



Curriculum Guide – Updated January, 2019

Pre-K/K/1/2nd Grade (Intro)

Our youngest grades don't just learn about Judaism – they live it, with the classroom as a laboratory of Jewish experimentation and discovery. Every session incorporates singing, storytelling, and hands-on activities, inspiring our children with the wisdom of our ancestors and building a community of friends and families. Students come to see Emanu-El as a second home, feeling comfortable in our sanctuaries, library, and museum, and they develop relationships with our clergy and Temple staff along the way.

The students join together with Cantor Glazman each week for a 30-minute music session filled with dancing and joy, where they learn catchy songs in Hebrew and English and participate in a short prayer service. Our students often perform songs they have learned at synagogue services at Temple Emanu-El ... [click here for videos of our students leading the congregation in song \(link to 2017 Ocho Kandelikas, 2018 Light 1 Candle\)](#)

To learn more about our school's weekly tzedakah collection, [click here](#). (can keep text from http://emanuelnyc.org/simple.php/ed_relig_tzedakah)

(this next piece about the library should be a subset of the PK-2nd grade page but can also be part of a master curriculum page)

Through class visits to the synagogue's Stettenheim library, students study (and take home books about) Jewish holidays, Israel, Bible heroes, folktales and Jewish values. The library maintains a collection of more than 15,000 items, including an extensive media collection of recorded books, movies, and music. The children's book collection serves children from toddlers through teens, as well as their parents.

Parents are invited to explore the library while their children are in Religious School.

Our Pre-K-2nd Grade parents are invited into the classroom twice throughout the year for our family cooking series: The Blessings of Bread. In the fall, we explore the rituals of Shabbat and bake challah together, and in the spring, we retell the story of Passover while making matzah.

Pre-K/K/1st Grade (Grade Specific Bullets)

Our Pre-K-First grade curriculum is a combined classroom with multiple teachers, so that children in public and private schools can stay together with friends from preschool. The curriculum is cyclical, rotating among topics each year so that returning students will continue to be challenged and exposed to new layers of exploration.

- We celebrate the Jewish holidays and Shabbat, creating ritual objects filled with personal meaning.
- We learn a few useful words in Hebrew, our people's language, and that Israel is our people's special home.
- We study Torah, our people's stories, through drama, games, and art projects, learning the classic stories of the creation of the world, Noah's ark, the Tower of Babel and the 10 Commandments.
- We explore how we are all partners with God in *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).
- We create a community of friends, as we learn the importance of being kind to one another.

2nd Grade (*Grade Specific Bullets*)

Our 2nd grade students learn in their own classroom, as they expand upon their repertoire of stories and holidays that they have studied in the younger grades. 2nd grade serves as a transitional year for the students which prepares them to embark on their formal introduction to prayers and Hebrew.

- We learn about Jewish holidays and rituals, focusing on blessings, key words and vocabulary, and the symbolism found within our customs.
- We learn the Biblical stories of our ancestors in the Book of Genesis and of the Exodus from Egypt.
- We document our journey of learning through yearbooks, serving as a reminder of the different holidays that we celebrate and the stories that we read throughout the year.
- We begin to identify and decode Hebrew letters while also learning fundamental vocabulary.

3rd-6th Grade – intro paragraph

Beginning in the third grade, each session of religious school incorporates three components: **History**, **Hebrew** and **Tefilah (Worship)**. On Sundays, the school day is 30 minutes longer, and students in Grades 3-5 additionally participate in **Tribes**. 3rd-5th graders each participate in a unique family program during the year; Fifth and Sixth graders additionally go on a field trip during school hours and have a special family **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Mini-Retreat (link)**.

(links for Hebrew, Tefilah and Tribes are by Topic, for History are by grade)

To learn more about our school's weekly tzedakah collection, click here. (can keep text from http://emanuelnyc.org/simple.php/ed_relig_tzedakah)

3rd and 4th Grade- "The Story of our People"

The third and fourth grade curriculum is a two-year bible focused curriculum that explores stories from the Hebrew Bible through the values of our text. Through video, drama, and storytelling, students explore ancient stories of our people and examine how challenges faced by our Biblical ancestors mirror those in our own lives today. Students ask themselves if the characters in those stories made the right decisions and if they would do the same had they been in their positions. These texts hold timeless questions, values, and wisdom, and the curriculum gives students the tools they need to be upstanding people within both our Jewish and secular communities. Throughout the third and fourth grade, students learn to challenge one another in a respectful discourse, being open to new ideas while having important discussions

- Third grade focuses specifically on Torah stories (the five books of Moses).
- Fourth grade focuses specifically on stories from the books of the Prophets and Writings.

3rd Grade

- We learn that the Torah is the Jewish people's guidebook for living positive values.
- We explore how the challenges faced by characters in the Torah mirror those in our lives today. We put ourselves in the shoes of the biblical characters through role playing, helping us to understand that everyone makes mistakes but we must nevertheless always strive to do the right thing.
- We learn the concepts of *Tzedakah* (righteous giving) and *mitzvah* (adult Jewish responsibility), giving examples from our own lives throughout the year.
- We celebrate Jewish holidays as they occur throughout the year, reviewing their stories, characters, rituals, and the values that are associated with each holiday.

Every year, our third grade parents are invited into the classroom to learn about the concept of *tzedakah*. During the family program, we explore how Jewish wisdom and practice guides us to

create a more equitable and just society. Each family comes up with their own family giving motto and designs a tzedakah box.

4th Grade

- We explore how the triumphs, mistakes, and missed opportunities made by characters in the books of the Prophets and Writings serve as models for us today.
- We discuss the values and beliefs that shaped Biblical characters' actions and think about whether or not we would make similar decisions ourselves when faced with ethical dilemmas.
- We learn how to translate our own daily actions into Jewish values, emphasizing the ways in which we have a responsibility to make value driven decisions.

During our fourth grade family program, we focus on *tefilah* (prayer). We identify values that are important to each family, and then we create *mezuzot* to help us remember these important principles every time that we enter our homes.

(“click here to learn more about the **History, Tefilah** (Worship), and Sunday **Tribes** curricula for 3rd and 4th grades”)

5th and 6th Grade- “The hiSTORY of our People”

The fifth and sixth grade curricula teach inspirational and challenging stories from the rich history and adventures of the Jewish people. Exploring Jewish history allows students to discover their sense of identity and encourages them to take pride in the heritage of our people through stories of courage, creativity, and leadership. They are inspired by the great achievements of our people, and the resilience needed to overcome challenges in difficult times. Through their study, they develop a sense of connection to the Jewish people across time and around the world.

Our students learn how Judaism evolved over time by responding to ever changing circumstances, and how the decisions made by individuals in pivotal moments in Jewish history has influenced who we are as Reform Jews today. They learn to take personal responsibility to write the next chapter in the history of the Jewish people.

All Fifth and Sixth graders additionally go on a field trip during school hours and have a special family **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Mini-Retreat** ([link](#)).

(these next bullet points should be separate links separated by grade)

Fifth Grade has four main units of study:

- Origins and Exile
- Diaspora and Diversity
- Enlightenment and Emancipation
- Immigration to America

Sixth Grade has two main units of study:

- Holocaust
- Modern Israel

5th Grade

- We learn the amazing journey of the Jewish people from life in ancient Israel to modern times and we see our own individual stories as part of this narrative.
- We identify key turning points in Jewish history, explaining how the Jewish people and Judaism adapted in response to changing circumstances.
- We explore the topic of perseverance, asking how it was possible for the Jewish people to continue to thrive even in dark times such as the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition.

Our 5th grade students travel to the Museum at Eldridge Street, housed in the 1887 Eldridge Street Synagogue on the Lower East Side. The synagogue is the first great house of worship built in America by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. At the museum, we follow in the footsteps of the synagogue’s immigrant founders and learn about the synagogue itself while also discovering stories of both obstacles and opportunities for immigrants at the turn of the century.

This trip encourages students to think further about how our past informs both our present and future selves, tying into the narrative of the 5th grade curriculum.

Fifth grade parents are invited to join us in the classroom once a year to discuss our own personal relationships with God. During our family program, we explore how the names by which we call our God can reflect our beliefs and shape our community.

(“click here to learn more about the **History, Tefilah** (Worship), and Sunday **Tribes** curricula for 5th grades, and the B/M mini-retreat”)

6th Grade

- We learn how key events of the 20th Century- the Holocaust in Europe and the foundation of the State of Israel- shaped the contemporary Jewish experience.
- We explore the rise of Nazism in Europe, acknowledging with honesty not merely the terrible crimes committed against humanity, but more importantly, the stories of courage and resistance that enabled the Jewish people to triumph in the face of evil.
- We discover how the modern state of Israel came into being and explore what it means for both a diverse population and for Jews around the world to call it home.

6th grade trip to the Jewish Museum

Our 6th grade students spend a day at the Jewish Museum on the Upper East Side which is a distinctive hub for art and Jewish culture. We visit the museum during our Holocaust unit of study, and we participate in a program called “Remembering the Holocaust.” Students have the opportunity to discuss, interpret, and establish connections between the events of World War II and works of art and artifacts related to the Holocaust.

(“click here to learn more about the **History** and **Tefilah** (Worship) curricula for 6th grades, and the B/M mini-retreat”)

Hebrew (Grades 3 – 6):

The Enduring Language of the Jewish People

Hebrew is the language of our most sacred texts, our deepest wisdom, and our independent nation. The ability to understand Hebrew, without relying upon the translation or interpretation of an intermediary, is perhaps the most significant form of Jewish literacy.

Hebrew songs, prayers, and vocabulary are part of the fabric of our school culture in all grades of our program, including the youngest. In the 3rd grade we first teach the Hebrew alphabet, but we continue to offer introductory level Hebrew in every one of our grades.

Our students explore Hebrew as a living language, spoken by Jews throughout the world, and we provide students with the skills to actively participate in a prayer service and to read from the Bible. Classes offer a balance of reading, listening, speaking and writing, often through games and movement-based activities. Once students master the Hebrew alphabet, our students focus on learning meaningful conversational Hebrew vocabulary that relate to the prayers that they are learning in our prayer service, as well as relevant holidays and curricular related topics.

Many of the classes offer review and extension activities that can be completed online. We also provide, upon request and at no extra charge, **supplementary one-on-one tutoring** ([link](#)) online with one of our Hebrew teachers.

Mo'adon Ivrit is an invite-only program for students who wish to build their conversational Hebrew skills. Each session, the small group of students participate in a fun, Ulpan-style approach to speaking Hebrew. The club meets on Sunday mornings from 9-9:30am or on Mondays from 3:30-4pm about twice a month.

Our Hebrew faculty includes both native speakers and those, like our students themselves, who are products of a Hebrew school education.

Tefilah (Grades 3 – 6):

Becoming Empowered and Inspired Prayer Communities

At Emanu-El, students not only learn the skills to pray as part of a Jewish community but also engage in a rich dialogue about the liturgy that helps them to find personal meaning in the words they say. The experience is transforming how our students see themselves, as they become equipped to grapple with their personal relationships with the Divine amidst a congregation of diverse individuals.

Our **third graders** begin with only a few prayers and learn to associate the melodies with the Hebrew words even before they can read the letters. Students each have a personal siddur (prayerbook) kept in a loose-leaf binder. As students grow in fluency and self-confidence, additional pages are added, providing the students with a feeling of accomplishment as they gradually build their repertoire.

As students learn the prayers in Hebrew, they also deliberate about their meaning. At each prayer service, students think deeply about the words they are saying. They listen carefully to each other's interpretations, challenging themselves to clarify and refine their own understanding. At the conclusion of the study of each prayer, the students create an original design for the page in their prayer books. They surround the Hebrew text with their own images, words, and symbols, so that every time they look at the page, they will have personal reminders of what the words mean to them.

In the first half of **sixth grade**, our students experience the diversity of Reform Jewish worship, from our own daily Sunset service led with the Union Prayer Book to services conducted entirely through movement with no prayerbook at all. They come to recognize many different styles of worship as legitimate and of value, even if not personally to their taste. Then, during the second half of the year, students gather in small groups to plan a worship service for their peers.

To watch a three-minute video describing the curriculum and showing a school prayer service in action, visit our website at www.emanuelnyc.org/tefilah.

TRIBES (Grades 3 – 5 / Sunday Only)

Tribes is a weekly program run on Sundays during school for 3rd-5th graders and led by members of the A-TEEM (high school internship program). Tribes aims to build community and strengthen relationships among students across grades. Students are placed onto one of four Tribes (Sarahites, Noahites, Joshuaites or Estherites) based on their interests, parent feedback and staff assessment. Each Tribe includes students, teen leaders (aka, Tribal Chiefs and Juniors), and teachers (Tribal Elders). A key component of Tribes is having teens lead the program, creating an opportunity for students to see teens in the Emanu-El community as Jewish role models.

Each year, the Tribes curriculum is based on a quote from Pirkei Avot chosen by staff and lay leaders. This year's quote is Pirkei Avot 4:1: "Who is wise? Those who learn from all people. Who is strong? Those who have self-control. And who is rich? Those who are satisfied with what they have." Weekly Tribal sessions include experiential learning, follow up discussions to make sure students understand the theme of the day, and relationship building activities. Throughout the year there are special sessions to recognize achievement, celebrate holidays and introduce new units. Once placed on a Tribe, students remain on the same Tribe for the duration of their time in Sunday Religious School grades 3-5 allowing them to form friendships and develop a sense of community within their Tribe.

To watch a three minute video about **Tribes**, click here ([Currently on the website](#)).

Extracurricular Activities

Student Council

The Religious School Student Council has been meeting since 1965. Representatives of the Student Council are from grades 4 through 7, and meet throughout the fall on Sunday mornings. Delegates serve as the voice of the students, selecting the recipient organizations for the Religious School's weekly tzedakah collection.

Newspaper Editorial Board

All budding reporters, puzzle-makers, photographers, cartoonists and essayists are invited to submit their original work to our school newspaper. 3rd-7th grade students have the opportunity to join our editorial board, which meets for 30 minutes prior to the start of school on both Sundays and Mondays throughout the winter and spring. The newspaper is published every spring for the entire student body to read.

Online Hebrew Enrichment and Mo'adon Ivrit (Hebrew Club)

Hebrew is an essential part of the learning that takes place at Emanu-El's Religious School and many of our students seek opportunities to learn more language skills outside of the classroom. For those students looking for more, we have two fun options:

Online Hebrew Enrichment via Skype

All students in our Religious School can take advantage of this complementary program that matches students with one of our Hebrew teachers for a 20-minute lesson via Skype. Each session builds on topics taught in the classroom and it is recommended for any student who either wants to get ahead and move at a faster pace or for those who could benefit from additional support beyond the classroom. All you need is a computer or tablet with Skype!

Mo'adon Ivrit (Hebrew Club)

Mo'adon Ivrit is an invite-only program for students who wish to build their conversational Hebrew skills. Each session, the small group of students participate in a fun, Ulpan-style approach to speaking Hebrew. The club meets on Sunday mornings from 9-9:30am or on Mondays from 3:30-4pm about twice a month.

For more information about any of these programs, please contact school@emanuelnyc.org.