

# Temple Sinai Religious School Handbook

2009-2010

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# Mission Statement of Temple Sinai Religious School

Temple Sinai's Religious School is dedicated to enabling our children and their families to learn Jewish ethical values, Judaic studies and Hebrew under the guidance of professional teachers, engaging clergy and a thriving and supportive congregation, in an enriching environment that promotes a lifelong Jewish identity and desire for Jewish learning.

*- Approved by the Temple Sinai Religious School Committee, 4/12/01*

*Ben Zoma said, "Who is wise? The one who learns from everyone, as it says, 'From all who would teach me, have I gained understanding...'"*

*Psalm 119:99*

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## Kindergarten – Seventh Grade

### Opening Days

Welcome to Temple Sinai Religious School! Our opening day of school is Sunday, September 13, 2009. Beginning at 9:30 am, volunteers from the Religious School Committee will be waiting in the Atrium to greet and assist you and your children in locating your rooms.

Opening day is also for family fun! Start the day by accompanying your children to class to learn with them about what their curriculum will be, what supplies will be needed, and what homework is expected. Then nosh with us at our opening Barbeque as you meet our Education

Director, Melissa Cohavi, hear from our clergy, and network with other families. The opening day program and Barbeque will run as follows:

9:30 am—11:00 am: Students to class; parents meet teachers  
10:30 am: Parent orientation with Rabbi Disick & Educator Melissa Cohavi  
11:00 am: Fun, games and lunch begins!

The day will be full of information and fun for all – whether first-time or returning families.

#### First Days of School:

**Sunday, September 13, 2009**

See schedule above.

**Monday Afternoon Hebrew, September 14, 2009**

4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Grades, all classes begin at 4:00 p.m.

**Wednesday Afternoon Hebrew, September 16, 2009**

4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Grades, all classes begin at 4:00 p.m.

## Curriculum

The Religious School of Temple Sinai offers educational programming for children and their families, beginning at age five with Kindergarten, and continuing through Seventh Grade.

**Kindergarten through Third Grade** classes meet once a week on Sunday mornings. The curriculum of these four grades focuses on providing youngsters with a foundation of Jewish knowledge and experience, including *Shabbat* and the Jewish holidays, *Torah*, Jewish value concepts, music & worship, and oral/aural development of Hebrew skills. The letters and vowels of the Hebrew *alefbet* are introduced in both Second and Third Grade.

**Fourth through Seventh Grade** classes meet twice a week: Sunday mornings, and Monday or Wednesday afternoons. Both Judaic courses and Hebrew instruction are offered; the former include Jewish History, God, *Torah*, Israel, Life Cycle Events, the Holocaust, *Mitzvot* and Reform Judaism.

The goals of Hebrew instruction are fluent reading skills, understanding of the relevance and ethical values underlying the prayers, a basic foundation of prayer, a repertoire of Jewish value concepts, and a sense of belonging to *Am Yisrael*— the Jewish people.

In addition to classroom study, students and their families regularly join together for family education programs, family worship services, and special Holiday programs.

For a copy of the detailed curriculum, parents should contact Melissa Cohavi.

*"You shall teach them diligently to your children."  
Deuteronomy 6.7*

## Family Education

Each class has its own special day dedicated to family education; it is a program planned by each child's teacher, based on the year's curriculum. The family education days provide parents with a perfect opportunity to see first-hand what their children are studying, a rich Jewish learning experience to be shared by parents and children together, and a chance to network with other Temple Sinai families.

### Family Education Dates!!!

Kindergarten:	October 4, 2009, 9:00 a.m.
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade:	October 25, 2009, 9:00 a.m.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade:	December 6, 2009, 9:00 a.m. & 11:10 a.m.
3 <sup>rd</sup> , 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Participate in the Chavurah program

## Family *Chavurah* Program

This program meets three times each year for the 3<sup>rd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> Grade families. The goal of the *Chavurah* program is to build community within our Temple family, as well as for parents and children to spend some time together learning about ethics, values and other Jewish topics. The *Chavurah* program is led by Rabbi Marc Disick and Melissa Cohavi. All *Chavurah* programs begin at 9:00 a.m. unless otherwise noted, and the dates for this year are:

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009	<i>Indiana Ike and the House of Jewish Treasure</i>
Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009	<i>Chanukah Menorah</i>

Sunday, May 16, 2010	<i>Planting Flowers at Scofield Manor Residence</i>
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	
Sunday, Oct. 25, 2009	<i>Israel Map and Games</i>
Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009	<i>Chanukah Menorah</i>
Sunday, Apr. 4, 2010	<i>Raising a Mensch</i>
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	
Sunday, Nov. 8, 2009	<i>The Living Museum Project: A Trip to the Museum of Jewish Heritage</i>
Sunday, Dec. 20, 2009	<i>Chanukah Menorah</i>
Sunday, Mar. 7, 2010	<i>The Fifth Commandment: Honor Thy Mother and Father</i>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	
Sunday, Nov. 15, 2009	<i>Living Voices: Anne Frank</i>
Sunday, Feb. 7, 2010	<i>Kiddush Cup Project with Avi Zuckerman</i>
Sunday, Mar. 7, 2010	<i>Purim Lego</i>
<b>7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	
Sunday, Oct. 4, 2009	<i>Retreat Review, B'nai Mitzvah Family Education, or Paperclips movie</i>
Sunday, Jan. 31, 2010	<i>Movie: PROMISES</i>
Sunday, Mar. 7, 2010	<i>Purim Lego</i>
<b>8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	
Friday, Oct. 23, 2009	6:00 p.m. <i>Program and Dinner and Services</i>
Saturday, Jan. 16, 2010	5:00 p.m. <i>Havdallah Program</i>
Sunday, Mar 28, 2010	9:00 a.m. <i>Social Action program</i>

### Students with Special Needs

Parents of students with special needs are invited to meet with Education Director, Melissa Cohavi, to discuss ways the school can partner with the family to provide an appropriate and meaningful religious education for those students. It is Temple Sinai's practice to mainstream students with special needs in religious studies programs.

### Homework

Teachers do assign homework; the responsibility lies with every student to practice reading aloud Hebrew assignments a minimum of 10 minutes, three to four times a week, at home. Religious School assignments do not usually require more than a half hour a week. When larger projects are assigned, students are given an appropriate number of weeks for completion. It is the absent or early departure student's responsibility to contact his/her teacher to receive homework assignments and to make up any missed work.

*Rabbi Nachman ben Yitzhak said: "Why are the words of Torah likened to a tree?  
As it is said, 'It is a tree of life to them that grasp it.' "*  
*Proverbs 3:18*

### Worship Service Attendance

Students' attendance at worship services is strongly encouraged. In addition to complementing their religious education and Hebrew studies, attendance at services enhances their sense of belonging to both the Temple Sinai community and to the greater Jewish community. Service attendance helps students and their families understand and feel comfortable with prayer and ritual, an important part of preparing for *B'nai Mitzvah* and building a commitment to Judaism.

As a guideline, it is suggested that during the school year, students attend a number of services at least equal to the grade he or she is in at school, e.g., a fifth grader should attend services at least five times during the school year.

All students also have the opportunity to participate in a 30-minute worship service each week. In addition, all grades take part in a Family Shabbat Service during the school year.

### Tikkun Olam Program

The purpose of the Religious School *Tikkun Olam* (literally, "Repairing the World") Program is to provide each student the personal experience of both giving *tzedakah* (righteousness/charity) and doing *gemilut chasadim* (deeds of loving-kindness) in a way that ensures that they understand both as important Jewish values and actions. We strive through this program to develop compassion and the spirit of charity in our children.

Students are asked to contribute regularly to their Sunday class *tzedakah* fund; each class chooses the organization or cause to support with its funds. There is no established amount for this weekly donation, but parents are asked to monitor their children's donations (who sometimes may wish to be overly generous!)

The *gemilut chasadim* component of our program consists of school-wide community projects and community service

activities which students do together as a class.

*"Love your neighbor as yourself."  
Leviticus 19:18*

## Religious School Music

Music is an integral part of the Religious School program at Temple Sinai. Children participate in music activities both on Sunday and mid-week. On Sunday mornings during *tefillah*, students in grades Kindergarten through 3rd have both music and prayer. In addition, students in grades Kindergarten through 5th have separate music periods with Cantor Micah Morgovsky. On Monday and Wednesday afternoon *tefillah*, students in grades four through seven also have music at that time.

## Ruach Junior (RuJu)

Ruach Junior, more affectionately known as RuJu, is the children's choir. The choir is open to children of all ages, from Kindergarten through 7th grade & up! RuJu meets every Sunday that school is in session from 10:45 a.m. to 11:15 a.m. and is run by Cantor Micah Morgovsky. RuJu sings at services on the first Friday of each month, which generally begin at 7:00 p.m. For more information and to join RuJu, please contact Cantor Morgovsky directly at [cantor@templesinaistamford.org](mailto:cantor@templesinaistamford.org).

## B'nai Mitzvah

Because we believe that Jewish learning is a lifelong process, Temple Sinai's educational program strives to provide a rich learning environment, as well as a communal worship experience. To that end, we require that to become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*, a student must:

- ❖ have successfully completed four years, or the equivalent, of the Temple Sinai Religious School;
- ❖ be enrolled in Temple Sinai Religious School (or *Kulanu*) during the year in which the student will become a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*;
- ❖ have been tutored in Torah during the six months immediately prior to the date of the *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* ceremony.

*Bar/Bat Mitzvah* students and their families are also encouraged to take part in the following activities:

- ❖ Community service
- ❖ Attend worship services on a regular basis
- ❖ Participate in family educational programs
- ❖ Participate in a mitzvah project

The use of one-to-one tutoring as a substitute for meeting educational requirements is not encouraged; however, special needs cases should be referred to Melissa Cohavi, and/or Rabbi Disick.

## Attendance

Each child's regular attendance is expected and necessary to ensure educational continuity, reinforcement of learning, and sense of community in the class. If a parent knows that his/her child will be unable to attend a particular class session, it is important for the child's safety that you notify the Temple office, particularly since many of the Monday and Wednesday students come directly from their secular schools to Temple Sinai.

## Lateness

Each child's punctuality is expected. Late arrivals disrupt classes and disadvantage the tardy student as well. If punctuality is a consistent problem, e.g., due to secular school dismissal time, the child's teachers should be informed. Students who need to leave early *must* have a note from a parent to that effect, the note *must* be signed by Melissa Cohavi, and the child *must* be picked up at their classroom by their parent.

## Arrival & Dismissal

Parents, Temple Sinai cares about each child's safety! Kindergarten and First Graders must be accompanied by parents to their classroom before school and should be picked up from their classroom after school. Teachers will not allow someone other than a parent to pick up a child unless it has been pre-arranged with the school office (or on a child's registration form).

## Discipline

At Temple Sinai Religious School it is expected that all members of the school community treat each other with *kavod*— with respect and honor. Since it is believed that all people are created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God, every person is worthy of respect. Students are expected to behave in a way that demonstrates respect for their teachers, their classmates, and themselves. Teachers are committed to creating an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, one that can meet the educational needs of all students. Ongoing behavior problems will be referred to the Educator Melissa Cohavi, who will take steps to resolve them with the student and his/her family.

### **Progress Reports**

Progress reports are issued twice a year, at the end of the fall and spring semesters. These reports will hopefully foster communication between parents and teachers, and help to better plan for the individual growth and success of each student. Parents do not have to wait for reports, however, to communicate with their child's teacher about progress and happenings in the class.

### **Switching Class Sessions**

Temple Sinai regrets that it cannot honor requests to switch sessions even temporarily, e.g., Sunday first session students attend second session classes or vice-versa, or that Monday Hebrew students attend Wednesday sessions or vice-versa. The switching of sessions by students tends to be disruptive. It affects class size and the student-teacher ratio making the maintenance of discipline more difficult.

### **Class Schedule**

#### *Sunday Morning*

First Session: 9:00 a.m. — 10:50 a.m.

Second Session: 11:10 a.m. — 1:00 p.m.

#### *Monday Afternoon (4<sup>th</sup> — 7<sup>th</sup> Grades)*

All classes: 4:00 p.m. — 6:00 p.m.

#### *Wednesday Afternoon (4<sup>th</sup> — 7<sup>th</sup> Grades)*

All classes: 4:00 p.m. — 6:00 p.m.

### **Emergency School Closings**

Emergency school closings will be announced on the Temple Sinai website, and on WSTC 1400 AM in Stamford. Class will automatically be canceled on any day on which the Stamford public schools are closed or dismissed early due to a snow emergency. In special circumstances, a phone tree may be activated to notify parents of an emergency closing.

### **Fee Structure**

The fees for the school year 2009 — 2010 are as follows:

Kindergarten — Third Grade	\$535
Fourth — Sixth Grade	\$815
Seventh Grade	\$955

*Rabbi Chanina said, "I have learned much from my teachers,  
and from my friends more than my teachers, but from  
my students more than from them all."  
B. Talmud Ta'anit 7a*

## **Seventh – Twelfth Grades**

### **Junior SoSTY — Sinai of Stamford Temple Youth**

Junior SoSTY involves 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in the life of the synagogue and will help them enjoy the synagogue in social ways so they will continue to associate being Jewish with excitement and pride. Junior SoSTY starts our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders on their path to staying involved in the synagogue even after their Bar/Bat Mitzvah studies are complete; by going on to be a part of the senior youth group. This program creates a bridge for middle school students before they are old enough to be part of SoSTY, which begins in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade.

### **Senior Youth Group: SoSTY—Sinai of Stamford Temple Youth**

SoSTY's goals and values are wholly in sync with the goals and values of NFTY (*North American Federation of Temple*

*Youth*). In addition (and perhaps most importantly), SoSTY hopes to bring these goals and values right here to Stamford and to make Temple Sinai a second home for Jewish teens in Stamford and the surrounding areas. Goals and values are all well and good but in SoSTY, we practice what we preach by engaging in creative programming and social action.

Both of these youth programs embody the Jewish value of *K'lal Yisrael*, or Jewish solidarity. *K'lal Yisrael* literally means "all the people of Israel" and is the mitzvah of promoting Jewish unity. This mitzvah reminds Jews that they are responsible for one another no matter where they live or what they do.

SoSTY Membership Fee: \$36.00 per year

## Student-Teaching/Madrachim at Temple Sinai

The Hebrew term *Madrach* means guide. *Madrach* (male), *madracha* (female) are two versions of the same word. *Madrachim* is the plural form of the male and female words. A *madrach* is someone who helps Jewish learning happen in an informal way. All 8<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> Graders at Temple Sinai are eligible to become teaching assistants *madrachim*.

As a *madrach/a* in the classroom, the role is different than that of a student. In the classes in which our teens work, the younger students look up to them as role models. They are seen as people of authority. They are almost like a teacher, but not quite. Not a student, and not yet a teacher. There are periodic *madrachim* meetings throughout the year. *Madrachim* are volunteers in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, are paid in grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> for their service.

## Mitzvah Corps

This program meets **monthly** throughout the year from at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoons. The purpose of Mitzvah Corps is to provide 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students another on-ramp to involvement at Temple Sinai and in the Jewish community. Students will work with the Youth Advisor on various mitzvah projects at Temple Sinai and throughout the Stamford community doing the mitzvah of *Tikkun Olam* – repairing the world. The focus of this program is "learning and taking action." Projects can range from Midnight Runs to Habitat to Humanity, to clothing drives, to raising money for various causes.

The Mitzvah Corps program embodies the Jewish value of *Tikkun Olam*, or repairing the world. *Tikkun Olam* is the mitzvah of social action. It refers to all actions that benefit our society, and it includes all work that helps our local community as well as the deeds that aid the planet as a whole.

## Kulanu

Temple Sinai participates in a community-wide educational program, *Kulanu* ("All Together"), for students in 8<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grades. Classes are offered on Wednesday evenings, which are held on a rotating basis between the Temple Sinai and Temple Beth El. Temple Sinai students who complete this program through 10<sup>th</sup> grade are confirmed on *Shavuot*. Courses are offered on a variety of topics. For information, please contact Patty Goldstick, Director of Kulanu, at (203) 321-1373, extension 115.

## Confirmation

**At Temple Sinai there are two roads to Confirmation, which happens at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade year:** Participate in Kulanu in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and in 10<sup>th</sup> grade participate in Kulanu for the Confirmation year.

**And/Or** Choose two out of the other three youth options for students in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades:

Junior SoSTY/SoSTY, Mitzvah Corps, *Madrachim* Program and then participate in Confirmation class at Kulanu in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade year as a special course taught by Rabbi Disick and Melissa Cohavi in preparation for their Confirmation. Students are encouraged to develop and continue community service as a regular part of their lives. During the second semester, students work as a group with Rabbi Disick to create their own personal and meaningful service for their Confirmation, held on *Erev Shavuot*.

## Parental Involvement

### Volunteering

Those of us involved in Jewish education have learned that the more parents become involved in their children's education, the more children seem to value their learning. There are many ways to get involved in your children's Jewish education. Among them are:

- ❖ Volunteering to be a Class Parent
- ❖ Organizing the annual grade level *Tikkun Olam* community program, or
- ❖ Becoming a member of the Religious School Committee, which helps the Education

set the vision and programs that surround the Religious School curriculum.

Director

If you are interested in being involved in these or other class/school initiatives, please contact Religious School Committee Chair, Alan Barr ([candybarr@sbcglobal.net](mailto:candybarr@sbcglobal.net)).

## Adult Education

Adult Education classes encourage lifelong learning at Temple Sinai. Rabbi Marc Disick, Melissa Cohavi, and other qualified professionals conduct a wide variety of programs, workshops and seminars. Also offered are Interfaith Programs, *Torah* study, Hebrew, and a two-year program leading to an adult *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*.