



Ansin Religious School
of Temple Ohabei Shalom

Family
Handbook

2023-24

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Mission Statement

The Ansin Religious School of Temple Ohabei Shalom is dedicated to providing an environment in which each student can find a strong personal Jewish identity. ARS helps students build a foundation of Jewish values and thought which is intended to serve as a lifelong basis for independent Jewish thinking. Students are taught the skills necessary to achieve proficiency in the Hebrew language, to acquire Reform prayer literacy, to read and understand Torah and religious text, and to observe and practice Jewish rituals and customs. ARS students are expected to pursue excellence both academically and personally, and to show concern and respect for teachers, fellow students and the world in which they live. They are encouraged by a dedicated and caring faculty to develop confidence in all areas of Jewish study and practice. The Ansin Religious School is an extension of the Jewish education which children begin and continue in their homes. Therefore, parents, clergy, and school faculty are partners in the education of our children. The Ansin Religious School expects all of its members to share responsibility for the well-being of the school community, making a commitment to honesty, kindness, and respect.

PHILOSOPHY

At Temple Ohabei Shalom, we are striving to (re)imagine and create a fun, nurturing and dynamic center of living Judaism, with multiple opportunities for authentic Jewish study, practice and observance. Our unique program integration allows us to provide our students and families seamless connection points and entryways into our community and the Jewish world beyond our walls. The Ohabei Shalom clergy, teachers, and staff create positive Jewish learning experiences that make both children and adults alike wish for more. It is not our goal to complete your child's Jewish education but rather to awaken the fire that already exists inside your child. We want to give them a taste of a vibrant and complex Jewish experience that transforms them into lifelong learners and lovers of Judaism. Our community firmly believes that a quality religious school education should include both the "how-to" and the "why" of Jewish living. These elements, in concert, will encourage a commitment to Judaism through lifelong learning, a sense of identity and connection to *Am Yisrael* the Jewish people.

2023 -2024 THEME: B'TZELEM ELOHIM (Created to be Sacred)

One of the very first lines of the Torah explains that each human is created *b'tzelem elohim*, in God's image. If we are each created in God's image, we are each equally worthy of respect, kindness, and inclusion. As God's creations, we are each holy, special, and sacred. We each have value. We each have something to teach, to learn, and to share. We each have endless potential. And because we are all from the same Source, we all share something holy, and it is our sacred task to take care of that holiness in ourselves and others. When we come together as a *kehillah kedosha*, a holy community, the capacity for change, growth, and friendship is boundless.

A note on God: talking about God can be intimidating, confusing, and off-putting. The understandings of God that many of us have are influenced by the society in which we live, and sometimes involve that "old man in the sky" theory. That's not the kind of God that we are talking about at ARS. Judaism offers a multiplicity of ways to understand God, and we want to offer that multiplicity to our students, in the hope that each individual will find their own connection to what is greater than us.

A note on gender: At Temple Ohabei Shalom, we strive to embrace each human for the fullness of their individuality. We believe that knowing someone's name and their correct pronouns honors them as a person and shows them the *kavod* (respect) that they deserve. Pronouns are not just words; they are a reflection of

how people see themselves and how they want to be seen. We honor our students, staff, and community members by using their correct pronouns. Each of us is created B'tzelem Elohim – and our gender identities and pronouns reflect that image of God. Our teachers regularly wear pronoun pins and we welcome our students to use their pronouns when introducing themselves.

Ohabei Shalom's Core Values and Behavior Expectations

The Ansin Religious School expects that all students will work together to create an atmosphere of trust, honesty, cooperation and respect. Each student will strive to reach their highest personal standards as well as those of the school community. Below are the core values and behavior expectations adopted in Fall 2013, and reinforced ever since.

Derech Eretz, The Way to Be at TOS!

Derech Eretz, the way of the world, is how we conduct ourselves as individuals and in our community.

Kavod – Respect

We are each made in God's image:

- We show respect for our self.
- We show respect for others.
- We show respect for our Rabbi, Cantor, teachers, friends and classmates.
- We show respect for the synagogue's things, supplies and materials
- We always have safe hands and bodies.

B'Yachad - Together

We recognize we are a family, one people and the importance of being together as a community:

- We build relationships through everything that we do.
- We have fun when we are together.
- We listen to others.
- We speak thoughtfully and kindly.
- We share in each other's joy and support each other in times of sadness.
- We find respectful ways to solve differences.
- We stay with the group and participate.

Makom - Holy Place

Our synagogue is a special and holy place:

- We respect and care for our school and synagogue.
- We speak with quiet voices, walk carefully and clean up after ourselves.
- We do not go on the stage in Penn/Spero hall unless we are invited by an adult.
- We recycle our trash and clean up after ourselves.
- We conserve our resources - turn off lights when we leave a room.
- We do not waste food. We take only what we need.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

At ARS, we learn through questions. Questioning is a Jewish value; it is one of the ways in which we grow to understand the world around us. By asking essential questions each year, we can hone in on what is truly important. Each grade of curriculum at ARS has a few questions around which the curriculum is constructed; as students work to develop answers, they evolve deeper understanding of that year's theme.

Kindergarten

In kindergarten, the focus is on introductions; students are introduced to each other, their teacher, the synagogue space, and their Jewish community. To celebrate the beginning of each child's lifelong Jewish journey, children participate in a consecration ceremony on Simchat Torah in the fall. Essential kindergarten questions include: What makes this a Jewish community? How do we celebrate Shabbat? How can mitzvot add meaning to my life?

In Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade, students learn Hebrew Through Movement, a language acquisition strategy in which students learn Hebrew by hearing and responding to Hebrew commands.

First Grade

Students embark on Bible study of stories from Genesis (B'reshit) and Exodus (Shemot), the first two books of the Torah. The learning activities for each story include tasks that teach the skills that are needed for building Torah fluency in reading and listening. Hebrew will be used for classroom routines, prayer and other learning experiences. Oral Hebrew will be used in class as frequently as possible making the classroom environment rich with the Hebrew language. Essential questions include: How is the Torah relevant to my life? What lessons can I learn from Torah? How is Hebrew a living language?

Second Grade

Students will explore Israel as the Jewish homeland and the heart of the Jewish people. Students will learn about the modern State of Israel through music, dance, literature, sports, food and language. They will learn about the major cities and extraordinary sites of Israel, the diversity of Israel's people and cultures, our biblical and modern ties with the Jewish homeland, and the geography of Israel. Students will also be introduced to the Jewish values which are the foundations of Jewish life. Promises, doing good deeds, caring for the world, welcoming guests, and more will be explored.

Essential questions include: How am I connected to Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel), Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) and Medinat Yisrael (the State of Israel)? How does the shared language of Hebrew enrich that connection? What values are components of a strong Jewish community?

Third Grade

This curriculum includes a comprehensive look at the cycle of the Jewish year and holidays. Modern customs and celebrations are presented along with each holiday's history and ancient traditions. Students will also be introduced to the Jewish values which are the foundations of Jewish life. Promises, doing good deeds, caring for the world, welcoming guests, and more will be explored.

In third grade Hebrew reading begins, with a focus on phonetics and prayer vocabulary. Students will begin to develop prayer literacy. They learn that prayer is a way to communicate with God, and explore their own conceptions of God. Essential questions include: What is a sacred community (*kehilah kedosha*)? How do we infuse our days, weeks, and years with meaning and connections?

Fourth Grade

Fourth graders will delve into text study, focusing on Torah using original text excerpts. They will learn the names of all five books of the Torah and develop knowledge of the stories in each section. By using the original Torah text, we expose students to the richness of Torah and begin their lifelong relationship with Jewish learning. As students are taught to analyze text by finding hidden clues and secret patterns, they learn that it is not only the content of the story that is important, but the way in which the story is told. Students will be trained to take a closer look at the text and to search for key markers: theme words, number words, repeated phrases (sometimes with changes), missing information and word echoes. Students are encouraged to interpret text in a way that is meaningful to their personal experience.

Hebrew concentrates on improving reading fluency. Students will increase comprehension by learning to decode root words. Essential questions include: How can the Torah strengthen my Jewish life and identity? How are the stories in the Torah still relevant today? How does reading and rereading the Torah add meaning to our lives? How does our knowledge of Hebrew root words impact our Torah understanding?

Fifth Grade

We live in a world where kids need heroes. They need them because values are best learned from people who live them. They need them because there is a shortage of values in the world in which they live. Through a lens of our Jewish identities, fifth grade students focus on a wide range of historical figures and events, holidays and values that helped shape who we are as Jews today. Students will learn of individuals' contributions to Jewish history, to Jews and the world. We will teach and empower our students to live their Jewish values: learning to make a contribution to the world, how to be a *mensch*, and how to live up to being created in God's image. Essential questions include: How do the stories in our ancient texts strengthen my Jewish identity? How are the struggles that our ancestors went through still relevant today? What are the characteristics of a Jewish hero? Who are our heroes and how can we be heroes? How does the path to b'nei mitzvah help us define our superpowers?

In Hebrew, students will master the prayers of the Friday night Shabbat service, and will also be expected to complete weekly homework in order to progress at the expected rate.

Sixth Grade

As students prepare to celebrate their own B'nei Mitzvah they explore what it means to be a "child of the commandments." They examine the holy obligations of becoming a Jewish adult as they learn about the Shabbat morning service and how to write and deliver a d'var Torah. In preparation for their B'nei Mitzvah ceremonies, sixth graders explore the Torah Service and their own role in it. Students are introduced to Torah cantillation (*trope*): the principles and the melodies for chanting from the Torah. They will study and progress through the prayers of the Shabbat morning service, particularly the Torah service. In their study of prayer and community, sixth graders are guided to create connections to their own lives to make their Judaism personally meaningful. They answer essential questions like: How is the Torah my story? What is my connection to the people who came before me? How does all this fit in with my family? How do I make the world a better place and have a positive impact on the world?

Seventh Grade

Adolescence is a time of discovery of self and one's relationship to the world around them, filled with intellectual and emotional change. Our grade 7 curriculum serves to support students on their personal journey through this challenging time as they prepare for b'nei mitzvah and beyond. Our seventh grade students will begin to increase their level of Jewish commitment in concrete and practical ways. Students look toward Jewish history as their own personal legacy. In an age-appropriate manner, they will be introduced to the Holocaust. Seventh graders consider their connection to both the land and the people of Israel and how

the legacy of our collective Jewish history affects our everyday lives. Essential questions include: How do we use our collective history to fight hate and bigotry today? Why is Israel so complicated and nuanced? How can I develop my own relationship with Israel?

Post-B'nei Mitzvah Programming

TOS Teens

TOS offers a variety of programs to our teens (grades 8-12) that are designed to give many opportunities to learn, create community, and give back to the world. Our program is flexible, intended to allow teens to opt in and out of programs as they choose. Options for 2023-2024 include:

- Class with Rabbi Jenn Queen for 8th & 9th graders: The Good Place and Jewish Ethics
- Confirmation Class with Rabbi Jenn Queen for 10-12 graders
- The Tent at Temple Israel (we partner with this weekly community high school program for 8-12 graders)
- Madrichim (Teen assistant teachers in ARS on Tuesday afternoons; for 8-12 graders)

ARS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

COVID-19 Policies and Procedures – September 2023

- We require full vaccination of all students at ARS, and families have been asked to submit that information in their registration forms.
- We are a mask-friendly building; anyone who wears a mask will have full support from peers, teachers, and staff.
- If a student or teacher tests positive for COVID, they must stay home for 5 days. On days 6-10, they can return to ARS with a negative antigen test on the first day back OR a high-quality mask (N95, KN95, KF94, or well-fitting surgical mask) AND fever free for 24 hours and other symptoms improving AND feeling energetic enough for an active day.
- If a student or a teacher has a COVID exposure (exposure is contact of at least fifteen (15) minutes over a 24 hour period at distance of six (6) feet or less), please just let Amy know. You can attend ARS while wearing a mask for days 0-7 following the exposure.

Student Attendance

Students are expected to attend as many classes as possible throughout the school year. While we are aware that some absences cannot be avoided, it is our belief that when students miss significant portions of their courses, they will not be prepared to progress to the next grade level with their peers. We will work hard with you to help your child catch up, especially if absences are due to illness, but we also need help from parents to help students get their work done.

As our school meets only one day a week, an integral part of the curriculum are our Shabbat experiences. We hold monthly Shabbat B'yachad services, both on Friday evenings and on Saturday mornings (more information below). It is expected that ARS students will attend Shabbat B'yachad monthly and also at least the number of Shabbat services equal to their grade (i.e. one additional service for first grade, two for second grade, etc).

- The maximum number of ARS absences for the school year is seven class sessions.

- Each time a student is absent they are required to make up the missed work. This will ensure that the student is familiar with material that was covered when absent. Teachers will reach out to families or families can contact teachers for information.
- We appreciate that students these days have many activities, but leaving early every Tuesday means that students miss a critical component of ARS every week. Please be in touch with Amy or your child's teacher about how to make up for missed ARS time.

School Hours

ARS (K-7): Tuesdays, 3:15-5:45 PM

Teens:

8th & 9th grade class with Rabbi Queen (The Good Place and Jewish Ethics) – Tuesdays 6:00 – 7:30

10th – 12th grade Confirmation with Rabbi Queen – Sunday afternoons, twice a month

Arrival and Departure Procedures

Arrival: ARS opens at 3:00 pm. Please try to drop your child off no earlier than 3, as we do not always have staff available.

K-5 students will gather in the Chapel; 6th and 7th graders will proceed directly to their classroom spaces.

Dismissal: Every class will bring their students outside for dismissal. Our parking lot will be closed by 5:35 each Tuesday to ensure everyone's safety.

Please check in with your child's teacher upon picking them up so that we know that you have safely collected your child. If your child is in grades 5 and up, and you want to give blanket permission for them to walk home on their own, please email Amy, as we need permission given in writing. Thank you.

We try to make Marshal Street be one-way street during school hours, as it is constantly a traffic jam! It is one-way going TOWARD Beacon Street. Please try not to turn onto Marshal Street from Beacon Street.

Early Dismissal

- Parents/caregivers should email teachers and the school office (ars@ohabei.org) to let us know if a child needs to be dismissed early.
- We appreciate the many activities that busy children have; however leaving early every Tuesday means that students miss a critical component of ARS every week. Please be in touch with Amy or your child's teacher about how to make up for missed class time or tefilah time.
- If you need to pick your child up early, please buzz the door on Marshal Street. You will be let in to the building and sent to find your child in their classroom space.

Shabbat Attendance

Our curriculum was designed to work in concert with the cycle of Jewish worship with Shabbat as an opportunity for community observance and celebration. This allows students to apply the lessons learned in the classroom to a genuine Shabbat experience. Our Friday night Shabbat B'yachad services are a chance for families to come together to pray, celebrate, and eat together. The dates for 2023-2024 are:

☆ September 8	☆ October 6 (Simchat Torah)
☆ October 27	☆ December 8
☆ January 5	☆ March 1
☆ April 5	☆ May 3 (Teacher Appreciation)
☆ June 7 (Confirmation)	

Another option for service attendance is **Shabbat Morning B'yachad**, a chance to celebrate Shabbat together on a Saturday morning. These monthly gatherings are a great way for students to learn more about the Torah portion and the structure of a Saturday morning service, especially in advance of b'nei mitzvah.

We understand that sometimes you may not be able to participate in our Shabbat programming, but we encourage you to join us when you can.

Inclement Weather

- The Ansin Religious School will be closed if the Brookline Public schools have closed for a snow day. When the after-school programs close, ARS will also close.
- In the case of closure, we will post a closure message on the homepage of our TOS website (www.ohabei.org) and send an email to all families.

Food Allergies

Ansin Religious School is sensitive to the fact that some of our students have severe food allergies. While we do not promote ourselves as a "Peanut/Nut Free" environment, we take precautions to ensure that all of our students are safe while in the school building. Because of this, all teachers and students are not to bring food into the building that contains peanuts, nuts, or is processed on equipment that comes in contact with peanuts or nuts. Please check all labels carefully before bringing any food into the building. If you have any questions regarding snacks or treats for your children, please check with Amy (adeutsch@ohabei.org).

Teachers will be informed by the school office if they have a student that has a food allergy. Students with food allergies MUST have written Emergency Action Plans and Epi-Pens in the school office.

Health Policy

All students attending the Ansin Religious School of Temple Ohabei Shalom must have received all up to date immunizations as recommended in the immunization schedules published by the Centers for Disease Control and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Additionally, we expect that all students will be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

It is important for the health and safety of all of our students and staff that sick children do not come to school. If your child is sick, keep them home, and let us know. Please also always let us know if your child develops COVID so that we can inform others as needed. We appreciate your attention to this matter.

Snack

Students always seem to arrive at ARS quite hungry! We request that you send a nut-free, easy-to-eat snack with your student (or feed them in advance of arrival!) We will have backup snack available if needed (usually Veggie Straws), but we find that students much prefer to eat their snacks from home.

Homework

Practice at home is a critical component of our one-day-a-week programs. In order to progress, students really need to practice their Hebrew reading skills more than once a week. Homework is important for providing continuity from one class session to the next. Homework begins to increase in grades 3 and above, and as students perfect their Hebrew and prayer reading, homework becomes more consistent. Students are expected to practice reading Hebrew at home for 5 to 10 minutes daily, and may also have some weekly Hebrew reinforcement work.

Teachers will communicate make-up assignments when a student misses a class so students don't fall behind.

Tefilah (Prayer)

Our tefilah program is designed to build community and be an engaging way to make prayer feel relevant to each child. Prayer is universal for all Jews, and a strong base of prayer knowledge will help our students to feel connected to Judaism wherever they are. Students in K – 5 are assigned buddies with whom they sit every week. Buddies work together to answer a “tefilah question” about a prayer, and the older buddies help guide the younger buddies through the prayerbook. It's truly a special experience. Each student in grades 3 – 5 has their own prayerbook which they personalize through drawings to help make meaning on each page as they learn about specific prayers. The binders stay with the students from year to year. Our goal is that students feel that the words on the page have meaning that is relevant to their lives, even as it was relevant to the lives of their ancestors. As students progress into grades 6 and 7, we shift our tefilah service to the liturgy of the Saturday morning Shabbat service, helping to prepare our pre-teens for the sounds and rhythms of their b'nei mitzvah.

Inclusion and Special Education Support

Our goal is to support all of our learners to be their very best. In order to do so, we need your help! If your child is on an IEP or 504 plan, please send that to Amy (adeutsch@ohabei.org). All plans will remain confidential, but having the information about your child and the strategies that work best for them in their school settings truly helps us here at ARS. Please reach out to Amy with any questions.

TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES

At ARS we use computers, the Internet and other technology on a regular basis as part of our curriculum and methodology. Electronic information research skills are now necessary to prepare students for the future. The

ARS leadership is excited to integrate and incorporate such information throughout the curriculum, as well as provide guidance and instruction to students and families regarding the appropriate use of such resources. Internet safety needs to be a vital part of every household and parents should set rules, stay involved and place themselves in control of home internet and mobile phone usage.

Student/parent/family online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face. School employees and students are responsible for appropriate conduct on school computers and networks. Since any information on the network can be viewed by others at all times, general school rules for behavior and communications apply.

Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones are not allowed at ARS; they cannot be out during class, during snack, or any break times. Many teachers choose to collect cell phones in a box at the beginning of class, returning them at the end of class. There may be occasions where teachers ask their students to use their phones to do research for a project, or allow them to be used in a specific manner.

If you need to contact their child, please do it via the school office, not on your child's cell phone. You don't want to be the reason that your child loses access to their phone throughout the day! The school office number is 617-739-9200.

Communication with Parents

Almost all communication from ARS will come via email. Teachers will be communicating with parents on a regular basis to keep them updated about classroom curriculum, events, student anecdotes, and more. Amy also sends a weekly parent newsletter with pictures, notes on what's happened at ARS, and upcoming events for the ARS and TOS community. Please feel free to reach out to your teacher or to Amy (adeutsch@ohabei.org) with any questions. We are here to help you!

ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OUR CLASSROOM WALLS

Shul Ins

We are so excited for our Shul In programming this year. We will have two synagogue sleepovers: one for grades K-3 with parents, and one for grades 4-7. A Shul In is an incredible addition to our ARS curriculum and creates a special and different environment for one weekend a year.

K-3 Shul In Date: Saturday January 20 – Sunday January 21 (snow date: February 10-11) WITH PARENTS!

Kindergarten students and parents do not sleep over

4-7 Shul In Date: Saturday October 21 – Sunday October 22

HomeBASE (Brookline After School Enrichment)

Temple Ohabei Shalom is proud of our initiative, HomeBASE, an out-of-school-time program, that combines afterschool childcare and enrichment programs for children from Kindergarten through 4th grade. HomeBASE

offers integrated programming based on modern values, teaching children to care for themselves, each other, and the world around them. Our staff provides a safe and fun-filled environment where children can always feel like they are at home. Our curriculum is based on a program model that focuses on learning enhancement, health, and recreation, while also building competence and confidence in children. HomeBASE gives all children the opportunity to form long-lasting friendships that enhance their development, growth, and self-confidence. For more information, contact Alex Brodsky, HomeBASE Director: abrodsky@ohabei.org.

Additionally, HomeBASE administers our ARS Walking program; a supervised walk from Pierce, Lawrence, and Coolidge Corner schools to ARS on Tuesday afternoons. This program costs \$400 per student and registration is required; the link can be found on our website.

OHABEI SHALOM PARENT TASK FORCE

In the 2023-2024 year, we plan to reinvigorate our room parent program to help support our teachers and students with special programming, announcements, and community-building. If you would like to be an ARS room parent, please reach out to Amy Deutsch at adeutsch@ohabei.org. Our Vice President of Youth Education this year on the TOS Board is Michele Simon, who is also happy to connect with you.

SCHOOL CALENDAR 2023 – 2024

The calendar can be found on our website and is regularly updated.
The first day of ARS is September 12, and the last day is May 21.