

**THE HEBREW CONGREGATION OF SOMERS
HEBREW SCHOOL HANDBOOK**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Item</i>	<i>Page Number</i>
INTRODUCTION	2
THE HCS PRINCIPAL	2
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:	3
HEBREW LANGUAGE	3
GROUP PROGRAMS	3
JEWISH HOLIDAYS	3
FAMILY SERVICES AND SATURDAY TORAH SERVICE	4
HEBREW SCHOOL FUNDRAISERS	4
CURRICULAR GOALS	4
OPERATIONS	5
CLASSES.....	5
DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PROCEDURES:	5
HEBREW SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT	6
SNACK PROCEDURE	6
CONCLUSION	6
HEBREW SCHOOL CODE OF CONDUCT	7

Note: If you are a Hebrew School parent, please also refer to the Calendar of Events and Curriculum Summary for important information about our program. Ask Tal Hadani for information.

Education Committee	
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Introduction

Welcome to the Hebrew Congregation of Somers Hebrew School! We are looking forward to your helping us create a fun and enriching year for our children and our families. The two documents we distribute to help you prepare for your year are:

- ◆ **This Handbook:** This includes information about the Hebrew School operations and special programs
- ◆ **The Calendar:** We will be using an online calendar, available to anyone who has access to our homepage (www.hebrewcongregationofsomers.org). We have done our best to accurately plan for all Hebrew School, services, committee/board meetings and any other special events for the entire school year. Inevitably, changes will need to be made along the way. These changes will be communicated to you in the following way:
 - ◆ They will be incorporated into the online calendar
 - ◆ They will be incorporated into the Monthly Shofar
 - ◆ They will be incorporated into the weekly HCS Happenings emails

If you want to have a paper copy of the calendar (on your refrigerator!), you should be able to print it out from the website. If you have any problems printing it, please let us know and we will get you copy.

If you have any questions about Hebrew School, please contact the principal and any one of us on the Education Committee. Our goal is to create -- with you -- an enriching and rewarding Hebrew School experience for your family.

Thanks!

The HCS Principal

The Hebrew Congregation of Somers is delighted to welcome back our Hebrew School Principal, Tal Hadani. For a number of years now, Ms. Hadani has used her wonderfully creative spirit to inspire our children to explore all things Judaic.

Ms. Hadani came to us with a Yeshiva education, an art degree from SUNY Purchase, and extensive and varied experiences working with children, especially in the arts and Judaic education. Ms. Hadani's father is Israeli, so she has traveled to Israel many times and is fluent in Hebrew.

Ms. Hadani's keen intelligence, administrative skills, and creativity have proved to be a wonderful enhancement to our little Shul in the Woods. Her deep appreciation of our culture, heritage, and rituals has enriched our families' lives.

THE HEBREW CONGREGATION OF SOMERS
2015/2016 HEBREW SCHOOL WELCOME

In addition to her principal duties, Ms. Hadani will continue to teach a class on Wednesday evenings and sing and dance with all the students. Ms. Hadani lives in Sherman, Connecticut with her family and flock of chickens.

We are privileged to have Ms. Hadani continue to be a part of and contribute so immeasurably to our community.

Program Highlights:

Hebrew School students and their families participate in a number of activities in addition to their classroom learning. These are highlighted below:

Schedules for Gan through Hay

Hebrew School will be scheduled once per week (on Sundays) through the fourth grade (Gan, Alef, and Bet classes) and move to twice a week (adding Wednesdays) for the fifth through seventh grades (Gimmel, Daled, and Hay classes). In addition, the Hebrew Congregation of Somers runs a Youth Group for graduates of our program or 8th and 12th graders on Sundays from 10-12 and a monthly Moreh Cadash class for 10th grade and up (after two years of youth group).

Hebrew Language

We are delighted to continue with the *Chevruta* (friendship) method, which is designed to individualize the learning of Hebrew for each child. This is our third year using new books that will work closely with the laptop computers we received as a gift in 2011. Some books will have an accompanying CD that the students will bring home or use at school, where teachers will be able to monitor their progress. These books and CD's will be included in the initial purchase of textbooks.

Group Programs

Scheduled during Hebrew School, these programs are designed for families to learn together. While adult attendance is not essential for your child's enjoyment, these programs are enriching through the involvement of multiple generations.

Jewish Holidays

The Jewish Holidays are more than an opportunity for celebration; they define the cycle of the Jewish year. Many holidays (such as Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur; Simchat Torah, etc.) are observed as a community during special services; we encourage you to attend these services with your children. Once again, our Yom Kippur children's services will be enthusiastically led by Jill Liflander and new this year, our long time teacher, Beth Whipple will be leading our Rosh Hashanah services. In addition, each year, the Hebrew School selects key Jewish Holidays to observe. These include Sukkot; Chanukah; Purim. Check your calendars for the appropriate dates.

THE HEBREW CONGREGATION OF SOMERS
2015/2016 HEBREW SCHOOL WELCOME

Family Services and Saturday Torah Service

Part of any Hebrew School education is participating in services. Attending services will help your child become more familiar with the customs and music of HCS and will make Bnei Mitzvah preparations easier when the time comes. Students will have the opportunity to participate with Rabbi Fred and many of the other regular attendees of the congregation to help foster connections with the extended HCS community.

Services requirements are listed below for ALL students.

Gan - 2 Services

Alef - 3 Services, Minimum 1 Saturday morning service

Bet - 4 Services, Minimum 2 Saturday morning service

Gimmel - 5 Services, Minimum 2 Saturday morning services

Dalet - 8 Services, Minimum 4 Saturday morning service

Hey - Outlined in the Bnei Mitzvah handbook

Students will track their service attendance by locating their name on the Services Attendance poster, and marking the date with a special sticker. The attendance will be monitored/recorded in Hebrew School and required for a prospective Bar/Bat Mitzvah's eligibility.

Friday Family Services: Services on the First Friday of the month are specifically designed to incorporate and address the Hebrew school students and younger members of our congregation. Almost all first-Friday services are preceded by a dairy potluck dinner. On the third Friday of the month, services begin at 7:15pm.

Saturday morning services: As your children approach becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah, there is no substitute for attending Shabbat services to help them gain confidence and comfort leading services from the Bema. Shabbat morning services are led twice per month (the second and fourth Saturdays) and start at 9:30 a.m. We encourage all families to attend with their children. As the students continue through our program, it is important that they learn that becoming a Bnei Mitzvah is a way of life and not an isolated event.

Hebrew School Fundraisers

Every Hebrew School needs fundraisers and we are no exception! We do various fundraisers throughout the year and additional ideas are always welcomed.

- **Raffle Baskets:** This event is a successful fundraiser for us, donate all your unused, unwanted stuff!
- **Purim Carnival:** Every year, the students look forward to this event over almost all others, and we raise money for the Hebrew School at the same time, but we need some volunteers to coordinate the effort.
- **Tag Sale:** Consider the Hebrew School tag sale a fine excuse for cleaning out your attics and basements! Your discards can help support programs at the school.

Curricular Goals

The Hebrew Congregation of Somers Hebrew School offers 11 years of Hebrew School education, starting with an introduction to Jewish Holidays for children as young as five years old. We have written curriculum that was rewritten in the summer of 2011 and updated again in

THE HEBREW CONGREGATION OF SOMERS
2015/2016 HEBREW SCHOOL WELCOME

2013. If you would like a copy of the curriculum or have any questions, please contact our principal.

Operations

As you may know, the Hebrew Congregation of Somers Hebrew School operates out of two buildings: the main sanctuary and the annex across the street at 8 Cypress Lane. This section of your welcome package summarizes the school operations:

Classes

A summary of the classes is included in the table below:

Class	Secular Grade	Schedule (will follow the Somers School District Schedule)
Children's Holiday Workshops (joins the Gan class on Selected Sundays)	Kindergarten/Pre school	Selected Holiday Workshop Sundays as well as Family Workshops and Celebrations, as indicated on the calendar.
Gan	First/Second	Sundays: 10:00 a.m.-12 noon
Alef/Bet	Third/Fourth	Sundays: 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon
Gimmel/Dalet/Hey	Fifth-Seventh	Wednesdays: 4:15 - 6:15 p.m.; Sundays: 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon
Youth Group	Eight/Ninth	Sundays: 10:00 a.m.-12 noon
Moreh Chadash	Tenth-Twelfth	Once a month on Sundays: 10:00 a.m.-12 noon Schedule to be determined

Drop-Off and Pick-up Procedures:

The drop-off and pick-up procedures are designed so that students can get the most out of their Hebrew School time. We have three goals in mind: most importantly, **the safety of the children**; secondarily, the **convenience** of parents; third, the **efficiency** of school operations.

Drop-off procedure

For students who are dropped off on time: Parents will pull their cars up in front of the synagogue. Parents will stay in their cars. A Hebrew School staff member will be waiting at the steps to receive all children and welcome them. The students will then enter the synagogue. Those students who attend class in the synagogue will proceed to their classrooms. The students who attend class across the street will remain in the synagogue and a Hebrew School staff member will supervise these children and escort them across the street.

For students who arrive late: If there is no Hebrew School staff member waiting at the steps of the synagogue when a student is dropped off, the parent must park his/her car in the synagogue parking lot and escort the child to the classroom, and confirm with the teacher that the student has arrived. Students may not be dropped off outside either building if they are late.

Pick up procedure

For students who are picked up on time: Students will not be available for pick up until the end of the Hebrew School session (6:15 p.m. on Wednesdays, 12 noon on Sundays), unless special arrangements are made with the principal or teacher. All students will be picked up **inside the synagogue**. Students who

THE HEBREW CONGREGATION OF SOMERS
2015/2016 HEBREW SCHOOL WELCOME

attend class across the street will be escorted to the synagogue by a Hebrew School staff member. Parents **should enter the synagogue entry hallway to meet their child.**

For students who are picked up late: The children will be waiting with a Hebrew School staff member in the synagogue and must be picked up from there.

Hebrew School Code of Conduct

Our goal is to assure that all students' educational needs are served. For this to be achieved, all students must feel safe, comfortable, and available to receive HCS's outstanding Hebrew School teaching. To that end, every family must understand the school's rules of conduct, which are printed on the last page of this handbook. Please review the code with your child and return it, signed.

As a community and a school, our focus is on providing a nurturing environment conducive to relaxed learning. Our small classes mean that teachers and the principal really get to know the personality and individual needs of each student. Because of this, it is rare for HCS to have disciplinary challenges. However, as a school, we must be prepared to address them should they arise. To that end, the Hebrew School staff works with a series of progressive disciplinary procedures established by the Education Committee. These include interventions such as a teacher, the principal, and/or the Rabbi speaking with an individual or group of students as needed and may lead to calls and/or correspondence with parents. If you have any questions about these procedures, please feel free to ask.

Snack procedure

As many of you know, we have tried many different snack procedures over the years, taking into account the comfort and safety of the students, the expectations of parents, and so on.

We have concluded that in the best interest of the children, their health, and the efficiency of Hebrew School operations, ***each parent will be responsible for sending a healthy snack in for his or her child. Please note that the Synagogue has undergone a massive cleaning this year. We no longer keep any food in the building. Therefore, we will not be able to feed your child if s/he does not have snack.***

Snacks should follow the synagogues dietary rules. No non-kosher meat or mixing of meat and dairy. In the interest of our children's health and safety and keeping the synagogue clean, please follow these guidelines in providing snacks:

- **Food:** provide healthy, neat, finger-food snacks, such as pretzels, crackers, grapes, raisins, cheese sticks, and the like. Please stay away from high-sugar and high-fat dessert snacks, or snacks that could cause a lot of mess. Please avoid doughnuts and cookies.
- **Drink:** The best drink to send in for snack is water. If you send in other drinks, such as juice or milk, please use containers that are unlikely to spill.

Conclusion

Our goal is to provide a rewarding Hebrew School experience for your child and family. **If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding Hebrew School, please feel free to contact the Hebrew School Principal or any of us on the Education Committee.**

THE HEBREW CONGREGATION OF SOMERS
2015/2016 HEBREW SCHOOL WELCOME

Hebrew School Code of Conduct

The goal of the code of conduct is to ensure the safety of Hebrew School students and staff at all times. It is also important to protect personal and school property from damage. The code of conduct is based on respect for oneself and others.

In order to ensure the physical safety of students and staff, people's bodies and personal space are to be treated with respect. This means that physical aggression, the threat of physical aggression, and the invasion of personal space are not acceptable.

In order to ensure the emotional safety of students and staff, people's feelings are to be treated with respect. This means that teasing and inappropriate language (including remarks about a person's appearance or background or sexual comments or innuendo) are not acceptable.

In order to ensure the safety of personal and school property, all property is to be treated with respect. This means that a student may not touch or take items that do not belong to him/her without permission from the owner of the item or from a Hebrew School staff member. All property is to be treated carefully and never used in a destructive or dangerous manner.

In addition, the following rules and expectations are in effect at all times:

- Students will comply with the directions of and will be respectful at all times to each other and Hebrew School staff.
- Students will not bring any items from home to Hebrew School unless requested to do so by a staff member.
- Students will remain at all times in areas supervised by school staff.
- Students will make a positive effort to participate in class lessons and school activities.

Your signature on this document indicates that you have read and understand it and will comply with these expectations to ensure that all students can have a positive Hebrew School year.

Parent Signature _____

Student Signature: _____

Class _____

Date _____