

Temple Aliyah
Religious School Parent Handbook
2011 – 2012
5772

PARENT HANDBOOK

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MISSION STATEMENT

Temple Aliyah's Religious School is committed to providing a comprehensive Conservative Jewish education in a positive, inclusive and creative environment. This education reflects and transmits Jewish values with the goal of teaching our children to be active participants in all aspects of Jewish life. In addition to instructing students in the practice of a range of mitzvot, our educational objectives include a sound knowledge of Hebrew and studies in prayer, Torah, history, customs, literature and traditions. We strive to create a next generation of life-long learners who are eager to remain connected to their synagogue, their community, Israel and Jews throughout the world.

DEREKH ERETZ

Our tradition promotes courteous, respectful behavior, called *derekh eretz*, toward all others. Demonstrating *derekh eretz* reflects the Jewish view that every individual has been created in God's image and is unique and special.

Temple Aliyah's Religious School strives to promote such behavior among students and teachers. Such an attitude toward others means respecting each other, accepting individual differences, being thoughtful and kind, and caring about the other's feelings.

The social interactions of teachers, parents, students and all members of the Temple Aliyah's Religious School are guided by the Torah and the teachings of the Conservative Movement. Teachers and learners serve as role models for one another. We resolve conflict through respectful interactions in a manner that maintains the dignity and self-image of all parties.

Teachers and learners are guided by two fundamental values:

1. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Every member of our temple community and every guest in our temple community are treated with respect and courtesy at all times. We are committed to creating a community where everyone is respected, accepted and included.
2. Do not destroy. We are committed to respecting the personal property of every member of the community as well as the public property that we share. The synagogue is a sacred space. Our words, actions and behavior reflect the sacredness of the community we share.

If students behave in a manner that is inconsistent with our fundamental values they will be asked to reflect together with an adult (either their teacher or the Director of Education) about how their behavior was inconsistent with our values, how their behavior made them feel and how their behavior might have made others in the community feel. Together, with the positive support of their teacher or the Director of Education, students will develop a plan for making amends for their behavior. Parents will be informed when such conversations take place so

that they too can support their child in making better decisions in the future.

In addition to respectful interactions, another way that we support the creation of sacred space within our learning environment is by making appropriate and respectful clothing choices. We ask that members of our learning community will not wear clothes that distract from the learning process. We ask that girls and women do not wear spaghetti strap tank tops, halters or have bare midriffs. We ask boys and men not to wear sleeveless shirts. We ask everyone to refrain from wearing short shorts or tee shirts with suggestive or offensive wording.

In keeping with Temple Aliyah's religious practice, boys and men are required to wear a *kippah* at all times in the building. Girls and women are invited to wear *kippot* as well.

EDUCATIONAL CHOICES

Temple Aliyah's Religious School offers an eight-year curriculum designed to expose students to many skills and experiences. It is our hope that our program of formal and informal education will help our students to become well-educated and active adult members of the Jewish community.

We recognize that families have many Jewish educational options to choose from. Some families choose to enroll their children in the eight-year Religious School program, others choose to enroll their children in Jewish Day School or in a Jewish After School program and some select the communal Gateways Special Education program, while others work with us to design a program of independent study (tutoring). Our primary goal is to help you, the parent, to make the best Jewish educational choices for your child while supporting your entire family in developing a supportive and nurturing relationship with the Jewish people in general and our synagogue community in particular, one that enhances your family's personal Jewish journey. It is the role of the Director of Education to support you in making Jewish educational decisions for your child and we are committed to maintaining an ongoing dialogue to make certain that your child benefits from the most appropriate educational experiences available.

MEETING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Temple Aliyah's Religious School is an inclusive environment, where students with a variety of abilities, learning styles and needs can access a dynamic and engaging Jewish educational experience in an environment that is respectful and supportive of individual differences. If a student has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or receives any accommodation in a public school we ask that you share this information with the Director of Education so that we can work with you and the classroom teacher to make any necessary accommodations for your child.

Marion Green taught Hebrew reading in our school for many years. All of our

educators are trained in Marion Green's pneumonicher mnemonic system for teaching Hebrew reading. Although originally designed specifically for students with reading challenges, we believe that all students benefit from Marion's program. Additionally, our educators are trained in The Responsive Classroom Behavior Management Program, the same program used in the Needham Public Schools. This is helpful to students as behavioral expectations, classroom routines and norms of social interactions at public school and religious school share a common language.

Many of our classrooms have a Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher, Teaching Aide or Madrich (teen assistant). Having two teachers in a classroom allows for individualization of assignments, small group instruction and more personal attention for each student. In addition, this means that students do not need to be taken out of their classroom to receive academic or social support. Instead, our goal is to meet the needs of each student within the classroom environment

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

At its core, Jewish learning is a family endeavor. The material and experiences that your child encounters within the classroom are only one part of their Jewish education. Your involvement in Temple Aliyah, your attendance at religious services and the many Jewish experiences your family has in the home all are critical to your child's education. The transmission of Jewish traditions and values to our children is all of our responsibilities and we look forward to partnering with you throughout the year. We encourage you to volunteer in the school, to join one of our congregational committees, and to join us for programming and religious services.

COMMUNICATION

Open and ongoing communication between parents, students, educators, and the Director of Education is critical to a successful educational experience. At the beginning of the year you can expect to receive an email from your child's teacher describing the overall classroom routine as well as a general description of the class content. Throughout the year bi-weekly emails describing the material covered over the past two weeks, previewing upcoming materials, and sharing specifics of upcoming programming, are sent from the Religious School. Teachers are in regular contact with families to share information about homework assignments and special events. In an effort to provide timely correspondence with families and also to be fiscally responsible and environmentally friendly, the Religious School communicates almost exclusively via e-mail.

We encourage you to maintain ongoing communication with your child's teacher and the Director of Education. While face-to-face conversations are often the best way to communicate questions, comments or concerns, the fastest and most efficient way to get in touch with your child's teacher or the Director of

Education is via email. We check email regularly and encourage you to drop us a note and let us know that you would like to set up a time to meet or to have a phone conversation. Please remember to include your phone number in your email. All teachers can be reached via their first name @templealiyah.com. Although you are welcome and encouraged to stop in at the beginning or end of classes to check in or just say hello, these are often busy times as we are focused on transitioning students into or out of class.

Formal progress reports are mailed home at the end of the first term (end of January) and at the end of school. Progress reports include both skill-based checklists and narrative comments.

FAMILY EDUCATION

Each year there are a number of opportunities for parents and children to engage in the teaching and learning process together. These programs are developed by the Director of Education and often include the involvement of the Rabbi, Cantor, classroom teachers and other special guests. One of the goals of our Family Education programs is to empower parents with Jewish skills and knowledge so that they feel comfortable as Jewish educators of their children.

Below are listed some of the programs that are being offered at Temple Aliyah this year. Please know that there are many other family programs offered by Temple Aliyah's Community Educator and other synagogue committees. These programs are designed for children and a parent or other adult. If you are unable to attend, please let the Director of Education know so that we can partner your child with another adult. We look forward to sharing these learning opportunities with you.

Temple Aliyah Family Education Programs

Mark Your Calendar...More information to follow

Sun. Sept. 25	Zayin Family Brunch	10:30-12:30
Sun. Nov. 6	Gesher & Gan Aliyah	9:00-10:30
Sun. Nov. 13	Bet Fam. Ed.	9:00-10:30
Sun. Nov. 20	Gimel Fam. Ed.	9:00-10:30
Sun. Jan. 8	Dalet Fam. Ed.	9:00-10:30
Sun. Jan. 8	Vav Fam. Ed #1	10:30-12:30
Sun. Jan. 22	Heh Fam. Ed.	9:00-10:30
Sun. Jan. 22	Vav Fam Ed. #2	10:30-12:30
Sun. Feb. 5	Vav Fam. Ed #3	10:30-12:30
Sun. Feb. 12	Zayin Fam. Ed. ADL	10:30-12:30

Sun. Mar. 11

Vav Fam. Ed #3

10:30-12:30

Sun. Mar. 29

Gimel Fam. Ed

9:00-10:30

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The overall goal of the Religious School is to prepare students to be knowledgeable, caring and participatory adult Jews, ready to take their place as eager members of the various Jewish communities they will encounter. The three pillars of Jewish life, Torah (Jewish wisdom) and its study, *avodah* (Jewish prayer) and *g'milut chasadim* (Jewish values and actions), are the foundations of our curriculum. This curriculum grid gives you an overview of the content of each class.

OVERVIEW	Living / Values	Tefilah	Hebrew	Israel	Holidays	Bible	History
K-1	Self / Family	Daily Blessings & Prayers	Letter Recognition	Israel is a Country	Home Holidays	Bible Stories	N/A
2	TA Community	Special Blessings and Prayers	Letter/Sound Relationships	Israeli Cities	Synagogue Holidays Calendar	Selected Parshiyot	N/A
3	Local Jewish Community	Hineini Hebrew Book 1	Hineini Hebrew Book 1	Israeli Symbols	Holiday Rituals	Textual Sources Parasha HaShavuah	History of American Jews
4	My personal practice & values	Hineini Hebrew Book 1	Hineini Hebrew Book 1	Israeli Culture and Tradition	Holiday Textual Sources	Genesis/Exodus	History through Jewish Heroes
5	World Jewish Communities	Hineini Hebrew Book 2	Hineini Hebrew Book 2	See History	Holidays Around the World	Leviticus	History through World Jewish Communities
6	Life Cycle I	Hineini Hebrew Book 3	Hineini Hebrew Book 3	Israel Music, Art and Innovation	Holiday Liturgy	Numbers	Overview of Historical Periods
7	Life Cycle 1 & II	Holiday Liturgy	Let's Talk Live	See History	N/A	Deuteronomy	Overview of Historical Periods

HOMEWORK

Beginning this year each student will have a Homework Folder. The folder has two pockets, a To Go Home pocket and a Bring Back To Class pocket. Please help your child by checking for this folder after each class and by reminding your child to bring this folder to class each day. You will find homework assignments in the To Go Home pocket. Homework always reinforces the material covered in class. Often homework assignments are in the form of computer-assisted Hebrew reading practice. You will receive a CD that accompanies your child's Hebrew and Siddur text. Please keep it in a safe place and do not send it back and forth to school. Long-term homework assignments and projects will be given well in advance of their due date. You can expect to receive a description of the project requirements and a grading rubric in advance. If your child is ever having difficulty with an assignment or is unable to complete a homework assignment please communicate with the teacher as soon as possible. The goal of homework is to enhance, not to complicate, learning.

SPECIAL CLASS AND MILESTONE EVENTS

Throughout the year we celebrate specific milestones in our students' Jewish education. Students enrolled in the Religious School as well as those enrolled in Day School or other Jewish educational programs and their families are invited to participate in these joyful events. Below are the programs for this year.

Hat'halat Ha-Limudim (Beginning of Learning)—Welcomes kindergarten students into the joy of Jewish learning.

Gimel Kabbalat Siddur (Receiving the siddur) – Recognizes the special achievements of third grade students in learning to read Hebrew and the presentation of an inscribed copy of the congregational siddur, *Sim Shalom*.

Zayin Siyum Ha-Limudim (Ceremony of completion)—Marks the successful completion of seventh grade and the transition to Prozdor or a Jewish high school.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Within the classroom students explore the meaning of blessings and prayers, develop their prayer fluency and discuss the role of prayer in their lives. Throughout the year, as part of the classroom experience and special programs, students engage in prayer experiences, often with Cantor G. These learning experiences transform into sacred conversations with G-d when students and families attend religious services on holidays and Shabbat.

During the school year, each Shabbat that school is in session we offer three children's/youth services each Shabbat from 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. (The most up to date youth service schedule is posted on the synagogue website, www.templealiyah.com). Each service offers a significantly different davening experience. We invite families to select the service that best meets their child's learning needs.

1. Roberta Stein, our Hebrew College Intern, leads an active Shabbat experience for students in the primary grades and an adult. This service engages the imaginative minds and active bodies of young daveners through multi-sensory prayer experiences, songs, stories and activities. The service concludes with a mini-Kiddush.
2. Bill Lichtman leads this service that features a new siddur, *Siddur Kol Ha-Noar* (Voices of Children) and combines prayer, storytelling, creative dramatics and discussion. In this service the emerging curiosity, developing ability to engage in conceptual conversations, and expanding attention span of elementary students allow for a more in-depth exploration of the Shabbat morning liturgy.
3. Josh Edelglass, Assistant Director of Camp Ramah New England, combines the ruach of Shabbat at Jewish overnight camp with dynamic discussions based on

parashat hashavuah (the weekly Torah portion) and interactive games . This service engages maturing students in developing prayer leadership skills, in thinking critically about ethical questions and in creating their own davening community.

Temple Tots sponsors a number of additional prayer experiences. Shabbat Yeladim is a Shabbat Morning Experience for infants, toddlers and preschool age children. Shir-La-La is a Friday evening musical Kabbalat Shabbat for infants, toddlers and preschool age children. And Ruach Shabbat is a parallel Friday evening Shabbat service for older siblings of Shir-La-La participants. Please consult the synagogue website www.templealiyah.com for specific dates and times.

All children are invited to join the congregation for the conclusion of the sanctuary service and for Kiddush.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Gesher	Sun	9:00-10:30			
Bet	Sun	9:00-10:30	Wed	3:30-5:00	
Gimel, Dalet, Heh	Sun	9:00-10:30	Mon	3:30-5:30	Wed 3:30-5:00
Vav	Sun	10:30-1:30	Wed	5:00-7:00	
Zayin	Sun	10:30-1:30*	Wed	5:00-7:00	

- 12:30-1:30 Electives

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Escorting your child in and out of the building also gives you an opportunity to see the work displayed on bulletin boards in the hallways and classrooms, to chat informally with teachers and other members of the synagogue staff and to socialize with other parents. We invite all parents to accompany their children at arrival and dismissal. Parents of children in kindergarten, grades 1 and 2 are asked to walk their children to and from the classroom. The safety of every student is our primary concern. Parking is available in the lot in the front of the building. If you arrive before 8:45 am on Sundays or 3:15 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays please wait with your child until the teacher is ready to welcome students in to the classroom. If you live near the synagogue and want your child to walk home, we simply need a dated letter of permission.

ATTENDANCE AND EARLY DISMISSAL

Our classrooms are dynamic and engaging environments. Although we certainly understand that students sometimes need to miss class for medical appointments, family or social functions or other obligations, we encourage regular attendance so that your child can engage fully in the learning environment. If you know in advance that your child will be absent please let your child's teacher and the Director of Education

know so that we can provide the material that will be covered in class during your child's absence. If your child is ill and unexpectedly unable to attend class please be in touch at your earliest possible convenience. Again, we will work with you to provide any missed material. Our goal is to support your child's transition back into class after an absence.

We ask you to make every effort to follow the school schedule. Late arrivals and early dismissals, while sometimes necessary, can be disruptive for students. Again, advance notice and communication with your child's teacher and the Director of Education will help to ease transitions. We will be happy to help you identify a natural break in the rhythm of your child's class that would be least disruptive for a late arrival or early dismissal.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Each year classes are designed to reflect a balance of boys and girls and to combine students from the various schools represented in our community. Whenever possible, students will be grouped with at least one other student of the same gender from their secular school. If you have specific concerns regarding your child's class placement please speak with the Director of Education. We will certainly work with you to make the best possible class placement for your child.

BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

The book and supply fee is for texts, workbooks and other consumable materials. These materials are your child's to keep and we hope they will become part of your Jewish library. If a book is on loan to a student we will let you know that in advance and we ask you to please make sure your child returns the book at the end of they year. Some students find it easier to remain organized if they have a set of books to keep at home and a set of books to keep at school. If this is helpful to your child please be in touch with the Director of Education so that we can facilitate this accommodation.

The book and supply fee also covers materials such as loose-leaf binders, folders, paper, pencils, markers and other art materials. This year each student will be given a three ring binder and art supply box containing basic art materials and a supply of pencils that should be left at school. The cost of holiday celebrations, special programming and special art projects are also covered by this fee.

TZEDAKAH

Giving of time, talent, resources and voice are all important aspects of *tzedakah*. Throughout the year students and families will be invited to participate in hands-on social action projects, often lead by the Social Action Committee. These projects include contributing items to Family Table (Boston's Jewish kosher food pantry), Mitzvah Day and Nursing Home Visits. At the start of each class students are invited to contribute money to their class tzedakah box. Each month a different family will be asked to count the money and the class will explore various non-profit agencies, selecting one to benefit from their contributions.

SNACKS & CLASS PARTIES

Students are encouraged to eat healthy snacks before class and during designated snack times. In keeping with the synagogue's kashrut policy, all food and drinks brought into the building must be certified kosher, from an approved bakery, or in a package marked with an approved symbol of kashrut. A list of symbols of kashrut can be found on the bulletin board outside the main office. Although we know that students often want to share snacks with their classmates, because of food allergies we ask that students eat only the snacks that they have brought from home. If your child has a food allergy, please alert the classroom teacher and Director of Education so that we can work with you to make certain that the classroom is a safe place for your child.

From time to time teachers may request that students bring in particular food items for a class party or holiday celebration. These requests will be made via email or a personal phone call from the teacher. These requests are not meant to be a burden. If you are unable to assist at a particular time, please simply convey that to the teacher. Again, any food brought in for a party or celebration must be certified kosher, from an approved bakery, or in a package marked with an approved symbol of kashrut. Food for public consumption should not contain nuts or sesame products of any kind.

You are welcome and encouraged to send in a special snack to celebrate your child's birthday. Please be in touch with the teacher to coordinate.

SNOW DAYS

Temple Aliyah will cancel Religious School whenever classes are cancelled for the Needham Public Schools. If a decision is made to cancel school during a day in which public school is already in session, this information will be posted on the Temple Aliyah website in the banner on the home page. We will make every attempt to contact you by phone to confirm that you have received notice of the cancellation. Please make sure that we have your correct emergency numbers.

Information about our school cancellations can be heard on WBZ 1030 AM, (Sundays only), WRKO 680 AM, and can be seen scrolling at the bottom of the television screen on WCVB Channel 5, WHDH TV Channel 7, WBZ TV (Sundays only) and Needham Public Access. You can also check TheBostonChannel.com, whdh.com/stormforce. If you are uncertain as to whether or not there is school and you are unable to access the synagogue website, please call the office at 781-444-8522.

AWARDS

Every year Temple Aliyah gives a number of awards to students who have demonstrated excellence in certain areas.”

At the conclusion of each year, the Marcia Levin Memorial Award is given to one

outstanding student from each class, Gimel through Vav.

There are also several awards given at the Zayin Siyum at the end of each year. A special Marcia Levin Award and Scholarship to Prozdor is given to one member of the Zayin class who has shown excellent all-around academic work and who will be pursuing continued Jewish education.

The Diamond Family Hebraic Award, a scholarship towards Prozdor tuition, is given each year by Ruth and Ben Diamond in honor of their children, to a Zayin student who has demonstrated a love for Jewish learning and achievement in Hebrew language.

The Rick Park Memorial Award, which also carries a scholarship, is given by the Temple Aliyah Men's Club to a Zayin student who shows fine academic work and leadership.

The Cheryl Kramer Memorial Award given by the Temple Aliyah Sisterhood and Rick Kramer to a student who has demonstrated perseverance and consistent effort. This award carries a scholarship to the Prozdor High School.

At the Zayin Siyum, awards are also given for outstanding mitzvah work, outstanding progress, and for consistently demonstrating *derekh erez* (courtesy and respect) to fellow students and staff. These awards carry a gift certificate.

PASSPORT TO ISRAEL

For the past seventeen years, Temple Aliyah has participated in the Passport to Israel Program, which is sponsored by the Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP). This program allows the children of synagogue members to save for an educational trip to Israel during their teenage years. Participation in the program begins at either the Gimel or Zayin class level. Parents pay a predetermined amount of money to CJP through Temple Aliyah each year for three or seven years, depending on the date of enrollment. The payments made by the parents are matched by a combination of Temple Aliyah and CJP funds and accrue interest. The total amount contributed by the parents, Temple Aliyah and CJP, which usually exceeds \$2,000 by the time the student completes tenth grade, can be applied towards an educational trip to Israel, of which there are many to choose.