Our mission is to provide the children of Shaare Tefila with:

- A familiarity and knowledge of Jewish traditions,
- Love and respect for Torah,
- Connection to the people of and the land of Israel,
- An understanding of Jewish history and
- Fostering a sense of responsibility to our world through *Derech Eretz* (ethical decency) and *Tikkun Olam*.

With a focus on achieving a deeper understanding of what is being studied, our goal is to discover the very essence of what it means to live a Jewish life. Taking guidance from the Torah, adhering to the idea of [Na'aseh V'Nishma \(we will do and we will understand\)](#) our children will explore the many facets of Judaism through acts of *chesed* (kindness), performing *mitzvot* and actively engaging in *Limud Torah* (learning Torah), thereby building a solid connection which will remain with them long after they graduate from our school. Our aim is to help children gather the tools they need to engage in building a strong Jewish identity and knowledge base in order to lead active Jewish lives.

BUILDING SACRED COMMUNITY

When your child is with us at Shaare Tefila they are part of a *Kehilah Kedoshah* (sacred community). The goal of building a sacred community is at the core of our approach to classroom management.

Classroom Atmosphere

We strive to create a place where students can grow Jewishly and enjoy the community of their classmates in a nurturing and supportive environment. The atmosphere in our classrooms should be *heimish*, positive, relaxed, and respectful. Students are expected to participate in all activities and follow teacher instructions. Teachers should work towards making their classroom a *makom kadosh* (holy place), taking into account ways to bring holiness to classroom space and time. All staff, parents, and students are expected to act like *mentchen* and treat each other with respect and *kavod*.

Core Values

Teachers will utilize the following Jewish value terms in their classrooms on a regular basis, using them as the core for discussions about behavioral expectations.

➤ *KEHILAH KEDOSHAH*

We are a "holy community".

➤ *SHALOM BAYIT*

"peace in the house"

➤ *KAVOD*

"respect" or "honor"

➤ *CHESED*

"kindness" or "loving kindness"

קהילה קדושה

שְׁלוֹם בַּיִת

כְּבוֹד

חֶסֶד

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

We are fully committed to personally supporting each Chavaya student on his/her/their individual journey of Jewish growth and involvement. As our partners in Jewish education, we hope that you will support our policies, which have been developed to maintain school quality and ensure that each student receives a meaningful Jewish education.

Arrival

Classes start promptly at 9:30 a.m. Please be considerate of our limited class time by dropping off your child promptly. It is disruptive to the class when students come in late. Thank you in advance for your support in valuing our time together.

Parents or a responsible adult are always welcome to walk their child(ren) to their classroom.

Books and Materials

Books are provided to students as needed according to their curriculum, and the cost each year is included in their tuition fees. If a book is lost, you are asked to purchase a second copy. Students are responsible for bringing books to class when needed. We recommend that you give your child a tote bag to dedicate specifically for Chavaya books and materials.

Cell Phones

In general, students may not use cell phones during class time. Upon teacher request, students will deposit phones in the provided container when they enter the classroom and retrieve the phone when class is dismissed.

Teachers will permit students to use phones as needed to participate in class activities (e.g., online research, Kahoot games) or when the teacher deems it appropriate. Students will comply with teacher instructions concerning device use.

If a student violates this policy, the teacher will give the device to the Director of Education & Programming. The first time the device will be returned to the student at the end of the class. The second time the parent will be called and the device will be given to the parent at pick-up.

In an emergency students may have their phone to contact the parent. Parents should call or text the Director (703-593-5834) if they have an important message

to relay to their child.

Communications

Regular communication with parents is an important means of empowering parents as partners in their child's Jewish education. We will provide:

- Introductory e-mails from your child's teacher/s.
- A meeting for parents on the first day of classes to orient you to the year ahead.
- Weekly school e-mail communications - our 'Chavaya Happenings' weekly updates. These e-letters will inform you of upcoming activities and programs of interest. Teacher updates are also included in these newsletters.
- Our monthly synagogue newsletter, 'The Shofar.'
- Be sure to "like" the Shaare Tefila Facebook page, follow us on Twitter, Instagram & Pinterest, and subscribe to our YouTube channel.



Dismissal

Please arrive promptly at 12:00 p.m. Late parents make students nervous and prevent our staff from leaving at the appropriate time. **All students will be taken to the Winer Gallery for dismissal.** If your child needs to be picked up early, please send an email to Babette Cohn, bcohn@shaaretefila.org. If someone other than a parent is picking up a child, the office needs a written note.

Dress Code

Kippot - Children of all genders are expected to wear a kippah while they are in the building on Sundays. They are free to bring one from home or use one they will receive at school.

Jackets - We are blessed with a wonderful outdoor space. Weather permitting, classes will often spend time outside; be sure you send your child with appropriate outerwear so they can be comfortable.

Field Trips

Field trips are a way for students to gain firsthand information about topics we are studying. As an experiential school, field trips are an integral part of our program. Transportation for some field trips may be the responsibility of the parents; we will create carpools wherever possible. Other field trips will be taken by bus. Parents are invited to participate as chaperones on our outings as well.

Thank you for supporting our trips (and joining us) as our curriculum is enriched in this manner.

Fire Drills

Fire emergency instructions are posted in every classroom. There will be at least one fire drill exercise conducted during the school year.

Inclement Weather

Shaare Tefila follows MCPS when deciding whether to close due to inclement weather. If MCPS activities are canceled on Sunday, then school will be canceled. We will utilize email, text, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to announce a school closing.



Photo/Video Policy

Many photographs and/or videos of the children are taken during the school year. In addition, videos of special programs and/or field trips may be taken. Chavaya may publish such photographs, or videos in various forms, including, but not limited to, a bulletin board display, a posting on the shul's websites or in newspapers or magazine materials. There is an opportunity to opt-out on the registration form each year.

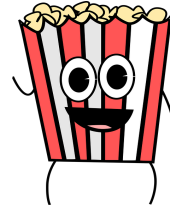
Safety Protocols - One of our priorities is to keep the children of Shaare Tefila safe to the best of our ability. The policies listed here are intended to help us meet that goal:

- **Arrival** - Parents or a responsible adult are always welcome to walk their child(ren) to their classroom. Please arrive promptly at 9:00 a.m.
- **Background Checks** - All staff and volunteers are required to do a background check ahead of time.
- **Dismissal** - Please arrive promptly at 12:00 p.m. Late parents make students nervous and prevent our staff from leaving at the appropriate time. If someone other than a parent is picking up a child, the teacher needs a written note. **All students will be taken to the Winer Gallery for dismissal.** If your child needs to be picked up early, please send a note to the teacher that morning and an email to Babette Cohn, bcohn@shaaretefila.org.
- **Finger Printing** - All staff members are required to be finger printed.

Snack Policy

All our classes will have time for a 5-10 minute snack break. This provides an opportunity for the class to learn blessings, to socialize, build community, and to enjoy informal sharing. Parents send snacks with their children each week following our guidelines to be nut-free and heckshered.

Chavaya follows the Conservative Movement's guidelines for Kashrut. Any questions in this area will be referred to Rabbi Layman.



Options:

We recommend sending in water along with one of these snack items:

- graham crackers
- pretzels, crackers
- cheese and crackers
- fruit
- fruit roll ups
- veggies and dip
- mini bagels and cream cheese

No food with nuts or food made in a facility that processes nuts are allowed in the classrooms. Please check the labels!

Teen Program

Our teens meet Sundays approximately twice a month during the Chavaya session. Our program includes learning in the classroom, social action projects, and field trips which support learning objectives.

Tzedakah (Charity)

Tzedakah money will be collected weekly to encourage our students to give regularly to their selected organization. Any amount of tzedakah is greatly appreciated.

CONNECT TO YOUR SHAARE TEFILA COMMUNITY

B'nai Mitzvah Preparation and Celebration

Rabbi Layman meets with the families of all 7th graders at the beginning of the year to review expectations. Students learn with the Cantor, supplemented by their online tutor, to lead a Shabbat morning service. As Jewish learning is a lifelong endeavor, all 7th grade students are required to complete the year no matter when they become a b'nai mitzvah. It is respectfully requested to invite all the 7th grade students in the class to your child's b'nai mitzvah celebration. A class list can be obtained from the office.



Junior Congregation Participation - 2023-24 Dates - 10/14, 11/18, 12/16, 1/20/24, 2/24, 3/16, 4/20, 5/18

Children are invited to attend the monthly Junior Congregation Shabbat service in our beautiful Baumgart-Grosberg Chapel. The service is designed to engage those in 3-7 grades but all ages are welcome! Of course, parents are encouraged to attend too.

Special Programming for All Ages

Shaare Tefila Youth Group

Our youth groups provide a nurturing environment where children gather with friends for activities that focus on having fun and promoting a strong Jewish identity. Children in grades 8-12 help plan their activities while children in grades K-3 and 4-7 have programs planned for their special ages.

Community Programs

Our community programs are designed to bring congregants of all ages together to celebrate and learn.

Contact Babette Cohn, Director of Education & Programming,
bcohn@shaaretefila.org, for more information on all special programs.