



Congregation ETZ CHAIM

creating meaningful Jewish experiences

Congregation Etz Chaim Religious School Parent Handbook 2022-2023

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Etz Chaim Religious School

Philosophy

The goal of the Etz Chaim Religious School is to instill a love of Judaism and a working knowledge of Jewish practice. Developing a sense of being a part of a community, a *kehilla*, is incorporated into all we do. We hope that by participating in our kindergarten through 12th grade Religious School program, our students will feel a level of comfort within any synagogue setting throughout their lives and that their positive experiences in Religious School will start them on a path of lifelong Jewish learning.

Etz Chaim Religious School's curriculum teaches Hebrew decoding, *tefillah* (prayer), Torah *parashiot*, the importance of having a relationship with God, love of Israel, holiday rituals and practices. Our curriculum allows for each year to expand upon what was learned in previous years. We strive to provide learning opportunities for our students that are engaging, interactive, developmentally appropriate and meet the needs of every student including those identified with special needs. Family support of their child's religious education is critical to his/her success at Religious School and we encourage family participation through volunteer opportunities and parallel learning.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Our time with your child in Religious School is quite precious and we have a lot to accomplish in each session! We ask that Religious School be given the attention it deserves and please be diligent in being on time and sending your child to every class session. However, if your child is unable to attend class, please notify us by calling the Education Office at 770.977.3384.

TARDINESS

Our religious school day begins **promptly** at 9:15 am on Sunday and 4:45 pm on Tuesday (see Carpool Drop Off on page 3.) Should you arrive after 4:45 pm on Tuesday or after 9:15 am on Sunday, please walk your child into the building and sign him/her in on the appropriate forms in the Education Office.

EARLY RELEASE

Although we prefer that your child does not miss any part of the school day, should you need to pick up your child earlier than the scheduled dismissal time of 12:15 pm on Sunday and 6:45 pm, on Tuesday please adhere to the following procedure:

1. Enter the building through the main doors rather than the Education Wing.
2. Go directly to the Education Office to notify us that you will need to pick up your child. (please do not go to the child's classroom)
3. Sign the sign-out form.
4. The office *madrich* will get the child or children from the appropriate classroom.

If early release will occur on a consistent basis, please send in written notification of this change and we will plan to have your child meet you in the office to expedite the dismissal.

ABSENCES

In order for your child to receive the maximum benefit from his/her experience at Religious School – not to mention the investment you are making in their Jewish education – his/her attendance at *every* session is optimal. We ask that you put a top priority on attendance at Religious School; however, we understand that sometimes absences are unavoidable. Please notify the Education Office and, if possible, your child's teacher in advance when you know that your child will not be in attendance, and please let them know when to anticipate your child returning to Religious School.

If the number of absences is such that the teacher and/or Education Director deem it detrimental to your child's educational experience and progress, we will contact you to discuss the issues, offer our support, and make an action plan together to get them back on track with the class' progress, if necessary. This may include online learning sessions or homework assignments to keep your child current with his/her class.

ILLNESS

In determining whether your child is well enough to attend Religious School please refer to your public-school policy regarding illness. A written note should be sent upon your child's return to school.

ILLNESS DURING SCHOOL

Should your child report that he/she is not feeling well at school, we will assess the situation as it occurs. We will look for changes in behavior, how long he/she reports feeling poorly and take a temperature reading, if necessary. We will phone you to inform you of the situation and to help us determine if your child needs to be retrieved from school.

DAY TO DAY POLICIES

BAGS, BOOKS AND MATERIALS

Every child should arrive at school with a school bag, pencils, water bottle, and any other supplies the teacher has requested. Hebrew workbooks may be sent home periodically for homework and/or as a way for your child to keep you informed of his/her success. Please make sure that this book is returned to school each day.

CARPOOL

DROP OFF

SUNDAY - Please circle the building when you arrive and drop off at the portico at the doors to the Education Wing. Classroom instruction begins at 9:15 am; your child should be dropped off no later than 9:10 am.

TUESDAY – Please circle the building and drop off your child at the back door to the Hammer-Tritt Social Hall. The door will be open at 4:15 pm for your child to have a chance to socialize and grab a snack (optional) before school begins.

PICK UP

SUNDAY – Pick up will take place at the back door of the Hammer-Tritt Social Hall. Circle the building and form two lines as you approach the portico. A teacher or madrich/madricha will be out to assist you and take the names of your child(ren) or carpool members.

TUESDAY – Pick up will take place at the portico at the doors to the Education Wing. Please circle the building and from two lanes under the portico.

Pick up time on Sunday is at 12:15 pm and on Tuesday at 6:45 pm. **In an effort to expedite the time it takes to load all cars, we ask that you arrive at least 10 minutes before dismissal and wait in the carpool line for your child.** Arriving this early helps us gather the names of the child(ren) you are picking up and the order in which the children will be released, which in turn helps the process flow more quickly. *Once your car is loaded, remember to follow the lead of the or police officer in pulling away from the carpool line. For the safety of all students, we like to send all loaded cars away at the same time, so coordination is necessary. Please be patient while waiting to leave carpool.*

Should you choose not to utilize the carpool line for pick up on Sunday morning, please park in the lower parking lot by the Education Wing entrance and come into the synagogue **via the front door** to retrieve your child from the lobby. Be sure to let your child know to meet you there and send in a written notification to the teacher as well. ***Note that parking will not be available in the church parking lot (including the spaces adjacent to the soccer field) on Sunday as those spaces are reserved for the church.*** We strongly recommend that families carpool as much as possible and would be happy to connect you to other families who live in your area or whose children go to the same school as yours.

CELL PHONES

Cell phone usage in Religious School will be restricted to classroom activities as directed by the classroom teacher. When your child has his/her phone in school, we will ask that it be put into their pocket, backpack or handbag and set to silent. Please reinforce this policy with your children.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES

As partners in your child's education, effective communication is extremely important. Connecting with teachers, madrichim and the administrative staff is one of our primary goals of the school. To that end, there are different manners in which communication will take place:

TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Teachers will be communicating with parents at the beginning of each month to inform you of the topics that will be introduced in the coming month. In addition, teachers will begin using REMIND, a text only method of communication, to reach out to you with quick questions of the day to spark conversation with your child(ren) and/or to send you reminders. You will also be reminded of important upcoming dates in the Religious School.

Children in grades Kindergarten through Sixth will be given a two pocket folder that will be used to send home important notes and materials. Parents should also use this folder to send notes to the teacher. **Plan to check this folder daily.** Although we will make every effort to send things electronically for the sake of our environment, we realize that some things will need to be sent home in a paper format, such as assessment notes, conference notes or report cards.

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION COMMUNICATION

Each week, the Director of Education will send home a brief Mail Chimp email of important reminders for families.

Please feel free to contact the Director of Education at any time regarding questions or concerns you may have about your child's progress and/or the program in general. We also value your input and welcome comments or suggestions that help us identify the things we do well and/or areas we could improve.

FACEBOOK

Etz Chaim Religious School has a Facebook Page for sharing announcements and featuring photos of our students at work. Please "Like" the page and check frequently to catch a glimpse of what is going on each day, for reminders, and announcements on closings for inclement weather. Remember to indicate on your registration form, whether or not you give permission for us to share photos of your child on social media.

WEBSITE

Please note that we are working hard to keep the website information up-to-date. You can use this valuable tool to find all forms, flyers, calendars, etc. that you may need. Please let us know if you ever find something missing or incorrect as we will be happy to update.

DRESS CODE

Congregation Etz Chaim is a *makom kodesh*, a holy place. It is important to act and dress accordingly when in the building and on the grounds. Proper dress reflects our environment. To that end, please help your child make good decisions when dressing for school and use the public school guidelines concerning appropriate clothing. All males will be required to wear a *kippah* when in the building and females may do so if they choose.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the case of inclement weather, look for a Mail Chimp email from the Department of Education. We may or may not follow the Cobb County Public School closing schedule for inclement weather on Tuesdays and will decide whether to cancel school by 3 pm on Tuesdays and 8 am on Sunday mornings. You can also look at the Etz Chaim Religious School Facebook page for a confirmation of closing. If the decision is made to cancel religious school on Sundays, we will update the outgoing voicemail message at the number 770.977.3384 by 8:00 am as well as send out a mass email to notify you of the change.

SNACKS

In order to accommodate the various nutritional and health needs of our students we will follow the following snack policy: Your family has two options for snack on both Sunday and Tuesday. You may elect to pack a snack for your child(ren) or you may choose to send them with money to purchase snacks at the snack bar. At the snack bar, a variety of snacks from fruit and veggies to crackers will be available, pizza will also be made available on Tuesdays. All profits made from snack bar sales will go directly to the Religious School to add to our fundraising efforts.

When sending in something from home, we request that all snacks be fresh fruits, veggies or a pre-packaged snack that has a hecksher, if possible and never meat. Feel free to package your own small bag from a larger bag you have at home, but we request that the original bag have a hecksher. **WE ARE A NUT FREE SCHOOL, INCLUDING PEANUTS AND TREE NUTS! PLEASE CHECK ALL LABELS CAREFULLY AND REFRAIN FROM SENDING IN ITEMS (INCLUDING GRANOLA BARS) WITH ANY NUT PRODUCT!** A snack containing nuts will be sent back home and your child will be provided with a snack from the snack bar. We will send home a payment reminder to cover the cost of this snack.

We prefer that you prepay for snacks to create a family account for your child(ren) , this will alleviate the need to send money each day. Please go to https://www.etzchaim.net/form/snack.prepay.2022_23 to create/add money to your family's snack account. Pizza will be available for \$1 per slice on Tuesdays and each class will also have a snack bag in their rooms, so that students can choose a packaged snack on both Sundays and Tuesdays.

SHABBAT MORNING

ATTENDANCE AT SHABBAT SERVICES

Having your family at Shabbat morning services fosters both a sense of community and a sense of comfort in knowing how the service runs. Being comfortable with the synagogue service will not only enhance his/her Jewish education but also add to each participant's confidence as a Jew. We believe our Team Shabbat program is the perfect opportunity to help this occur. ***Religious School students in grades 2 – 6 must attend Team Shabbat each year equal to their grade number. For example, 2nd graders are required to come twice a year on Shabbat morning.*** We will designate dates for each grade and send the schedule in a separate mailing. We will keep a record of when your child attends services, either Team Shabbat or in the main sanctuary. As your family journeys through your child's Religious School education on the way to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, we encourage you to take advantage of the following options offered for all age groups:

TEAM SHABBAT

Team Shabbat is our new comprehensive program for all children. Team Shabbat meets twice a month either on its own or in conjunction with Shabbat L’Kulam, Shabbat for Everyone, and is designed for kindergarten – 5th graders from 10:45 am – 11:45 am. Kindergarten – 2nd graders will meet in rooms 10 & 12 and 3rd – 5th graders will meet in the Allan and Vivian Levine Family Chapel. Please refer to the Etz Chaim website for specific dates. Debbie Deutsch will lead the group in the classrooms and Shana LeVine will be the leader in the chapel. In addition, Tot Shabbat is our morning program for students who are preschool aged and younger. A brief service filled with songs and dances is the perfect way for families to spend their morning and your children will enjoy this age-appropriate experience. Tot Shabbat meets in rooms 5, 7, 9, & 11.

BABYSITTING

Babysitting is available for the youngest children every Shabbat morning in rooms 1 & 3 when there is no Team Shabbat. A reservation is not necessary.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

CHALUTZIM, CHAVERIM & GESHER

Children are encouraged to participate in our Chalutzim, Chaverim and Gesher programs. These youth programs, run by our Director of Youth Engagement, Leah Green, (leah@etzchaim.net) are social, spiritual, and recreational. They are wonderful complements to the experiences that your child will have in Religious School and will help to deepen the relationships they have built. The Chalutzim group is designed for children in grades K – 2, Chaverim is designed for children in grades 3 – 5 and Gesher is for children in grades 6 – 8.