

Temple Sinai Religious School Curriculum



There are six strands (subject areas) in our curriculum. Our school is currently engaged in a curriculum development project that has produced hundreds of specific educational objectives which stem from these strands:

Hebrew

Hebrew language is a priority in the Temple Sinai religious school curriculum. Our goal is for students to be able to read and write Hebrew with fluency and ease. Students will understand that Hebrew is the special and ancestral language of the Jewish people that unites Jews around the world. An emphasis will be placed on prayer-based Hebrew, root letter identification, and basic vocabulary. Students will also gain an understanding of the *tefillot* (prayers) and *brachot* (blessings) that they will use, we hope, throughout their lives.

In *Mechina* (grades K-2), students are introduced to Hebrew letters through classroom instruction, songs, and hands-on activities. The goal for the *Mechina* grades is to build basic reading and letter recognition skills. By the end of *Kitah Gimel* (third grade), all students are expected to know the letters of the Aleph-Bet and decode Hebrew. By the end of *Kitah Vav* (sixth grade), all students should be able to recite prayers accurately and fluently, and identify the overall prayer themes.

Beginning in *Kitah Daled* (fourth grade) all students are given a yearly assessment to track their progress. If needed, students will receive one-on-one or small-group Hebrew tutoring.

Avodah (Worship)

Students will participate in *Avodah* (worship) on a weekly basis with Cantor Freedman, learning a variety of holiday songs, prayers, and blessings, often connected to the Jewish holidays. In the younger grades, students will become familiar with the *tefillot* and rituals of Shabbat and many of the Jewish holidays. Over the course of the curriculum, students will be introduced to additional *tefillot* and *brachot*, exploring the meaning of individual prayers and building fluency in their recitation, with the goal of being able to feel comfortable with, and participate in, all types of services at Temple Sinai, as well as at other synagogues.

Torah

The students will gain familiarity with Jewish sacred texts and will come to appreciate the Jewish value of lifelong study. Beginning in the *Mechina* grades, students will learn about the matriarchs and patriarchs in the book of Genesis and the values and lessons that are drawn from its stories. As they enter the older grades, students will be introduced to themes, characters, and episodes in the *Tanach*, which will strengthen their understanding of early Jewish history; convey the importance of the Bible's lessons and values; and demonstrate the influence that these stories have had on Jews and people of all faiths to this very day.

In *Kitah Vav* students will study a unit called "*Sifrei Kodesh*" (holy books) from Project *Etgar*, a curriculum of the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism based on 4-MAT, a learning approach that intends to meet the needs of a variety of learning styles. In this unit, students will study four of the major written works of the Jewish tradition; the *Tanach* (the five books of Moses, Prophets, and Writings), the *Talmud*, *Mishnah*, and *Shulkhan Aruch*. Our goal is that they will develop critical skills for interpretation and understand that these texts have relevance to their own lives.

G'milut Chasadim

Students will recognize how *mitzvot* and acts of loving kindness enrich the spirit and help us to perform *Tikkun Olam* (the Jewish imperative to repair the world). We will show our students, through the study of texts and through our own words and actions, why *g'milut chasadim* is an essential part of Jewish life and how they can contribute to the strengthening of relationships and the building of a caring society. Students will participate in trips and hands-on projects to reinforce these goals.

Culture, Holidays, And Community

Students in the Temple Sinai religious school will be encouraged to value being part of a *Kehillah Kedosha*, a sacred community. Students will have opportunities to learn with their same-age peers, participating in projects together, *Avodah*, and joining in grade-based games and activities. Jewish holidays will be studied each year, with an emphasis in *Kitah Gimel*. Special programming will be planned around holidays such as Hanukkah, *Tu B'Shevat*, Passover, and *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Israeli Independence Day). Students are strongly encouraged to attend Shabbat and holiday programming, along with their families, as an important complement to the studies occurring in the classroom.

Students in *Kitah Hey* (fifth grade) partake in a family history project in conjunction with the Philadelphia Jewish Archive. Each student is tasked with interviewing a member of his or her family and creating a family history report that will be sent to the archive and stored at Temple Sinai. This has been a meaningful project for all who have participated.

Israel

Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people and a special place for Jews around the world. Israel plays an important role in the religious school curriculum in all grades. Whether it is exploring the cities of the country, tasting the food, hearing the music, learning about Israeli innovations, or listening to a personal story from a teacher, students will know that Israel is an important part of who we are as Jews. *Kitah Daled* students participate in an in-depth study of Israel, exploring its cities, culture, and people. Every Sunday all of the students gather before dismissal in the sanctuary. During this time students sing the *Hatikvah* (Israel's national anthem), and they also hear fun facts about Israel from students in *Kitah Vav*.