



Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom Religious School Parent Handbook

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Our Leadership

President	Steven Cohn	
Vice President	Vicki Graff	
Treasurer	Bruce Cole	
Secretary	Alan Seltzer	
Rabbi	Brian Michelson	rabbi@ohebsholom.org
Religious School Director	Holly Michelson	school@ohebsholom.org
Religious School Committee Chair	Jessica Leisawitz	Jessicawarren4@gmail.com

Dear Parents,

The teachers and I would like to welcome you and your children to Religious School at Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom.

As a synagogue, we share 5000 years of history, culture, theology, and values. We are entrusted with the responsibility of giving our children a quality education. Our opportunity to do so is limited by the number of hours we have contact with our students. Formal religious education and home experiences are a partnership in developing a child's religious identity and education. You are the key factor in motivating your children to attend school on a regular basis. Being involved in their classes, helping them with their homework assignments, encouraging them to participate in special activities, and attending services with them will serve to reinforce and support the class instruction that we provide. It is our role to expose the students experientially to what it is and what it means to be a Jew. It is your role to communicate to them the beauty of Jewish family life.

We look forward to seeing all of you once school has begun. If we can be of any help, please feel free to call us at the synagogue to arrange a time to meet.

Sincerely,

Holly Michelson, RJE

Religious School Director

Dear Parents,

It is a pleasure to welcome you for another year of Religious School at Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom.

It is our hope that this handbook will provide you with some of the basic information and policies of the Religious School. Please take the time to read the manual and to speak with Holly Michelson or myself if you have any questions.

We look forward to an exciting, educational and fulfilling school year.

L'Shalom,

Brian I. Michelson

Rabbi

Mission Statement

“You Shall teach them (the commandments) to your children...” This quote, found in the Torah and in our Prayer book, commands us to teach our children. Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom values the education of our children.

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom provides a well-rounded liberal Jewish education. It offers a balanced program of instruction in Jewish religious concepts, Hebrew, and basic Reform religious practices.

Religious School Goals

The goals of our Religious School are:

- To provide our Religious School students with a comprehensive, egalitarian Jewish education, in accordance with the teachings of Reform Judaism.
- To instill a love of and pride in Judaism.
- To strengthen Jewish identity through active participation in Tikkun Olam (repairing the world).
- To teach values, ideals and ethics that are the foundation of a Jewish way of life.
- To provide Hebrew language instruction to our students with the goal of basic proficiency in reading and comprehending Hebrew prayer for life as an educated adult Jew.

Judaic Curriculum

I am so excited to share that this year RCOS will once again be partnering with Shalom Learning in offering our students a values-based curriculum for the entire school. This interactive, spiral, values-based curriculum helps children develop a positive Jewish identity.

The program is based on values we all share and include, among others, Shalom Bayit - Peace in the Home; Tzedakah - Giving to help others; Hakarat Hatov - Recognizing the Good; Teshuvah - Taking responsibility for your actions; and Koach Hadibbur - Understanding the power of words. We're also using resources from other Jewish sources to bring our students the most engaging and innovative Jewish educational content, including videos, text studies, blessings, and stories.

Students in our younger grades will experience each lesson using the five senses. Their lessons also include "Fun with Hebrew" and STEAM activities. In grades 4-7, the lessons incorporate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills that enable students to build positive relationships and make responsible decisions. Through the values, students will explore Jewish text, history, tefillah, and holidays. We will also be incorporating enrichment and services into the morning.

Hebrew Curriculum

Hebrew is intergrated into our Sunday morning program at all levels. In the younger grades, Hebrew is taught in an informal manner through songs, games, and prayer.

In third grade, students add a second day of instruction. Students will receive individualized Hebrew lessons (1:1 with teacher) on Tuesdays, in person, and will last approximately 25-30 minutes per session. An on-line option for Hebrew lessons is available for a limited number of students. Each class builds on the material learned the year before. Our expectation is that, by the end of 7th grade, students will be able to:

- Read commonly used prayers fluently from the Siddur
- Translate key prayer vocabulary
- Identify important roots, prefixes and suffixes
- Explain the theme of each of the prayers studied
- Connect the prayers with Jewish values
- Understand the sequence of the service and participate comfortably in the service
- Chant from the Torah using trope
- Read basic Shabbat and holiday prayers

B'nei Mitzvah

Reform Congregation Oheb Sholom believes that education is a necessary part of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah process. The earlier a student starts learning about his or her religious background, the more meaningful the Bar or Bat Mitzvah will be. A minimum of three successfully completed years, not including the year of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah, of Jewish education is required of all Bar and Bat Mitzvah candidates.

Any synagogue Religious School (including Hebrew) or full- time Jewish day school education may be applied to this requirement. During the fifth-grade year, the Rabbi will meet with all potential B'nei Mitzvah families to introduce the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process, its requirements, and expectations.

Confirmation

Confirmation is a lifecycle event which includes continuing religious education for post-B'nei Mitzvah students. We participate in the Reading Jewish Community High School Program. Please contact the Temple office for more information on this program.

Other Important Information

Attendance

School is in session from 9:30 am to 11:30 am, in person, on Sundays. Children may be dropped off up to fifteen minutes prior to the start of class and should be picked up promptly at dismissal. Time slots for Tuesday Hebrew instruction will be available for signup on the first day of Sunday Religious School. Since lessons on Tuesdays will be scheduled back to back, please make sure your child arrives five minutes before their assigned time.

Continuity is an important factor in a student's learning process and we therefore require students to attend at least 75% of classes for which they are enrolled. Students are expected to stay for the full session times. Students who do not meet these requirements due to absences, late arrivals, or early dismissals, will be asked to make up assignments during the school year or over the summer. It is very difficult for children to keep up with the curriculum if they are not regularly attending.

Calendar

To access the Religious School calendar, go to the "Learn" tab on the Temple website and click on Religious School. Here is where you will find information about class Shabbats, days off, and special events. Please refer to this for dates to remember.

Classroom Management

We feel that the best atmosphere for the education of our children is one that fosters freedom of expression, positive interpersonal relationships, and mutual respect for teachers and peers. In order to support the teachers' efforts, please advise them of any special conditions that might have an impact on your child's behavior (for example, a learning disability, family disruptions, etc.)

To ensure that each student's rights are protected, we expect each student to:

1. Follow directions
2. Be prepared for class
3. Respect other students and teachers
4. Arrive on time and stay until the end of class.

If a child is sent to the office, the child's parents will be notified.

If a student is continually disruptive, the Religious School Director will have a conference with the teacher and the student to determine the problems that exist and mutually resolve them. Issues that cannot be resolved in this manner may be referred to the Religious School Committee and the Rabbi for further action.

Communication

Teachers will send out weekly or bi-weekly email reports about what is going on in your child's Sunday class. We will use an online system to track progress and communicate information about Tuesday Hebrew lessons, attendance and homework. We are all here to make your child's Jewish education the best it can be. Any concerns you have should be immediately brought to the attention of your child's teacher. If your concerns are not addressed, please feel free to speak in private with the Religious School Director.

Dress Code

The Religious School of RCOS aspires to a standard of good grooming that will reflect in a positive way upon the student, his/her home, and the synagogue. Students are required to dress and groom themselves in a manner which meets standards of safety and health and which does not cause disruption to the educational process. **THE WEARING OF MASKS WILL BE REQUIRED BY ALL STAFF, STUDENTS AND GUESTS.**

Hats, bandanas, or clothing that contain words or symbols that are profane, obscene or sexually explicit, or make reference to drugs or alcohol, or which by their nature disrupts attention from the educational process of the school are not considered appropriate attire. Please remember there is a short prayer service as part of the curriculum on Sunday mornings. Students should be appropriately dressed for a service in the sanctuary.

Electronic Devices

Personal electronic devices may not be used during class time unless directed to by the teacher. They must be kept in the student's pocket, bookbag, or purse. They may be used during the brief break time. If you must reach your child during class time, please call the school office.

Homework

Homework may be assigned in moderate amounts. Homework assignments are part of the curriculum and will benefit your child in the learning process. To help maintain your child's Hebrew reading skills, please have them practice reading Hebrew every week. If you are not comfortable with your Hebrew reading skills, but would like to help your child with their Hebrew, please see Holly Michelson for transliterated pages.

Please remember that Jewish education is a collaboration between the family and community. Your participation is essential in your child's education.

Students should arrive at each class with all necessary books, folders, notebooks, and pens or pencils.

Inclement Weather

In the case of inclement weather on a Sunday, Religious School may be cancelled at the discretion of the Religious School Director. The office voicemail will be changed to indicate closures by 8:30 am on Sundays. On Tuesdays, decisions will be based on the weather closures for the Wyomissing Area School District. Text message notification is also available; please contact the school for text notification sign up information.

Service Attendance

Jewish education is more than learning in the classroom; it is about being part of a community. As a congregation, we come together most frequently for worship services. Therefore, it is highly recommended that students attend at least eight Shabbat services over the course of the academic year. Students may attend services in person or watch the online stream service. Please notify Mrs. Michelson within 5 days as to which service your child attended.

Friday night, Saturday morning, or festival services, except Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, that are held at RCOS or jointly with RCOS may be counted. Up to 2 services at other synagogues may be counted upon approval by the Rabbi or Religious School Director. Tot Shabbat services are acceptable for Grade 1 and younger.

Each grade will also lead a Shabbat service during the school year. Parents from the class organize the Oneg.

Children are expected to behave not only at the service, but during the Oneg. Running in the hallways and playing in the bathroom are not permitted. We ask parents to monitor their children's behavior.

Snack

Haf'sakah (break) will be at the teachers' discretion on Sundays. Snacks are sometimes provided for special occasions. If your child has a food allergy, please make sure you state this on the enrollment form. We will do our best to accommodate your child's needs.

Tikkun Olam

One of the goals of our Religious School program is to help students understand Jewish values such as G'milut Chasadim (acts to make the world a better, holier place). Tzedakah (justice, often translated as charitable donation) will be collected every Sunday. In addition to collecting money for tzedakah, we strive to teach values through actions such as our annual class projects, serving meals at Opportunity House, and donating goods to various organizations. The organizations that have benefited from our tzedakah in the past are: Food Bank of Berks County, Meals on Wheels, Opportunity House, Family Promise, and Haitian Relief.