



Temple  
CHAI

# Parent and Student Handbook 2023-2024



TEMPLE CHAI  
RELIGIOUS  
SCHOOL

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# Temple Chai Religious School Philosophy

## **Students will experience Judaism in soulful and spiritual manner.**

At Temple Chai, our students are given the opportunity not just to learn about Judaism, but to experience it through many different lenses. To foster a lifelong connection to Judaism, they are given chances to experience what Judaism feels like in their souls, what it looks like in their hands, what it tastes like, what it smells like, and what it sounds like. Our students “do Judaism.” It is not enough to learn about mitzvot. They are performing mitzvot. It is not enough to learn about what food we eat on holidays. They are preparing and eating the food. We do not assume that our students will open their hearts to Judaism simply because their parents do. The magic happens when students discover their Jewish identity within their own human identity. We facilitate this by providing them with learning opportunities that are experiential and that appeal to learners of all varieties. The learners, not the teachers nor the texts, are the center of our educational goals. We focus on hands-on discoveries, technology, and student-led discussions, not just in the lower grades, but with our older students as well. Experiencing the living, breathing culture of Judaism allows us to feed the souls of our students, not just their minds.

## **Students will develop a community with their peers.**

To foster a Jewish community among our students, we give them ample opportunities to form friendships. We give them the chance to exchange ideas and share opinions. We focus on relationships, not just encounters. Students at Temple Chai are given a chance not just to learn side-by-side with their peers, but to learn from their peers. The forming of relationships is prioritized so our students connect to their Judaism in a way that is meaningful and lasting. Students are given the time, space, and structure to form relationships. Our classes are taught in a way that fosters friendships and socialization so their experiences here are relevant and valuable to them. We are proud to make Temple Chai a place where children have the opportunity and the guidance to build strong, lasting friendships. Along with teaching curriculum, teachers focus on lessons and activities that allow friendships to form. Although it follows many variant models, both structured and unstructured socialization time occurs every time we gather together.

## **Students will learn to read and interact with the Hebrew language in order to connect them both to the past and to Jewish people around the world.**

By teaching our students to read Hebrew, we are providing them with a link to their ancestors, to their community, and to future generations. Students participate in reading readiness as early as Pre-K and lay their decoding foundation in 2nd and 3rd grade. In 4th grade and beyond, students dive deeper into Hebrew, playing with the language confidently and excitedly while simultaneously being exposed to vocabulary, texts, and Shabbat prayers. Our Hebrew classrooms are student-centered places where learners are safe to explore at their own pace. The variety of activities in the Hebrew classroom appeals to students of all learning styles, with scaffolding and productive struggle implemented at every level. Inside the classroom, students are encouraged to act independently, take risks, and collaborate with their peers. Students in 4th, 5th, and 6th grade have additional learning opportunities throughout the week to work one-on-one with their teachers and work toward individual learning goals. Skilled and novice Hebrew learners alike have the opportunity to find success and empowerment, guided by accomplished educators who are deeply passionate about the Hebrew language. At Temple Chai, Hebrew is more than the ability to read from a siddur. It is a gateway into a deeper connection with Jewish identity, culture, Israel, and Jewish communities everywhere.

# Temple Chai Mission Statement

Temple Chai inspires and ignites robust Jewish life.

We share these core values:

Passionate worship is powerful and transformational. We are a Reform Synagogue that draws upon the best of many Jewish traditions for our spiritual growth.

Learning is the driving force that enlivens, challenges, and connects us as a people. We nurture our future through creative education at all levels, beginning with children and encompassing life-long adult learning.

Above all, Torah teaches that we should care for one another. We strive to heal each other and the greater community through innovative programming and practice. Our goal is to ensure that no one is alone in their time of need.

As Jews, we have an obligation to engage in Tikkun Olam, repairing the world. Social action projects and social justice endeavors permeate all areas of congregational life.

There is nothing more vital to us than community, which includes the land and people of Israel. We form bonds of friendship and strengthen our lives when we share them.

We treasure the diversity of our world, and welcome all who choose to join us.

# Temple Chai Religious School

## General Policies and Procedures

### Health and Wellness

At Temple Chai, we are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our community. This includes doing what we can to minimize the risk of spreading any communicable illness on our campus. If your child is feeling unwell or has been on fever reducing medication within 24 hours of programming, please keep them home. For a detailed explanation of our health and wellness policies, please refer to the end of this handbook.

A certain amount of minor scrapes and bumps are to be expected as children grow in their awareness of the physical world and their own capabilities. We do our very best to ensure the playground and classrooms are in safe conditions. Standard first aid procedures include applying ice to bumps and washing out cuts and scrapes with water and applying Neosporin and band-aids as needed. You will be notified at pick-up of minor incidents and you will receive a phone call during the morning for anything more serious.

### Pick Up and Drop Off

Sunday hours for PreK-7<sup>th</sup> grade and madrichim are 9:30am-12:15pm, with the option for Open Play at 9:00 on select Sunday mornings. Sunday hours for 8<sup>th</sup> grade are from 12:15-1:45pm and includes lunch. Tuesday hours for 9<sup>th</sup>-12 grade are 7:00pm-9:00pm at the JCC.

### Sunday Morning Arrival/Drop Off

We will begin our Sundays together as a community at 9:30 in the main sanctuary. Parents are welcome and encouraged to join us for this time together. If you wish to join us, please arrive anytime between 9:20 and 9:30, park in the front lot, and find a seat in the sanctuary. If you (the parent) will not be joining us, please drop your student off in the front parking lot starting at 9:25. Please use the posted QR code to sign in your student(s).

If your student is participating in Open Play, please drop off in the back parking lot anytime between 9:00 and 9:20.

If you arrive any time after 9:35, please park and walk your student into the main sanctuary to ensure that they find their teacher and classmates. Older students may walk in on their own.

If you arrive any time after 9:45, please walk your student(s) into the building through the front office and into the religious school office to get your student(s) checked-in.

### Sunday Morning Departure/Pick Up

Our students will be dismissed at 12:15. If you need to pick up your student(s) early, please come to the religious school office and you will be directed on how to sign out your student(s).

At 12:15, parents of PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade students should go to their student(s) classroom and sign them out. If an older sibling (4<sup>th</sup> grade or above) or anyone other than a parent will be signing out a student, please communicate that to your student's teacher.

Students in 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grade will be dismissed by their teacher and can meet parents at any designated spot in the courtyard.

### **Snacks and Drinks**

Temple Chai is a nut-conscious campus.

**We ask that you send a nut-free snack to school with your student(s) on Sunday mornings.**

We will provide challah each week and other snacks on occasion as they fit into our curriculum. We will do our best to accommodate food allergies and restrictions and encourage you to communicate with your student's teacher about any food-related concerns.

Students are encouraged to bring a reusable water bottle with them on Sundays. Please label the water bottle with your student's first and last name.

### **Electronics and Cell Phones**

Like all personal possessions, a student's cell phone and/or electronic device is the sole responsibility of the student. Temple Chai and our staff and volunteers are not responsible for any loss or damage to a student's device.

All electronic devices should be turned off or on "do not disturb" mode during class time and should be put away unless a teacher has given permission for devices to be out and used.

If you need to contact your student during the morning, please be mindful of the class time and only text/call during breaks. You can always text Amanda at 602-478-7823 if you need to get a hold of your student during class.

Teachers have the option of collecting devices at any time during class for any reason. If this happens, it is the student's responsibility to retrieve their phone at the end of class. Any devices left behind will be brought to the front office.

The teachers and volunteers at Temple Chai appreciate your full cooperation with our policy. Our students will respect our policies if you model the respect for them.

### **Harassment, Bullying, and Threats of Harm**

Jewish tradition teaches that every person is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the Divine image. In the spirit of this core Jewish value, every individual who participates in events within the Temple Chai community including participants, presenters, staff, vendors, guests, facilities staff, and all others will be valued and treated with respect. Every participant, whatever their role, has a right to a safe and inclusive experience, including treatment that is fair, honest, dignified, and nonjudgmental.

Temple Chai does not tolerate, in any form or at any time, discrimination, harassment, bullying, sexual misconduct, threats, intimidation, menacing, or any other offensive behavior or acts against anyone in our community or participating in our events. This includes but is not limited to actions taken against others based on their race, age, religion, disability, marital status, veteran status, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, size, ethnicity, origin, religion, class, or any other identity.

Such actions are inconsistent with respecting the dignity of our fellow human beings. We are responsible for ensuring that personal and sexual boundaries are respected in our relationships with others. Thus, Temple Chai program participants are obligated to refrain from all such behaviors when interacting with other program participants, Temple Chai employees or contractors, or volunteers in Temple Chai-related activities.

Students found to be involved in these activities are subject to disciplinary consequences that may include verbal warnings, parent conferences, suspension, or expulsion from school.

### **Audacious Hospitality**

Participants, staff, and volunteers of Temple Chai programs will likely meet and work with people from a wide range of backgrounds (i.e., races, cultures, genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, disability status, etc.). Jews from historically marginalized backgrounds - including Jews of Color, Jews who identify as LGBTQIA+, or Jews with disabilities - are often, albeit unintentionally, made to feel "othered" in Jewish spaces when they are asked questions about their background or Jewish identity that serve to further marginalize and separate them from Jews with dominant identities (white, Ashkenazi, heterosexual, cisgender, etc.)

As such, all participants, staff, and volunteers in Temple Chai programs are asked to recognize and affirm the diversity of the Jewish people and to continually challenge dominant ideas of who "looks Jewish" (for example, not mistaking Jews of Color for building staff or asking if they are lost in Jewish spaces). By respecting one another's identities in this way, we help to make Reform Judaism a more inclusive and safe space for all.

### **Behavior Expectations**

At Temple Chai, we strive to create a religious youth community based on mutual respect and a sense of personal well-being. We expect and require all of our students, parents, staff, guests, and volunteers to treat themselves and others with *kavod* (respect).

Teachers are responsible for implementing a classroom management plan that responds appropriately to both positive and negative behavior and supports the following Five Rule of *Derech Eretz* (ways of the world) expectations:

1. We will be respectful to ourselves, to others, to religious symbols, and to property (including respecting the personal space and time of others)
2. We will use appropriate language.
3. We will use technology appropriately to engage in and enhance our learning.
4. We will contribute positively to the learning atmosphere.
5. We will be kind.

If any of the Five Rules of *Derech Eretz* are not observed, the following actions may be taken:  
First Offense: Teacher talks to the student(s), records the event, and informs the Director of Education.

Second Offense: Student meets with the Director of Education and parents are notified.

Third Offense: Director of Education meets with parents to create a plan for the future (such as a behavior contract). Rabbi Segal is informed.

Fourth offense: Conference with Director of Education, parents, and Rabbi Segal.

*\*Please note that for some offenses, there will be an immediate conference with parents.*

# Student-Parent-Teacher Commitment

In order to promote a love of Jewish learning and in order to make Temple Chai Religious School a place where students feel safe and nurtured, we ask of you the following:

## **Student Promise:**

As a student at Temple Chai Religious School, I promise...

- to be kind.
- to make good choices.
- to show respect to myself, my teachers, and other students.
- to help my parent(s) make sure I arrive to school on time on Sunday mornings.
- to be willing to explore and experience Judaism with my teachers and classmates.

## **Parent Promise:**

As a parent at Temple Chai Religious School, I promise...

- to be kind.
- to show respect to myself, adults, and children.
- to help my child attend religious school regularly, on time, and with a positive attitude.
- to receive and when appropriate, respond to, written communications from the Religious School
- to be an active participant in my child's Jewish experience.
- to my make sure my child is well-rested and has a full tummy on Sunday mornings.

## **Teacher/Staff Promise:**

As a member of the Temple Chai Religious School staff, I promise...

- to be kind.
- to show respect to myself, adults, and children.
- to provide an environment that is safe for children to learn and grow.
- to provide an environment that respects various perspectives and ideas and encourages healthy exploration of Jewish topics.
- to offer praise and encouragement to students.
- to communicate weekly with parents via email.
- to use intentionality and care when creating educational classes.