

Congregation Olam Tikvah Religious School Handbook

2009 – 2010 / 5770



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Religious School Goals

Congregation Olam Tikvah Religious School (OTRS) provides a safe, loving environment where children, teachers, and parents can explore their Jewish identity, nourish and maintain friendships, and participate in the richness of Jewish learning.

We want our children to:

- Take part in synagogue life.
- Incorporate Jewish values and ethics into all that they do.
- See the wonder and beauty of the world that surrounds us, and to remember to say an occasional blessing because of it.
- Place the presence of a Jewish campus organization high among the criteria for choosing a college, and to walk through its doors of their own accord in their very first semester.
- Remember to pack candlesticks and a Kiddush cup for their dorm rooms.
- Be Jewish business people and professionals.
- Treat their colleagues, customers, and clients with honesty, and respect.
- Live as part of a Jewish family.
- Include their families within Jewish congregational and synagogue life.

Above all, we want them to do these things willingly and joyfully, and to one day send their children to religious school while remembering with love, their own Jewish school years.

With these goals in mind, we teach:

Torah:	The history of our people, our Mitzvot—our laws and ethics.
Jewish Living:	Our holidays, rituals, and celebrations.
Hebrew:	The language of Torah, prayer, and the modern state of Israel.
Prayer:	How to pray from the Siddur; how to pray from the heart; how to pray for the community; how to pray for oneself.
Israel:	What it has meant throughout the generations, and what it means to us and to the world today.

We encourage our families to:

- Be involved in Jewish education—their children's and their own.
- Celebrate Judaism in their homes.
- Participate in Jewish community and synagogue life.
- Feel at home in our school.

Curriculum

Religious school is an integral part of the Jewish way of living and learning. When we bring our children to religious school, we acknowledge the importance of transmitting our heritage from generation to generation. Our Jewish journey begins at birth, continues through religious school, and then through all the years of our lives. *Kabbalat Torah*, *Kabbalat Siddur*, *B'nai Mitzvah* and confirmation are celebrated as milestones along the way. OTRS begins in kindergarten and continues through twelfth grade.

Kindergarten: Meets Sunday mornings, 9-noon.

The curriculum is structured around holidays and customs, the synagogue, Torah, literature, community, Mitzvot, values, and music. Teachers make use of hands-on experiences that appeal to all learners: crafts, music, movement, cooking, and storytelling.

- **Hebrew:** Letters and vocabulary are introduced and learned through songs and games.
- **Family Programming:** Includes the Star Reading Library Program and Holiday workshops.
- **Kabbalat Torah:** All children who are new to Jewish learning are welcomed at *Kabbalat Torah*.
- **Shabbat Programming:** Students attend Shorashim.

First Grade: Meets Sunday mornings, 9-noon.

The curriculum remains structured around holidays and customs, the synagogue, Torah, literature, community, Mitzvot, values, and music. Teachers make use of hands-on activities including crafts, music, movement, cooking, and storytelling that appeal to all learners.

- **Hebrew:** Students develop beginning reading and writing skills and begin to acquire basic Hebrew vocabulary.
- **Family Programming:** Includes the Star Reading Library Program and Holiday workshops.
- **Shabbat Programming:** Students attend Shorashim.

Second Grade: Meets Sunday mornings, 9-noon and Tuesday afternoons, 4:15-6:15.

Children begin to study Torah and learn how to make Shabbat at home.

- **Hebrew and Tefillah:** Hebrew phonics and word recognition. Basic *brachot*.
- **Tanach:** Students become familiar with our Torah, and the people who inhabit its pages.
- **Holidays:** Blessings, Ritual, customs and music, emphasis on Shabbat and Havdallah.
- **Community:** The classroom, our Jewish neighborhood, beginning awareness of Israel, notable Jewish individuals.
- **Values:** Relating to God, *Mitzvot* between people.
- **Family Programming:** Includes Holiday Workshops, Shema and Sweet Dreams, Three Stars and Havdallah.
- **Shabbat Programming:** Students attend Shorashim.

Third Grade: Meets Sunday mornings, 9-noon and Tuesday afternoons, 4:15-6:15.

Curriculum highlights include an introduction to Prophets, and to the people and cities of Israel.

- **Hebrew and Tefillah:** reading and comprehension, *Shema and her blessings*.
- **Tanach, Values:** Continuing development of a relationship with God, *Mitzvot* between people and God, *Nevi'im*.
- **Holidays:** Ritual, customs, music and practice with an emphasis on Shabbat.
- **Community:** Including Israel, notable Jewish individuals.
- **Family Programming:** Holiday workshops, model Shabbat celebration, *Kabbalat Siddur*.
- **Shabbat Programming:** Students attend Junior Congregation.

Fourth Grade: Meets Sunday mornings, 9-noon and Tuesday afternoons, 4:15-6:15.

Exploration of Jewish lifecycle ritual and practice.

- **Hebrew and Tefillah:** Siddur reading and comprehension, emphasis on Amidah and reading fluency.
- **Tanach:** Jewish lifecycle.
- **Holidays:** Values and theory.
- **Jewish History:** Jewish American History and Immigration.
- **Family Programming:** Jewish Wedding Ceremony, Mizvah Mania.
- **Shabbat Programming:** Students attend Junior Congregation.

Kabbalat Siddur

When our students have mastered the basics of the Hebrew reading, we honor their achievement with a family ceremony called *Kabbalat Siddur*. Each student receives his or her own *Siddur* (prayer book). Parent and grandparent participation make the ceremony a significant and memorable occasion.

Fifth Grade: Meets Sunday mornings, 9-noon and Tuesday afternoons, 4:15-6:15.

Torah trop is introduced. Students begin to learn the “Hows” of Torah Study.

- **Hebrew and Tefillah:** Siddur reading and comprehension, the Torah service, continued emphasis on reading fluency, Torah Trop, Peer Reading Partners.
- **Torah:** Text Study.
- **Jewish History:** Emphasis on Post-Biblical Period.
- **Family Programming:** Torah, inside and out, Daniel’s Story.
- **Shabbat Programming:** Students attend Junior Congregation and Peer Reading Practice.

Sixth Grade: Meets Sunday mornings, 9-noon and Tuesday afternoons, 4:15-6:15.

A Jewish values based curriculum focusing on the *Sifrei Kodesh*, (Sacred Texts), Friendship, Kashrut and the relevance of Mitzvot in our lives. Includes Pre-B’nei Mitzvah Family Life Workshops.

- **Torah:** Students discover the *Tanach, Mishnah, Talmud, and Shulkhan Arukh*, and use these texts to explore Jewish teachings in units on Friendship and Kashrut.
- **Hebrew and Tefillah:** Continuing exploration of the *Amidah*, and the Torah Service (reading, chanting, trop, comprehension and values). Peer Reading Partners.
- **Shabbat Programming:** Students attend Junior Congregation and Peer Reading Practice.

Seventh Grade: Meets Sunday mornings, 9-noon and Tuesday afternoons, 4:15-6:15.

Students examine the Tanach, Talmud, Mishna, and Shulchan Arukh, as well as modern teachers such as Abraham Joshua Heschel and Reuven Hammer.

- **Text Study and Israel:** Students explore *Bikkur Holim*, Klal Yisrael (the Jewish people as one family), Zionism, and the birth of the modern state of Israel through the lens of Jewish values, Areivut (responsibility of Jews for one another), and Pidyon Shevuyim (redeeming of captives).
- **Family Education:** The Meal of Many Blessings.
- **Hebrew and Tefillah:** Hebrew reading practice of Shabbat morning Tefillah, Matbea Tefillah, Keva and Kavanah.
- **Shabbat Programming:** Students attend Services in the main sanctuary, Junior Congregation and Peer Reading Practice.

Eighth Grade: Meets Sunday evenings, 6:00-8:00

The eighth grade core curriculum includes:

- **Israel, Realizing the Dream:** Students explore the growth and development of Jewish identity at home and in the world through the lens of sociopolitical issues in the modern state of Israel.

Electives vary from year to year and include:

- **Study of Jewish Texts:** teachers include the rabbis.
- **Jewish Contributions to Culture through the Arts:** includes a “hands-on” component.
- **Cooking in Jewish Communities throughout the World**
- **Hebrew Conversation**
- **Hot Topics:** Classic Jewish Sources applied to modern, personal issues.
- **Tikkun Olam:** Jewish values in action for the benefit of the community.

Ninth And Tenth Grades: Meets Sunday evenings, 6:00-8:00

The high school curriculum spans two years and includes:

- **Text Study-the Torah:** in-depth focus on content, and development of lifelong Torah study skills.
- **“Jews Through the Eyes of America/America Through the Eyes of the Jews”:** Examination of the Jewish American position within the American sociopolitical environment.
- **Text Study with the Rabbis:** in-depth study of Talmud and Mishnah
- **Jewish Contributions to Culture through the Arts:** includes a “hands-on” component.
- **Cooking in Jewish Communities throughout the World**
- **Hebrew Conversation**
- **Hot Topics:** Classic Jewish Sources applied to modern, personal issues.
- **Tikkun Olam:** Jewish values in action for the benefit of the community.

Pre-College: Meeting days and time to be determined.

Covers today’s issues as seen through the lens of classic texts. These classes are taught by the rabbis.

Youth Groups

Machar: Grades 4 and 5

Kadima: Grades 6, 7 and 8

OTUSY: our award winning USY Chapter for grades 9 and up

Family Programming

Family programs occur throughout the year. They provide opportunities for families to learn, celebrate, and play together, and to share in the Jewish religious school experience. Please refer to the school calendar and website <http://olamtikvah.org/relschoo.html> for times and dates.

Policies, Procedures, and Practices

Parent Involvement

A child's attitude toward Jewish education reflects those of his/her parents. We hope you will encourage your children's efforts, and let them know how much you value their attendance at OTRS. When you ensure regular attendance at classes, participation in family programs, attend *Shabbat* and holiday services, and volunteer in our school, you are giving your children positive messages. Our staff is available to suggest Jewish family projects and outings, and to provide extra help outside the classroom.

Tzedakah and Gemilut Hasadim

Tzedakah (righteous or obligatory giving of money) and *Gemilut Hasadim* (acts of loving kindness) are *Mitzvot* (commandments). OTRS students collect *Tzedakah* in class and decide together which charities and organizations to support. As part of the process, students learn about the needs of the Jewish community, Israel, and the world. We strongly encourage our students and their families to incorporate these *Mitzvot* into their everyday lives.

Homework

We recognize the demands on your child's time, however homework is necessary. **Students are expected to practice Hebrew reading aloud, 5 to 15 minutes, 3 to 5 days each week. Reading practice outside of class is essential to your child's progress.**

Parents do not need to be able to read or understand Hebrew in order to listen to your child read. Your presence and encouragement will contribute to your child's success and self-esteem. Resources:

- Olam Tikvah's website has audio links to the entire Torah service and several prayers studied in class.

Visit <http://www.olamtikvah.org>

Click on "Rituals & Prayers."

- Behrman House has two new interactive Hebrew reading sites, at <http://www.behrmanhouse.com>.

First you need to create a family account if you do not already have one.

Go to the Families section.

Click on the “Click and Learn Prayer at Home” button and choose Hineni 1 or Hineni 2 Interactive, or click on the orange button with Professor Gimmelstein for “Click and Read Hebrew at Home.”

- Siddur Audio, <http://sidduraudio.com/> has audio clips of the siddur to practice through listen and repeat.

Hebrew for Parents

We will be delighted to assist you as you learn to read. Please contact the school office for information.

Attendance Requirements

Students are expected to attend at least 75% of all classes to ensure they are able to keep up with the curriculum. Exceptions to this policy due to special circumstances (such as medical reasons) may be granted on an individual basis. Students are expected to arrive on time for classes and remain until class is over.

When you anticipate an absence, please call the school office or contact your child’s teacher. Your child’s teacher will be happy to provide you with class work and homework assignments in advance.

Please do not send your child to religious school if they are sick or until they are fever-free for 24 hours.

Outstanding Attendance will be recognized and celebrated.

**Please see Appendix A for our
complete attendance policy**

Dismissal Policy

Early dismissal is strongly discouraged! Our classroom hours are limited, and early dismissal disrupts the lesson for the entire class. If early dismissal is unavoidable, please sign the Early Dismissal Pass in the school office and bring it to your child's classroom. **No child will be released to an adult other than his/her parent without written permission.** You may request *in writing* that another person pick up your child. Please include the name of that person in the request. No child is permitted to leave the school premises during school hours without being signed out in the school office.

Student Drop-off and Pick-up – Your child's safety is our concern

We request that all parents come into the building to pick up their children. With the construction and changes to our parking lot, it can be dangerous for the children.

Class Preparation and Supplies

Please make sure that your child is prepared for class. Homework is to be completed each week. Textbooks, pens or pencils, a notebook and homework folder is required in every class. Boys are required to wear a *kipah*. Girls may wear one if they choose. It is a good idea to keep one (or more) in your child's backpack. We do not recommend sharing *kippot*.

It is a good idea to remind your child to bring *Tzedakah* as part of his/her supplies. From time to time, teachers may send home notices requesting special items for arts and crafts projects.

Progress Reports

Individual parent-teacher conferences are scheduled when necessary. Students in grades K-8 receive interim progress reports twice a year as well as 2 report cards. Please discuss the report with your child. **You may request a conference with your child's teacher at any time.**

Parent-Teacher Communication

Teachers and administrators are available to discuss any issues or concerns that may arise during the school year. Teachers can be reached through their personal email or through the religious school office (703-425-3237 or religiousschool@olamtikvah.org.) Please let us know if your child is experiencing difficulty in the classroom so that the situation can be resolved quickly. We are committed to providing your child with the best Jewish learning experiences possible.

Shabbat Programming

Congregation Olam Tikvah Religious School strives to create communities which enjoy and celebrate the Shabbat. These communities include the worship of Shabbat with joy and

celebration, music and prayer in our main Sanctuary, and in the community created for our students' participation – Junior Congregation.

Junior Congregation provides a full and rich Shabbat service. Our Rabbis and community leaders bring the students into the fun and joy of participating in and leading services. Junior Congregation is a chance to build the student community, learn lifelong prayers, and prepare for the leadership role of the Bar and Bat Mitzvot.

Communal prayer is an integral part of Jewish life. For this reason, attendance at Junior Congregation or Shabbat services in the main sanctuary are required for all Olam Tikvah children, grades 3-7, regardless of where they receive their Jewish education. Services are available for all ages.

- **Tot Shabbat:** For children ages two to five. Children delight in Shabbat observance with stories, songs and prayer.
- **Shorashim:** Shorashim means roots and is our Shabbat morning service for grades K-2. Shorashim is designed to accustom children to the rhythm and structure of a Shabbat morning service and to prepare them for their "graduation" to Junior Congregation.
- **Junior Congregation:** Junior Congregation provides a variety of learning experiences that focus on the Torah and Musaf services. Using a copy of Siddur Sim Shalom designed for younger congregants, Junior Congregation often parallels the services conducted in the main sanctuary. It affords students a chance to practice developing skills and to participate in ways not available in the main service. As a teaching service, Junior Congregation sometimes varies the melodies, emphasizes different parts of the service, or explores the meaning and spirit of different prayers through discussion.

Please see Appendix B for our Shabbat attendance policy

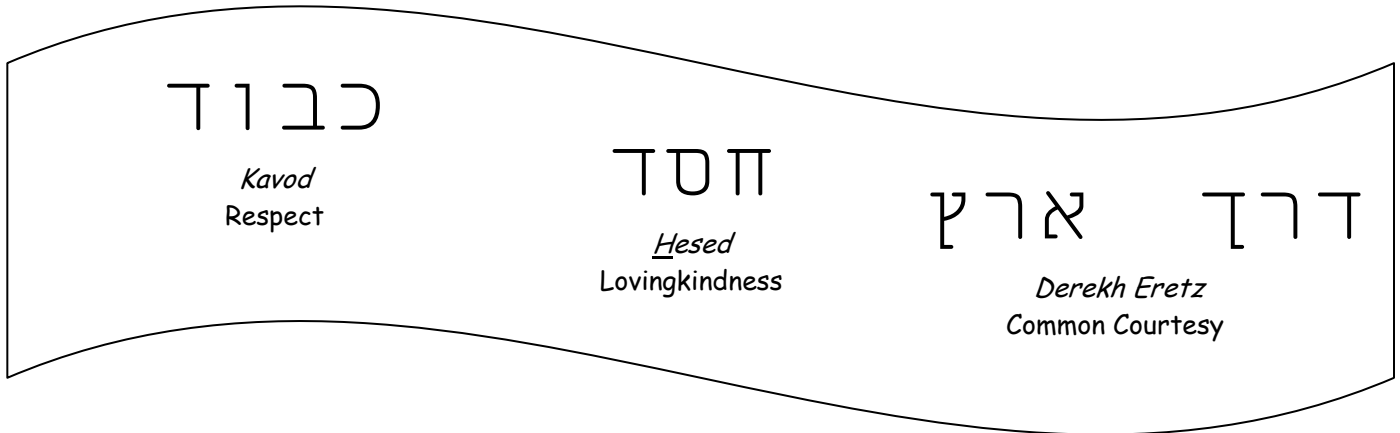
Special Needs

Our school is dedicated to creating a warm and safe learning environment for all students. For us to meet the needs of our students, it is important for parents to share with us their child's learning style and special needs. The more we know about our students, the better we can create a secure and caring environment in which to share our Jewish heritage.

If your child receives support services in their public school, please complete the forms included in your summer mailing and attach the relevant documents. This information is kept strictly confidential. Your family will receive a call before the start of school to discuss implementation of your child's plan at OTRS.

Behavior

Without Torah there is no *Derekh Eretz* (common courtesy)
Without *Derekh Eretz* there is no Torah (Pirkei Avot 3:21)



We expect that OTRS students, staff and parents will treat each other, the building, and their learning environment with respect, courtesy, and loving kindness. At the beginning of the school year, teachers establish class rules and consequences and post them where they are clearly visible.

Please see Appendix C for our complete behavior policy.

Field trips

From time to time, class trips may be scheduled to augment the curriculum. **Transportation for these trips is provided by bus or parent-volunteers.** A general permission slip is signed at registration. Please refer to the school calendar and website <http://olamtikvah.org/relschoo.html> for times and dates.

Snacks & Kashrut

Children are permitted and encouraged to bring a snack and/or bottle of water to school, providing that the food is kosher and dairy or parve. Snacks may include fruit or any **prepackaged** and unopened food which bears a valid *Kashrut* symbol, as well as baked goods from bakeries which are under rabbinical supervision. A list of approved bakeries and *Kashrut* symbols is available through the school office. Your child's teacher may communicate additional guidance based on classroom needs. If you would like to bring a snack to school in honor of a birthday or special occasion, please arrange this with your child's teacher.

Reminder - there is no Snack and Chat this year.

Visitors

Parents are welcome to observe their children's classes. However, we do ask that they make arrangements with their child's teacher in advance and check in with the school office upon arrival.

Medical release

Each child is required to have a signed medical release on file in the school office specifying emergency treatment and authorizing the school to provide transportation. In the event of a medical emergency, the school will contact a parent or the designated secondary contact (on the release form) before seeking emergency treatment. Be sure to keep your signed medical release up to date. Copies of the medical release form can be found on our website, <http://olamtikvah.org/relschoo.html>.

Inclement Weather Policy

OTRS is automatically canceled when Fairfax County Public Schools are closed for inclement weather. Should weather conditions worsen during public school hours, we will email parents. Sunday morning cancellations will be broadcast over WTOP 103.5FM or 820AM, beginning at 8:00 a.m. School cancellations are available on WTOP News, <http://www.wtopnews.com/>, Fairfax County Public Schools, <http://fcps.edu>, and Olam Tikvah's website, <http://olamtikvah.org/>.

Please check backpacks and email notices on a regular basis for flyers and program announcements.

Calendar

There are three Sundays during the 2009-2010 school year when OTRS will not be following the Fairfax County Public School Calendar due to the large number of Jewish holidays that fall on Sundays. Please check the religious school calendar emailed home monthly for those dates.

Classroom Attendance

Regular attendance at religious school is crucial for student success. Teachers take attendance at the start of each class. OTRS sends home attendance reports 4 times a year, on 2 interim progress reports and 2 report cards. OTRS will contact families when attendance requirements are not being met. Students are expected to attend at least 75% of religious school classes.

Teachers will assess students who fall below 75% attendance. When necessary, OTRS shall create a course of independent study for the student to complete. The amount of work in the course of study will be based on the student's assessment as well as attendance.

If your child is absent, please contact your child's teacher to receive missed class work and discuss upcoming homework assignments.

Please do not send your child to religious school if they are sick or until they are fever-free for 24 hours.

Grades 6 and 7

Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparations begin in Sixth grade. Students who do not meet attendance requirements will be assigned independent study to be completed with their parents or a tutor. Poor attendance at religious school and Shabbat services could affect the child's leadership during services on their Bar/Bat Mitzvah day. OTRS and the Rabbis will work with the family when making decisions about a child's preparation for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Appendix B

Shabbat Attendance

Congregation Olam Tikvah Religious School strives to create communities which enjoy and celebrate the Shabbat. These communities include the worship of Shabbat with joy and celebration, music and prayer in our main Sanctuary, and in the community created for our students' participation – Junior Congregation.

Junior Congregation provides a full and rich Shabbat service. Our Rabbis and community leaders bring the students into the fun and joy of participating in and leading services. Junior Congregation is a chance to build the student community, learn lifelong prayers, and prepare for the leadership role of one's Bar and Bat Mitzvah.

Junior Congregation starts promptly at 11am most Shabbatot during the school year. A schedule will be distributed through the religious school office and posted online.

All Olam Tikvah children – those joining us from OT Religious School, from Gesher Jewish Day School, or other schools – are asked to participate in Junior Congregation as part of the preparation and requirements of the OT *B'nai Mitzvah* program:

- **Children in grades 3 through 6 will benefit greatly from attending at least 8 Shabbat morning services, including 5 mornings in Junior Congregation.**
- **Students in grade 7 should attend a minimum of 10 Shabbat morning services, either in the Main Sanctuary or in Junior Congregation.**

Attendance is taken at Junior Congregation and each child's participation is sent to parents several times throughout the year to help you track if your child is meeting this requirement. Poor attendance at Shabbat services could affect the child's leadership during services on his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah day. OTRS and the Rabbis will work with the family when making decisions about a child's preparation for his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

Appendix C

Behavior Policy

We expect that OTRS students, staff and parents will treat each other, the building, and their learning environment with respect, courtesy, and loving kindness. At the beginning of the school year, teachers establish class rules and consequences and post them where they are clearly visible.

The following is the course of action the teachers and administration will take if a child's behavior continually disrupts the class.

1. Student will first receive a warning. If the behavior continues that day, the student will write a note to their family explaining their behavior and what changes they plan on making in the future.
2. If the student's behavior continues, the teacher will contact the parent directly to discuss the issue. The teacher will document the behavior issue and conversation with the parents. OTRS administration will be notified of the meeting/conversation.
3. OTRS administration will become involved when the teacher and parents are unable to address the behavior issues satisfactorily. A student will be asked to leave the classroom for the rest of the day. OTRS will contact the parents to arrange a meeting with the parents and teacher. A behavior modification plan may be created at that time to include time frames for improvement.
4. The effectiveness of the behavior modification plan will be evaluated at an agreed upon benchmark and the teacher will contact the parents to update them on the successfulness of the plan. If behavior is still an issue, another meeting will be arranged with administration, parents and teachers to change the plan, as necessary.
5. If a student's behavior continues to be an issue, the Rabbis, parents and administration will discuss further actions. It is possible that the student will be asked to leave OTRS.