



Religious School Handbook 2020-2021

A: Staff

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B: Community

Derech Eretz: Derech erez means, “the way of the land,” but really it is just the Jewish way of describing the kind of respectful behavior to which we aspire. We hope to create an environment in which *derech erez* 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 also 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.

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 parents that no one should be excluded from social interaction. We – parents and teachers – can teach this most important lesson by reinforcing this position at home, discouraging cliques, and modeling inclusion.

Health and Safety: There is no higher value in Judaism than *pikuach nefesh*, saving a life. Therefore: if your child is unwell, please keep them home. TEMV also requires the same vaccinations schedule as public schools in Massachusetts. If your child is not vaccinated, you must report that to the director with a letter from your child’s physician explaining why. We also ask that all visitors to our space wash hands upon entering, and we ensure students wash hands frequently during school.

Communication: We are always happy to hear from you with any feedback, comment, suggestion, or question. Please reach out as often as you wish, and do not delay contacting the director as soon as any problem or concern arises so that it can be addressed promptly.

Each week, you'll receive an email called *Hadashot* (which means "news") with information about upcoming events and plans for the week. The *Hadashot* is also a great place to share information among school families – feel free to send your news along to the director for inclusion in the weekly email blast.

Parental Involvement: There are many ways in which you can become involved throughout the year. Please consider attending 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! You are welcome and encouraged to visit the school. Please let the director know if you'd like to sit in on a class.

C: Time

Calendar: You will receive a complete school year calendar at the beginning of the school year (and can also view and download it [here](#)), 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 publicized in the bulletin, on the temple website, and via weekly reminders in the *Hadashot*.

Arrival and Tardiness: School begins at 10:00am, but children and their adults are encouraged to arrive beginning at 9:45, which provides them with some vital socializing and community-building time. Please endeavor to have your children at school **BEFORE 10:00am**. If you know your child will be late, please email or text the director.

Dismissal: School ends at 12:00 noon – please be sure to arrive promptly for pick-up so that our staff may leave on time. If your student will need to be released early, kindly alert their teacher and the director as soon as possible. If you are running late for pickup, please be sure to inform us right away.

Absences: If your child will be absent, kindly email both the director and your child's teacher (contact information for all staff is included above). 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.

School Cancellations: If school must be cancelled due to inclement weather or other emergency, check your email or phone for notification. If we have more than one snow day, we may extend the school year by one week.

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 parents 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.

D: Learning

Curriculum: As a small school, we are able to design the curriculum with the unique needs of our learners in mind. Our program is designed to follow best practices of supplemental progressive Jewish education, including both traditional classroom learning and informal and family education opportunities. Our modified “one-room-schoolhouse” model includes developmentally-appropriate curricula for Hebrew reading and prayers, Torah, mitzvot, ethics, life-cycle celebrations, holidays, *t’filah* (prayer) and spirituality, and history. The school curriculum outline is posted each year on the website.

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, please know we want to 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.

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.

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) and has not been proven to strengthen students’ academic achievement, there will generally not be any 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 grade 3 or above **spend 5-10 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, particularly as they move toward preparing for b’nei mitzvah.

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

B'nei Mitzvah: It is our hope that all TEMV students will celebrate b'nei mitzvah. For additional information, including program guidelines, planning, and costs, please see our B'nei Mitzvah Handbook.

E: Miscellany

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 snack (pretzels, granola, crackers, fresh or dried fruit, etc.).

Tzedakah: Each week we will collect *tzedakah* (charity) which 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.

Electronics: Our learning time is so precious and it's hard to 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 parents at the end of the day.

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.

F: Pandemic Notes

Nearly everything in this book applies while we host school remotely for the 2020-2021 school year. Remote learning demands that we all make some additional accommodations, as follows:

Curricular and special project **materials** will be mailed or delivered to you, as soon as possible. You are also asked to ensure your learner(s) have all of their school materials and some pencils at hand, a fully charged computer, and that your learner is in a comfortable, quiet, and distraction-free location, with the best internet connection you can manage, and illumination behind their computer (so their face is bright/easy to see, and so that they are not backlit by windows, etc).

We also ask that all learners adhere to typical **zoom etiquette**, including using the chat responsibly, not using any filters, muting and unmuting when asked, keeping their video on (as appropriate), dressing appropriately, and letting teachers know when they will be stepping away for any needed bio breaks.

If you are having any **technical challenges**, be in touch right away. The admin is always happy to help you get connected or troubleshoot problems.