

STEPHEN WISE FREE SYNAGOGUE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL HANDBOOK



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RELIGIOUS SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The Stephen Wise Free Synagogue Religious School is committed to providing comprehensive and continuing education for children and adults in Jewish history, observance, beliefs, culture and the Hebrew language. Our mission is to integrate the Religious School into every aspect of the rich environment of our congregation and community and to inspire commitments to *Limud Torah* (study), *Avodah* (prayer), and *G'milut Chasadim* (acts of loving-kindness). This goal is realized through the regular interactions of students with a talented and diverse faculty, a vibrant clergy, and an active and multifaceted congregation with a dynamic history of social action. The pivotal roles of Israel and of Jewish civilization in the modern world are made accessible through art, literature, culture, dance, and music integrated with the study of Hebrew, Jewish heritage, Torah, and ritual.

Students forge a lifelong connection and commitment to the continuum of the Jewish experience through an understanding of Jewish history, faith, and tradition. Adults and children will strengthen their Jewish identity, further integrate the teachings of Torah into their daily lives, become more intimate with the liturgy and rituals of Shabbat and Jewish holidays, and solidify their relationship with God. They will actively participate in the life of our congregation, the building of our community, *Am Yisrael* (the people of Israel), and *Tikkun Olam* (the healing of the world).

Stephen Wise Free Synagogue (SWFS) hopes to share the joy, excitement and reward of lifelong Jewish living with all those who enter its doors. We share in the challenge that Judaism presents, and strive to act as a partner with our students, families and faculty members in creating a joyous, meaningful and rich Jewish life.

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RELIGIOUS SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The SWFS Religious School Program is based on the spiral curricular concept in which students visit similar areas of study (Bible, Hebrew, values, history, holidays, etc.) each year at increasingly sophisticated and theme-specific level. We recognize that as children grow spiritually and intellectually they can appreciate more complex aspects of their Jewish heritage and experience while enjoying the familiarity that comes from revisiting topics that are “old friends.” Our goal is to grow with our students, facilitate their religious and spiritual development, and share with them the joy and excitement of Jewish living. We value and encourage parent and family participation in this process and journey.

Our students

- Learn how to express the **Jewish values** they learn in their personal and communal behavior as we confront the task of repairing our world through acts of loving-kindness (*G'milut Chasadim*).
- Learn **Hebrew** as the language of the Jewish people while developing reading and comprehension skills, so that they are comfortable with our community and our prayerbook.
- Regularly participate in **prayer experiences** through educational *Tefila* (community prayer service) and Shabbat services and studies of the meaning underlying Jewish ritual and prayer.
- Experience **holiday celebrations and life cycle events**.
- Develop a personal connection to **God** and strengthen their **Jewish identities**.
- Discover the meaning of **community** by becoming active participants in the life of our synagogue, the New York City population, Israel, and the world.

Our curriculum embodies the best of informal Jewish education combined with innovation in teaching and learning: Our students feel that our school is more like a home in which they can have fun and learn at the same time. Stephen Wise Free Synagogue becomes a haven where they can experiment with different ideas, express themselves freely, and grow as members of our Jewish community.

Core Concepts & Jewish Literacy: We believe that every student should develop a kind of Jewish “literacy” that is rooted in a set of core concepts and values. These core concepts, also known as “pillars of Judaism”, are based in *Limud Torah* (study), *Tefila* (prayer), and *G'milut Chasadim* (acts of loving-kindness). We expect that these core concepts affect every manner by which we interact with the world around us and will be a part of the infrastructure of every aspect of our curriculum. Through prayer, study and application of what they have learned to real-life situations, students will develop an increasingly diverse set of terms, concepts, vocabulary, and values that are essential to the maturation of our students into a literate and thoughtful adult Jewish population.

Essential Questions: To achieve this broad-based foundation of concepts and values, we have created a curriculum based on “essential questions,” the rubric under which all our learning in any given year will be organized. An essential question is a commitment to focus learning on a bigger picture, and helps to form a framework for a young person’s learning. What understanding, what meaning will emerge from a child’s learning in our school? What will endure? What is the big picture that we want our young people to grasp? Our essential questions will refine our students’ learning and will convey to them and to our families the structure as well as the most important elements of our curriculum. The essential questions our school’s curriculum hopes to answer are found within the description of each grade’s course of study.

Drafts: Our curriculum is constantly being revised and improved. The Religious School believes that this state is the best in which to be constantly revising, constantly reflective and constantly evaluating our curricular process. We welcome feedback from parents and rely on feedback from our faculty to continually reshape our curriculum to meet the changing needs of our students, our families and our synagogue.

SCHOOL YEAR THEME:

Each year at Stephen Wise Free Synagogue is dedicated to a specific theme or event. We hope that through school wide and class centered programs we will infuse the importance of the school year theme srael into all that we do here at SWFS Religious School. The Religious School office will be sure to update our families on the theme of the month and the various special programs that students and classes will participate in.

PRIMARY GRADES (Kindergarten, First and Second Grade)

The curriculum for the Primary Grades introduces students to the core concepts of SWFS education and lays the foundation for relationships with *Tefila* (prayer), *Limud Torah* (study), and *G’milut Chasadim* (acts of loving-kindness). We invite all families to join us at Shabbat services, holiday celebrations, family programs, and community events in order to deepen our relationship with Judaism, the synagogue, and the community. Stephen Wise Free Synagogue offers **two options** for students in Kindergarten through Second Grade.

- Parents can choose a **weekend or weekday program**, held on **Sunday Mornings OR Tuesday afternoons**. Kindergarten students meet from 9:30am- 11am on Sundays **or** 3:45 pm – 5:15 pm on Tuesdays. Students in First and Second Grade meet from 9:30 am- 11:30am on Sundays **or** 3:45 pm – 5:45 pm on Tuesdays.

KINDERGARTEN

Our goal in our Kindergarten is to introduce our students to Jewish learning and help them to develop an enduring relationship with their congregation and community through their explorations and experiences.

The students will explore the following essential questions: What are the Jewish holidays? What do they mean to us? How do we celebrate them? What is the

cycle of the Jewish year like? Kindergarten students will advance their Jewish education with the foundational stories, symbols, rituals and blessings of the Jewish people, explored through musical and artistic expression, stories and drama, hands-on activities and games. They will be introduced to the study of the Jewish calendar, Israel, the synagogue, and the Hebrew letters.

FIRST GRADE

Our goal in our First Grade class is to foster a sense of connectedness to the Jewish people, and to begin to understand our uniqueness as a people. Together we will begin the lifelong habit of asking questions and discovering the answers through further exploration of our holidays, celebrations and rituals, and Torah study.

The First Grade will contend with the following questions as they explore and develop their own individual connection to the Jewish experience through the study of the *Tanakh* and the book of ***B'rei-sheet*** (Genesis) and through the essential questions: What are some of the unique aspects of Judaism and Jewish culture that distinguish us from other peoples and religions? What are some of the things that Jews believe? How do Jews celebrate holidays, rituals and traditions? How do different communities of Jews celebrate? What do all of these things mean to us? What is the Torah? What are the Jewish stories? Our First Grade students will learn the Hebrew letter recognition and Hebrew words. Young people in the First Grade class will continue to develop new skills, building on the experiences they encountered in Kindergarten.

SECOND GRADE

Our goal in our Second Grade class is to discover the individuals, narratives, places, and vocabulary which are the foundation of the story of the Jewish people, and to actively engage in the rituals and use the objects which allow us to enhance our celebration of holidays and traditions. Students will begin learning Hebrew letters and the vowels in order to create a foundation in Hebrew for future years at SWFS. Students will also continue their Torah study by looking at more stories from the book of ***B'rei-sheet*** (Genesis) and ***Sh'mot*** (Exodus) through the theme of relationships and they will see how these stories develop a connection to the land of Israel and the Jewish people.

The people, places and symbols of our Jewish heritage, biblical and historical, will be the center of Second Grade students' studies this year as they begin to answer these questions: Who are the main characters of the Jewish story? What are the symbols and equipment that we use to celebrate Jewish holidays and to live Jewish lives? What are some of the ways we act, behave and celebrate as Jews?

INTERMEDIATE GRADES (Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Grade)

The Intermediate Grades focus on our students' developing their relationship with *Limud Torah* (study), *Tefila* (prayer), and *G'milut Chasadim* (acts of loving-kindness).

Students deepen their understanding of the Torah, Israel, life cycle, *Mitzvot*, Jewish History, and Reform Judaism using the URJ CHAI CURRICULUM. Through the study of *Tanakh*, students will learn that the Torah is a rich and vibrant text that continues to remain relevant in the daily lives of all Jews. The CHAI CURRICULUM then connects the main themes found in the *Tanakh* to *Avodah* and *G'milut Chasadim*. Students will also begin using a self-paced Hebrew reading program entitled "Phonetic Hebrew Decoding" or PHD in the Third Grade. Through this program, students will master the alphabet, vowels, and basic grammatical structure of Hebrew. Once students have completed our PHD program, they will move on to our self-paced Hineini: Hebrew Through Prayer.

Stephen Wise Free Synagogue offers **two options** for students in Third-Sixth Grade.

- Parents can choose our **Sunday program** held from 9:30 am – 1 pm.
- Parents can choose our **weekday program**, held on **Monday and Wednesday afternoons**, which meets from 4–6 pm.

THIRD GRADE

Our goal in our Third Grade class is to expose students to the system of values that is encoded in the obligations that we call *mitzvot*. We also strive to engage them in an ongoing conversation about Jewish experience through the lens of Jewish values, enhancing our study of narrative and language found in the Torah. These questions will be posed for examination and discussion: What do Jews believe? What is important to us? What are *mitzvot*? What does it mean to be commanded? How do these *mitzvot* make our daily routines holy? How can engaging in the work of *avodah* bring order, beauty, meaning and insight into our lives?

Our Third Grade students continue their study of *Tanakh* looking closely at the book of *Sh'mot* (Exodus) and *Vayikra* (Leviticus). They will examine how the laws and rules found in the Torah help us live lives filled with holy moments. Third Grade students will also continue their study of prayer and Israel. They will encounter Jewish values and *mitzvot* on a variety of levels and in different forms throughout the year.

FOURTH GRADE

Our goal in our Fourth Grade class is to deepen students' individual connection to prayer as a vehicle for conversation with God and interaction with our community. This is accomplished in part by helping students acquire the skills necessary to actively participate in Jewish prayer. Students will examine the meaning of prayer and the eternal question, "Why pray?" as well as "What is prayer?" How do people pray? What is Jewish prayer? Why do Jews pray? The students will then see how prayer and participation in a community through acts of loving-kindness can enhance and strengthen the relationship with God, oneself, the community, and the people of Israel. How do *Keva* and *Kavanah*, the fixed order of worship and the personal intention we bring to prayer, complement aspects of Jewish worship? How does this combination help us

make a sacred connection through prayer? Within this unit, the students will also learn that we have a responsibility to perform acts of *g'milut chasadim* for the people we encounter in our daily lives.

Fourth grade students build upon the foundation created in earlier grades in *Tanakh*, Hebrew, Prayer, and Israel. Through the study of ***B'midbar*** (Numbers) and ***D'varim*** (Deuteronomy), students will look more closely at the relationship between the people of Israel and the land of Israel (*Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*). They will begin to examine the relationship of the holy land (*Eretz Yisrael*) to a holy people (*Am Yisrael*) and our responsibility to strive towards holiness by observing the covenant between God and Abraham.

FIFTH GRADE

Our goal in the Fifth Grade class is to develop our students' senses of connectedness to Jewish text, prayer, and responsibility to actively support the Jewish community through action.

Fifth Grade students will continue to deepen their study of prayer on a variety of levels. They will ask themselves: How does prayer assist in personal growth? How can prayer increase my connection to the Jewish people? How can prayer strengthen my relationship with God? Students will use the *Tanakh* as a source of text, exploring the ***N'vi-im*** (Prophets) to see how the prophets emphasized to the Jewish people that God's commandments were a part of every aspect of their lives. Students will take a close look at the messages of the prophets and how they are connected to the heart of Reform Judaism.

To begin their preparation for *B'nai Mitzvah*, our Fifth Grade students will receive their *Torah* and *Haftarah parshiyot* (portions) during the second semester. Each student will have the opportunity to examine the texts in both Hebrew and English, as well as learn about various commentaries and significance. Students will then create a project based on the content of their *parshiyot* to share with their classmates.

SIXTH GRADE

Our goal in the Sixth Grade class is to bring our students closer to text and traditional Jewish study as they begin the process of preparing to join our community as adult Jews. The Sixth Grade students will explore Jewish experiences through the study of Jewish texts. Students will use these texts as an approximate guide to the ancient history of the Jewish people, tracing the progression of Jews and Judaism throughout the ages. They will examine the reoccurring themes of Jewish history and the factors that have worked to shape our Jewish lives into what they are today - special attention will be paid to the *Shoah* (Holocaust) including a look at the history of anti-Semitism and the historical/political factors that enabled the *Shoah* to occur. Students will

examine the relationship between the *Shoah*, the establishment of the modern State of Israel, and the deepening roots of North American Jewry. In the second half of the year, students will be studying modern Jewish History through the lens of films and other media. The students will watch “Fiddler on the Roof,” “The Chosen,” as well as modern Israeli films in order to engage and connect to the History of the Jewish people since the turn of the 20th Century.

BAR AND BAT MITZVAH PREPARATION

Stephen Wise Free Synagogue takes pride in sharing the transition to Jewish adulthood with the young people in our congregation. The Religious School’s curriculum encompasses the material needed to prepare each student for this transition. You and your child’s decision to recognize his or her Bar/Bat Mitzvah on the *bimah* at SWFS is a serious commitment on both sides. The Religious School, clergy, and community at SWFS are committed to offering your child the educational opportunities to prepare for Bar/Bat Mitzvah and to share this wonderful event with you and larger community. You and your child have made the commitment to participate fully in these educational opportunities and to lead a meaningful service for the entire congregation on this joyous occasion. We are proud each year to welcome these learned young people into our community

We help families through this process with several opportunities to learn together with our PACT (Parent and Child Together) Programs beginning in Kindergarten. In Fourth Grade, families will begin the Bar/Bat Mitzvah process by selecting and confirming a date for the celebration. In Fifth Grade, students participate in **The Parasha Project**, a semester long project to be completed during class. As part of this program, students will be presented with the English and Hebrew texts of their *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions (their *parasha*), along with guiding questions. The students will begin study of these texts and will prepare a lesson to teach the rest of their class about their portion. To continue their preparation for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, our students and their families will participate in our **Family Bar/Bat Mitzvah Cohort Program**. The Family Bar/Bat Mitzvah Cohort meetings will meet during the year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration and will help create a close knit community of learners/families who are all on the same path studying towards becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. The students and their families will learn about the process of study, rituals related to becoming a Jewish adult, as well as an understanding of the Social Action and Social Service projects that students will participate in. This experience will help sharpen their identities as Jewish adults and enable them to be comfortable and active members of the SWFS community and larger Jewish community.

Students preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah are required to complete the *Parasha* Project, participate in the Family Bar/Bat Mitzvah Cohort meetings, attend Religious School, and fulfill the service requirement. **Please see Page 23 for the full Bar/Bat Mitzvah Policy and the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Handbook for complete details.**

UPPER SCHOOL

Our Upper School Program for Seventh through Twelfth Grade students provides an intellectually challenging opportunity for our older pupils. Students will have the opportunity to join together as a community and forge lasting bonds with one another. Students will have increasingly frequent and direct interaction with the clergy and other scholars and engage in exploration, discussion, and debate regarding major cultural, political, and social issues relevant to the Jewish people. Our Upper School students will assume greater leadership and teaching responsibilities as they progress, including opportunities to become teaching assistants and participation in our youth group, SWFSTY, and larger community programs.

Students in **Seventh - Twelfth Grade** can enroll in the following program:

- **Students in Seventh Grade** can join together on **Sunday Mornings** from 10:30am -1 pm. Students can choose the **Tuesday** option with class from 4:30-7:00 pm on Tuesdays. *Please note: beginning in Fall 2012, Seventh Grade will only be held on Tuesday afternoons.*
- **Eight-Twelfth Grade Students** are invited together for dinner and study monthly on **Tuesday afternoons** from 5-7pm.

SEVENTH GRADE

Our goal in our Seventh Grade class is supplement Bar/Bat Mitzvah study with clergy office and to facilitate students' transition to Jewish adulthood and engage them in lifelong commitment to our tradition through a sense of personal obligation, study, prayer and an ongoing relationship with their synagogue community.

Students in our Seventh Grade class approach their studies as adults, grappling with contemporary issues connected to our understanding of Judaism, tradition, authority, and personal obligation. These studies will dovetail with their preparations to take on the responsibilities of a Jewish adult when they become Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Each student will address how Jewish identity is formed through texts and issues that become central to their individual Jewish experience. Our class goal is not only to prepare our students to ascend the *bimah* on the occasion of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, but also to prepare them to become proud and responsible adult members of our Jewish community.

EIGHTH – TWELFTH GRADE: ZARKOR

Our goal in our Upper School Program is to continue to foster students' relationship with Judaism and their community at a more sophisticated level as they begin to deal with more adult responsibilities both at home, at school, and in their Jewish community.

Our new program, ZARKOR, Hebrew for searchlight, allows our students in Eighth Grade and older to create an individualized Jewish path of learning and enrichment. This Program offers a variety of leadership, learning and social

opportunities. Individuals can participate in our Madrichim – Teaching Assistant 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 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! ***We join together at the end of each year to recognize our graduating Seniors and allow them to present their thoughts on their time involved at SWFS.***

MADRICHIM – TEACHING ASSISTANTS

We welcome young people in Eighth-Twelfth Grade to assist us in the Religious School. High school students will be paired with teachers and work as assistant teachers in the school under the supervision of the Associate Director of Education. Join the world of Jewish education from the inside, and work to bring the exciting world of Judaism to children! A limited number of spaces are available. Students may choose to receive payment or community service credit towards their primary schools' requirement. For more information, please contact the Religious School Office or the Associate Director of Education.

YOUTH GROUP –

JYC – Jewish Youth Club: Our Fifth-Eighth Grade Junior Youth Group

This newly formed junior youth group will enable our students to have positive, comfortable, and welcoming educational and social opportunities throughout the year. We hope to continue to create a cohesive group of participants as well as help foster leadership opportunities for these young adults. These programs will take place on Fridays or Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons throughout the year. We encourage all students to participate in these programs and to get involved in SWFS.

SWFSTY: Our Ninth-Twelfth Grade Senior Youth Group

The Stephen Wise Free Synagogue Temple Youth (SWFSTY) is run by a warm and welcoming group of our high school students under the supervision of the Assistant Director of Education. SWFSTY is intimately connected with the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) and its New York Area Region (NFTY-NAR).

NFTY is a strong and spirited community of more than 10,000 Reform high school students throughout the U.S. and Canada. Within the various regions of NFTY, students gather for social, social action, leadership development, and learning

oriented retreats throughout the year. Every other year, participants from all of the 19 regions of NFTY gather for a North American Youth Conference.

SWFSTY and NFTY provide students with a network through which they can form lifelong friendships, develop leadership skills, have new experiences, develop a personal connection to Judaism, and learn how to pursue justice in the world around them. There will be many opportunities for high school students to become a part of both SWFSTY and NFTY.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Students can receive community service credits through participation in the homeless shelter or emergency food program, the *Madrachim* (Teaching Assistant Program), and other social action activities. For more information contact our Community Service Coordinator at communityservice@swfs.org.

SHABBAT and HOLIDAY SERVICE PARTICIPATION

Active participation in the liturgy is an essential and enjoyable part of the SWFS Religious School program. We encourage families to join together each Shabbat with the larger SWFS community in order to reinforce the learning of Hebrew and prayers and to ensure that our students are confident and competent worshippers. We invite all families to join us at Shabbat services,* holiday celebrations, family programs, and community events in order to deepen their relationships with Judaism, the synagogue, and the community.

WORSHIP SERVICE REQUIREMENT: Students enrolled in Kindergarten, First and Second Grade are required to attend a minimum of **4 Shabbat, holiday and festival services**. Students enrolled in our Third Grade through Sixth Grade are required to attend a minimum of **7 Shabbat, erev Shabbat, holiday, or festival services**. Students preparing for Bar/Bat Mitzvah are required to attend **8 Friday night services and 8 Shabbat morning services a year prior to Bar/Bat Mitzvah**. *Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services do not count towards our Service Requirement.*

SHABBAT TOGETHER: KESHER

Our **Shabbat Together: Keshet** (connection) program serves as an exciting supplement to traditionally structured religious school for families with children in the elementary and intermediate grades (Kindergarten through Fourth Grade). Families can celebrate Shabbat together in a welcoming, child-centered atmosphere. On Shabbat mornings, Shabbat Together: Keshet families will gather for a song and dance-filled service followed by learning for both adults and children. This class is led by the talented our Associate Rabbi, Beth Kalisch and Jewish Educator, Michael David.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

SWFS is an inclusive community that welcomes all types of families and children. In the Religious School, we try hard to create a Jewish learning experience for all types of students. If your child has specific learning needs, please do not hesitate to meet with the Director of Education to arrange a learning program that best suits your child. We encourage families who have children with ASD to visit our Kulanu Program.

KULANU (All Of Us) is our weekly religious school class for children ages 9-11 who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The class offers a high teacher-to-student ratio and a curriculum designed to enable children to participate in home and synagogue celebrations as well as gain knowledge of and comfort with their Jewish identity. The class incorporates behavioral principles including visual supports and positive reinforcement.

FAMILY and PARENT EDUCATION

As our children grow and learn, so do we. SWFS encourages parents to act as Jewish role models for their children and continue their own learning. Formal and informal courses on a variety of subjects will be offered throughout the year. We encourage parents to demonstrate their interest and commitment to Jewish learning by participating in adult education course offerings provided by the synagogue. Parents who engage in Jewish learning are the very best role model for their child, who will learn from parents' actions and emulate them! Please see the SWFS Center for Community Learning program guide for more information.

Our families are a vital part of the learning process. We recognize that the best learning takes place in a comfortable, familiar environment in which we can construct our own meaning and knowledge, and hope that our families will share celebration and learning not only with our congregational family but in the home as well. **We place an emphasis on family learning, and hope that parents will feel comfortable learning alongside their children and sharing Jewish experiences with them.** Our Religious School and entire congregation are places in which we strive to open doors of opportunity and personal growth to all, regardless of age or previous knowledge.

By Grade Level: Family education is a top priority for SWFS! We provide a rich educational environment that allows parents and children to learn and experiment together. Parents and Children Together (PACT) Programs are intertwined into the Religious School calendar taking place on Shabbat mornings and during the Religious School day. We invite parents and siblings to participate in this Jewish learning experience two times throughout the school year. Please note that these are a part of our Religious School curriculum and that your family's presence is greatly encouraged. We look forward to sharing these marvelous learning opportunities with you.

Synagogue Programming: In addition to our grade level programming, we will also provide families with other opportunities to participate in extracurricular education, synagogue events, and communal acts of loving-kindness. These programs will range

from holiday celebrations, art workshops, and Shabbat meals to visits to local Jewish museums and sites of Jewish interest. We encourage you to join us for as many events as possible, and to engage with us in the pursuit of Jewish learning and living on all levels.

*If you are interested in learning something specific that is not represented in our program offerings, we welcome your suggestions and will happily work with you to put together a personalized program of study for you. Please contact our Religious School Director of Education for more information.

STUDENT AND FAMILY INFORMATION

Our Religious School Registration form includes all information that the Religious School may need to get to know your child. This form includes:

- emergency contact information
- authorization for pick-up from school
- permission for travel home
- personal health information
- information about individual learning styles

For Safety's Sake: Please note the extensive nature of our form. We understand the value of being in immediate contact with parents, family members and caregivers in case of emergency. We urge you to complete all forms so that in case of emergency we can best care for your child. Unfortunately, we will have to return your form to you or contact you for more information if any item is incomplete. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Your Child's Learning Style: We believe that information provided to us about your child's learning style is as integral to his or her experience as it would be if it were provided to your child's school teacher. Our program makes use of the very best in innovative teaching techniques, and we want to be able to tailor our teaching to your child's learning style. Please help us to do this by completing this section as fully as possible. We also encourage you to contact the Director of Education to talk about your child's learning style.

Medication: It is imperative that you include under the appropriate section on the back of our form any and all medications your child takes. We understand the sensitive nature of this question: All of our registration and enrollment materials are kept 100% confidential. This information is of such vital importance not only because it affects your child's learning and experiences in our school but also because it can be helpful or even lifesaving in case of a medical emergency. *Please note that by law we are unable to assist in administering medication to students. If medication must be administered during Religious School, we are happy to work with you to find an alternative means to do so.*

Allergies: Parents of children with allergies are encouraged to disclose detailed information about any life-threatening or even dangerous allergies. We serve food in our school, and want to be sensitive to any allergies or medical conditions that may affect our students. Please fill out the appropriate section on our registration and enrollment form so that we can partner with you in protecting your child. If you have specific concerns, please feel free to speak to the Director of Education.

Changes: If any of your personal information (telephone number, address, etc.) changes during the course of the year, please notify the synagogue or Religious School Office as soon as possible.

PARENT/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

We actively encourage parents to become involved in their child's religious education!

Orientation- Meet and Greets: We encourage all parents to have an ongoing relationship with our teachers about religious school. At the beginning of the year, we invite new parents to join together for an Orientation meeting. Parents will also have the opportunity to learn about the overall curriculum of the school. In addition, each grade level will be invited to a Meet and Greet. At this event, parents will have a chance to meet other parents, teachers in the Religious School, and members of the Religious School Committee.

Please be in regular contact with your child's teacher and the Director of Education. You may reach any member of the Religious School faculty or Director of Education by calling the Religious School office at (212) 877-4050, ext. 230. We encourage you to make an appointment to discuss your child's progress, school programs and any concerns or feedback you would like to share. We look forward to meeting with you!

Check out our Email Updates! We encourage you to send us your email address so that you can receive updates about special events, programs, courses and services at SWFS via email. **Shavuon - Religious School Newsletter for Families:** The Religious School will distribute a weekly newsletter to families once a week via email. These newsletters will contain information about upcoming programs, Religious School news, articles, and other vital information. We hope to save trees, stamps and time by being in touch in the most efficient manner, and hope you'll join us in our attempt to be technologically up-to-date! If you're not already on our email broadcast list, please send an email to our synagogue office at religiousschool@swfs.org to subscribe. We try hard to remain "earth friendly," but are happy to make a hard copy for you and your family – please email religiousschool@swfs.org if you would like to receive a hard copy of the weekly newsletter.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Religious School Committee provides an opportunity for parents to get involved in the school through various projects and portfolios, and to discuss issues of Jewish education and their impact on both the Religious School and the Congregation. Our Religious School Committee has undertaken a number of impressive platforms over the past few years. Membership in the Religious School Committee is open to the SWFS community. If you are interested, please speak to the chairpersons of the Committee. The Religious School Committee actively participates in discussions regarding curriculum, scheduling, and many aspects of the day to day environment of the Religious School at SWFS. The committee structure at SWFS is an excellent means to bring up issues affecting multiple students.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:

BECOME CLASS PARENT LIAISONS

We are also seeking parent liaisons for each class. Class liaisons are an integral part of the Religious School and will provide a needed link between the school leadership and the families, ensuring a constant flow of communication. Class parent representatives will ideally sit on the Religious School Committee. If you have a few hours a month to volunteer and improve the quality of communication between our families and our school, please contact the chairpersons of the Religious School Committee.

PURIM CARNIVAL VOLUNTEERS

Each year we need parents who are willing to help organize and run our SWFS Purim Carnival. Along with ECC parents, we create a fun and exciting day for the entire community.

ONEG ORGANIZER

Help us nourish our students by assisting the Religious School in organizing snacks for our Kindergarten, First and Second Grade students during the week as well as help with Kindergarten through Seventh grade Friday night Shabbat dinners!

SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In addition to our desire for the SWFS Religious School to be an outstanding institution of Jewish education, we want our school to be a caring community. The school's policies and procedures are designed to insure that students, parents, teachers, and administrators share an understanding of our goals for achieving both learning and community.

DISCIPLINE POLICIES & OUR BRIT KAVOD

Our Religious School upholds Jewish values. The school must be a place where students, teachers and families feel safe and supported. We expect that students, teachers and families honor each other and act with dignity and respect at all times.

We are a **House of gathering - *Beit Kneset*:**
I will be respectful of others, their things and their bodies.
I will listen to my fellow students, my teachers, and my parents.

House of prayer - *Beit Tefila*:
I will remember that when I am in my synagogue I am in God's house.
I will use language appropriate for a guest in God's house.

House of study - *Beit Midrash*:
I will be respectful of others' opinions and ideas.
I will act in ways that encourage learning for everyone.

Our *Brit Kavod*--Classroom Covenant

Teachers and students will work together during the first or second session of school to create a class *Brit*, or a code of conduct. These codes of conduct will be the guiding principles for behavior and personal discipline in the classroom context. Students and teachers in each class will complete their own *Brit Kavod* together, setting communal goals and expectations for personal behavior. Our Religious School *Brit Kavod* is sent to each family and must be signed and returned prior to the student's first day in the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue. Each student is required to have a signed copy of the *Brit Kavod* in their file for the duration of their Religious School studies.

Our School's Expectations: Discipline Process

When a student is unable to fulfill any of the standards set forth in the personal *Brit* or the classroom *Brit*, we will take the following steps:

- student will meet after class individually with their classroom teacher.
- student will meet after or during class individually with the Director of Education.
- parents will meet individually with the Director of Education and if possible, the classroom teacher. During this meeting a plan of action will be created.
- parents will meet with the Rabbi and Director of Education.

- if the above meetings and conversations do not result in a change of behavior, students will be asked to leave our program.

All students are asked to sign a copy of our *Brit Kavod* during their first year of attendance in our school. This *Brit Kavod* contract will be in effect for the duration of the student’s tenure at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue Religious School.

The Stephen Wise Free Synagogue Religious School has a ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY for violence, drugs and alcohol, and any item that could harm another individual or represents something that could harm another individual. There is no smoking at SWFS. If a student is thought to be a threat or danger to him or herself and/or anyone else in the classroom or to the structure or equipment that constitute our synagogue, he or she will be removed from the classroom immediately. Any student bringing a potentially an illegal substance, a gun, a knife, or any toy weapons into SWFS will be immediately removed from the classroom and may be asked to leave the Religious School. Bullying and inappropriate language may also result in removal of the student from the classroom for the duration of the class day.

OFFICE HOURS/COMMUNICATION

The Religious School office is located on the 4th floor of the synagogue building. Office hours are 10:00 AM - 6:30 PM Mondays through Thursdays and 9:00 AM - 1:30 PM Sundays. Our Religious School Assistant, is available to help you during these hours. The school office is closed on Fridays, Shabbat, Jewish holidays, and national holidays.

Evita R. Sokol, RJE, Director of Education and Rena Kaufmann, RJE Associate Director of Education are available to meet with parents, by appointment. Please do not hesitate to call or schedule a meeting to discuss your child’s progress. If you would like to discuss an issue or concern with a teacher, depending on the nature of the concern, please contact the teacher ahead of time and schedule an appointment with him/her. Written communications to our teachers and tutors can also be left in their private mailboxes in the school office.

ENROLLMENT

Synagogue membership is a prerequisite for enrollment in our religious school. Each spring, families already enrolled in the school will receive their registration materials for the following year. The Religious School will immediately bill all current student families the tuition for the following year. We ask that all families turn in their registration form by June 30th with a non-refundable \$250 check to SWFS. New families registering after Labor Day will be charged an additional \$150.00 administrative fee. SWFS tuition costs are listed below the schedule of classes.

Options for class times will be offered depending upon enrollment. In order to create an educationally sound learning environment, class availability is contingent upon enrollment and a minimum of 6 students is required.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

As with any worthwhile learning experience, commitment and effort are required at SWFS. The policies and curriculum work together to provide students with a Jewish education that is meaningful and will lead them towards an active and committed Jewish adulthood. The pressures and competing interests in life sometimes make attendance requirements seem even more demanding. However, regular class and activity participation are critical to connecting students with their classmates, their religion, their identity, and their synagogue.

SWFS requires that each student attend 75% of class sessions each school year. If a student misses two or more consecutive class sessions, parents will receive a call from the teacher. Persistent absence will be met with a call from the Director of Education and at-home projects to achieve the learning that was missed. Further absences will require a conference with the family, director, and the rabbi.

If it is known ahead of time that this attendance requirement will not be met, please schedule a meeting with the Director of Education to set up a plan for accomplishing the required learning.

GUEST POLICY

Students must register all guests with the school office. The SWFS student's parent must provide written or oral permission to the office for his/her child to bring a guest to class and must be confirmed with the Director of Education at least 24 hours prior to the visit.

TZEDAKAH

There is a strong tradition of social activism and social justice at SWFS. One part of our commitment to the world around us is our willingness to lend financial support to important causes. Please discuss with your family the concept of *tzedakah* (righteous giving) and the obligation of giving as a community. After determining the amount to be contributed each week and from where the contributions should come, please be sure students arrive to class with that money. Teachers will collect *tzedakah* at the start of each class. The funds will be immediately sent to the school office where they will be counted, recorded, and safely kept.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

ARRIVAL

Students are expected to be in their classrooms by the scheduled start of class. Students arriving 15 or more minutes late need to report first to the school office and then to their classrooms.

Because of the varied schedules and locations of secular schools, some students arrive before class begins. SWFS will provide supervision of students up to one hour before the start of class in the 4th floor library or room 407. A staff member will be there to sign in students. All students arriving more than 5 minutes before the start of class need to report to one of these locations.

For safety reasons, students must remain in one of these two locations until the start of classes. Students will not be allowed on the 5th floor, in the hallways, or stairwells without appropriate supervision. To insure the safety of all students and staff, we need to always know where students are in the building. Parents will be notified of students disregarding this policy.

DEPARTURE

We will continue to use the dismissal policy created in January 2007. At the end of each class session, teachers will bring their class to the designated “dismissal location” on the main floor. Teachers will remain with their students until a known parent or authorized caregiver arrives and identifies themselves to the teacher. Students may not leave until the class has reached its designated pickup area and the teacher has officially released each student directly to the appropriate parent or caregiver. In order to avoid traffic jams and chaos, parents and caregivers will be allowed to enter the building via the ramp and door near the guard’s desk. After picking up your child, please exit through the main doors, away from the ramp and guard’s desk. This will help improve the flow in the lobby and speed and safety of pick up. It is assumed that families have agreed upon arrangements for traveling to and from SWFS. Please let the school office know if there are special circumstances regarding drop-off and pickup.

EARLY DEPARTURES:

Students will not be allowed to leave the building before the scheduled end of class unless a parent or caregiver has sent a note or signed the student out through the school office. Any student leaving early must sign out in the Religious School office and be accompanied by a parent/guardian unless otherwise discussed with the Religious School office.

TELEPHONES, CELLULAR PHONES, AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

A phone is available in the school office for students and parents to use to contact one another during class sessions. Students needing to check in with their parents upon arrival or before departure from school may use this phone.

PLEASE NOTE: *To maintain an environment conducive to learning, **students will not be allowed to use cellular phones and/or other electronic devices in the classroom.** If parents need to contact their student during class hours, they may do so through the school office. At the start of each class, students will be asked to turn off all phones.*

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

The Religious School follows the inclement weather school closing decision of the New York City Public Schools. While our school remains open in almost all weather situations, parents should, of course, use their best judgment in deciding whether or not to send children. Please do not hesitate to call the school office if you have a question regarding whether or not school is open.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

FAQ: Why do I need to join the synagogue in order to enroll my child in Religious School?

Our school program is an integral part of our congregational community. For that reason, Religious School is open to members of our congregation only. We welcome all families to join our congregation and become a part of our community, and you are welcome to enroll your child and join our congregation at the same time. For more information about membership, please contact our Executive Director.

FAQ: What if my child is starting Religious School for the first time this year?

We welcome all new students to join us, regardless of age or previous education! We welcome you to meet with the Religious School administration to learn the specifics of our school. Please note: If a child enters Religious School during the intermediate grades an individualized plan will be created with the Director of Education and the family.

FAQ: Do I need to make special arrangements if a caregiver is to pick up my child?

The Religious School Registration Form includes a section entitled "Pickup Authorization." Parents are asked to provide the names and phone numbers of three people, besides parents, who are authorized to pick up their child. Relatives, siblings and caregivers' names should be written in full. In order to protect the safety and well being of your child, we will not release your child to someone who is not on this list unless you give us your permission, either in writing or by phone.

FAQ: I want to find out what other children in the Religious School attend my child's school so that I can arrange for a group trip to Religious School.

We will gladly facilitate a connection between families whose children attend the same school so that groups of children can come to Religious School together. We provide a walking service for students attending school on Wednesdays from PS 199 and The Ethical Culture School. Please contact our Religious School office for more information.

FAQ: I'd like to correspond with the school and synagogue via email. Can we set that up?

We would be thrilled to correspond with you via email. Please send a message to our Religious School office at religiousschool@swfs.org and you will be subscribed immediately to our E-Newsletter service. We will also distribute your email address to our faculty so that they can correspond with you as well. Please make sure that you complete the email line under Family Information on the Religious School enrollment form so that we have a written record of your email address.

FAQ: The registration form has a lot of information. Do I need to complete it?

Yes! Our Religious School Registration Form is designed to get all the information we need from our families. This form is designed to give us all the information that we require in order to permit your child to participate in our program: emergency contact information, pickup authorizations, health and safety information, family information, etc. It is absolutely crucial that parents fill out this form completely so that we have all

the information we need to not only provide a quality education for your child but to protect your child in case of emergency.

FAQ: I need to get a message to my child during Religious School hours. How do I do this?

When you call the synagogue during Religious School hours (between 3:30-6:15 PM) with a Religious School-related question, you will most likely be routed to the Religious School office. Because we see it as our pleasure and responsibility to be with our students during the school day, we will not be easily accessible by phone. In case of emergency or if some essential information needs to be relayed to your child, please dial our Religious School office at ext. 230.

HOW DO I GET THINGS DONE AT SWFS?

You may often find yourself wondering who to call for information about something specific at the synagogue. Here is a list of our departments and staff so that you will know where to direct your call.

I have a question about	Ext.	Email Address	Contact Person
Religious School enrollment, learning and curriculum issues, classroom and community concerns, etc.	Ext. 236	esokol@swfs.org	Evita R. Sokol, RJE Director of Education
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Process including date assignment, Parasha Project, Family Bar/Bar Mitzvah Cohort Program, Youth Group and High School Programming.	Ext. 247	rkaufmann@swfs.org	Rena Kaufmann, RJE Associate Director of Education
Shabbat and Holiday Family services, Adult Bnai Mitzvah and Center for Community Learning	Ext. 246	bkalisch@swfs.org	Rabbi Beth Kalisch, Associate Rabbi
Calendar and General Information pertaining to Religious School.	Ext. 230	religiousschool@swfs.org	Religious School Office
Membership, financial arrangements, fees, building use, catering, contributions, and general membership questions.	Ext. 227	executivedirector@swfs.org	Sandy Divack Moss Executive Director
Ritual and Lifecycle Events and appointments with clergy.	Ext. 226	ariel@swfs.org	Ariel Groswater, Assistant to Rabbi Hirsch
Community Service Opportunities: Next Step! Men’s Shelter, Emergency Food Program, etc.	Ext. 244	communityservice@swfs.org	Director of Community Service

SWFS Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service Policies

1. In conjunction with traditions of the Jewish people and the Reform Movement, a student must be thirteen years of age or older at the time of the scheduled service. Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates will be assigned during a student's Fourth Grade year and must fall after the child's thirteenth birthday.
2. A child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah will be scheduled as close as possible following a child's thirteenth birthday. If there are not enough weeks in a year to accommodate single service celebrations, **more than one student will share a Bar/Bat Mitzvah Shabbat service celebration.**
3. Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates are assigned only to those students who are enrolled in the SWFS Religious School and actively attend classes. Additionally, Bar/Bat Mitzvah dates are assigned only to those families who are members in good standing at SWFS.
4. If a student enters our program after the Fourth Grade, a Bar/Bat Mitzvah date will be given after discussion with synagogue staff. If additional learning is necessary, the family agrees that they must cover the costs of a supervised private tutor in order to accelerate the learning process for the student.
5. A Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service is scheduled in anticipation of each student's meeting of the Educational Requirements set out in the Parent's Handbook. *Regular attendance, acceptable behavior and satisfactory academic progress are required.*
6. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah fee will be billed one year prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. This fee and all other obligatory SWFS fees, including but not limited to Annual Membership Dues and Religious School tuition, must be paid in full and current one hundred and eighty (180) days prior to the Bar/Bat Mitzvah service.
7. Each prospective Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate and family is required to attend the Bar/Bat Mitzvah Cohort Family Education sessions beginning one year prior to the year of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration. Each prospective Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidate is required to attend the full year of instruction, regardless of the date of the service, to support fellow classmates and share the Jewish celebrations within our learning community. *We also expect our celebrants to continue in our Religious Education program through graduation, which occurs at the end of Twelfth Grade.*
8. On most dates of the year, prospective Bar/Bat Mitzvah families will have the opportunity to rent the social hall and lower level spaces for a celebration. Families should contact the SWFS office at least 1 year prior to the celebration to request a hold and to review full rental terms.