



University Synagogue Religious School Family Handbook 2018 - 2019 5779

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PLEASE KEEP FOR REFERENCE

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Dear Religious School families,

Shalom and Bruchim HaBaim! Hello and welcome!

I am thrilled to welcome you to what promises to be a beautiful and exciting new school year.

I've been doing some light summer reading and came across the following text: "Age is foolish and forgetful when it underestimates youth." No, it doesn't come from our Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, or some other obscure Rabbinic text. It comes from the sagacious writings of J.K. Rowling in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

Professor Dumbledore says this to Harry to help boost his confidence as embarks on a daring journey. In addition to the confidence boost, he explains to Harry that youth has incredible talent and power, and those who have aged out should not forget that. Well, I can't promise that we'll have a lot of daring journeys this year during religious school, but I can stress the importance of inspiring youth and helping them understand how much they have to offer this world.

Our children are capable of so much, and it is our job as educators, parents, and clergy to help them see that. It is our job to let them use their voices, which are capable of powerful messages. We must let them be silly with their bodies, which may be standing in front of crowds one day. We need to let them explore and show them how Jewish values can guide their explorations.

I can't do this alone. I ask you as parents and family members to be involved in your child's Jewish education. Come to Family Learning Days, worship with us at Family Shabbat services and the High Holy Days, eat with us on Sukkot, laugh with us at Purim, and above all: stay informed. Read our monthly newsletter and updates from your child's teachers. Like us on Facebook for more photos and announcements. Read the Torch, our synagogue bulletin for information about what is happening in our community.

We'll see you on Sunday, September 23 to kick off another amazing year.

L'Shalom,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Shamout".

Jessica Shamout, M.Ed.
Director of Jewish Education

University Synagogue Religious School's Mission

We at University Synagogue believe that the purpose of Religious School is:

1. To instill a sense of pride in a child's Jewish heritage and an appreciation of the beauty of Jewish tradition as guided by the principles of Reform Judaism.
2. To teach Judaism and Jewish living as guided by the principles of Reform Judaism for the next generation and develop an understanding of where each individual fits into the community.
3. To teach the how and why of Judaism in order to create a positive Jewish identity that makes for a long-lasting and meaningful connection to Judaism.
4. To acquire Hebrew skills in order to understand and make personal meaning from prayers, to participate in prayer services around the world, and to connect with others in Jewish settings across the globe.
5. To foster a love of the land and dream of Israel as a Jewish country with democratic ideals.
6. To promote a sense of commonality and connection with Jews around the world.
7. To help students develop their own relationship to Judaism through inquiry, problem solving and discovery.

We strive to provide a community of learning to our students with an emphasis on kavod (respect), K'hillah (community), and keshar (connections).

We are committed to providing a quality educational experience at all grade levels. We believe that acquiring a positive Jewish identity through a Jewish education that appeals to all the senses is the goal of our students. Content areas for students in grades K through 7 include:

- Am Yisrael: Jewish Identity
- Chagim: Shabbat & Holidays
- K'lal Yisrael: Community & History
- Eretz Yisrael: Land of Israel
- Talmud Torah: Jewish Literature
- Ivrit u-T'filah: Hebrew & Prayer

These subject areas provide the roots of our children's education and Jewish identity. When we tend to these roots – nurturing them and allowing them to grow and develop, our children can have strong Jewish identities, rooted in a deep understanding of what Judaism is all about.

University Synagogue Religious School graduates are knowledgeable about Reform Jewish practice, are connected to Jewish life through an understanding of Jewish values and acts of Tikkun Olam and are equipped with the tools to create authentic relationships among their peers.

The Expected Learning Outcomes of University Synagogue Religious School Graduates:

Be knowledgeable Jews who can:

- Participate in and lead Shabbat services in Hebrew and English
- Understand the meaning of the Shabbat prayers and holiday blessings
- Share moments and identify figures of significance in Jewish history
- Identify biblical characters and explain how their stories impact our lives
- Explain the Jewish life cycle and rituals
- Read and recognize Hebrew prayers and words
- Connect to Israel in meaningful ways
- Lead holiday blessings at home
- Share lessons from Torah in a d'var Torah

Connect to Jewish life through:

- *Tikkun Olam* – making the world a better place
- A growing commitment to Jews around the world
- Making life decisions that are shaped by Jewish ethics and values
- Developing a life-long relationship with God
- Being proud and active members of the University Synagogue community
- Celebration of Jewish holidays
- A desire to visit Israel, go to Jewish camps, and participate in youth group programming
- Israeli dance and Jewish songs
- Taking pride in and having fun being Jewish
- Express their Jewish opinions on issues of moral and ethical concern

Be advocates for *derech eretz* by:

- Showing care and compassion for humanity
- Honoring their parents
- Giving tzedakah
- Pursuing peace
- Valuing friendship
- Respecting teachers and classmates
- Working at home and school to protect and save the environment

Enduring Understandings

Gan/Kindergarten:

At the end of their Gan year, students will...

- Begin to understand the concept of “Kehillah”: what makes a community, and what makes our community special.
- Gain familiarity with and a knowledge of Jewish holidays, symbols, and concepts.

- Know key Torah stories from the book of Genesis and how they relate to their lives.
- Apply select Jewish values found in Torah and holidays to their own lives.
- Chant the following prayers, and know when they are to be recited:
 - Motzi
 - Kiddush (Borei P'ri Ha-gafen)
 - Shema
 - Shabbat candles
 - Hanukkah candles
 - *Havdallah* blessings

Alef/1st grade:

At the end of their Alef year, students will...

- Continue to understand and feel the concept of “Kehillah.”
- Be able to recount the stories and identify the symbols of each major Jewish holiday.
- Understand that the Torah is told/read in a cycle and express how those stories relate to their lives.
- Begin to discuss ideas about God.
- Be able to locate and identify key items in the synagogue
- Understand and recite the order of the prayers for Shabbat evening (candles, Kiddush, Motzi)
- Be able to recite the Barchu, Shema, and Shehecheyanu.
- Understand “kindness” as a mitzvah

Bet/2nd grade:

At the end of their Bet year, students will...

- Explore mitzvot through Jewish value concepts and apply them to their own actions.
- Gain personal meaning of mitzvot from study of values, family, and holidays. Consider what values to practice (i.e., covenant, g'milut chasadim, derech eretz, lashon hara, kavod, teva, pikuach nefesh, etc.)
- Be able to identify select Hebrew letters and their sounds.
- Gain familiarity with the map of Israel and major sites.
- Be able to retell the story behind each Jewish holiday.
- Chant the following prayers, and know when they are to be recited:
 - Passover blessings and four questions (Mah Nishtanah)

Gimel/3rd grade:

At the end of their Gimel year, students will...

- Recognize that Judaism acknowledges a multitude of theological ideas under the umbrella of “there is one God.”
- Understand that our concepts of God are constantly developing and changing.
- Be able to identify Hebrew letters and their sounds.
- Relate the importance of Hebrew as the language of Israel, the Jews, some prayer, and Torah.
- Have a general understanding of Torah narrative and the Five Books of Moses as a complete work.
- Identify Jewish values in practice and explain personal choices in “Jewish” terms.
- Apply holiday knowledge to personal holiday practice.
- Discuss holiday celebration in a modern context.

Dalet/4th grade:

At the end of their Dalet year, students will...

- Decipher Torah narrative according to patterns and clues in the text.
- Synthesize Torah and value knowledge to express how one can emulate Torah, and how/why one would or would not want to do so.

- Consider Torah as a living book that has personal meaning.
- Locate important historical sites in Israel and explain their biblical significance.
- Understand that Jewish values are part of our rich Jewish heritage, woven into folk tales and biblical stories.
- Create a personal code of ethics incorporating Jewish values as a guide to ethical living.
- Begin to rank prayers learned in order of personal importance and explain the list; explore personal connections

Hei/5th grade:

At the end of their Hei year, students will...

- Become familiar with Jewish lifecycle and explain Jewish milestones and their personal meaning including:
 - o Birth
 - o Family
 - o Torah events
 - o Marriage
 - o Growing Old
 - o Death and Mourning
- Identify various prophets and their messages.
- Evaluate personal and societal actions regarding prophetic messages: what are we doing “right,” what can we do better?
- Explain the role the prophets played in the people of Israel’s history and discuss how their words and actions are still relevant to us today.
- Discuss how God’s holiness becomes real through our own holy actions.
- Evaluate how each student is holy, and how he/she can perform holy acts.

Vav/6th grade:

At the end of their Vav year, students will...

- Explain main points and players in the history of Israel and express personal opinion regarding controversial moments in Israel’s founding and development.
- Recognize social and political challenges that Israel regularly faces and discuss how Israel addresses each issue.
- Understand that Havdallah is the ceremony that transitions us from Shabbat to the rest of the week.
- Explain the various symbols we use in the Havdallah service.
- Discuss what it means to be holy and ordinary.
- Relate Jewish values to our society and personal lives.

Mechinah/7th grade:

At the end of their Mechinah year, students will...

- Understand pressing issues in the Jewish community and society.
- Participate in meaningful acts of *tikkun olam* (healing the world)
- Understand and relate personal responsibility in making the world a better place.
- Develop leadership skills in communal participation by leading t’filah (both in and out of the Religious School).
- Review all prayers already learned for meaning and fluency.
- Be able to debate big questions about God, faith, and the afterlife.
- Feel a part of the Tichon (high school) program and build community with post b’nei mitzvah students.
- Engage in meaningful Jewish project-based initiatives.
- Understand Judaism’s connection to the earth, the frailty of human existence and our shared history.

Tichon/8th grade through high school:

At the end of the Tichon experience, students will...

- Have a chevre (social friend group) of other Jews.
- Feel a connection to Judaism.
- Develop a deeper understanding of a variety of topics including God, Torah, morals and ethics, and history.
- Have a positive Jewish identity and be able to express their personal practice and beliefs.
- Explore their “core selves” as they relate to their Jewish world around them.

Hebrew Goals:

Starting in Fall 2018, we are introducing Hebrew Through Movement to our K – 3 grades. “Hebrew through Movement,” a language acquisition strategy in which students learn Hebrew by hearing and responding to Hebrew commands. Hebrew through Movement is an adaptation of James J. Asher’s Total Physical Response (TPR). Hebrew Through Movement is being used in Jewish congregations, day schools, camps, early childhood programs and other settings. HTM does not teach communicative Hebrew, but students can easily move on to other Hebrew forms (as early childhood and day school colleagues will attest). And camps just have a lot of fun!

Hebrew Through Movement introduces Hebrew in a playful and meaningful way, creating a positive first link between children and Hebrew. Hebrew Through Movement (HTM) is supported by the latest brain research on learning, providing an aural foundation for Hebrew that opens the door to more facile Hebrew decoding and reading.

Hebrew Through Movement is based on ways that children learn naturally:

- They learn by moving about and doing.
- They learn in an environment of positive emotional support.
- They learn when they feel safe from the embarrassment of not knowing.
- They learn when they can move forward at their own pace.
- They learn best when learning is joyful and playful.

Our Dalet – Mechinah Hebrew program has been developed out of the principles of Response to Intervention. We have designed our Hebrew curriculum around each student’s individual skills and learning needs.

We know all students progress at different paces on the Hebrew track, and this new method allows them to excel with their peers with similar learning styles.

Students are placed in Hebrew “pods” with 6-8 students per pod. These pods will be determined by student need rather than grade level. Faculty and Religious School staff are responsible for assessing student progress and ensuring that students remain in the correct pod. If students need to be moved from one pod to another based on their ability and progress, we will make arrangements to do so.

1st level Hebrew students will:

- Have a solid understanding of the Hebrew alphabet and vowels.
- Chant/recite the following prayers:
 - o Barchu
 - o Shema and V’Ahavta
 - o Mi Chamochah
- Be able to explain that the Barchu is a call and response prayer that readies individuals both to pray and to belong to a prayer community.
- Demonstrate and explain the reasoning behind any prayer choreography in the Barchu, Sh’ma, and V’Ahavta.
- Interpret the idea of love in Ahavah Rabah and analyze ways to show love to others, and feel loved.

- Recall that giving the Torah to the Jewish people is one of the ways that God shows love to the Jews.
- Identify the Shema as the most important prayer in the prayer service and explain its significance.
- Discuss how the Shema and V'Ahavta move us from God's love to actions, and demonstrate how to "live" that God is one.
- Understand that the Mi Chamochah is about the redemption of Israel, and name where the prayer came from.

2nd level Hebrew students will:

- Chant/recite the following prayers:
 - o Adonai S'fatai Tiftach
 - o Avot V'Imahot
 - o G'vurot
 - o Ma'ariv and Yotzer Or
 - o Kiddush
 - o Food Brakhot
- Understand that Yotzer Or is a prayer about creation that we read only in the morning service.
- Explain the metaphor of "light" in the Yotzer Or, and determine individually which metaphor has the most personal meaning.
- Demonstrate and explain the reasoning behind any prayer choreography in the Avot V'Imahot and G'vurot
- Understand that the Amidah is a series of prayers that work in a certain order.
- Explain that in the Amidah we praise God, ask God for things, and thank God.
- Interpret that through the Avot V'Imahot, we remember our ancestors and connect to God through our families.
- Weigh the value of hesed described in the the Avot V'Imahot.
- Identify the G'vurot as a prayer where we value God's power.
- Demonstrate ways we can be like God, according to the G'vurot.
- Explain that the K'dushah is in many ways the climax of a service.
- Explain how Kiddush sanctifies Shabbat on Shabbat eve.

3rd and 4th level Hebrew students will:

- Chant/recite the following prayers:
 - o Torah Service – blessings for before and after Torah and Haftarah readings
 - o Aleinu
 - o Mourners' Kaddish
 - o Havdallah blessings
- Demonstrate and explain the reasoning behind any prayer choreography in the Aleinu and Mourner's Kaddish.
- Know that Aleinu is a summarizing theological statement at the end of our services.
- Describe how Aleinu acknowledges what God has done for us.
- Evaluate the idea of chosenness, as explained in the Aleinu.
- Analyze our responsibility to do tikkun olam (heal the world) as it is expressed in the Aleinu.
- Identify why the Mourner's Kaddish is a prayer to comfort those in mourning.
- State that the Mourner's Kaddish is a prayer both in Aramaic and Hebrew.
- Describe why the Mourner's Kaddish can bring communities together.

T'filah

Our students in Gan – Mechinah will have T'filah every Religious School session. These T'filah sessions are led by our Director, our clergy and often Madrichim and teachers.

At University Synagogue, our goals for T'filah are as follows:

- To develop a personal meaningful prayer practice
- To help students become familiar with the general order of T'filah (keva)
- To help students relate the prayers to their own life/personal experience (kavannah)
- To create a prayer community
- To build community outside the classroom
- To understand why we pray as a community and not just alone
- To obtain the knowledge to connect with other Jewish communities globally
- To utilize prayer as a way to communicate with God
- To empower students to find their own spiritual connection

Religious School Schedule 5779 / 2018 – 2019

University Synagogue Religious School is in session during the following days/times:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Gan (K) – Mechinah (7) | Sundays 9:00am-12:00pm |
| Dalet (4) – Vav (6) | Tuesdays 4:00pm – 6:00pm |
| Tichon (7 – 12) | Tuesdays 6:00pm – 8:00pm |

Religious School Office Hours

The Religious School office is open Sunday through Friday during the school year. Below are our office hours:

- Sunday 8:30am-12:30pm
- Monday 9:00am-5:00pm *Director out
- Tuesday 11:30am-8:30pm
- Wednesday 9:00am-5:00pm
- Thursday-9:00am – 5:00pm
- Friday 9:00am-3:00pm *Admin Assistant out

RS Office Phone: 310.472.1255 x 118 Fax: 310.476.3237

Email: Jessica Shamout, Director: jshamout@unisyn.org
Marianne Crawford, Administrative Assistant: unisynadmin@unisyn.org

Religious School Daily Schedules

Sunday Schedules

Gan (K) – Gimmel (3)

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 9 – 10:25am | 10:30 – 10:45 | 10:50 – 11:10 | 11:15 – 12:00 |
| Class time / activities | Hafsakah | T'filah | Class time / activities |

Dalet (4) – Mechinah (7)

| | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|--|
| 9 – 10:10am | 10:10 – 10:25 | 10:25 – 10:50 | 10:50 – 12:00 |
| 1 st Block (Hebrew or Judaica) | Hafsakah | T'filah | 2 nd Block (Hebrew or Judaica) |

Tuesday Schedule

Dalet (4) – Vav (6)

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 4:00 – 4:45pm | 4:45 – 4:55 | 5:00 – 5:20 | 5:20 – 6:00 |
| Judaica | Hafsakah | T'filah | Hebrew |

Tichon (7 – 12)

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| 6:00 – 6:30pm | 6:35 – 8:00 |
| Dinner | Class time |

Connecting to our Community

We offer a multitude of opportunities throughout the year for families to connect with each other, our clergy and staff. Families are encouraged to attend as many as possible!

Family Learning Days

Each class has a dedicated day of learning for parents and students. This day focuses on a theme from the class curriculum or an area of social justice. These programs typically take place on Sunday mornings during regular class hours. Check our most updated calendar for all family learning day dates.

Gan (K) – Passover Family Learning

Alef (1) – Biblical Animal Family Learning at the LA Zoo

Bet (2) – Tikkun Olam (healing the world) Family Learning with Heal the Bay at Will Rogers State Beach

Gimmel (3) – Tu B'Shvat Family Learning at Will Rogers State Park

Dalet (4) – Tzedakah (charity/justice) Family Learning at SOVA

Hei (5) – Life Cycle Family Learning at Hillside Memorial Park

Vav (6) – L'Dor V'Dor (through the generations) and Holocaust Family Learning at LA Museum of the Holocaust

Mechinah (7) – Several social justice events throughout the year

Shabbat Family Services

Every month, our students participate in our family Erev Shabbat services. This can include students leading certain prayers with the Rabbi and Cantor, reading their own poetry or stories, engaging the congregation in different ways; it's a chance for teachers and students to get creative! Cantor Shapiro works directly with teachers and classes to make Shabbat extra special. Before each service, we will have some pre-neg snacks and drinks set up in the Grand Lobby for the families of this class to schmooze and mingle. After each family service, we will hold an oneg with Israeli dancing, challah and sweets.

In addition to class participation, our children's choir (Hasharim) as well as our teen choir lead the congregation in song as directed by Cantor Shapiro.

Check our most updated calendar for Shabbat Family service dates.

Havurot

A *havurah* is a group of 5-10 families or 8-10 singles/couples who get together on a regular basis to celebrate Jewish life. The difference between a *havurah* and any other social group is that all members make a commitment to the Synagogue community and to each other. Getting to know people in a larger congregation can be intimidating for some. A *havurah* is a terrific way to become acquainted with others who live near you, have similar interests, and help make our Synagogue feel more like a family.

Havurot plan all types of activities. Some enjoy a Shabbat dinner together, host a Hanukah party, build a Sukkah, plan wine tasting events for adults and movie nights for families, even go camping together. Each *havurah* determines the types of activities it wants... some involve children, some do not. Our Executive Staff, Clergy, and Engagement Coordinator are here to help guide you on this sacred journey and to help with programming ideas.

Contact Emilie Leder, Engagement Coordinator, 310-472-1255 or eleder@unisyn.org.

Family Camp for Families with Young Children

Join University Synagogue for a weekend of family fun at our University Synagogue ECLC/RS FAMILY CAMP at the Shalom Institute, just a one hour drive in the mountains of Malibu.

A select group of families will spend a weekend together celebrating Shabbat, enjoying the sunshine and participating in a variety of exciting and engaging activities including arts and crafts, nature walks, sports, horseback riding, adult yoga, kid's activities and much more.

Wine and beer tasting for the adults (with babysitting!), song sessions, breathtaking nature and comfortable private motel-style accommodations await. Don't miss this unforgettable family event!

This special program is designed for families with preschool and early elementary school aged children, and their siblings. It will be a fun weekend for the whole family!

Family Camp 2019: April 5 – 7 at the Shalom Institute, Malibu, California

Religious School General Policies and Procedures

Inclusion

(Developed in part by KESHET, endorsed by University Synagogue VP Education)

University Synagogue believes in the power of community to create a sacred learning space. Our programs are deeply rooted in Jewish values and we refer to these values in much of what we do. Administrators, teachers, and family members share responsibility for modeling Jewish values.

- Teachers study the values below as part of staff development and are expected to commit to this policy in their terms of employment.
- School-wide programming, classroom lessons, and passive formats such as bulletin boards/newsletters/T'filah topics around these values, procedures, and policies will all be utilized to nurture a kind and respectful community.

We at the Religious School take seriously the success of each child and want to ensure all students feel comfortable and included in our programs. Our Hebrew program has been designed to meet the needs of different types of learners. If your child(ren) has special needs, please notify the Director so that we can work on a plan to best accommodate your child(ren).

Seven Jewish Values for an Inclusive Community

(Developed by KESHET)

Kavod: RESPECT - Judaism teaches us to treat ourselves and others with respect; even the stranger is to be treated with respect. Kavod is a feeling of regard for the rights, dignity, feelings, wishes, and abilities of others. Teasing and name-calling disrespect and hurt everyone, so learn to respect people's differences.

Shalom Bayit: PEACE IN THE HOME - Our community centers, synagogues, youth groups, and camps are often our second homes. Everyone needs to feel comfortable, safe, welcome, and respected at home. Don't ostracize those who seem different. Strive to settle disagreements in peaceful and respectful ways that allow all community members to maintain their dignity.

B'tzelem Elohim: IN GOD'S IMAGE - The Torah tells us that we are all created "b'tzelem Elohim" (Bereshit 1:26), in the image of God. This is a simple and profound idea that should guide our interactions with all people. We do not know the "image of God" except as it is reflected in the different types of people we encounter in the world. If we can remember that each of us, no matter how different, is created in God's image, this idea can lead us to find the connection we have with one another and help create truly inclusive communities.

Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh: COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITY - The Jewish principle that “All Israel is responsible for one another” (Shavuot 39a) means that it is our responsibility to stand up for each other, especially for those who are vulnerable and cannot speak up for themselves.

Shmirat Halashon: GUARDING ONE’S USE OF LANGUAGE - The Talmud warns us that we must take care in how we use language. Talking about others behind their backs, even if what we are saying is true, is prohibited. The guidelines for “shmirat halashon” remind us that what we say about others affects them in ways we can never predict. Words can hurt or heal depending on how we use them.

V’ahavtah L’Reiecha Kamocha: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF - Commenting on Leviticus 19:18, Rabbi Hillel once stated that this was the foundational value of the Torah. It begins with loving ourselves. We must love and accept our whole selves, and in doing so create the capacity for extending that love and acceptance to others.

Al Tifrosh Min Hatsibur: SOLIDARITY - “Don’t separate yourself from the community” (Pirke Avot 2:5). When you feel different from others in your community, don’t isolate yourself. Find allies and supporters who you can talk to. If you know someone who is feeling isolated, reach out; be an ally and a friend.

Anti-Bullying

To foster a safe and caring community where Jewish learning and engagement takes place, University Synagogue does not tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind by any person, including students, teachers, parents, or other members of the community. Bullying based on race; religion; color; national origin; disability; age; physical appearance; learning or behavioral difference; family structure; financial status; sex; real or perceived sexual orientation; real or perceived gender identity; or any other category is prohibited.

Not all conflicts or inappropriate behaviors are bullying. Specifically, bullying is unwanted, aggressive, usually repeated behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.ⁱ

There are three types of bullying: verbal, social or relational, and physical.

1. Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things and may include teasing; name-calling; inappropriate sexual or body comments; taunting; and threats.
2. Social or relational bullying involves hurting someone’s reputation or relationships and may include leaving someone out on purpose; telling other people not to be friends with someone; spreading rumors about someone; or embarrassing someone in public.
3. Physical bullying involves hurting a person’s body or belongings and may include hitting; kicking; pushing; or taking or breaking someone’s things.

All members of the community (including teachers, parents, guardians and students) have an ethical obligation to report bullying. Teachers also have a contractual obligation to do so. Students and parents can report bullying to any teacher, clergy member or directly to the Director of Jewish Education.

Teachers must report known or suspected bullying in writing Director as soon as possible. Even if the situation was addressed or resolved with the teacher’s help, it must be reported. *The teacher does not need to have witnessed the bullying. Most bullying occurs out of the range of teachers or other adults.*

The Director of Jewish Education will involve clergy on an as needed basis as a resource for teachers, students or families.

The Religious School staff will use the following strategies to support the targeted student and the family:

- Listen and focus on the student.
- Notify the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Ask the student what is needed to have a safe learning environment.
- Make changes as needed to make the student feel safe, without singling out that student or another specific student.
- Follow up with the student and the family on an as needed basis.

The school will take the following steps in addressing bullying behavior:

- Make sure the student knows what the problem behavior is.
- Firmly and respectfully inform the student that bullying is not tolerated.
- Notify the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied and provide supportive resources to the student and/or family as needed.
- Use consequences that involve learning or building empathy.
- Involve the student in making amends or repairing the situation.
- Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences.
- Follow up with the student and the family. ⁱⁱ

Safety and Emergency Procedures

Each member of the University Synagogue staff and Religious School faculty receives a copy of our safety and emergency procedures. We follow a careful protocol which prioritizes the health and safety of our students. In the event of an emergency you will be properly notified and upon arriving at the synagogue will receive instructions on how to proceed to pick up your children.

We hold regular safety drills (fire, earthquake, shelter in place, etc.) for all students and teachers throughout the school year.

For safety reasons, students should not be walking unattended in the parking lot. If for some reason your child(ren) is/are late for Religious School, please park your car and walk your child(ren) into the building. If you must pick up your child(ren) early, please come to the Religious School Office and we will send for the student(s). If you send a note in advance, we can have the student waiting for you in the School Office. Students may leave the building to walk home only if written consent is given in advance.

Attendance

University Synagogue Religious School is committed to providing a quality educational experience at all grade levels. We believe that acquiring a positive Jewish identity through a Jewish education that appeals to all of the senses is the ultimate goal of our students. The Religious School faculty knows that our students' learning will be achieved by means of viable instructional methods, a variety of appropriate educational tools (texts, materials, audio-visual, etc.), and student and parental motivation. We believe that a solid curriculum, a strong staff, quality family programs, and a continuous evaluation process will allow us to reach and then to exceed our goals – remember, we are all teachers!

Regular class attendance and a commitment to learning are also necessary for a student to be able to reach our goals. Irregular attendance will cause a variety of negative factors:

- When a student often misses class, he/she will fall behind the peer group and begin to experience failure. As a result, many such students become frustrated and may generate discipline problems in the classroom.
- If promoted with their peers, these students usually continue to fail at each successive grade level, because they lack appropriate skills which new material builds upon. Under those circumstances, teachers will be faced with classes in which there are too many ability levels. Thus, their effectiveness will be weakened.
- Students who miss class regularly have more difficulties socializing because their peers have developed relationships in their absence.

We never want to demoralize students or keep them back due to busy schedules or family issues. Please be in touch with the Director, Jessica Shamout, if you are concerned about your child(ren)'s attendance or their engagement in class.

B'nei Mitzvah

Once a student is officially enrolled in our Religious School's Judaic and Hebrew Studies program (4th grade Dalet class and beyond), we make it a practice to tentatively schedule that child's Bar/Bat Mitzvah Service. The student must have successfully completed Dalet through Vav (4th – 6th) Hebrew and Judaic studies material (or its approved equivalent). Also note that a commitment for the student to continue beyond the Bar/Bat Mitzvah through Confirmation.

The Director will contact parents if a student begins to fall behind the rest of the class. If a student's academic performance falls below class level, or if a student is absent from class 25% or more, his/her parents will be asked to take steps to see that the student returns to class level ability through private tutoring. Lists of approved tutors will be provided by the Religious School. Family members may tutor the student(s), if it is certain that our curriculum and the Director's requirements are followed. The Religious School staff will monitor progress carefully and they will maintain contact with the family.

Our Bar/Bat Mitzvah policy states that a student must complete or be actively attending with the intention of completing the Mechinah/7th grade. Therefore, it is possible that a student, who is not in compliance with our attendance and achievement policy, would have his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration date placed in jeopardy.

Golden Kippah

Golden Kippah is a program meant to enhance a bar/bat mitzvah student's connection to the Jewish people and to God. The program is based on the ten obligations that our rabbis said were so valuable that their worth could not be measured:

1. Honoring one's father and mother
2. Acts of Love and Kindness
3. Pursuit of knowledge and wisdom
4. Hospitality to strangers
5. Visiting the sick
6. Celebrating with bride and groom
7. Consoling the bereaved
8. Praying with sincerity
9. Making peace where there is strife
10. Studying Torah

Golden Kippah program participants must complete a series of mitzvot, write reflections on their various experiences, and remain in good standing in the Religious School. Once completing the program, students receive a golden kippah at their bar/bat mitzvah. Golden Kippah recipients participate in and help to lead Family High Holy Day services.

Youth and Teen Programming

Ongoing Programs at University Synagogue

Religious School Retreat for Dalet – Mechinah (4th – 7th grade)

Once a year, we take students out of the city, away from the synagogue, and experience our Judaism in a unique and special way. This is a wonderful opportunity for your child to spend time with his/her classmates in an informal Jewish learning environment. We'll celebrate Shabbat together, play games, enjoy the outdoors, dance, do some art, play sports, do the ropes course and engage in a variety of Jewish camp activities.

Retreats are some of the most positive and memorable experiences we can give our children: retreats give them a chance to explore Judaism in an “outside-of-the-classroom” environment and allow your rabbi, cantor, and educators a comfortable opportunity to get to know your children better. Retreats impact how our students feel about their classmates as friends, and provide a unique environment to build community. Our retreat – literally, a withdrawal – allows our students’ bodies, minds and souls to be refreshed. *The retreat is a mandatory part of our 4-7th grade curriculum and is required for all students. There are no regular classes that Sunday.*

2019 Retreat: February 1 – 3 at Camp JCA Shalom, Malibu, CA

Madrichim: Teaching-Assistant Program

The Hebrew word *madrich* means leader or counselor. It is derived from the word *derech*, which means path or way. At University Synagogue, our post b'nei mitzvah students have the opportunity to learn about leadership as they guide younger students along their Jewish educational path. *Madrichim* at University Synagogue can work with specific grades, specialists, or in the Education Office. In addition to “classroom time,” *Madrichim* will have an orientation and five meetings throughout the year to reflect on their work experiences, and learn Jewish lessons of leadership. If you have a 9-12th grader who is interested in becoming a *madrich*, please contact the Director ASAP.

Hadrachah: 8th grade Leadership Track

On Sunday mornings, 8th graders will come and spend time in the Religious School engaging in hands-on active leadership training. The morning will be spent in two different capacities: they will spend time doing leadership activities, games, discussions and role play scenarios. They will learn skills such as conflict resolution, balance, and stress management. The other part of the morning will be spent IN a Religious School classroom where they will assist teachers, lead activities and get to put some of these skills to the test.

This program is designed to get students ready for the *Madrichim* program which begins in 9th grade. If you have an 8th grader who would like to be involved, please contact the Director.

Twinning Program for 8th graders

Three years ago, we were thrilled to introduce a new program to our eighth-grade families this year. University Synagogue now participates in the Jewish Federation’s Tel Aviv/Los Angeles School Twinning Program, the only initiative in existence that connects schools in Los Angeles with schools in Tel Aviv. Middle school students from Los Angeles travel to Tel Aviv and students from Tel Aviv come to Los Angeles. Visiting students live with a host family and study history, literature, language, pluralistic Judaism, Zionism, and the sciences at their partner school. The cultural and educational exchange between students transforms school cultures, transcends the distance between Israel and L.A., and creates a shared Jewish identity and destiny.

There are currently 19 schools in Los Angeles, 19 in Tel Aviv, and one in the Baltics that are part of the program. University Synagogue is in a Los Angeles cluster with Temple Isaiah and Leo Baeck Temple, and together, we will be partnering with Ironi Yud Daled School in Tel Aviv. This cluster program is the embodiment of the Twinning Program's ultimate goal: creating relationships and uniting Jewish communities around the world.

JR UNITY

JR UNITY is our junior youth group for 6th-8th graders. JR UNITY is an opportunity for middle-school students to spend time together socially and to make our world a better place. JR UNITY is open to all 6th-8th grade students - there is no fee to join. Come to one of our events and let us know what you want to do this year! Calendar available in September.

UNITY

Our Synagogue's Senior Youth Group (9th-12th grade) is complete with a dynamic leadership team and enthusiastic members who are seeking to create fun and exciting programs for the synagogue youth. From Havdalah on the beach, creative Shabbat services, laser tag and sleep over, regional wide weekend events at Camp Hess Kramer to a limo scavenger hunt around Los Angeles, UNITY covers all of your social, cultural and religious needs. UNITY also takes social action seriously as we are creating opportunities to help clean up the environment and fight the genocide in Sudan. Come join UNITY and be a part of life-changing group. Calendar available in September.

ⁱ Stopbullying.gov, a federal interagency effort led by the Department of Education that works to coordinate policy, research, and communications on bullying topics.

ⁱⁱ *ibid.*