



CONGREGATION BJBE
Jewish Learning Center
A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE



Parent Handbook 2017-2018

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Dear BJBE Families,

In earlier generations, Jewish students were asked to dip a finger in honey, touch it to a page of Talmud, and then lick the sweetness from their skin in the hopes that their learning will always be sweet and fulfilling. I'm so excited to be your new Director of Jewish Education at BJBE, and I hope to make Jewish education sweet and fulfilling for your children and for your whole family.

I envision a Jewish education for your children that is fun, interactive, and engaging. I envision a Jewish education that provides meaning and purpose in your children's lives and that makes them feel like part of a sacred community. And most of all, I envision a Jewish education that is a partnership between you and me.

A Jewish folktale is told about Rabbi Menachem Mendle of Kotzk. A father once approached him, worried that his son wouldn't study Torah. The Kotzker Rebbe advised him, "You have two choices. You can force your son to study Torah, and he in turn will grow up and force his son to do the same. Or you can devote some of your own time to your own Torah study. If you do the latter, you will find your son learning by your side."

I encourage you to engage alongside your child at BJBE through our grade-level family programs, Matzah Ball Shabbat and Shabbat dinners, or through our adult education programs. Ask your children what they are learning about during JLC Sundays, JLC AfterSchool, and Chai School (and if they struggle to answer that question, ask: "What did they try to teach you?") We'll also be texting Carpool Conversations on a regular basis to encourage discussions in the car and at home about what your kids are learning.

This handbook contains important information regarding the program, philosophy, and policies of our school. I hope it will enable you, my educational partners, to work with me in providing a positive, substantive, and enduring Jewish learning experience for your children. However, as no handbook can take the place of conversation, please keep in close touch with me during the year so that I can provide the best experience possible.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions or concerns. I look forward to getting to know you and developing relationships with each of you during the year.

L'shalom,

Missy Bell, RJE
Director of Education
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Mission and Core Beliefs

BJBE's Jewish Learning Center provides an inspiring and everlasting learning experience for our youth that reflects BJBE's five core values: Torah (Jewish learning), Avodah (meaningful worship and spiritual practice), G'milut Chasadim (acts of loving kindness), Community, and Israel.

We believe children can...

- Actively participate in worship and lead a Jewish life
- Be transformed by their Jewish education and experience
- Build a strong connection with their Jewish community in the United States and Israel
- Give back to their community and the world through acts of loving kindness
- Experience joy and excitement in their learning

The Five Foundations of Jewish Learning

By Rabbi Karyn Kedar

Transactional learning

Transactional learning avoids cotton candy education. It provides substance that has staying power. You can't become a part of the legacy of the Jewish people without basic literacy. The Torah is the Five Books of Moses. The bible is Torah, Prophets, and Writings. The Jewish calendar sets the rhythm of our souls. Abraham and Sarah began a progeny of characters which form the hero's story of the Jewish people. The stages of our lives are marked with ritual to imbue a sense of belonging, continuity and sacredness to our lives. The Hebrew language is the abracadabra that unlocks sacred text. Blessings and prayers taste good, feel natural, when they are memorized. Israel is both modern and ancient and has geography, culture, and sacred story.

Transformational learning

Transformational learning is the why behind the what, it takes shared knowledge and makes it personal. I take the knowledge that has been passed on to me, and I morph the facts into meaning. How does this knowledge anchor me? How do I tether myself to something grand and eternal? Why am I alive? What is the purpose of my life? Who am I? Touch my soul. Ignite my imagination. Sustain in me a sense of wonder and curiosity.

Community

If our children finish years of school and know who Moses is but do not know who Molly is, we will have failed. To grow up privileged is to grow up in a community dedicated to safety and love. We care about what the people in our community think, feel, enjoy, celebrate, and what makes them cry. We show up for each. We say Kaddish together. We dance with bride and groom. Visit the sick. And we notice when one is missing. We feel compelled to care for the wellbeing of the other. We ask *how are you?* and wait for the answer.

Ethical Living

When we are in the center of our universe we are small and lonely. But when we are a mere speck in a magnificent continuum that spans centuries we are a part of something big. When our lives are in service to something greater than ourselves our lives have purpose. When we are obligated beyond self-interest, convenience, and rote behaviors, then life expands. We belong to a tradition that demands we heal a broken world. That we practice compassion. That we act ethically. That we love our neighbor as ourselves.

Joy and Delight

And how would we be different if we created a generation of people whose experience of Jewish learning was joyful. Could we transform the world if we taught the Judaism implores us to be delighted with our place in world? That beauty abounds? That creation is a continuous miracle? That laughter and joy are the manifestation of spiritual practice, of a sense of belonging, and a commitment to others? What if we knew, even expected, to go to synagogue to have fun, rejuvenate, reduce stress, and connect to something that matters?

JLC Curriculum

JLC Sundays

Kindergarten

Kindergarten is a joyful introduction to the Jewish holidays, Shabbat, and the story of Creation with crafts, singing, and story telling. Our program will provide a strong sense of camaraderie and reinforcement of basic Jewish concepts.

1st Grade

1st graders deepen their knowledge of the synagogue, the Jewish home, and the holidays through an exploration of Jewish symbols. Art projects help these students share these symbols with their families.

2nd Grade

2nd graders begin learning about our homeland, Israel, and they explore our responsibility to do g'milut chasadim, acts of kindness. A simulated trip to Israel and mitzvah projects deepen their experience.

3rd Grade

Using a new curriculum, 3rd graders learn what it means to be a mensch through stories from the Torah. What can Abraham, Jacob, Miriam, and all of other biblical heroes teach us about being a good person? Students also re-visit the Jewish holidays by studying each holiday's accompanying biblical story.

4th Grade

4th grade will continue their engagement with the Jewish lifecycle, including an annual highlight, the 4th grade wedding celebration. 4th graders will also reflect on the holidays from a more mature perspective.

5th Grade

5th grade is divided into three units devoted to different aspects of Jewish history. Students re-visit Genesis and Exodus by encountering our ancestors through weekly spy missions. Then, they travel to modern times and engage with the Jewish immigration narrative. Finally, the 5th graders explore modern Israel through an in-depth study of geography and culture.

6th Grade

6th graders spend the year engaging with b'nai mitzvah preparation. Not only do they spend extra time studying prayer, they also think about what it means to become a Jewish adult by exploring their responsibilities to each of our five core values: Torah, Avodah, G'milut Chasadim, Community, and Israel.

Grade-Level Family Programs

Each grade has at least one family program each year during JLC Sundays as part of the grade's curriculum. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend. Grandparents, aunts, uncles or other relatives are welcome to join us if parents are unable to attend.

Kindergarten – Challah Program

Engage with your kindergarteners in their Shabbat curriculum by learning how to bake challah and making a challah cover together as a family.

1st Grade – Symbols of the Sanctuary Scavenger Hunt

Help your child review the symbols they've been learning by participating in an interactive *Symbols of the Sanctuary* scavenger hunt!

2nd Grade – Protecting the Earth Terrarium Project

Bring Jewish values into your home by creating a terrarium with your child as you learn about our Jewish obligation to be Shomrei Adamah, protectors of the earth.

3rd Grade – What's in a Name?

In the Torah, characters' names hold so much meaning. Spend time with your family learning and discussing what your names mean.

4th Grade – Wedding, L'Dor V'Dor Family Celebration

Join your 4th graders for two special celebrations during their lifecycle journey. Experience a Jewish wedding ceremony and reception in February, and in March, bring all the generations for a celebration of Jewish family.

5th Grade – Paper Clips, Wax Museum, Israel Fair

During the immigration unit, watch and discuss the documentary Paper Clips to learn about tolerance and how a lack of tolerance influenced Jewish immigration. During the Torah unit, parents are invited to a unique wax museum experience to learn from their kids about the Biblical characters. At the end of the year, parents enjoy an Israel fair created by their children after an in-depth study of Israeli cities.

6th Grade – B'nai Mitzvah Program by SHALVA

During this workshop, an expert from SHALVA, a local organization that offers community education on relationships, will lead parents and students through an important conversation about how to manage the social dynamics during the B'nai Mitzvah year.

JLC AfterSchool

In our AfterSchool program, students are given the tools to decode Hebrew and to read the prayers used regularly at BJBE. This is reinforced by twice weekly tefilah during JLC Sundays and JLC AfterSchool. Each year, students learn the following:

3rd Grade

- Recognition and pronunciation of Hebrew Letters and Vowels
- Shabbat Blessings

4th Grade

- Core Prayers: Barchu, Ma'ariv Aravim, Shema, V'ahavta, Mi Chamocha, Mah Tov, Shehechyanu, Chanukah Blessings, Four Questions, Blessing for Studying Torah
- B'nai Mitzvah Revolution: Learn about the three portals to B'nai Mitzvah at BJBE, then choose one together as a family

5th Grade

- Core Prayers: Avot, G'vurot, Kedusha, Lecha Dodi, Hatikvah
- Enrichment Prayers: Shalom Rav, Sim Shalom, V'shamru
- B'nai Mitzvah Revolution: Portal-specific learning

6th Grade

- Core Prayers: Talit Blessing, Nisim B'chol Yom, Ashrei, Torah Blessing, Haftarah Blessing, Aleinu, Mourner's Kaddish, Havdalah, Shabbat Kiddush
- Enrichment Prayers: Modeh Ani, Elohai N'shama
- B'nai Mitzvah Revolution: Portal-specific learning

Chai School

As they journey to high school, college, and beyond, Chai School provides a pivotal forum for our teens to explore their Jewish identities and solidify their Jewish foundation. Our 7th-10th graders gather on Sundays, 12:00-1:30pm, to enjoy lunch as a community, followed by learning with their peers, led by teams of master teachers and our clergy in small and large group settings.

7th Grade

Students explore the question: What do I learn from the Shoah (Holocaust) about my responsibility to the Jewish community, the global community, and Israel our home? 7th graders with b'nai mitzvah dates are required to enroll in Chai School.

8th/9th Grade

Students delve into the question: As a Jewish young adult, how do I navigate my relationships and life choices? Through a two year rotating curriculum, they discuss relevant topics to today's Jewish world, connecting them to Jewish text and values. 8th and 9th grade Machoniks are required to enroll in Chai School.

10th Grade

10th grade is Confirmation at BJBE, when the teens declare: I am a Jew because....as they answer the questions: Are you a Jew by birth or a Jew by choice? The year culminates in a meaningful ceremony in our Sanctuary in front of the JLC community, family and friends. 10th grade Machoniks are required to enroll in Confirmation.

11th/12th Grade

The Jewish Life Fellowship is an exciting opportunity for 11th and 12th grade students to learn individually and in small groups with one of our rabbis or cantors. Through this program, students effectively consider the question: How does Judaism inform the adult I am becoming? With the guidance of clergy and staff, each Jewish Life Fellow will determine the topic, scope and schedule of the experience.

Machonik Teaching Assistant Program

8th-12th graders comprise our nationally recognized Machonik teaching assistant program. Upon completion of a semester class in 7th grade that includes developing an understanding of the different ways students learn, as well as lesson planning and instruction, Machoniks are then qualified to assist teachers in JLC Sunday and JLC AfterSchool classes. 8th-10th grade Machoniks are required to be registered for Chai School.

Policies and Procedures from A to Z

The JLC at BJBE strives to be a sacred community. The school's policies and procedures are designed to ensure that students, parents, teachers, and the administration work together to achieve a kind, caring, and safe space for learning.

Arrival and Dismissal

We encourage parents to join us in the building as much as possible. Walk your children to class and then stay for our engaging adult education opportunities. Or, grab some coffee from our Beit Café on Sundays and spend time simply shmoozing with other parents in the Village Center! On those days when you can't come in, here are our drop-off guidelines:

Students should enter the building through our main entrance. Students arriving prior to the start of school are welcome to buy a snack from our Beit Café on Sundays (our Beit Café may start selling snacks on Tuesdays/Wednesdays later in the year). Students may go to their classrooms at 9:20am on Sundays and 4:20pm on Tuesdays/Wednesdays.

We strongly encourage all families to come inside to pick up their children. Children in grades K-2 must be picked up from their classrooms, and children in grades 3-6 can be picked up in the Village Center. If you are unable to come inside, you may pick your child up by car at the back entrance of the building. If you wish to use the carpool line, please email Debbie Heywood, dheywood@bjbe.org, with the names of every child in your carpool and which day(s) you will use the carpool line. Each carpool group will be assigned a number. Please make sure you, the other drivers in your carpool, and the students in your carpool all know your number. As you pull up to be one of the first three cars in the carpool line, you will give your number to our Carpool Coordinator and the child(ren) in your carpool will be released from the school.

We ask that you keep early dismissals to a minimum as they disrupt class activities, and we will not permit early dismissals during the last 15 minutes of school. If you must pick up your child early, please notify us as soon as possible – preferably prior to the day of school – by emailing Debbie Heywood, dheywood@bjbe.org. If the need for early dismissal should arise the day of school, please contact Debbie at 847-826-0564(Sundays), 847-940-7575 x121 (Tuesdays/Wedensdays), or dheywood@bjbe.org or give a handwritten note to our JLC Assistant, Dolores Breitberg, when you arrive. Your child's teacher will give them an early dismissal pass during class. Please meet your child in the Village Center (K-2 will be brought by a machonik, 3-6 may walk there on their own) where you may sign them out.

Attendance

The JLC faculty works hard to create a meaningful Jewish learning experience for each child and to build a class community. In order to receive the full benefit from our programs, it is essential that child attend regularly and be prepared to participate fully in class. If a student misses class, they can make up the learning by doing an at-home enrichment project by themselves or with their parents.

If you know in advance that your child is going to be absent, please notify the Debbie at dheywood@bjbe.org. If a child is absent two or more consecutive weeks, their teacher will reach out to check in with you.

Behavior

The JLC at BJBE upholds Jewish values. The JLC must be a place where students, teachers, and families feel safe and supported. We expect that students, teachers, and families honor each other and act with dignity and respect at all times.

During the first weeks of school, each class will create a *brit*, or a covenant. The students and teacher will work together to create a list of expectations explaining how they will treat each other with respect.

If a student is repeatedly struggling to follow the expectations in the class *brit*, s/he will work together with his/her parents and the Director of Education to create a behavioral plan for the student.

B'nai Mitzvah

Students will receive their b'nai mitzvah date in May of 4th grade. In order to receive/maintain their date, students must be enrolled in the JLC and must continue to be enrolled through 7th grade.

We are excited to have completed the Union for Reform Judaism's B'nai Mitzvah Revolution program. In the spring of 4th grade, families will learn about and choose from one of our three different portals for becoming b'nai mitzvah at BJBE: My Personal Prayer Journey, Team Tzedek, and My Israel Journey.

Important B'nai Mitzvah Contact Information:

- To change your date, contact our B'nai Mitzvah Date Committee Co-chairs, Lara Kunz, larabiz@aol.com and Carol Gaines, carolgaines5@gmail.com.
- For more information about the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution, contact Missy Bell, mbell@bjbe.org.
- For more information about b'nai mitzvah tutoring and requirements, contact clergy assistant Leslie Block, lblock@bjbe.org.
- For more information about hosting your b'nai mitzvah celebration at BJBE, contact events coordinator Erica Stone, estone@bjbe.org.

Cell Phones

In order to maintain an environment that is conducive to learning, where all students are fully present and paying attention to one another, cellphones and other electronic devices are not allowed to be used when JLC is in session.

If a teacher sees a student using his/her phone or electronic device during class, they may

collect it and return it when class is over. Some teachers may collect all cell phones at the beginning of class and return them at the end of the day.

Students and parents who need to contact each other during school hours may do so through the phone in the Religious School office.

Communication and Social Media

In order to foster a love of Judaism in our students, we need your active involvement in our school. Therefore, we take seriously our job of keeping you informed. The Director of Education and your child(ren)'s teacher(s) will send regular emails home to share classroom happenings and upcoming events with you.

Additionally, new this year, we will be using Remind to communicate with you by text. Text messages will include our weekly Carpool Conversations, questions you can ask your child(ren) about what they did during JLC Sundays.

If you or someone you know thinks they are missing emails or texts, please contact Debbie Heywood to make sure your email and cell phone are in our database correctly. This communication includes important information that will make the school year run more smoothly for you and your child, so we don't want you to miss anything!

We will also be sharing pictures on our brand new school Instagram account. Follow us @bjbejlc so you can see what your child is up to when they are here. Children's names will not ever be posted online. If you do not want your child's picture on social media, please let us know in writing.

Homework

Learning Hebrew requires regular practice. The more your child practices, the easier it will be for him/her to learn to read Hebrew and feel comfortable with prayers. JLC AfterSchool teachers will assign weekly homework to their students which will be posted on our website at www.bjbe.org/hebrewpractice.

Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather, we follow Deerfield Public School District 109's emergency closing schedule. If they are closed on a Tuesday or Wednesday, we will cancel JLC AfterSchool that day. If they are open during the school day but cancel after school activities due to weather, we will cancel JLC AfterSchool that day.

For JLC Sundays, we will make a decision to hold school by 7:30am.

When school is canceled, we will send an email and text message to all registered families. This information will also be posted on our website and Facebook page. If you're ever unsure if there is school, please call the office.

Parent Involvement

We hope that BJBE will become your family's Jewish home away from home. Through your participation in synagogue life, you can help establish BJBE as a place of joy, comfort and belonging. Participation is a great way to role model for students the power of a sacred community. Not only do we hope to see you at family programs and family Shabbats, but we hope you will involve yourselves through one of BJBE's learning, worship, and volunteer opportunities for adults.

For those of you willing to take a more significant leadership role, we invite you to join our JLC Committee. The JLC Committee (formerly the Education Committee) meets bi-monthly and provides guidance and support for our JLC programs and helps plan special events for our school community. If you are interested in joining the JLC Committee, please contact the JLC Committee Chair, Maureen Chertow Miller, mkc918@gmail.com.

Project Nourish

Project Nourish is a volunteer program at BJBE that makes, assembles and delivers lunches to people who do not have enough to eat, both in the city and in Lake County. For many years our JLC families have partnered with Project Nourish by contributing food. It is a natural, hands-on opportunity for children to incorporate G'milut Chasadim, acts of loving kindness, into who they are and who they will become.

During the year you will be receiving a request via email for your family to participate, different grades at different times. Some classes will be asked for cookies and some for fruit.

Imagine how it would feel to need to line up to get a lunch that someone has packed for you. Now imagine how good it would feel to see home-made cookies or fresh fruit in your lunch. By adding our cookies and fresh fruit we are adding some TLC to the lunches and giving the message that people care.

If you have any questions about Project Nourish, please contact our Project Nourish Coordinator, Merrilee Waldron, memi660@aol.com

Registration

Registration will open in the late spring of each year. In order to register, families must be in good financial standing. If your family is unable to fulfill your financial obligations to BJBE, please contact our Executive Director, Arlene Mayzel, amayzel@bjbe.org. We never turn anyone away because of a financial hardship.

Children in grades K-2 will register for Sunday. Children in grades 3-6 must register for Sunday and Tuesday/Wednesday unless separate arrangements are made with the Director of Education. Children in grade 7 are expected to register for Chai School in order to maintain their b'nai mitzvah date.

All families register online at www.bjbe.org using their BJBE login and password. If you are unsure of your login and password, please contact Debbie Heywood, dheywood@bjbe.org. When registering, your child may request up to two friends, and we will do our best to accommodate these requests. Additionally, please tell us about any learning needs your child has so that we can plan for a successful year for each student.

Snacks

BJBE strives to be a nut-sensitive community. We order and serve foods without nuts as an ingredient. We ask our congregants and staff not to bring food with nuts into the building. We do not guarantee that all machinery used to produce foods we order will be nut-free.

Those affected by a nut allergy or any other food allergies/intolerances may bring their own snacks and each family should take personal responsibility for advocating for the safety of their children by checking to make sure the staff is aware of and responsive to individual circumstances.

Any time a snack will be served, an email will be sent to families in advance (by the Director of Education if the snack is for the whole school, or by a child's teacher if a snack will be class-specific) so that parents can decide if the snack is appropriate for their child and send in an alternative snack as needed.

Students arriving before 9:30am may purchase snacks from our Beit Café. The Beit Café may open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays later in the year. Students may eat these snacks as well as nut-free snacks brought from home during the first 10 minutes of class.

Parents are strongly urged to monitor the choices children make when purchasing snacks. Excessive amounts of sugared drinks and treats may affect a student's ability to concentrate in class. Parents will be notified if this becomes a concern for their child. Additionally, out of respect for the synagogue, students are asked not to bring in foods containing pork or shellfish.

Tzedakah

Tzedakah, or righteous giving, is one of our responsibilities as Jews. Teachers will be collecting tzedakah during JLC Sundays, and we hope that all students will participate on a weekly basis, ideally giving from their own money. This year, we will give to organizations chosen by BJBE's Social Action Committee. Our machoniks (teen assistants) will teach the students about the tzedakah recipients.