



Sutton Place Synagogue Jackson Religious School & N'siyah Parent Handbook 5780/ 2019—2020

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WELCOME TO THE JACKSON RELIGIOUS SCHOOL AND SUTTON PLACE SYNAGOGUE COMMUNITY!

VISION

The Jackson Religious School is a vibrant learning community that prepares our students to participate in Jewish life within and beyond Sutton Place Synagogue.

We value:

- studying Torah.
- engaging in meaningful Jewish moments and holidays through their stories, rituals, customs, mitzvot and prayers.
- connecting to our Jewish story—our history and story as a people in both Israel and the Diaspora.
- exploring our relationship with God.
- reflecting on what it means to live a Jewish life and be a Jewish person, including how we can improve the world.

We are a warm, intimate community that prioritizes flexibility, and meeting the schedules and needs of our learners, while making their learning engaging and enjoyable.

ABOUT US

The Nathaniel H. and Fanny Stricks Jackson Religious School offers a warm and enthusiastic environment committed to building your children's sense of Jewish integrity and self-esteem. Our goal is for all students graduating from the Jackson Religious School to feel prepared to lead Jewish lives—through their knowledge base, experience, understanding, and practical skills. We use the lenses of Torah, holidays, Israel, history, and Hebrew/Tefillah (prayer) to explore our Judaism. We prioritize meaningful, interactive learning that allows our students to personally connect to their Judaism. Our teachers build deep relationships with our students, and our small class sizes allow for individualized attention and learning.

This handbook has been prepared so that you and your family will feel comfortable with the policies, curriculum and philosophy currently existing in our religious school. Please take the time to thoroughly read this handbook as it will be helpful to you when preparing for the upcoming school year.

Please be in touch with the religious school office with questions, ideas, concerns or to reflect on your child's experience. We are looking forward to another amazing year!

GOALS FOR THE JACKSON RELIGIOUS SCHOOL & N'SIYAH

At the Jackson Religious School, Jewish education begins with the Kindergarten year, continues through Bar and Bat Mitzvah and on through N'siyah, our Teen program. The program strives to encompass all relevant Jewish topics. It provides a basis for lifetime Jewish learning, knowledge and participation. The curriculum and structure of the religious school instill in students a sense of pride in Judaism which will carry them through their high school and college years.

The Jackson Religious School, through its lay Religious School Committee and its professional staff, strives to assemble the finest quality staff of educators available, and to provide the most effective materials and methods for use in the classrooms.

JRS CURRICULAR GOALS:

- Instill a passion for Judaism and love for the Jewish holidays.
- Inspire connection to and love for the State of Israel.
- Develop an understanding of Jewish history.
- Build a connection to and passion for learning Torah.
- Promote age-appropriate understandings of God, spirituality, and prayer.
- Proficiently and comfortably read from the *Siddur* (prayer book) in Hebrew.
- Developing skills to act as *Shaliach Tzibur* (prayer leader).

Teachers in the school are viewed by students as accessible Jewish role models who create a stimulating, exciting and creative atmosphere within our school.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A JACKSON RELIGIOUS SCHOOL STUDENT

Two hours seems like a long time! What do we do in two hours? Here is a sample schedule:

4:00-4:05	5 min.	Jewish mindfulness moment
4:05-4:40	35 min.	Hebrew reading and vocabulary
4:40-5:10	30 min.	Tefillah
5:10-5:20	10 min.	<i>Return to class; break</i>
5:20-5:55	35 min.	Class part 2: holidays, Israel or history
5:55-6:00	5 min.	L'hitraot (see you later) and daily closure

For those interested in more details of our curriculum, please read pages 5 to 16.

N'SIYAH GOALS:

- Support Teens as they discover the relevance of Judaism to their own lives as Jewish teenagers living in America.
- Teens will realize that being Jewish is an integral part of their adult lives.
- Teens will work together to connect with a Judaism with which they are personally comfortable.

Another important aspect to our religious school is the idea of Family Education. Our students will be able to learn from their teachers but also from their parents as we invite parents to participate in family services, programs and Shabbat dinners throughout the school year. These programs will allow you to experience Judaism together and will enable you to learn together.

PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE:

We encourage our religious school students to have consistent attendance during the course of the year. We understand that other commitments arise, but we believe that attending religious school regularly throughout the year will help a child learn more, feel more comfortable, and have a better experience.

DISCIPLINE POLICY:

It is our belief that all religious school and N'siyah students should have an opportunity to learn and study in a proper educational environment. We expect that all students will behave in an appropriate, polite, attentive, and cooperative manner.

The Religious School Committee, in cooperation with the Director of Education, the Rabbi, and the President of the Congregation, will not permit any child to disrupt his or her classroom, thus preventing others from learning. In the event that a student does not meet the standards of behavior as stated above, a conversation with the parents will occur to determine the student's role and placement at the Jackson Religious School.

Students are simply not permitted to act in ways that prevent the teacher from teaching or other students from learning, or are dangerous to themselves or others. Students who act in such a manner will be removed from class. All incidents will be duly reported and maintained in each student's cumulative file.

ANTI-BULLYNG POLICY:

Sutton Place Synagogue and the Jackson Religious School are completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it in any form. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we work and live by. All members of the Sutton Place Synagogue community have the right to learn in a secure and caring environment. They also have a responsibility to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the protection and maintenance of such an environment. Bullying means written, verbal or physical conduct that adversely affects the ability of one or more students to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities by putting the student (or students) in reasonable fear or physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, conduct that is based on a student's actual or perceived race, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other distinguishing characteristic. We are continuously committed to ensuring a safe and secure learning environment for all our students and their families.

EARLY DISMISSAL:

Parent(s) should let the Director of Education know if a student requires early dismissal. Parent should email aschwager@spsnyc.org with the words "Dismissal for ____" in the subject line and/or call the office to indicate at what time the student should be dismissed and who will be picking them up. Student will be dismissed to the lobby to meet the parent (or other designated person) at the appropriate time, unless an alternative is discussed.



SNACK:

The school will provide a snack to each student, which they will be permitted to eat before religious school and when the classroom teacher allows. If you wish to provide your child with additional snack, you may do so – please note that all snacks must adhere to strict rules of kashrut (including a heksher on packaged food, examples above) and must be **peanut- and nut-free**.

CONFERENCES AND COMMUNICATION:

Conferences will be held during the week of January 6-10. There will be in-person conferences scheduled for Wednesday, January 8. Phone or virtual conferences can be scheduled throughout the week.

We will email out monthly updates about what is happening in class, and we will be in regular contact with families to discuss each student’s progress throughout the year.

TEXTBOOKS:

All books used by the students during the year are supplied by the school as part of your tuition. You have purchased these books and they will be returned to you at the end of the school year if you want them.

CELL PHONES:

Students should not be on their cell phones or other electronic devices during religious school hours without teacher permission. If students are on their cell phones without permission, teachers will collect the cell phones from students and place them in a container. Teachers will bring the cell phone container with them when they leave the room, so that students’ cell phones are not left unattended.

Any messages that need to be given to students during religious school hours should be sent to Alyssa via email (aschwager@spsnyc.org) or phoned in to the main office at (212) 593-3300. The main office will insure that the message is communicated. For dismissal changes, please email aschwager@spsnyc.org with “Dismissal for ___” in the subject line. **Please do not text or email students during religious school.**

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES:

All faculty members of the Jackson Religious School are familiar with the emergency procedures. Additionally, a copy of “Emergency Response Procedures” is given to all teachers at their orientation. We regularly practice fire drills, and all of our classrooms and communal spaces are equipped to “lock down” for intruder alerts. We also have an off-site evacuation location at a secure location nearby. In case of emergency, we use EZ Text alert text messaging system and mass emails to communicate with parents.

B'NEI MITZVAH POLICY

Religious school education is an opportunity for the children of the Sutton Place Synagogue to become part of a Jewish community and to prepare for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. The Bar and Bat Mitzvah of a child is only a part of their Jewish education, not just the goal. The children of Sutton Place Synagogue are encouraged to continue their quest for Jewish learning and experience after their Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

This being said, Sutton Place Synagogue has created the following guidelines for religious education prior to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah in our synagogue.

Children are encouraged to attend the Jackson Religious School starting in Kindergarten and are required to attend the Jackson Religious School beginning in third grade. Transfer students from other religious schools are welcome to our religious school and these new students will be evaluated by our Director of Education in order to determine proper class placement. Children need to fulfill the requirements of attendance to class, either twice a week (Monday/Wednesday or Wednesday/Saturday), or once per week with weekly private tutoring. This will optimize the educational and community experience. Sutton Place Synagogue is committed to making the religious education for the children both meaningful and enjoyable.

If your child attends an accredited Hebrew Day school Program, s/he does not need to enroll in our Jackson Religious School

Only children enrolled in an accredited Hebrew Day school Program or our Jackson Religious School will be given a Bar or Bat Mitzvah date in the fourth grade.

Children are required to be enrolled in our Jackson Religious school or an accredited Hebrew Day school program through the end of seventh grade to become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah with us. Synagogue membership is required to attend the Jackson Religious School and to have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Sutton Place Synagogue.

Starting in the third grade, students will be given the following 3 options for Religious School education:

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL TRACKS

MONDAY/WEDNESDAY:

The majority of the Religious School students will be enrolled in our Monday/Wednesday (4:00 – 6:00 pm) Religious School program. Students will be a part of the same class on both days and will follow our school's curriculum.

PRIVATE TUTORING/WEDNESDAY TRACK:

This program will require the student to come to religious school every Wednesday and for the family to hire a private tutor to come to the child's home once a week for one hour to make up the curriculum that is taught at the school on Monday. The tutor will follow the curriculum of the Jackson Religious School and will give periodic progress reports to the principal regarding the child.

The principal of the Jackson Religious School must approve the tutor. The cost of this program to the family will be the cost of the tuition for the traditional program plus the cost of the private tutor.

WEDNESDAY/SHABBAT SCHOOL TRACK:

Religious School students will also have the option of attending Religious School on Wednesdays (4:00-6:00pm) and on Saturdays (9:00 – 10:30am). The material covered on Saturday will be the same material the student is missing during the Monday class. The cost for this program will be the same tuition as the Monday/Wednesday track option.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

Gan (Kindergarten):	Wednesday, 4:00-5:45 pm
Kitah Aleph (1 st grade):	Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 pm
Kitah Bet (2 nd grade):	Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 pm
Kitah Gimel (3 rd grade):	Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 pm + Monday, 4:00-6:00 pm or Saturday, 9:00-10:30 am
Kitah Dalet (4 th grade):	Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 pm + Monday, 4:00-6:00 pm or Saturday, 9:00-10:30 am
Kitah Hay (5 th grade):	Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 pm + Monday, 4:00-6:00 pm or Saturday, 9:00-10:30 am
Kitah Vav (6 th grade):	Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 pm + Monday, 4:00-6:00 pm or Saturday, 9:00-10:30 am
Kitah Zayin (7 th grade):	Wednesday, 4:00-7:00 pm
N' Siyah:	Wednesdays, 7:00-8:30 pm once per month Saturdays, 4:00-5:30 pm once per month

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING

STUDENT SHABBAT:

Students in the religious school will lead prayers for the congregation four times. As our pilot year, we will have two Friday evening services and two Saturday morning services. The students will have a chance to lead from the *bima* as a class, helping them to feel comfortable leading services and more connected to our SPS Shabbat experience. The dates for this year are:

- Friday, October 18 @ 6:15 pm (followed by Sukkot Shabbat dinner)
- Saturday, December 7 @ 9:15 am
- Friday, March 6 @ 6:15 pm
- Saturday, April 4 @ 9:15 am

FAMILY SERVICE AND YOUNG FAMILY SERVICE:

We are continuing to have family-oriented Shabbat services for our K-6th grade students and their families. Families will pray, sing, and learn together through discussion, activities, singing and learning more about Shabbat services. We will have Family Services, during Shabbat School, that are geared towards students in grades 3-6 and their families. Our Young Family Service is geared towards students in grades K-2 and their families.

The dates for this year are:

Family Service (geared towards students in grades 3-6 with their families):

- Saturday, November 2, 9:45-10:30 am
- Saturday, January 11, 9:45-10:30 am
- Saturday, February 8, 9:45-10:30 am
- Saturday, May 16, 9:45-10:30 am

Young Family Service (geared towards students in grades K-2 with their families):

- Saturday, November 9, 10:45-11:30 am
- Saturday, February 8, 10:45-11:30 am

PJ HAVDALLAH:

Kids night IN, Parents night OUT! Bring your kids in grades K-4th to PJ Havdallah, where they will have dinner, watch a movie, and play games while the parents enjoy a night out. We will either start or end the evening with a short Havdallah service and family craft, depending on the season. This year's dates are:

- Saturday, November 23, 5:30-8:30 pm
- Saturday, March 21, 6:30-8:30 pm

MITZVAH OPPORTUNITIES:

Each class has their own Wednesday mitzvah opportunity where parents will be invited to join for a mitzvah project. We will work together to build community and a better world through our service! There will be a school-wide Mitzvah Day on **Sunday, November 10.**

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Throughout the year, we celebrate holidays and special occasions together as a community! Save these dates on your calendar:

- **Bible Players Performance**—Wednesday, September 11 from 5 -6
To kickoff our year together, the Bible Players will bring their hilarious Jewish improv and comedy show to SPS! We will laugh, learn, and act together as we explore Torah stories and Jewish values as a community. Parents and siblings are welcome to attend!
- **Sukkot Shabbat Dinner**—Friday, October 18 @ 7 pm (after Student Shabbat @ 6:15)
Come eat under the stars with us as we celebrate Sukkot in our rooftop sukkah! We will enjoy Friday night services together, and then eat our Shabbat dinner in the sukkah! Complimentary for families in the Jackson Religious School, nominal charge for guests.
- **Mitzvah Day**—Sunday, November 10 @ 12 pm
The whole Sutton Place Synagogue community is invited to join together as we make our world a better place. In honor of Veteran’s Day, there will be a variety of mitzvah projects that are fun for all ages!
- **JRS Family Pre-Chanukah Celebration**—Wednesday, December 18 @ 6 pm
The Jackson Religious School is excited to get in the Chanukah spirit with our families! Directly after religious school, we will enjoy a delicious Chanukah-themed meal, and maybe even get to play some games and do some crafts!
- **Purim Carnival**—Sunday, March 8 @ 11:30 am
Join us for our fun, festive annual Purim Carnival! Games, bounce houses, face painting and more are fun for all! Students in 5th grade and up can volunteer as the younger children enjoy the activities!
- **Passover Fair and Book Talk**—Wednesday, March 25 (fair @ 4 pm; book talk @ 5 pm)
Right after Purim, it’s time to prepare for Passover! Come explore Passover as a family, get ready for your Passover *seder*, and hear author Jordan Gorfinkel present his family-friendly *Passover Haggadah Graphic Novel*.
- **End-of-the-year Celebration**—Wednesday, May 20 @ 5:15 pm
“School’s out for summer!” Come celebrate all of our hard works this year! We will share what we learned and make fun memories to take with you through your summer adventures!