RELIGIOUS SCHOOL CURRICULUM – SPECIAL DATES

Temple Israel is known throughout the community for our progressive Religious School curriculum which has been designed to engage children in their Jewish learning throughout all grade levels.

Below are grade level summaries of the concepts, values, prayers and texts around which the Temple Israel Religious School curricula are built. Building community is at the foundation; all classes incorporate the study of Israel, Tikkun Olam (taking care of the world) as well as B’tzelem Elohim (in the image of G-d) into their lessons.

Included in each summary are the topics and dates of the Family Education programs or grade level Friday evening, holiday or special worship services. Parents are urged to attend these special events with their child.

In the lower grades, Hebrew is purposefully and regularly integrated into the curriculum in preparation for the beginning of formal Hebrew school education in third grade. Music and art enrichment, taught by trained specialists, round out curriculum in each grade.

Haggigat Shabbat (“Gat” Shabbat) on Saturday mornings and Sunday School offer choice for our busy families!

Pre-Kindergarten

Approximately once per month, as part of Haggigat Shabbat on Saturday mornings, parents, grandparents and students come together to study and celebrate our holidays. Each session contains a learning portion as well as a variety of hands-on projects including different forms of art (painting menorahs to creating tzedakah boxes), food (making our own edible art to braiding our own challah), games, story time and community building opportunities for families. Through these fun activities, families experience the cycle of the year. Participants in this highly interactive, fun-filled class are also integrated into the full school experience via participation in school services and music class. The text used in Pre-Kindergarten is Jewish and Me: Holidays.

Pre-K class dates: September 20, October 11, November 15, December 15, January 31, March 7, March 21 and April 25.

Kindergarten

During Kindergarten, students explore the Jewish holidays and general Judaica, with a focus on rituals, the cycle of the year, and an introduction to the Ten Commandments. Students participate regularly in intra-grade activities to build community, relationships and comfort at Temple Israel. The Kindergarten Values Curriculum focuses on Tzedakah (righteousness), Tza’ar Ba’alei Chayim (kindness to animals), Bal Tash’hit (keeping the earth) and Bikkur Cholim (visiting the sick). An extended study of tzedakah and mitzvot (acts of human kindness or commandments) emphasizes community and hands-on mitzvah activities. During their study of creation, each student designs and completes a creation book which they share with the entire student body and parents during a service in the spring. Students participate in the Color Project as part of our Diversity Within Judaism Program, which reinforces the idea that people cannot be placed in such simple categories black or white, and that appearances should not be the only way to describe a person. As part of our Disability Awareness Training, Kindergarten students explore hearing impairments, learning the Shema in sign language. The text used in Kindergarten is A Time to Celebrate; as part of their prayer curriculum, students study the Shema.

Consecration, which marks the beginning of each child’s formal Jewish studies at Temple Israel, will be held on Sunday, October 12, 2015; information will be mailed to families.

Family Education for Kindergarten students and parents, held on December 13-14, 2014 will focus on the holiday of Chanukah.
First Grade
In First Grade, the central focus is Shabbat. During the course of the year, each class studies all aspects of Shabbat culminating in the creation of a Shabbat kit by each student. Each kit contains all ritual items needed for the celebration of Shabbat, including Havdalah. In April, the students and their families come together for a very special Friday evening Shabbat dinner, followed by a special service, during which the children use the items they created. Other holidays are studied throughout the year, exploring their unique ritual objects and blessings. The study of Israel is fully integrated throughout the first grade year. First Grade values curriculum encompasses Derekh Eretz (respect), Mitzvot (commandments), Mechabayd Zehet Zeh (loving and honoring one another), Shabbat (Sabbath), Shalom (peace) and Shalom Bayit (peace in the home). As part of our Disability Awareness program, students explore visual impairment via a variety of experiences including reading prayers in Braille. Prayer curriculum for first grade includes the Barchu (Call to Worship) and Kedushat Hayom (Sanctification of the Day). Jewish literature and texts are used to reinforce concepts taught in class.

Family Education for First Grade students and parents is the Family Shabbat Dinner and service on Friday, April 24, 2015.

Second Grade
The Second Grade curriculum explores the cycle of the weekly Torah readings and the role of the synagogue in our lives. Through use of the text, My Weekly Sidra, Chai (Torah strand) as well as games, projects and stories, students understand the meaning and lessons learned from each Torah portion; students also gain familiarity with the synagogue as a place and its meaning. Bible stories are used to reinforce the course material. In second grade, the synagogue and the Bible curricula present the lens for holiday study. Second grade values curriculum focuses on Bikur Cholim (visiting the sick), Emet (truthfulness), Kavod (honor), and Sever Panim Yafot (a pleasant demeanor). The Chai Avodah (spiritual work our minds and hearts engage in to connect with G-d) component includes Mah Tovu (How Pleasant are Your Dwellings), Mi Chamocha (Who is Like You?), blessings, Modeh Ani (Giving Thanks) and Shema.

Second and Third Graders will lead the congregation in song during the Family Chanukah Service and Dinner on Friday, December 19, 2014.

The Family Education program for Second Grade is Alef Round-up on Sunday, February 8, 2015 (all 2nd grade students attend on Sunday).

Third Grade
Third Grade students study the concept that “the world stands on three things: Torah, Avodah and Gemilut Hasadim”. These pursuits – study, worship and deeds of loving kindness – provide the framework in which Jews build their relationships with G-d, with one another and with the world. A variety of texts are used including the Chai Curriculum, A Child’s Bible: Torah, and Partners with G-d as well as related experiential learning opportunities. Jewish life cycle is explored. In third grade, holidays are studied from the perspective of G-d, and what/why/how is this holy? Students delve into Shehecheyanu, Yotzer (Creation), and Nissim B’chol Yom (Blessings for Daily Miracles). The values curriculum for third grade includes Brit (covenant), Gemilut Hasadim (acts of loving kindness), Teva (protecting the environment), Lashon Ha-Ra (gossip) and Kedushah (holiness).

Second and Third Graders will lead the congregation in song during the Family Chanukah Service and Dinner on Friday, December 19, 2014.

Third Grade students, also in Hebrew School, will celebrate Siyum Alef, the completion of their first year of Hebrew studies, on Sunday, May 3, 2015 (during Sunday School). Students not in Hebrew School will join their teacher for a fun-filled morning of activities.
Fourth Grade
The curriculum emphasis in Fourth Grade is the analysis of Jewish text. Through the texts Being Torah, Experiencing the Torah, and A Child’s Bible: Lessons from the Prophets and Writings, students become familiar with our Bible and come to understand how the words of the Torah impact our lives and guide our decisions. Students also explore the Tanach, Talmud, and Midrash. Holidays are studied via the connection to Jewish text and literature. All sources help guide students to translate words and thought into action. The Chai Avodah (spiritual work our minds and hearts engage in to connect with G-d) component consists of the V’ahavta (Love of G-d), Kiddush, and creating silent prayers. The values curriculum for fourth grade covers Rodef Shalom (seeking peace), Talmud Torah (studying Torah), Vikuach (arguments), and V’ahavta L’re’acha Kamocha (love one’s neighbor).

The Fourth Grade Family Education program on February 21-22, 2015 is an introduction to Talmud study.

Watch for information about our 4.5.6 kickoff program in the fall!

Fifth and Sixth Grade
Fifth and Sixth Grade uses a sequential curriculum, the focus of which is Jewish Peoplehood, History and the Holocaust.

Fifth Grade students cover a wide span of ancient history over the course of the year, starting with the Matriarchs and Patriarchs through the Golden Age of Spain. Students participate in a study of personal family history through our Diversity Program, coming to understand the diversity within our Jewish community. Holidays are studied through the lens of ancient history and Israel. Students are exposed to a variety of resources and texts including History of the Jewish People, Volume 1, and Understanding Jewish History, I and the multi-media Heritage: Civilization and the Jews. The Chai Avodah (spiritual work our minds and hearts engage in to connect with G-d) component consists of the Amidah, Aleinu and Kaddish. Values curriculum topics include Brit (covenant), Hachnasat Orchim (welcoming the stranger/hospitality), Nedivut (generosity), and Yisrael (Israel).

Fifth graders will take a leading role in the congregational Simhat Torah Service on Wednesday, October 15, 2014 (directly following Hebrew School).

The Family Education program, focusing on pre-adolescent development through the Jewish lens, for Fifth Grade will take place on Saturday, January 31, 2015 (all 5th grade students attend on Saturday).

Watch for information about our 4.5.6 kickoff program in the fall!

Through a lens of our Jewish identities, Sixth Grade students focus on a wide range of historical figures and events, holidays and values that helped shape who we are as Jews today. Students begin with the Golden Age of Spain and travel through the centuries to the events of the mid-twentieth century, such as the Holocaust and the formation of Israel, which made significant changes in the landscape of Jewish history. A variety of learning techniques such as art, reading, discussion and skits, are combined to ensure that each child finds his/her own link to our past as well as how they can help move us forward into the future. Guest speakers, personal stories and testimonials are part of the curriculum, particularly during the study of the Shoah. Holidays are studied through an historical lens, for example, how a seder was celebrated during the Civil War or a Purim Shpiel performed in the ghettos of Europe. Information is culled from a variety of sources, including but not limited to History of the Jewish People, Volume 2, Understanding Jewish History, II, Atlas of Great Jewish Communities, the Challenge and Change series and Journey Through Jewish History. Values are tied to different people and events throughout the year with a specific focus on the following: Anavah (humility), Zachor (remembrance), Pikuach Nefesh (saving a life), Sameach B’chelko (contentment with your lot), and Heshbon Ha-Nefesh (accounting of the soul) as they pertain to the history, historical figures, values and holidays that students study.

Family Education for Sixth Grade, taking place on April 18-19, 2015 will focus on Yom Hashoah: Holocaust Remembrance Day.
As students transition into middle school programming at Temple, and to honor completion of each student’s elementary education, sixth graders will be acknowledged during our Dalet and Sixth Grade Recognition Service on May 8, 2015.

Watch for information about our 4.5.6 kickoff program in the fall!

Temple Israel Religious School is a beneficiary of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation.