

I. SCHOOL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

OPENING DAYS:

Thursday Religious School	(Grades K to 6)	September 11, 2008
Monday Religious School	(Grades 3 to 6)	September 15, 2008

An OPEN HOUSE for all Religious School parents will be held Thursday, November 20, 2008. All parents are invited to observe their children's classes that day.

The School Calendar is at the end of this handbook. Please review it and note all school days, family days and special Shabbatot.

BUILDING INFORMATION:

Please enter the building under the carport in the main entry of the church. All classes will be held on the upper level of the educational building. Any group programming and services will be held on the lower level in "Friendship Hall." Adult education and committee meetings will be held on the lower level of the education building in the room opposite the stairs.

The three classes will be held at the end of the hall in the "new section" of the educational wing. The *Gimmel* classes will be held in the last room on the right side, the *Aleph* and *Bet* classes will be on the left side. There is an office located at the front of the educational wing hallway and restrooms are in between the office and the classrooms.

Parents are encouraged to stay, socialize and relax in the parlor or the entrance lobby during school hours.

ATTENDANCE:

Regular attendance is essential to any school program. We expect students to be present and on time for each session. If there is a problem, please let us know. Students are responsible for all work done by the class and for all assignments. Because we assign minimal homework, attendance at school is the major vehicle for success. If your child is absent, please contact the teacher and find what he or she missed and how your child might make up the work.

CARPOOL INFORMATION/ STUDENT DIRECTORY:

Class lists are available at the school office in Elkins Park for your convenience to help you set up carpools. A student directory will also be organized for you with similar information. *If you do not want your information printed in the school directory please let us know.*

EARLY ARRIVAL and CLASS SNACKS:

If your child arrives before 3:45 he or she should find Rabbi Stacy Rigler, Peter Rigler or Orit Nelinson and let them know that he or she is in the building. Please do not leave your child until you know that either the teacher or supervisor is watching him or her.

Keneseth Israel's food policy, as adopted by the Board of Trustees in conjunction with the Religious Practices Committee and in keeping with the teachings of contemporary Reform Judaism, states that "no pork or shellfish products are to be brought to KI." Please keep this in mind when sending snacks with your children or preparing for synagogue events. For additional information, please contact the Rabbinic staff at 215-887-8702 or the Temple Administrator at 215-887-8700.

In addition we ask that you not send snacks that are very messy or cumbersome to eat (e.g. those with dips, sticks, etc.). *If you are providing a snack for the entire class please be sure to know all the ingredients in the snack for the sake of allergies.*

DROP OFF, PICK UP and PARKING:

If you are unable to accompany your child into the building, he or she should be dropped off under the carport in the front of the church. **If you do not walk your child to his/her classroom, please instruct your child to go directly to the classroom.**

LATE ARRIVAL and EARLY PICKUP:

Please be on time --- students who arrive late will find it difficult to catch up with the class. If you need to pick your child up early, please plan ahead. Send a note to the teacher. **You must report to the school office and sign your child out. Your child will not be allowed to wait for you outside the building nor will you be allowed to call the office and request your child be sent outside.** If, in an emergency, you are going to be late picking up your child, please notify the school office so that someone can be there until you arrive.

CONTACTING THE SCHOOL OFFICE:

If you need to reach someone in Blue Bell while the Blue Bell Religious School is in session, please dial 484-674-8700. You may also try Rabbi Stacy Rigler's cell phone 215-740-2244 on Thursdays or Rabbi Peter Rigler 215-740-7199 on Mondays. Please use this cell phone for emergencies only! Regular calls should be made to the Elkins Park office, 215-887-8704.

WEATHER-RELATED SCHOOL CLOSING INFORMATION:

Our school closing number is 324 on KYW-Radio (1060 AM). If the Whitmarsh schools are closed or close early, K.I. will be closed automatically. We will also do our best to email all parents and post this information on our website.

II. PARENT and CHILD EXPECTATIONS:

BOOKS and SUPPLIES:

Textbooks are supplied by the school and are included in the tuition payment. If lost, new books must be paid for at the time of replacement. Students should bring notebooks, folders, pencils and pens to each class session!! In addition, students who are in the *Gimmel* class will need a three ring binder and a pocket folder. Each student

is asked to bring in a box of pencils at the beginning of the year so that we have pencils available for the entire school.

CLASSWORK and HOMEWORK:

As stated previously, minimal homework will be assigned, and it is expected that the child will complete the assignment. *Hebrew reading practice is necessary every week --- students always have prayers to practice!!* Often students can reinforce their Hebrew work using tools on the internet. Please note that even if you don't read Hebrew yourself, you can still listen to your child practice to hear if he or she is comfortable reading Hebrew.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR and DISCIPLINE:

Under no condition will behavior which prevents others from learning be tolerated in the Religious School. Minor discipline problems are handled by the classroom teacher. If these problems persist, the student will be sent to the school office.

FIRST REFERRAL: The first referral to the school office will be handled by the Director of Religious Education. Should the discipline problem warrant it, she will contact the parents.

SECOND REFERRAL: At the second referral, the Director of Religious Education will contact the parents to discuss the problem and steps needed to resolve it. If the problem is significant enough, the student may be suspended from class until the parents are able to confer with the Director of Religious Education. A written letter will then be sent to the parents outlining the agreement reached and the consequences should the agreement not be adhered to.

SUSPENSION: If the parents are unwilling to confer with the Director of Religious Education or the student is unable to satisfy the terms of the agreement, the student will be placed in individual instruction with a teacher/tutor selected by the school. It will be the parents' responsibility to compensate the tutor. Tutoring will not begin until the parents make a payment.

If your child is having a minor classroom problem, the teacher may call to let you know what is happening and to ask for your help in solving the problem. You can reach any member of the faculty by calling the school office in Elkins Park (215-887-8704) and leaving a message. Your call will be returned promptly.

Many behavior problems are indeed learning problems. Please call Rabbi Stacy Eskovitz Rigler with any information about how your child learns best or any special learning needs that your child may have. This will help your child succeed in our program.

FAMILY EDUCATION:

Over the course of the year there will be several opportunities for parents to learn with their children or to learn on their own so that they will know about some of the topics their children are studying: Family education is the only way to ensure that what students learn at religious school is incorporated into a family's every day life.

We have a "community time" scheduled each month, this is a chance for parents to participate with their children in learning about the Jewish yearly cycle. In addition we have four Sunday programs that are both fun and educational. This year we will also have a family retreat at URJ Camp Harlam from January 23 to January 25, 2009.

TZEDAKAH:

All students will have an opportunity to give *tzedakah* and perform *mitzvot* during the school year. Students should contribute each time they come to school – the amount does not matter. Each class sets goals and projects and decides where the collected funds will go. Students should be encouraged to give from their own money to teach them that each of us is responsible for giving of ourselves.

T’FILLOT EXPECTATIONS:

In Jewish education, formal instruction can be no more than a foundation for life skills. In our classrooms, our children will be learning the prayers that compose the services in which our people have been participating for generations, which have established our identity and our historic connectedness. To learn prayers without seeing their place in our liturgy, without hearing the congregation sing them, without being a part of that congregation, is to miss the fundamental reason why we learn these prayers. The same can be said for learning about *mitzvot*. The learning, again, can be no more than a foundation for incorporating the *mitzvot*, our responsibility for each other, into our daily lives.

This is the fundamental reason that we have established service requirements for the children in our program. By participating in our religious services, by giving of their time to participate in service projects, our children are investing themselves in the opportunity to experience the power, reality and beauty of what Judaism can mean to them.

All students are required to attend *Shabbat* services. Attendance at High Holy Day services does not count toward these expectations. **After each *Shabbat* service, the Rabbis and Cantor will have stars. Students should say “hello” to the Rabbis or Cantor and wish them a *Shabbat Shalom*. They will give the students a star which can be mounted on the chart in the hallway.** One credit is given for each service attended. If your child attends services at another synagogue, please advise the Religious School Office in order for him/her to receive the proper credit.

Grades K - 2	Two (2) <i>Shabbat</i> services per year
Grades 3 - 4	Four (4) <i>Shabbat</i> services per year**
	**All of the Grade 4 service credits must be fulfilled in order to secure a date for your child’s <i>Bar/Bat Mitzvah</i>
Grades 5 - 6	Six (6) <i>Shabbat</i> services per year – (3) of which must be Jr. Congregation services held in Elkins Park on Sat Morning
Grade 7	Six (6) <i>Shabbat</i> services for the year
Grades 8 – 10	Two (2) <i>Shabbat</i> services per year

An attendance record is posted in the hallway nearby, so you can easily determine your child’s progress. Reminders will also be mailed home. If there are any discrepancies, please inform Lindsey Heller at 215-887-8704, so that corrections can be made.

III. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM:

In Kindergarten through Confirmation Academy, one of our overall goals is to provide the education that will allow all of our learners to evolve into knowledgeable Reform Jews and provide the knowledge base that permits the informed choices that are the elements of our

individual Jewish identities. We strive to engage the children through fun and exciting opportunities to learn about their Jewish tradition. Our curriculum balances Reform Judaism's love of history with a desire for innovation and seeks to make Judaism relevant for our students in their lives. We hope to bring the learning home to our families where we know the real Jewish education is learned.

Formal Hebrew instruction in our program begins with children in our First Grade class and extends through the 7th grade. It starts with an aural-oral program, extends through a readiness program and leads to instruction that will permit our children to attain individual levels of fluency and comfort with prayer. The goal of the program is not limited to the ability to decode Hebrew letters to form known sounds. It also involves the children in a variety of methods that create the opportunity for personal relationships with and the understanding of prayer in general, and those specific prayers that are integral elements of our service. Children in 3rd through 6th grades will have formal Hebrew instruction on Monday AND on Thursday for 45 minute periods each day. This instruction, in order to be successful, must be reinforced at least one day a week at home. Your child's teacher can be helpful in suggesting fun ways to reinforce his/her Hebrew reading at home.

Each grade has a specific program of study which is summarized below. These summaries, as well as curriculum, may change throughout the year:

ALEPH CLASS: The *Aleph* class is for students ages 5 & 6. This class provides an introduction to Jewish studies for our youngest students. In creative hands-on ways, students learn about the Jewish holidays, elements of the synagogue and Bible stories. Students will also explore concepts of God and discuss what we believe about God.

BET CLASS: The *Bet* class builds upon the students' knowledge of their Jewish identity and Jewish holidays. They will learn the basic values of Jewish life through torah study, holiday observance, exploration of worship and acts of *Gimilut Chasadim* (Loving Kindness). This year the *Bet* class will focus on learning about God, Holiness and Israel, our Holy Land. Students in the *Bet* class begin their study of Hebrew and learn not only the Hebrew letters, but they learn the vowels and begin to learn how to read Hebrew. The *Bet* class is for students in the 2nd and 3rd grades.

GIMMEL CLASS: The *Gimmel* class is for our most advanced students. Knowledge of all the Hebrew letters and vowels is a pre-requisite for the *gimmel* class. Students in this class will continue their Hebrew studies by focusing on prayers that are most commonly used in our services. They will practice reading and chanting the prayers, learn key vocabulary words and explore the meaning and themes behind the prayers. The class will also move beyond holidays and focus on God, Holiness and Israel, our Holy Land.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

In addition to religious academic activities and Hebrew instruction, Music, Art and *Tefillot* are regular components of the program. **Liz Sussman**, our Music teacher, and **Rabbi Peter Rigler** will lead a weekly prayer service for the oldest grades.

INDIVIDUAL or SPECIAL NEEDS:

We will do our best to accommodate every student in the school. Please let Rabbi Stacy Rigler and your child's teacher know if there is anything we can do to help him or her learn better. In addition if your child had any trouble learning English this is crucial information for us in our instruction of Hebrew.

CONFIRMATION ACADEMY (GRADES 7, 8, & 9):

The goal of the Confirmation Academy is to provide opportunities for our children to understand their identity as Reform Jews. Since we understand the needs of high school students social time is built into every school session. The core classes each year focus on a different aspect of being a Jew that had not been taught in earlier grades. The classes are designed to compare other religions and other branches of Judaism to our own to increase understanding about what we believe. Electives and special programs complement the curriculum. While the grade school curriculum focuses on teaching the "basics" of Judaism the Confirmation Academy helps our students develop into mature Jewish adults.

The Confirmation Academy's Tuesday night program in Elkins Park takes the following format:

6:30 – 7:00 p.m.	Dinner - during this half hour there will be time for both socializing and informal learning experiences.
7:00 – 7:45 p.m.	Core Curriculum Classes
7:45 – 8:30 p.m.	Elective Classes

IV. K.I. KIDS ACTIVITIES:

YOUTH GROUPS – Club 34, Club 56, Jr. KIFTY and Sr. KIFTY:

A formal Jewish education is best complemented by informal Jewish education. The program coordinates activities for our young people in 3rd & 4th grades (Club 34); 5th & 6th grades (Club 56); 7th & 8th grades (Jr. KIFTY) and 9th to 12th grades (Sr. KIFTY). The goal of our youth program is to guide our youth toward a strong emotional attachment to Judaism, as well as a deepening commitment to K.I. that will last long after formal religious education. **Janet Luterman is our Youth Activities Advisor. Mollie Serdikoff is the Assistant Youth Advisor. They can be reached at 215-887-8704 ext. 133 or at kifty@kenesethisrael.org.**

****ALL KIFTY EVENTS ARE LISTED ON THE SCHOOL CALENDAR.
WATCH FOR FLYERS WITH MORE DETAILS!****

SCHOLARSHIPS and JEWISH PROGRAMS:

K.I. understands that our formal religious school is just one aspect of your child's religious education. Children are strongly encouraged to attend the Union of Reform Judaism's summer Camp Harlam and regional youth group events. The K.I. Scholarship Committee provides aid to students in need who wish to attend URJ Camp Harlam. Scholarships are available also for NFTY (North American Federation of Temple Youth) events and Israel Programs. Applications are available in the School Office in Elkins Park.

“SHIR JOY” – YOUTH CHOIR:

Children in grades 2 through 10 are encouraged to join the choir. The group takes part in Family *Shabbatot* and congregational services as well as in congregational and community programs. Choir rehearsals are Thursdays after Religious School. All that is needed is the desire to sing!

The choir is under the able direction of Liz Sussman, our Music Educator. She can be reached through the Religious School Office, 215-887-8704.

SPECIAL SHABBAT PROGRAMS:

There are many different types of services offered at KI. **Our goal is to have one family worship experience per weekend. They vary by time and day to offer your family the most flexibility.**

Family Shabbat Services – the FIRST Friday of each month in Elkins Park. These services are traditional KI Friday night services with a special family friendly sermon. Many of the services are led by a specific grade (3rd - 9th) and there is often a dinner before the service.

Tot Shabbat Services – on the SECOND Friday of each month in Elkins Park we offer a special *Kabbalat Shabbat* program (to welcome *Shabbat*) at 6:00 pm. Geared toward younger children we welcome *Shabbat* with songs and our own KI puppets! A community dinner follows the service.

Blue Jeans Shabbat: Several times a year we hold an informal “blue Jeans” *Shabbat* service in our Youth Lounge in Elkins Park. This service has lots of guitar music and features Shir Joy – our Youth Choir. Come casual and celebrate *Shabbat* with us.

Blue Bell Shabbat Services – on the THIRD OR FOURTH Friday of each month we will have a more informal, family friendly service in Blue Bell. There will be a family *Shabbat* dinner at 6:00 PM which is pot-luck style. A Tot Shabbat puppet show and song session follows at 6:45 and a Family Shabbat service begins at 7:00.

Jr. Congregation - For students in grades 3-7 and their families, from 10:30-11:30 a.m. usually on the third Saturday of the month in Elkins Park. This service is an opportunity for students to lead a *Shabbat* morning service on their own. Students will take turns leading prayers, acting out the *Torah* portion, and learning about the *Shabbat* morning service in a fun, interactive way. **Jr. Congregation is also great preparation for a child’s *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*.** Parents are welcome to attend or they may choose to attend the regular *Shabbat* morning service held at the same time.

HOLIDAY PROGRAMS:

In addition to the preparation for holidays done in the school the holidays are celebrated in many fun and exciting ways at KI. All large holiday programs take place in Elkins Park.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur During the regular morning service on the High Holy Days, students in all grades are invited to our High Holy Day youth programs. This year

we will feature again programs with classroom activities and a short service for our youngest students (under 2nd grade) and an age appropriate service for our 2nd - 6th graders. Our Jr. High and High School students can choose between helping out in the classrooms with the younger students or by attending the adult service.

At 3:00 p.m. on *Rosh Hashanah* and 2:00 p.m. on *Yom Kippur* there is a special TOT family service featuring our KI puppets and a special young children's prayer book. This service is open to the community - please invite your friends and family and join us.

At 4:15p.m. on *Rosh Hashanah* there will be a community *tashlich* service and *oneg* at Wall Park in Elkins Park.

On *Kol Nidre* there is a family service at 6:00 pm. This service uses our regular High Holiday *Machzor* (prayer book) and is a shortened version of the 8:00 *Kol Nidre* service. It is also open to the community.

Sukkot and Simchat Torah – On October 12, there will be a Sukkah “build” at 3:00 p.m. in Blue Bell. On *Sukkot* we have an annual brown-bag dinner before *Erev Sukkot* services in Elkins Park. There are crafts for students to decorate the *Sukkah* and a chance for everyone to celebrate our harvest holiday. These will take place on October 13, 2008 with dinner at 6:00 p.m. and at a service at 6:45 p.m.

The start of a new *Torah* cycle brings a chance to formally welcome all of our new students. Children beginning their religious school education are honored at our Consecration service on *Erev Simchat Torah* October 20, 2008 at 6:45 pm. Everyone is invited to join in this joyous celebration of our holy book!

Hanukkah – Join us for our annual *Hanukkah* candle lighting, dinner, service, and super *Oneg* extravaganza. This year we will celebrate on December 26, 2008 with a 5:45 p.m. Tot service and 6:00 p.m. congregational dinner, a 7:15 p.m. regular service followed by the *Oneg* extravaganza.

Purim - Come in costume for our *Purim* festival. See our KI staff dressed up for a skit that is sure to make you laugh. This happening will take place March 9, 2009, with a Brown-bag dinner at 6:00 p.m. followed by the *Megillah* reading. The *Purim* Carnival will be held on Sunday, March 8, 2009, from Noon – 2:00 p.m. in Elkins Park.

Shavuot - Each year we observe the giving of the *Torah* by witnessing a new generation accept the responsibility of our Jewish tradition. The entire congregation is invited to attend the Consecration Service at 8:00 p.m. on Sunday June 8, 2008 and the Confirmation service at 10:30 a.m. on Monday June 9, 2008.

V. HOW PARENTS CAN BECOME INVOLVED:

P.T. A.:

The PTA strives to serve the needs of the students by fostering a partnership among the parents, clergy, faculty and the Director of Religious Education through communication, social and educational programming as well as financial support. The PTA organizes events for students and parents as well as the entire congregation during the year. It is a wonderful way to meet other families and to become a part of K.I. Ideally we would like a parent volunteer to act as Room Parent in each classroom.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

The mission of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel's Religious School Committee is to participate in the development and refinement of the school's goals, objectives and programs. The Religious School Committee provides support and advocates for high quality Reform Jewish educational programs for students and families. The Committee works collaboratively with the Director of Religious Education and related educational staff and serves as a liaison between the school, the families of the school and the larger synagogue community.

If you have concerns or you would like to join the Religious School Committee please contact Suzanne Newman or Kari Diamond, our Blue Bell School Committee members, or Ellen Finkelstein or Lori Siegal Rachel Sorokin Goff, Religious School Committee Chairs.

PARENT EDUCATION:

We are looking to develop classes for parents during religious school hours to meet your needs. If you are interested in taking Hebrew for Beginners, learning about the basics of Judaism or having regular *Torah* study (or any other idea) please speak with Rabbi Peter Rigler about starting a class. He can be reached at 215-887-8702 or kirabbipcr@kenesethisrael.org.

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CALENDAR FOR 2007-2008