

Temple Emanu-El Religious School

We will inspire our students to develop a Reform Jewish identity and a lifelong connection to the Jewish community.

At every grade level, our teachers engage students with developmentally appropriate activities about Jewish holidays, Jewish values, Jewish history, Israel, Hebrew language, and prayers.

This chart outlines the progression of our curriculum and highlights which aspects of Judaics, Hebrew, and Holidays are emphasized in each grade.

Grade	Theme	Content	Judaic Curriculum	Hebrew Curriculum	Holiday Curriculum
Pre-K	Living Jewishly	The Jewish Year	Pre-K students will meet twice per month for a gentle introduction to religious school. Together they will experience the Jewish calendar through stories, music, art, games, interactive play, family events and special visitors. The focus will be on Jewish holidays, seasons, and special celebrations throughout the year.	Our youngest learners will be exposed to Hebrew vocabulary through stories, songs, and learning about Jewish holidays throughout the year.	Pre-K will introduce children to holidays through stories, songs, crafts, and games. They will learn about what each holiday is and what season it is in.
K-1		Jewish Values and Jewish Identity	K-1 students will learn Jewish values including: Tzedakah, Feeding the Hungry, Caring for Animals, Honoring Parents and Teachers, Welcoming Guests, Visiting the Sick, Being Kind to Others, and Taking Care of the Earth. Stories, songs, arts & crafts, and interactive play will guide the students on their journey of discovery.	Through stories, movement, and play, the children will learn their Hebrew names, and be introduced to the Aleph-bet, numbers, and other Hebrew vocabulary words.	Holiday celebrations in K-1 will be connected to Jewish values (e.g., Yom Kippur – forgiveness; Sukkot – welcoming guests; Tu B'Shevat – caring for the Earth; Pesach – freedom). Students will celebrate with songs, crafts and stories.
2	Jewish Spaces and Jewish Places	Holy Spaces and Sacred Objects	Second graders will spend the year exploring the synagogue and learning about the material objects we use to celebrate Jewish life, both at home and at Temple. After discovering the meaning of items like mezuzot, kippot, tallit, candlesticks, Kiddush cups, and seder plates, the children will be able to create their own special objects to use at home.	Second graders begin their formal introduction to the aleph-bet, Shabbat blessings, and vocabulary words, all learned through movement, music, art, and text.	When second graders learn about holidays, they will learn about the ritual objects we use to celebrate them and create some of those objects to share at home in their own families' celebrations. Children will also celebrate with songs, crafts, and stories.
3		Jewish Life Around the World	Through food, music, and hands-on activities, third grade students will learn about how Judaism is practiced and how holidays are celebrated in various places, including variations in Ashkenazi and Sephardic traditions. Special emphasis will be placed on learning about modern Israel – its culture, people, land, and the contributions of Israel to the world.	The focus in Hebrew will be on decoding simple words and on learning the Kiddush and other Shabbat blessings.	Third graders will learn about how holidays are celebrated by Jews around the world with various foods, songs, stories and crafts. With our Young Emissaries, they will also learn about how some Israeli holidays are observed.
4	Our Jewish Family History	Torah Stories: Creation to Sinai	Students in fourth grade will examine our 'Jewish Family Tree' through Torah stories from Creation to our journey through Sinai. In addition to meeting our Jewish ancestors in these stories, students will learn to think about and discuss how the lessons and meaning of these texts can apply to their own lives.	Hebrew will focus on developing fluency in reading and on learning the root meanings of words that are common to many blessings and prayers. Students will review Shabbat blessings and learn blessings for other holidays, as well.	Students in fourth grade will learn about the biblical/historical origins of holidays and participate in hands-on activities to celebrate them. They will learn the blessings for some holidays, as well.
5		The Rest of the Story: Jewish Giants Throughout Time	Through text and hands-on activities (art, skits, projects), fifth grade students will learn about important Jewish figures from the age of Prophets, Judges and Kings onward, including the periods of Rabbinic Judaism, Zionism, and modern life.	Hebrew will focus on increasing reading fluency and on learning to read and understand important prayers (Barchu, Ma'ariv Aravim, Shema, V'ahavta, and Adon Olam) Students will also learn some basic conversational Hebrew with the YEs.	Through text, activities, and dramatic play, fifth graders will learn about the important historical figures of different holidays and important Hebrew terms related to them.

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6	Jewish Peoplehood: What is my place in the Jewish community and in the world?	Being Together: Life's Sacred Moments	The spotlight in sixth grade is on studying milestone events throughout the Jewish life-cycle and on learning how we create and celebrate sacred times in our lives through Jewish traditions and rituals.	Students will learn additional tefillah in preparation for their bar/bat mitzvahs and continue to work on improved fluency and comfort with prayers and the Shabbat service, as well as on conversational skills.	Sixth grade students will reflect upon and share their own family holiday traditions of food, music, and celebration. They will also learn about holidays as sacred times of connection for families and the Jewish community.
7		Learning to be a Jewish Adult	Seventh graders will participate in lively discussions about various ethical dilemmas, learn about Jewish views on current events, and practice how to clearly express their own opinions, both verbally and in writing. They will also spend time planning their mitzvah projects and d'var Torah speeches.	Students will help lead weekly tefillah services for younger students, learn trope for Torah reading, and learn to chant blessings for Torah and Haftarah.	Seventh graders will discuss the concept of holiday observances as mitzvot and will also consider the Reform Jewish interpretation of the meaning of each holiday.
8		Being Jewish in the World	Through film, field trips, text, and discussions, eighth grade students will cover various topics related to being Jewish in the world. Classes may include American Jewish History (including their own family histories), Comparative Judaism, World Religions, Questions Jews Ask, and anti-Semitism. Highlights of the year include holiday cooking activities and several field trips, including to New York City and Newport, RI.	Eighth grade students will spend time learning conversational Hebrew skills with our Israeli Emissaries. They will participate in the Living Bridge Program, led by the Emissaries, in which the students will be paired with students of the same age at a school in Israel to practice language skills and learn about each other's culture.	Students in eighth grade are excited to help plan and assist in leading holiday activities for younger grades.

Post Religious School

9-12	Staying Connected	Madrichim: Youth Leadership	<p>Students in grades 9-12 have the opportunity to learn leadership skills and gain work experience at Temple Emanu-el Religious School by serving as faculty assistants or Hebrew tutors, or by providing other assistance in the operation of the religious school. Madrichim are valued members of the TERS community and are provided with training and support throughout the school year.</p> <p>To strengthen connections with peers from the larger Jewish community, many of our high school students choose to participate in Jewish Community High School (including working toward Confirmation with Rabbi Ekstrand) and in BBYO Youth Group. Both of these programs are organized by the Jewish Federation of Eastern Connecticut.</p>
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