



Temple Emanuel of the Merrimack Valley

Dasha A. Baker, M.A. JEd.
Education Director

Religious School Handbook 5781/2020-2021



Yeder kind trogt zayn eygne brokhe arayn in der velt.

Each child carries their own blessing into the world,

{Yiddish Proverb}

וְשִׁנְנֶתֶם לְבָנֵיכֶם

Teach them faithfully to your children. {Deuteronomy 6:7}

Our Vision

Positive Jewish Learning for every student in our school.
We welcome students of all backgrounds and family structures as we learn about Jewish life and culture – prayer, holidays, stories, music, Torah, Hebrew, and so much more!

Religious School classes and events will be conducted virtually until TEMV leadership determines it is safe to return to the synagogue.

Student Learning Space: We ask that everyone act responsibly toward every area of the building, including classrooms, bathrooms, and public areas both within and outside our suite and building, and help to keep our spaces neat, clean, and cared for.

***Virtual School:** Students will need a well-lit distraction-free space and access to their own screen. Please ensure that pets, siblings, and household activities will not interfere with your child's learning.*

We will be sharing documents during classes and events, so a cell phone may not have a large enough screen. Contact the Education Director if you would like to lend or borrow a device. Borrower and lender names will be kept confidential.

Calendar: You will receive a complete school year calendar at the beginning of the school year, including dates of religious school and special services and events designed for your children and family. Please mark these on your family calendar to ensure your family will be free to take advantage of all offerings. Events will also be posted in the bulletin, on the Temple website, and via weekly reminders in the Chadashot.

***Virtual School** will follow the same procedure.*

Chadashot/חדשות: Chadashot means “news” – each week, you’ll receive an email with information about upcoming events and plans for the week. The Chadashot is also a great place to share information among school families – feel free to send your news along to the Director at educationdirector@temv.org for inclusion in the weekly email blast.

***Virtual School** will follow the same procedure.*

Arrival: School begins at 10:00 a.m., but students and their responsible adults are encouraged to arrive beginning at 9:45, which provides them with some vital socializing and community-building time. Please have your children at school by 10:00 a.m. If you know your child will be late, call or text Dasha at 857-928-7953.

***Virtual School:** Religious School Zoom sessions begin at 10:00. We will have a short schoolwide break following our prayer/song period. However, you and your child should feel free to log into the session beginning at 9:45 for additional socializing and community-building time.*

Dismissal: School ends at 12:00 p.m. – please be sure to arrive promptly for pickup so that our staff may leave on time. If you know you will be late, please call or text the Director.

***Virtual School:** Religious School ends at noon. Zoom sessions will be ended by the host. To protect student and family privacy, we do not record Religious School sessions.*

Absences: If your child will be absent, please notify both the Director and your child's teacher. Contact information for all staff is included at the end of the Handbook. If you know your child will be out on a date in the future, please let us know as soon as possible. Given our small class sizes, being informed of a child's absence will help teachers plan the day in a way that ensures the best experience for all of the students.

Keep in mind that many absences can make it difficult for students to feel connected to classmates or to master material. Try not to miss school unless it is absolutely necessary. If your child will be absent due to unique circumstances, please contact the Director and she will work with you to accommodate your family's needs.

***Virtual School:** If your child will be unable to join the Zoom session, please contact the Director and your child's teacher. If you know your child will be out on a date in the future, please let us know as soon as possible. Given our small class sizes, being informed of a child's absence will help teachers plan the day in a way that ensures the best experience for all of the students.*

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Derech Eretz: Derech eretz דְּרֵיכֵי אֶרֶץ means, "the way of the land," but really it is about respectful behavior. We hope to create an environment in which derech eretz is observed, and teachers and students feel respected and valued by each other at all times. All individuals have the right to experience respectful treatment and in return will act respectfully toward all others.

We hope everyone, both children and adults, will feel an integral part of our community. While we recognize close friendships often develop, we want to emphasize to both students and their families that no one should be excluded from social interaction. We – families and teachers – can teach this most important lesson by reinforcing this position at home, discouraging cliques, and modeling inclusion.

***Virtual School** will follow the same procedure.*

Learning Styles: Every child has unique strengths, and nearly every child has some unique learning styles or challenges. If your child has an IEP, health issue, or any other physical, emotional, or neurological challenge, we will accommodate them to the best of our ability. Please be sure to communicate your child's needs to the Director and teacher before school begins, or as early in the year as you are able.

***Virtual School** will follow the same procedure.*

Homework: The joy of Jewish learning is accomplished in class, at services, and through experiences that embody Jewish values. Since homework is generally not relished by students or parents/responsible adults and has not been proven to strengthen students' academic achievement, we will not give onerous homework assignments.

However, since Hebrew reading is a skill which requires practice like playing an instrument or mastering a sport, we do ask that your child in Grades 4 or above **spend 5 to 10 minutes at least 3 times per week reading from the homework sheets that will be sent home, OUT LOUD**. This practice will reap enormous dividends for your child. If you have any questions or concerns about Hebrew practice, please contact the Director and/or your child's teacher.

Virtual School will follow the same procedure.

Snack: There will be a very short break during the day for a healthy snack and drink. Please send your child with a drink and healthy nut-free snack such as pretzels, granola, crackers, or fresh or dried fruit.

Virtual School: Each class will have a short break in addition to the schoolwide break described above. Your child is welcome to eat or drink during breaks.

Materials: Students will be provided with all materials and textbooks, and are asked to keep most of these at temple to avoid loss. However, we do ask that you send a couple of sharpened pencils and a pocket folder for homework and notices each week.

Virtual School: Student materials and text books to be used at home will be provided to families following social distancing guidelines.

Tzedakah: Each week we will collect tzedakah (תְּדָקָה /charity) that will be donated at the end of the year toward a worthy project of the students' choosing. Please make sure your child has a bit of tzedakah money each week; \$1 is a suggested amount.

Virtual School: We will continue to collect tzedakah funds. Please make your donations to TEMV and indicate they are for Religious School Tzedakah.

Electronics: Our learning time is so precious, and we must maintain a distraction-free environment – please have your children leave their phones/games/electronics at home, or turned off and put away, when they come to school. Electronics may be taken away from students during class and returned to their parents/responsible adults at the end of the day.

Virtual School: Our learning time is so precious, and we must maintain a distraction-free environment – please have your child keep phones/electronics out of their learning area. Parents/responsible adults will be notified privately if such devices are being used.

School Cancellations: In the event of inclement weather or emergency an email will be sent by Sunday at 8:00 a.m. to the Religious School community:

From: Dasha Baker {educationdirector@temv.org}

To: Jo Rothman, Michelle Vlamis, Marylin Gallant, and Dayne Samuels

Cc: Rabbi Sparr, Robin Frisch, and Sue Corneliusen

Bcc: Religious School Families

Subject: Religious School is canceled.

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Message: Due to *circumstances* Religious School will not be meeting today. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. Be well and stay safe,
Dasha

If there is inclement weather Sunday morning, check your email or phone for notification. If we have more than one snow day, we may extend the school year by one week.

Virtual School: *If Religious School needs to be canceled due to Zoom technical issues, you will be notified as per above.*

Report Cards: Report cards will be sent home at the end of the school year. These will include a summary of material covered and a few words about your child's understanding of and interaction with the material.

Virtual School will follow the same procedure.

Library: We are blessed to have had an overhaul and reorganization of the library last year. There are many books for all ages, and you should feel free to borrow materials that you and/or your children will enjoy. If you would like to help us grow and update our library, please let us know – we are developing a wish list of more up-to-date titles.

Virtual School: *If you would like to borrow materials from the library, contact Robin Frisch, TEMV President, to make an appointment to visit the building.*

Services and Events: There are a number of services and events for our religious school students and families scheduled to occur outside of religious school hours. While your family is not obligated to attend these, they provide wonderful opportunities for whole-family involvement and closeness within our warm community. Many of these events also offer students a chance to demonstrate their newly-acquired skills and families a chance to *kvell* (beam with pride). At least one service per year is an all-school service, at which your child will be given a part – you are urged to attend this service if at all possible.

Virtual School will follow the same procedure with the following addition: *Family Programs will take place during Religious School. Please make every attempt to join Religious School Family programs. These programs are schoolwide, and siblings are encouraged to use the same screen and/or learning space.*

Family Involvement: There are many ways in which you can become involved throughout the year. Please consider attending Religious School Committee meetings or helping out at specific events. Even if you only have a small amount of time to share, your efforts are appreciated!

Virtual School will follow the same procedure.

Communication: You are welcome and encouraged to visit the school. Please let the Director know if you'd like to sit in on a class. If any problem or concern arises, please reach out as soon as possible so that it can be addressed. Feel free to phone or email the

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Director or your child's teacher to share any concerns, questions, comments, or encouragements. Your child's teacher or the Director will contact you with any challenges about your child so that we can work together to ensure your child and their classmates have positive Jewish learning experiences at our religious school.

Virtual School will follow the same procedure.

Feel free to contact us with any questions or for further information.

Dasha A. Baker, Education Director

educationdirector@temv.org

857-928-7953

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Rabbi Robin Sparr

temvrabbi@gmail.com

508-650-8894

Pronouns: she/her/hers