



Congregation Shaare Emeth Religious School | Fall 2020 FAQ's

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We are excited to explore what it might look like to learn and connect with our community online. Change is a challenge for all of us, and we know that it might be hard to imagine how this will work. That's why we've compiled some FAQ's about our plans and the decisions we've made to reach this point. We encourage you to read them and discuss any concerns as a family. We are here to listen, support, and help make this work for you when you are ready. We are only an email or phone call away!

Q: Why are we starting online this year when many of our public schools are offering multiple tracks or choices for families with in-person learning?

We made the decision to begin the year fully online for two main reasons:

CONSISTENCY: Planning for the trajectory of COVID-19 infection rates remains a moving target. Many of us would never have thought we'd be here back in March, and many of us truly believed with good intentions that everything would be back to "normal" by now. It has become increasingly clear that we are not there yet. Schools may open and close again in the months to come, and lots of your plans may change. We want to offer our families clear expectations and the opportunity to set up a routine. You have so much uncertainty in your life right now; we are ready to give you some plans you can count on from your religious school community.

SUPPORTING FULL-TIME LEARNING IN PERSON: For most learners, being together adds significantly to the impact of their learning experiences. According to much of the research we have seen and many real-life local examples, the spread of COVID-19 has been minimized by keeping children in isolated small groups. We want to do everything possible to maximize your child's ability to attend their elementary and secondary school in person if you family is choosing that option. We will continue to work with our COVID-19 Taskforce to learn about the latest news and research about the virus and identify the safest ways to bring families back into the building.



Q: Okay, online it is. What's the schedule and when will my child attend Religious School?

We will still be meeting on the same days of the week and almost the same times we always have with a few modifications. For the full schedule and timing outline, please refer to the end of this FAQ document.

Q: So, tell me more! How will the program be conducted? Who will be teaching and working with our children?

Our learning sessions will be led online over the Zoom platform. Our incredible faculty will receive detailed training on how to use Zoom and how to adapt their teaching to work best in this online environment. Our learners will still be placed into class groups to build connections and receive more individualized attention whenever they meet. Each meeting will feature a mix of class time focused on learning and Jewish content, and community gatherings for ritual, prayer, and song. All of our educational offerings will be fully staffed by our incredible, dedicated teachers and our responsible, high-energy madrichim (teen teaching assistants). They are committed to creating new, engaging learning experiences for all of our participants and building relationships with each learner.

Q: I have been thinking about this. I know my kid and I remember what the spring was like for us. What if I am not sure that online learning will work for my child?

We get it! Nobody was prepared for the switches made in March, and we all did the best we could to make it work in a very short amount of time. We have learned from those experiences and built on the feedback we received. With months to plan instead of days, we have crafted intentional learning experiences that focus on using many different learning modalities, including art, music, video, games, discussion, and more. We are adding in new and special joyful moments. We have also adjusted our curriculum goals and shortened the learning blocks, in line with the recommendations of many educational resources about online learning. We hope this will help minimize live screen time and maximize deeper content each and every week.

We value your trust in us and believe you will give us the opportunity to make this work. This year we are offering a week of sample programs and activities called "Taste of Religious School." These opportunities will be available to all our families so you can get a peek behind the scenes and your child(ren) can see how their teachers and classmates will learn together before the year formally begins. You'll have a chance to register for these in advance.

Q: Student support is important to my learner's success. What if my child has different learning needs or accommodations that need to be put in place online?

We remain committed to our school's value of radical inclusion, and the belief that every child has a right to a Jewish education. Our Coordinator of Student Support, Amy Blumenfeld, is on board and ready to help create appropriate learning plans and figure out the best way forward for each individual child. The more you can share with us (including IEP and 504 plans, your choices for your full-time school plans, and more), the better positioned we will be to customize this experience for your learners. Let's talk.

Q: Alright, this sounds pretty good. Now, what happens when we have a conflict, or I forget to get on Zoom at the right time, or our dog eats our wi-fi router, or the millions of other things that might come up?

Our expectation is that when you register, you will do your best, as you always do, to prioritize religious school participation. Regular attendance will allow for your learner(s) to maximize their experience and get the most out of it. However, we know that things do come up and we understand! You have other events going on, the internet doesn't cooperate, or you just wake up on the wrong side of the bed. We have a couple pieces in place to help with this. You can always let your teacher, Rabbi Lori, or Marci Diamond know so we can be in touch directly to help track attendance.

In addition, each Monday you will receive an email from your child's grade level team with a quick summary of what was covered on Sunday and a brief preview for what you can expect next. Plus, you'll have all your learning materials at home and with the guidance from your faculty, learners can easily catch up or stay on track with as much support from us as you need.

Q: Tell me more about how I can make this work. How am I supposed to keep track of all the details and materials? Help please.

You got this, and we are here to help! Before the school year formally begins, we are going to make sure you have all the materials you need for all of the learners in your household. You will be able to pick up (contact-free) bags customized for each grade that include textbooks and other learning materials that your child will need for school through December, including some fun extra goodies. They will also contain (for the younger children especially) basic art supplies and printed out templates for any projects the teachers are planning.

Clear, regular communication is going to be the key to a successful semester and beyond. As always, our school calendars with all the dates and times will be posted in the religious school section of the temple website. Each week, you will also receive links to each grade's Zoom meetings on Mondays and Fridays. In addition, you will receive day-of reminders via email an hour before the programs start so you have all the information you need pushed to the top of your inbox. Extra staff will be on standby and helpers will be available during our live programming to troubleshoot issues or answer questions. We will do our best to notify you as soon as we can of any changes that deviate from the regular schedule.

Q: We value the community and friendships my child finds at Shaare Emeth. What will be the plan this year for class requests and building personal connections?

Our program will still be rooted in relationships and connection. We know that every child finds community in their own way, and some need more support than others. We will still be accepting requests for class placement, and we will do our best to honor them in the order in which they are received. When you register formally, you will have a chance to submit those names to us. In addition, our teaching staff will devote time each week for checking in, setting aside moments to support social and emotional growth. This could be anything from telling a story about your week to a fun getting to know you game or exercise. It's important and we are all here to look out for one another.

Q: What will the tuition for this new version of the program be? How did you set these fees?

We are aware that COVID-19 has impacted our community in so many ways, including financially. Though we will not be in person, an online only learning model is actually just as costly, if not more so, to run than an in-person program. Despite the enormous challenges and higher initial cost of creating an excellent, rigorous, meaningful program with new curriculum and digital tools we need to invest in, we have committed to not raising our tuition numbers this year and holding the rates flat from the 2019-2020 school year.

Registration will now be done online through Shul Cloud, so when you sign up for school you will see all the rates reflected there. We believe this is the right thing to do for all of our families at this time. As always, scholarships are available for those that might need them for any reason. We strongly believe that finances should never be a barrier for any family. To learn more about our process for scholarships, please contact our Executive Director Rosalie Stein (rstein@sestl.org).

Q: This all sounds great. We are now ready to move forward. What's next?

We value your continued commitment to our program and encourage you to be open to the possibilities of our new school year. Please look out for another email about registration and starting the process of signing up for religious school. At that time, you will also receive some information about this year's *early bird financial incentive* for families who register before our first registration deadline. We miss you all and cannot wait to see what's next!

PLANNED SCHEDULE TEMPLATE (as of July 2020)

| SUNDAYS | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| LEARNING BLOCK #1 | | |
| TIME | GRADE/PROGRAM | STAFF |
| 9:00-10:00am | Pre-K through 2nd Grade Religious School | Classroom Teachers/ Madrichim |
| | 40 Minutes of Class Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judaic Curriculum • Hebrew Curriculum • Specialists • Community Building 20 Minutes of Community Time (T'filah/Havdalah/Music) | |
| LEARNING BLOCK #2 | | |
| 10:30-11:30am | 3rd-6th Grade Religious School | Classroom Teachers/ Madrichim |
| | 40 Minutes of Content Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judaic Curriculum • Hebrew Curriculum • Specialists • Community Building 20 Minutes of Community Time (T'filah/Havdalah/Music) | |
| | 9th Grade (Confirmation I) | Rabbi Bennett, Cantor Warner, Rabbi Bearman |
| LEARNING BLOCK #3 | | |
| 11:30am-12:30pm | 7th Grade Program | 7th Grade Team |
| | 8th Grade Program | 8th Grade Team |
| | 10th Grade (Confirmation II) | Rabbi Bearman, Rabbi Goldstein, Faculty Members |

| MIDWEEK: Tuesdays and Wednesdays | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| TIME | GRADE/PROGRAM | STAFF |
| 3:30-4:00 | Younger Learners Meet Ups **NEW** for Pre-K through 2 nd Graders | Specialists Rabbi Lori |
| 4:15-4:45 | 3 rd Grade Midweek | Hebrew Faculty |
| 4:45-5:15 | 4 th Grade Midweek | Hebrew Faculty |
| 5:15-5:45 | 5 th Grade Midweek | Hebrew Faculty |
| 5:45-6:15 | 6 th Grade Midweek | Hebrew Faculty |

About Our Hebrew Groups:

- Small groups of 1-3 students will work with teachers and madrichim
- Groups assigned by Rabbi Lori and Marci in 30-minute blocks
- Schedule organized by grade level
- Sunday Extended Day will be available for those who register for it. Time is still being determined.

STILL TO COME: Post-Con!

For our oldest learners, the Jewish knowledge and great discussion of big ideas don't stop! Rabbi Jim Bennett leads our 11th and 12th Graders in an informal, meaningful evening program to discuss issues they are passionate about with their own mini-community. Our participants partner with Rabbi Bennett to create this experience and make it relevant to their lives as emerging Jewish adults and leaders. Stay connected to friends and deepen your Jewish learning in this interactive, seminar style experience—all from your couch this fall! Stay tuned for the schedule details.

CONTACT INFORMATION

We want to hear from you!

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