



# Handbook

This school year promises to be meaningful and exciting. We have many outstanding programs planned for the year. The Meitin Alliance for Growth and Learning (MAGAL) is committed to your children's Jewish educational needs.

As a collaborative program involving Temple Shir Shalom, Temple Israel, and Congregation Beth Am, we offer a unique experience. MAGAL, which means circle, is an opportunity for us to share both our differences and similarities as part of the greater circle of our people.

MAGAL follows a robust curriculum developed to help our students not just master the material but to feel a part of the grand story of Judaism, past, present and future. We strive to enhance and expand our teaching materials and methods each year while meeting all of our learning goals set forth in our curriculum.

This handbook is a guide to help us all work together, to ensure the best experience for our children and our families. We hope it will answer the simple questions and let us explore the inspiring parts of our faith and tradition.

## **Our Mission**

We provide an innovative and effective formal Jewish education experience for all children that will equip them with the tools for continuous Jewish growth and involvement in their adult years.

It is our goal to strengthen Jewish families and to enrich the education experience of MAGAL's students. We do this by giving parents the opportunity to become involved as partners and co-educators in their children's religious school experience. Throughout the year there will be programs for parents to join in for family learning, but the weekly Kehilah program, homework review and family discussions about what was covered are equally important.

MAGAL is a facilitator helping to create positive Jewish experiences in a Jewish environment. Our program is designed to enhance the Jewish family unit, and develop and sustain Jewish values and commitments within the family.

Our teachers are not only great educators, but they have a deep love for Judaism and our children as well. As a result, our children develop strong bonds with their teachers and enjoy attending our school.

## **Class Attendance**

Attendance is the first step in gaining a solid understanding of Judaism and a sense of belonging. We understand that there are many activities in which we want our children to participate. Sometimes these activities create a conflict with religious school and services. We are sure that you will find that the time your children spend at our school will not only prepare them for a lifetime of being Jewish but will benefit them in their secular studies and social maturity as well.

If you know of unavoidable absences, please talk with us to arrange for alternative activities and studies to help keep your child's religious education in line with his/her peers. We expect students to attend at least 75% of the classes. Please help us set an expectation of engaged learning by discussing with your child how important active and respectful participation is. Their presence is the start of their learning, but we expect them to be lively learners as well.

If your child misses too many sessions without prior arrangements, it may be necessary to: receive private tutoring to achieve the same level of preparedness as their peers, to postpone his/her graduation or to delay his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

## **Service Attendance**

Attending services regularly is viewed as an extension of your children's education and greatly increases their feelings of being part of your congregational family. The services also provide many opportunities for our students to put their Judaic skills into practice, which makes their learning much more meaningful. We want our students to experience a range of Jewish celebrations, so each month there is a special MAGAL service for all of our students that will be held either on Friday evening, Saturday morning or Saturday evening. These highlight what they have learned, give parents time to meet one another, and help build Jewish memories. All students are expected to attend and participate in these services. In addition, check with your home synagogue for its own schedule and unique opportunities.

## **Dress Code**

All students should dress in clothing appropriate for a synagogue school setting. As a sign of respect, all our students are required to wear a kippah. The school supplies kippot, but we encourage our students to get one that is uniquely their own. The Temple Israel gift shop has many to choose from as does the Internet.

Weather permitting, the children will be allowed to enjoy our playground during recess. In order for the children to have a fun and safe time on the playground, we ask that they wear appropriate shoes. Sandals and open shoes often invite some of God's smallest and most bothersome creatures to hitch a ride.

Tzniut (modesty) is a long-standing Jewish value. As people who see ourselves as reflecting the image of God, our community believes that we should act accordingly. How we dress is a basic example of these values. With your cooperation, there should be no need for students to be spoken to about their attire.

## **Cell Phones and Other Electronics**

Electronics have become a way of life for many of us. That is a blessing and a curse. We ask that students not bring game devices to school. Phones may be brought but should remain in bags or pockets throughout the day; we are here to spend time with each other, not be mentally somewhere else. If there are problems with devices, they will be confiscated for the remainder of the day and returned to parents.

## **Arrival and Dismissal Procedures**

All classes and activities will start promptly. This allows us to make the most of our day. Please walk your child to his or her classroom by 9:00 a.m., and say hi to the teacher to ensure everyone gets where they need to be. Parents are asked to pick their children up on time. Please arrive at the campus for pick up by 12:30 p.m. on Sundays and 6:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. On Sundays, the children will be dismissed from the Kehilah program in the sanctuary. We encourage parents to join us for this community time, which begins at noon. At 12:30, parents in the sanctuary will be invited to collect their children. Remaining students will meet you in the courtyard by the drinking fountain. The teaching staff cannot leave the premises until all children are picked up.

**Early Pick-up:** Children who are going to be picked up early need to present a note to their teacher at the beginning of the day. If you want someone other than those who you have designated on your registration form to pick your child up, you must tell the teacher face to face and give him or her a note. No child will be allowed to leave the building at the end of the school day without his or her designated adult.

## **Behavior**

*What is hateful to you, don't do to others.*

*Hillel*

School should be a safe, respectful and supportive environment for our children to explore and develop their spirituality, culture, history and personal identity. To help ensure this, please follow these simple rules:

- ✧ Speak respectfully to each other and your teachers.
- ✧ No bullying or teasing.
- ✧ Do not damage school property or the property of others.
- ✧ No profanity.
- ✧ Respect our community's policies regarding keeping kosher. All outside food must have a kosher symbol.
- ✧ Stay with your teacher at all times.
- ✧ No roughhousing.

## **Discipline Policy and Procedure**

Even with the best of intentions, problems can still arise. Our discipline policy helps teachers to deal with a situation, and parents to know what you can expect from us. The system, which we have developed, recognizes that children need to fail (occasionally), experience the consequence of that failure, and have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and change their behavior. If there are minor problems, we will try to handle them without involving the parents. If these problems persist, the student will be sent to the Rabbi/Cantor to discuss the situation. Parents will be notified of such events. Should there be recurring incidents, parents will be called in to discuss ways to correct the behavior.

Violence of any kind will not be tolerated. The student will not be allowed back to class until the situation has been discussed with all concerned parties.

## **Books, Supplies and Homework**

Students are expected to attend class with all the books and materials they need in order to participate in class. Texts, workbooks and other learning materials will be provided by the school at the beginning of the school year or at other appropriate times. Not all books are permitted to be taken home. When a book is taken home, it is expected that the student will bring it back for the next session. Some books will be sent home, and it is expected that the students will continue their studies with them. At the end of the school year, students will be allowed to keep their workbooks.

Throughout the year, our students will be encouraged to make use of our Children's Library. Students and families are welcome to check out books with one of our staff. Please ensure the books are well looked after and returned on time.

Additional supplies may be required by individual teachers. Please check your child's notebooks for notes and flyers from the teacher and from the school.

Students will be asked to complete homework assignments on occasion. Our teachers are well aware of secular school obligations and do not intend to give lengthy homework assignments on a regular basis. If your child is new to Hebrew, please encourage him / her to review the Hebrew letters and vowels at home and make progress during the week.

## **Tzedakah**

A fundamental concept of Judaism is the responsibility of each person to their fellow human beings. Performing acts of tzedakah are important ways for our students to fulfill this obligation. We'd like every family to encourage and support this mitzvah by providing each student with a tzedakah box at home to save for donations to be made on Sundays and Wednesdays. Classes will decide how best to use these funds to help others in need.

Our congregations are also involved with local secular and religious organizations that help others. We sincerely hope that you will encourage your children to participate in these worthwhile projects. We encourage you to participate with us in the school as well as help your child participate in acts of tzedakah outside of school.

If you or your child are involved in other charitable activities, we'd love to hear about them and support them if possible.

## **Evaluations**

Every student will receive a written evaluation from his or her teacher before the winter and summer breaks. Teachers will also meet with the parents as a group twice a year. If you would like to discuss something privately with your teacher, please wait until all the other students have been dismissed.

## **Graduation**

Graduation from MAGAL is a major accomplishment. It represents the completion of the first stage of Jewish education, which involves the study of many areas of Jewish life including holidays, Hebrew, prayers, history, customs and ceremonies, life cycle events, ethics and moral values, to name a few. Students who have completed the 7<sup>th</sup>-grade class deserve recognition for their accomplishments. Enrollment does not automatically lead to a recognition of graduation without attendance and effort.

On behalf of Temple Israel Temple Shir Shalom and Congregation Beth Am, thank you for being a part of our expanding circle of learning and community – MAGAL!