

STEPHEN WISE FREE SYNAGOGUE

# RELIGIOUS SCHOOL



JOIN THE FUN AND BE  
PART OF THE  
COMMUNITY!

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# Live, Learn, and Have Fun!

Join our welcoming and supportive Jewish community here at Stephen Wise Free Synagogue! Once a part of the SWFS Religious School, your child will be surrounded by a wonderfully warm Jewish learning environment. Positive connections to Judaism, the Jewish people, and to the synagogue community are formed, laying an important foundation for the development of a strong Jewish identity later in life. The SWFS Religious School Program provides age appropriate opportunities for your child's Jewish learning from ages 5-18.

Working with the SWFS Early Childhood Center, the Religious School program integrates the Reggio Emilia and JECEI\* approach in the classroom as students explore Jewish life, identity, and education. We recognize that our students and families are continuing their *masa* (journey) with the SWFS community and we hope to strengthen these relationships through our program. We stress the importance of building a supportive learning community for students, teachers, and families. We offer many opportunities for families to join together for Jewish learning and experiences. Our program allows students to make friends while building a positive connection to the synagogue and Jewish people in a setting that they know and feel comfortable in. Our program recognizes the importance of a partnership with the entire family and sees family education as an integral part of developing Jewish identity.

We look forward to accompanying you and your family on this Jewish journey.

\* The Reggio Emilia Approach is an educational philosophy based on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery in a supportive and enriching environment based on the interests of the children through a self-guided curriculum. JECEI (Jewish Early Childhood Engagement Initiative) fuses the Reggio Emilia philosophy with the values of Jewish learning through several lenses: *Masa* (journey) - reflection, *Brit* (covenant) - commitment, *Tzelem Elokim* (divine image) - dignity, *Kedusha* (holiness) - intentionality, *Hit'orerut* (awakening) - gratitude, *D'rash* (interpretation) - dialogue, and *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world) - responsibility.

 Stephen Wise Free Synagogue\*30 West 68th Street\*NY, NY 10023

## **KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM:**

Our goal in our Kindergarten class is to introduce students to Jewish learning and living through a variety of media, art, music, dramatic hands-on activities, games, and exercises, which will ultimately help our students develop an enduring relationship with their congregation and community.

Families can choose from our two learning opportunity programs:



### **Sunday Program**

Sunday mornings 9:30-11 am



### **Weekday Program**

Tuesday afternoons 3:45-5:15 pm

## **Celebrate Shabbat As A Family At SWFS:**



### **Shabbat Together: KESHER**

Saturday mornings 10 am -12 pm

Parents and children join together on Saturday mornings for our Shabbat Morning Family Service followed by an optional parallel learning opportunity for adults and children.

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## **FIRST AND SECOND GRADE PROGRAM:**

Our goal in our First and Second Grade program is to foster a sense of connectedness to the Jewish people, while discovering the individuals, narratives, places, and vocabulary which are the foundation of the Jewish people's story. Students will explore the first two books of the Bible: Genesis and Exodus, and celebrate Jewish holidays and life cycle events as a community. Students are introduced to the Hebrew letters and language through interactive and multi-modal activities.

Families can choose from our two learning opportunity programs:



### **Sunday Program**

Sunday mornings 9:30 -11:30 am




### **Weekday Program**

Tuesday afternoons 3:45-5:45 pm

## **Religious School Community Worship - Tefila:**



Students in all programs come together as a community each week for a shared worship experience. Students have the opportunity to lead prayers and teach their fellow students about the prayer. We also use this time together to learn about the School Year Themes, such as Mitzvah of the Month or Shabbat in Action. We invite parents to join and participate!

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### **THIRD, FOURTH, FIFTH, AND SIXTH GRADE PROGRAM:**

Our Third Grade students use the theme of holiness as they explore the third book of the Torah: Leviticus. Fourth Grade students explore the theme of Jewish peoplehood and community as seen through the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Fifth Grade students move on to the book of Prophets and later begin exploring their own Torah portion that they will read at their Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. Our Sixth Grade students use the texts from Ketuvim (Writings) as an approximate guide to the ancient history of the Jewish people. They then study modern Jewish history through the lens of film and other media.

Families can choose from our two learning opportunity programs:



#### **Sunday Program**

Sunday mornings 9:30 am-1 pm



#### **Weekday Program**

Monday and Wednesday  
afternoons 4 - 6 pm

### **HEBREW PROGRAM:**



Our prayer based Hebrew program officially begins in Third Grade. Using our Phonetic Hebrew Decoding Program (PHD), students are introduced to the Hebrew letters and vowels and quickly begin to learn to read Hebrew words. Students then move onto learning prayers in our Hineini Hebrew program. Hebrew is reinforced during our weekly community Tefila sessions.

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### **SEVENTH GRADE PROGRAM:**

Students in our Seventh Grade attend Religious School for two and a half hours a week in addition to Bar/Bat Mitzvah tutoring. Our Seventh Grade students focus their year on preparations for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations while exploring their understanding of Jewish identity. The students look at identity through the lens of history, their lives, and Torah. Alongside our Jewish identity and Torah curriculum, the students, on the brink of Jewish adulthood, explore their responsibility to community service and *tikkun olam*, repairing the world.

Families can choose from our two learning opportunity programs:



### **Sunday Program**

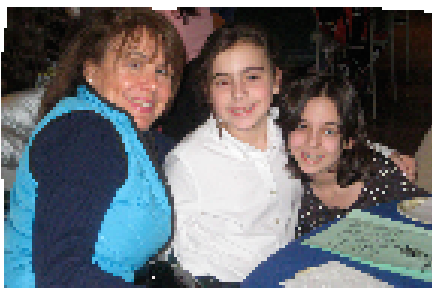
Sunday mornings 10:30 am -1 pm



### **Weekday Program**

Tuesday afternoons 4:30-7 pm

### **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Family Education Program:**



Preparation for the Bar/Bat Mitzvah ceremony is an exciting process and enables the Bar/Bat Mitzvah student to become a mature participant in synagogue life and marks the beginning of Jewish adulthood. This process is for the entire family! Within the year prior to the celebration, our Cohort Program allows families to learn about the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process, ritual and sacred objects related to being a Jewish adult, the prayer service, and, at the same time, build relationships with other families going through the same process.

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## UPPER SCHOOL PROGRAM - ZARKOR:

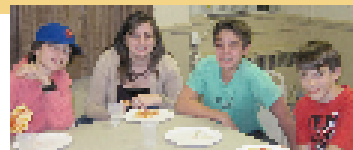
EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE DIRECTED PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS IN EIGHTH, NINTH, TENTH, ELEVENTH, AND TWELFTH GRADE.

ZARKOR, Hebrew for searchlight, allows our students in Eighth Grade and older to create an individualized path of learning and enrichment. This Program offers a variety of leadership, learning and social opportunities. Individuals can participate in our Teaching Assistant - Madrichim Program where they will assist in our classrooms and be a role model to our younger students. Eleventh and Twelfth Grade students will have the opportunity to connect with members of the SWFS community for internships in desired fields. All students will come together once a month on a Tuesday evening to learn together. Electives include: Modern Hebrew, Torah study, Jewish History, Israel, Teaching Assistant training meetings, songleading, and more. In addition, students will participate in ongoing community service opportunities. They are also welcome to get involved in various committees and sub-committees here at SWFS.

You choose your own way of learning; let us be your guide!

## YOUTH GROUPS AT SWFS:

SWFS Religious School encourages our students to become a part of the overall community here at Stephen Wise Free Synagogue. We offer two youth groups: JYC (Jewish Youth Club) our junior Youth Group for Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Grade students; and SWFSTY, our Senior Youth Group for Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Grade students. Both Youth Groups enable our students to have positive, comfortable, and welcoming educational and social opportunities throughout the school year. We hope to continue to create a cohesive group of participants, as well as to help foster leadership opportunities for these young adults through fun and exciting programming outside of school hours.



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### Evita R. Sokol, RJE - Director of Education

Before coming to Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, Evita R. Sokol, RJE spent many years working with children of all ages and families in Jewish summer camps, community centers, and synagogue schools. Evita participated in a double degree college program where she received a BA in History from Columbia University and a BA in Modern Jewish Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). She continued her studies at JTS and received her Master's in Jewish Education. Prior to her arrival at SWFS, Evita served as the Assistant Director of Education and later the Director of Family and Youth Education at Temple Shaaray Tefila in NYC. During these formative years, Evita became an active member in several educators' networks including the Metropolitan Educators' Council (MEC), The National Association of Temple Educators (NATE), and the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY). Evita then went on to be part of the first cohort of the Leadership Institute for Congregational School Principals. The Leadership Institute is guided by the vision of the New York School of Education at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) and the William Davidson Graduate School of Education at JTS. Working together and with the UJA-Federation of New York, this organization enables educators in the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist movements to join together to further the leadership capacity, pedagogic skills, and Judaic knowledge of top educators in the northeast. Evita later earned the title of Reform Jewish Educator (RJE) recognized for her commitment and work with students from early childhood through adult ages. Evita brings her knowledge and learning from her past experiences and her involvement in these groups to the families of Stephen Wise Free Synagogue.



### Rena Kaufmann - Assistant Director of Education

Rena brings enthusiasm, love and joy for Jewish education and learning. She holds two bachelor's degrees: one from Barnard College of Columbia University in Sociology and one from JTS in Bible. She continued her studies at JTS and received a Master's in Jewish Education. Before arriving at Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, Rena spent many years in Informal Jewish Education working with High School age students in summer camping, and youth work. She spent many summers involved in the United Synagogue Youth summer youth program called "Wheels." This program spends six and a half weeks on a bus traveling coast to coast with High School age students. As they travel and experience North America, the participants enrich and develop their awareness and appreciation of Judaism, Jewish living, and culture. After many years as a staff member, Rena then moved on to serve as the Director of this program. Rena joined the SWFS education team soon after Evita's arrival in 2007 and is thrilled to be able to share experiences both in the classroom with students, faculty, and families and outside the classroom with our two youth groups, JYC (Jewish Youth Club for 5th-7th grade students) and SWPSTY (youth group for 8th-12th grade students).

The SWFS Religious School is open to members of the SWFS community. For membership information, please contact [info@swfs.org](mailto:info@swfs.org).