

# **Am Shalom Handbook of Education**



**5770 ✪ 2009/10**

*“We believe a Jewish education for every person is indispensable if we are to fully experience the values of Jewish life and ideas, and if we are to claim our Jewish heritage joyfully.”*

# **AM SHALOM HANDBOOK OF EDUCATION**

**“Love Your Neighbor As Yourself”**

**5770 ✧ 2009/2010**

## **Goals of Education**

**We believe a Jewish education for every person is indispensable if we are to fully experience the values of Jewish life and ideas, and if we are to claim our Jewish heritage joyfully. Therefore, in order to truly become an Am Shalom, a people of peace, the following goals have been adopted:**

- 1. To develop and enhance spiritual and ethical sensitivity so that our actions and attitudes reflect ethical teachings of Judaism.**
- 2. To impart a knowledge of Jewish history, literature and culture necessary to develop an understanding of, and take pride in, the contributions of Jews and Judaism to world civilization.**
- 3. To develop an understanding of Hebrew necessary for rich and meaningful Jewish living.**
- 4. To develop the ability and encourage the desire to practice Jewish observances in the home.**
- 5. To provide a wide range of group activities and observances through which our school age learners may experience the satisfaction and inspiration of Jewish living.**
- 6. To develop an interest and a desire to participate in local, national and world Jewish affairs, to take leadership positions in Jewish life, and to contribute toward the fulfillment of the prophetic vision of a just society and a united humankind.**
- 7. To foster an awareness of the essential harmony of the ideals and traditions of American democracy and Judaism so that one can find fulfillment and as an heir to both American and Jewish traditions.**
- 8. To develop an awareness of Jewish theology and become aware of the continuing struggle to define the nature of the Deity and its relationship to humanity. To develop knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Jewish worship and prayer so we will be able to participate and find meaning in prayer.**
- 9. To develop knowledge of, and a bond with, ancient and modern Israel.**
- 10. To instill a love of learning for its own sake, to maximize inquiry and discovery, and to encourage lifelong Jewish study.**

**Steven Stark Lowenstein, Rabbi – Phyllis A. Sommer, Associate Rabbi - Harold L. Kudan, Founding Rabbi  
Nancy Diamond Landsman, Cantor – Judi Berliner, Director of Religious Education  
Edward M. Alpert, Executive Director, FTA – Sharon Morton, RJE, Educator Emeritus**

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## OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

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**KINDERGARTEN THROUGH TENTH GRADE:** The curriculum of the Religious School is designed to help the students develop a sense of Jewish self-esteem, identify with the congregation and establish a sense of “peoplehood” at the appropriate grade level. The school programs are based on development of a sense of awe, wonder, and the meaning and mystery of Jewish living. Grades K-6 meet on Sundays, 9:30-11:30 AM. Grades 7-10 meet on Sundays, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM. Grades 11-12 Enrichment Program meets on Sundays, 11:30-1:00 PM.

**HEBREW SCHOOL:** Our Hebrew school is a four-year program. It begins in the third grade in public school and ends when the student finishes 6th grade and transitions into 7th grade and intensive preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Many return as student teachers in the Hebrew school. All students who attend Hebrew school are required to attend religious school. A part of the Hebrew School/Religious School program includes B'nai Mitzvah.

- 1) Classes meet for 90 minutes each Wednesday, 4:10-5:40 PM, except for those days when school is closed for various secular and religious Holidays. See “2009-2010 Am Shalom School Calendar” for further details.
- 2) Family class (Bet – Dalet only) - Wednesday evenings 6:00-7:30 for parents and students together

**STUDENT TEACHERS:** Past confirmands will have the opportunity to help younger students, and will also participate in leadership development and educational classes. There will be opportunities for student teachers to get together socially as well as for the sake of learning.

**CHOIR:** Our Junior Choir sings at High Holy Day services, once every month at our family Friday evening services, and at other special services. The Junior Choir is comprised of students in the 2nd-6th grades. They rehearse before Religious School on Sundays.

**S.K.I.P. (Send a Kid To Israel Program)** S.K.I.P. is a savings incentive plan with contributions by your family, Am Shalom and the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. All monies collected accrue interest. SKIP is designed to enable Am Shalom high school, college students, or post-college students to participate in a Federation-approved trip to Israel – there are many to choose from. Families generally enroll their children in this program during their children's 3rd grade year and continue yearly payments through 9th grade. Call Marcia in the office for details.

**YOUTH ACTIVITIES:** At Am Shalom we are especially committed to providing opportunities for our young members to be involved in informal activities in the congregation outside of their religious education. Events will be well publicized by flyers, in the Temple Bulletin, and on the internet at <http://www.amshalom.com>. Please urge your child to join these hands-on events that build community and/or help the community in a fun and enriching way. There are three youth groups – 3rd- 4th grade, 5th-6th grade, and grades 9-12. Special programming for grades 7-8 will take place in conjunction with Tichon Am Shalom, our new 7th/8th grade pre-Confirmation program. Our new state-of-the-art Youth Lounge will be open for use in the fall. Times will be posted when it will be open and staffed for events and lounging. For more info, e-mail Rabbi Michael Sommer at [msommer724@gmail.com](mailto:msommer724@gmail.com). Please watch for more information about the program relevant to your child's age. Notices will be sent home from Religious School, published on the Am Shalom website, published in the KOL and sent via e-mail.

## FAMILY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Family education programs are provided to help families learn about their children's studies, to create a shared learning experience, and to have fun. We offer substantial Jewish content, authentic Jewish experiences, as well as a way of thinking about family. The key components are knowledge, skills, appreciation and empowerment.

We provide the following programs:

**TOT SHABBAT:** One Friday each month, our Rabbis will lead young families in a short Shabbat service with music, prayer, and food.

**CONSECRATION:** All Kindergarten and new families to Am Shalom join together for dinner and for a special ceremony when their children are consecrated into the Religious School. Consecration means to dedicate oneself to an ideal. It is through this experience that families begin to dedicate themselves to the ideal of study. The Kindergarten/New Student Consecration Service takes place this year on Friday, October 9, 2009.

**RELIGIOUS SCHOOL FAMILY DAYS:** Students invite their families to join them for a Sunday morning program during Religious School hours. The students work hard to prepare for these special days. They include an adult education component as well as an interactive family program. Also, each grade level hosts a special Friday night Shabbat Service and oneg, where they share things they have learned in Religious School as an integral part of the Service. Watch your e-mail for further details!

**ADULT EDUCATION:** The Adult Education Brochure includes a wide range of programs designed to enhance your knowledge and enable parents and grandparents to be role models for their children's education.

**HEBREW SCHOOL PARENTS MEETINGS AT OPEN HOUSE AND CONFERENCES:** Parents can meet with teachers and/or Senior staff to learn about and discuss aspects of Hebrew education and/or B'nai Mitzvah. Open House will take place on Wednesday, December 2, 2009, 4:10-5:40 PM, and Teacher Conferences will be held on Wednesday, January 20, 2010.

## **AM SHALOM RELIGIOUS SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

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The Am Shalom curriculum for every grade includes Torah study, Bible stories, Israel, and Tzedakah. In addition the grades will focus as follows:

### **Kindergarten: My Jewish Family Identity – Year One**

This is a basic introduction to the beauty of Judaism. We concentrate on the celebration of the Holidays, particularly as they relate to the Jewish home. We share the Jewish experience through music, art, dance, drama, literature and prayer.

### **First Grade: My Jewish Family Identity – Year Two**

The observance of Shabbat and the Holidays are the major themes of first grade. The importance of the family and its role within the home and the community is emphasized. Each person in the family helps to make a Jewish home. Each child will prepare a beautiful Shabbat Kit that will be presented to parents at an end-of-the-year Shabbat Dinner. The contents of the kit will enable the family to observe Shabbat in a meaningful way at home. Students are introduced to the study of Hebrew.

### **Second Grade: My Jewish Community**

We teach the second graders to appreciate the importance of the Synagogue, what it means, who are its leaders, and why we come to the Sanctuary to pray. We prepare our students for active participation in our Synagogue and learn the history and origins of our ceremonial objects and symbols. Prayer, Tzedakah and Mitzvot are an integral part of the year's study. We continue the study of Hebrew.

### **Third Grade: My Jewish Spirituality**

The students will study God and Bible, those two important cornerstones of their Jewish heritage. They will also continue their study of Holidays, traditions, and Mitzvot, as well as receiving an introduction to Israel.

### **Fourth Grade: Jewish Text Study and Klal Yisrael**

We create an exciting atmosphere for Israel study. The children will understand the powerful connection of religion, the people, the land, the culture of Israel with every country where there are Jews. The development of our Jewish Museum, for our Service at the Western Wall, consists of six units of study: Modern Jewish Heroes, Travel within Israel, Kibbutz Life, The Children of Israel, Jerusalem, and Making Peace. Hebrew is an integral part of the study of Israel. We study and discuss Jewish communities throughout the world. Children will understand that Jews all over the world are connected with one another. We share many rituals, Holidays, and values, and learn what makes each community different and unique.

### **Fifth Grade: Jewish Life Cycle**

Life is marked by a series of specific events, many that recur, others that happen but once. It is important that children understand the significance of Jewish life cycle events. Children will understand, appreciate and learn to commemorate each phase of the Life Cycle: Birth, Consecration, B'nai Mitzvah, Confirmation, Marriage, the Jewish Home, Aging, Death, and Dying. The students and their parents will join Rabbi Steven Stark Lowenstein for a trip to a funeral chapel. In addition, they will study Holidays, mitzvot, values, and God.

### **Sixth Grade: Our Jewish Blueprint**

The sixth grade will study Judaism in comparison to other world religions in the framework of Jewish history throughout the world, particularly the history of Israel. They will study their own family history and build a special scrapbook full of family mementos. They will also study Bible. Games will be played, stories will be told, thoughts will be shared, concepts will be debated, and minds and hearts will be instructed and challenged.

### **Seventh and Eighth Grades: Our Jewish Responsibilities** *(Now on Sundays, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM)*

The Tichon Am Shalom program (“*tichon*” is Hebrew for “high school”) is designed to offer our students interesting and relevant learning experiences. We strongly believe that this is an important piece of building Jewish identity, knowledge and passion, and hope that our families will feel the same way.

The program consists of three main elements: Community Building, Core Classes, and Travel Experiences. Core classes will focus on the question: “How do I become a responsible Jew?” Brunch will be served.

An 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade retreat is also planned that will form an integral part of your child’s learning experience. Details will be forthcoming.

### **Ninth Grade: “All of the Above”**

*(Class meets Sunday, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM)*

Ninth Grade reviews all of the material they have studied throughout their Religious School education – hence the title, “All of the Above.” Responsibility and World Judaism are all examined as students consider the question, “Who am I as I go out into the world?” The Ninth Grade is a most exciting year in the Religious School, as students begin to pull together of all the various strands of the previous years. The class members will examine their beliefs about Judaism and begin to develop a working philosophy for their lives. Brunch will be served.

### **Tenth Grade: Confirmation**

*(Class meets Sunday, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM)*

In their eleventh year, students continue to pull together of all the various strands of the previous years as they examine their beliefs about Judaism and continue to develop a working philosophy for their lives. The class retreat is a central experience that will help the class to further solidify the confirmands as a group. The Rabbis as well as the confirmation teacher will meet with the classes throughout the year. Students are confirmed at the end of the tenth grade year. Brunch will be served.

### **Eleventh & Twelfth Grades: From Confirmation to Affirmation**

*(Class meets Sunday mornings 11:30 AM-1:00 PM)*

Our upper grade program includes both a student teaching experience and Interactive Class dealing with current events, Jewish issues, and Jewish decisions for the future. Brunch will be served.

## AM SHALOM HEBREW SCHOOL GOALS

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Am Shalom believes we must equip our children with a knowledge of the Hebrew language, which is indispensable for full appreciation of the spirit and content of the Jewish heritage and its renaissance in modern Israel. We have adopted the following goals for our Hebrew School.

- ❖ To develop the ability to read and write Hebrew.
- ❖ To develop a knowledge and understanding of prayers for Shabbat, the Holidays, weekdays and their meaning.
- ❖ To develop a knowledge of a basic, functional, conversational Hebrew vocabulary.
- ❖ To instill in students a desire to continue their Hebrew studies beyond the elementary school years.
- ❖ To develop an appreciation of the Bible and the prayerbook in Jewish life.
- ❖ To develop an awareness of the significance and importance of becoming B'nai Mitzvah.
- ❖ To develop skills so that a student is competent and feels comfortable at the time of B'nai Mitzvah.
- ❖ To develop the ability to participate in the celebration of Shabbat and Holidays in both the synagogue and the home.
- ❖ To develop familiarity, comfort, and enthusiasm for the Hebrew language, Jewish customs and traditions.
- ❖ To incorporate Hebrew value concepts (i.e.: *Gemilut Chasadim* = acts of loving kindness) into students' everyday speech and actions.
- ❖ To demonstrate that Hebrew is an important part of our history and our culture; Hebrew is both a holy and a "living" language.

## B'NAI MITZVAH STUDIES AND PREPARATION

Most training in Hebrew prayer reading and Torah and Haftarah reading skills is accomplished in the four-year midweek Hebrew program which students generally begin in the third grade. The B'nai Mitzvah coordinator assists families in selecting dates for their children's B'nai Mitzvah service. Information describing this process are sent out well in advance of a child's thirteenth birthday year. A meeting for parents will take place to review the mid-week Hebrew program, and to give a brief orientation to the B'nai Mitzvah time frame. There is a four week family education course led by Rabbi Lowenstein and Rabbi Sommer approximately a year before B'nai Mitzvah. There is a 10 week class within the year before B'nai Mitzvah led by Cantor Nancy Landsman as well as an eight month program of weekly private tutoring immediately preceding B'nai Mitzvah to be scheduled with the Cantor. Sessions led by our Rabbis will help the student fully prepare to participate. In addition, each student is required to complete an individualized program of learning and social action activities preceding B'nai Mitzvah.

## HOMEWORK!!!

Particularly in Hebrew language instruction, homework is **essential** for information retention and skills development. It is the policy of our school that homework will be assigned by all Hebrew teachers. Assignments are expected to be returned when requested.

# **AM SHALOM HEBREW SCHOOL PROGRAM**

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## **YEAR I: ALEPH**

Students will:

1. Know the Hebrew alphabet and vowels, orally, visually and in block writing.
2. Carry on simple conversations in Hebrew with a controlled vocabulary.
3. Read and/or chant the prayers and blessings from our Alef textbook.
4. Recognize key words of the blessings and prayers from our Alef textbook.
5. Know their Hebrew names
6. Complete textbook *Shalom Uvracha*.

## **YEAR II: BET**

Students will:

1. Review learning from previous year.
2. Recognize Hebrew vocabulary orally as well as in block writing.
3. Utilize Hebrew concept words.
4. Read and/or chant the prayers and blessings from Bet curriculum.
5. Know the meaning of the blessings and prayers.
6. Learn to sing songs and liturgy which reinforce goals of the Religious School curriculum.
7. Participate in and help lead congregational worship services.
8. Continue to develop conversational skills.
9. Discuss the meaning of blessings and why we may choose to incorporate them in our lives.
10. Complete Bet Prayer Curriculum with success. Each student must pass a test for each prayer learned.

## **AM SHALOM HEBREW SCHOOL PROGRAM (continued)**

### **YEAR III: GIMEL**

Students will:

1. Review learning from previous years.
2. Recognize key words and root words and be able to understand, interpret, read, and/or chant the blessings and prayers from Gimel Curriculum.
3. Engage in an enriched conversational program.
4. Become comfortable with participation in a congregational service.
5. Complete Gimel Prayer Curriculum with success. Each student must pass a test for each prayer learned.

### **YEAR IV: DALET**

Students will:

1. Review learning from previous years.
2. Be able to understand and interpret prayers and blessings from Dalet Prayer Curriculum.
3. Recognize and read Hebrew without vowels.
4. Search for a personal understanding of the meaning of prayer.
5. Read and understand Pirke Avot (the sayings of the Fathers) and be able to find relevance for today in each quotation.
6. Become fully prepared to lead the congregation in one's own B'nai Mitzvah service.
7. Become fully prepared and comfortable for participation in a Friday evening Shabbat service.
8. Each student must pass a test comprised of the Am Shalom service prayers.

## **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

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### **ATTENDANCE**

Regular and "on time" weekly attendance is very important. It maintains continuity and develops meaningful social interaction. We expect your child to be in class at least **70%** of the school year. Families will be contacted by phone either by a teacher or a member of our office staff in cases of recurrent absences. Teachers often assign meaningful make-up work to students who are absent. It is expected that these assignments will be returned to the teacher when completed.

### **TARDINESS**

Please make sure that your student(s) is/are in school on time. It sets a positive tone to the entire day and allows the teachers to use the first few minutes to do significant, motivating activities for the day. We have limited class time and in return expect students to arrive on time, and to remain in class until the end of the school day.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

All school communications with very few exceptions will be handled via e-mail. In addition, you will receive "Am Shalom School News" via e-mail from your child's teacher or the school office. It states all current information and reminds you of future programs.

### **POST B'NAI MITZVAH STUDIES**

Students are expected and encouraged to continue their Jewish education through Confirmation. Taught by our Rabbis and confirmation teacher, our Temple's Confirmation program is designed to provide students with the education and inspiration necessary to confirm their Jewish faith. Students are expected to attend the Confirmation Retreat, and attend a specified number of worship services, including Consecration, Confirmation and special events. Students and families participate in preparations for Confirmation. In addition, 11th and 12th grade students are encouraged to serve as student aides, as well as participate in a special after-class enrichment program, led by our rabbis as well as other exciting guest speakers.

### **APPROPRIATE DRESS**

Students are expected to dress in a manner that does not disrupt the educational environment of our school. Therefore, they may NOT wear:

- a) coats or jackets inside the building
- b) tank tops or shirts that show bare midriff
- c) clothing that promotes drugs, alcohol, violence, or disrespect for the feelings and rights of others
- d) clothing that features sexually suggestive or explicit language

Any student seen dressing in a manner that violates the above rules shall be instructed to remove such items, which will be stored in the Educator's office until the end of the day. If the student can't remove such items, the student will be provided with a covering garment that they will be required to wear for the duration of class, which they will then take home, launder and return.

## **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Cell phones, iPods, Gameboys, and other portable digital devices are an increasingly significant part of our lives, but they have no place in the classroom. Students are expected to turn off any portable digital devices before entering the classroom, and to leave them off until the end of class. Results of violating this policy are as follows:

- a) **First occurrence:** Any portable digital device that is seen or heard to be in use during class time will be confiscated and held by the teacher until the end of the day.
- b) **Second occurrence:** Any portable digital device that is seen or heard to be in use during class time will be confiscated and placed in the Religious Education Director's office until the end of the day, and the student's parents will be notified.
- c) **Third occurrence:** Any portable digital device that is seen or heard to be in use during class time will be confiscated and only returned to the student after a meeting between the student, the student's parents, and the Director of Religious Education.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Good behavior is expected throughout our school. Teachers establish specific classroom guidelines and a discipline plan which they review with students at the start of the year. Ongoing communication between teachers and parents and educator will be maintained throughout the year should behavioral challenges occur. There will be meaningful consequences for disruptive behavior. Respect and mutual trust are integral values of our educational philosophy.

## **LIBRARY**

Classes visit the library during regularly scheduled sessions at which time they participate in library activities and check out books. The Am Shalom library is open whenever the temple is open. You may visit the library on Sunday mornings while your children are in class. Our volunteer librarian is happy to direct you to any of the books in our collection or any of the Jewish periodicals to which the Library subscribes. You may also wish to check out any of the audio-video materials.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

Mark your children's coats and sweaters with their name to facilitate return of clothes if something is inadvertently left at school. We maintain a lost and found area where you can reclaim lost clothing. At regular intervals during the school year, unclaimed clothing is donated to our Help the Homeless program.

## **TZEDAKAH**

Tzedakah is collected each week, and students are encouraged to contribute what they can. This is never treated as a routine matter, but is discussed regularly by our teachers on an age appropriate level. Our contributions are sent to Jewish as well as secular causes, and to local, national, and international organizations. During the past year, at the direction of our students and faculty, tzedakah funds were sent to support Chernovtsy (our adopted Russian town), J.U.F., the ARK, Mazon, Habitat for Humanity, Jewish National Fund, Lifeline for the Old, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Leukemia Research Foundation, Ziv Tzedakah Fund, Shomrei Adamah, and a number of other worthy causes.

## **VISITORS**

We discourage students from inviting guests to school. If it cannot be helped, we urge you to call the school office to let us know that your child is bringing a guest. Your cooperation in this matter is important. Upon arrival on Sunday morning, guests must go to the school office before going to class, where an admission slip will be prepared. We expect all guests to cooperate with the teacher in all activities. **If a parent chooses to visit a class, he/she must first notify the Director of Religious Education.**

## **SAFETY POLICIES**

- ❖ **Anyone entering the building prior to 11:30 a.m. must use the main (middle) entrance.** This is to ensure the safety of all students entering the building. On Sundays, greeters are present to answer your questions as you enter the building.
- ❖ **7th – 10th graders should use the Sanctuary entrance when arriving for class.** 7th – 10th graders with younger siblings can be dropped where their younger siblings are picked up, but should still use the Sanctuary entrance. 7th – 8th graders with no younger siblings should be dropped on Lincoln Avenue and use the walkway there to the Sanctuary entrance.
- ❖ Although we do NOT encourage early dismissal, **all students who need to leave early must bring a note from home.** The teacher will then send the child to the office. **STUDENTS MUST BE PICKED UP IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE.** Students leaving early may not leave directly from classrooms, and they may not meet their rides outside. Parents or guardians must sign the students out.
- ❖ **The turn-around in front of the building is for pick-up and drop-off only.** (The Glencoe Police Department will strictly enforce these rules and ticket for violations.)
- ❖ **There is absolutely NO PARKING in the driveway,** even for a moment.
- ❖ **There is absolutely NO DOUBLE PARKING on Vernon Avenue. EVER!!**
- ❖ **Right turn only** when exiting the driveway.
- ❖ Be very careful and obey volunteers wearing safety vests for the safety of all our children.
- ❖ During congested times, if the person you are picking up is not there, please drive around the block until your carpool comes out of the building.
- ❖ **Pickups are only southbound on Vernon. Children MUST enter car on school side of building.\***
- ❖ **We encourage students living within walking distance of Am Shalom to walk to and from class, either in the company of a parent or guardian.** We do not assume liability, however, for any injuries that might occur not on Am Shalom property.

Your assistance in these vital safety measures will help us ensure your children's safety.

The Am Shalom theme for 5770 is:

LOVE YOUR  
NEIGHBOR  
AS YOURSELF



וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ