

Philosophy of our School

Our religious school strives to create a dynamic and supportive environment where students of all ages can learn, grow, and be challenged. We seek to nurture a Jewish identity and a sense of community through all of the programs we offer.

Religious School Curricula

Pre K-Kindergarten / First Grade

In our Pre-K/ Kindergarten and First Grade curriculum, learning is interactive as we strive to provide our youngest students with an understanding of our heritage and nurture a love of learning. Each week, instruction for these grades will take place in four unique environments:

1. **Worship Services:** Through weekly family services our students will become familiar with Jewish prayers and songs.
2. **Group Activities:** These dynamic activities are focused around learning about God and Jewish symbols. We will blend grades Pre-K through First together. Activities will include art, cooking and more.
3. **Classroom Time:** Grade specific learning will focus on Shabbat, Mitzvot, and stories from the Torah. Each grade will also have Hebrew class and will learn new letters each week.
4. **Music Class:** 20 minutes of religious school will also be used to teach songs for holidays, the Sabbath, and the reinforcement of Jewish ideas and values.

Grades 2 – 5

Our program for these grades includes the weekly worship service at 9:30 AM, Hebrew instruction, and project centered learning through a series of hands-on, 5-week rotations. Each grade will spend 5 weeks in one of the following rotations, and then rotate to each unit throughout the year.

- Mitzvot- each week students will do a project to give back to the community
- Jewish Values through Cooking
- Shabbat through Song
- The art of Blessings

Grades 6 – 7:

The primary goal of the 6 and 7 grade programs is the creation of a youth community around the following Jewish values: doing *mitzvot*, exploring the values of Torah, developing skills in leadership and a common quest for meaning and purpose. These grades will also engage in a weekly worship service to enhance their familiarity with prayer and song. Coby and Frank McElroy, Julia Fleckman, and Stephanie and Rob Bell will teach these courses.

Grades 8 – 9: Confirmation

Confirmation represents an opportunity to publicly declare our commitment to our faith. Under the guidance of Rabbi Steve Gross and Leslie Lovett, our students will draw from our heritage and tradition in order to develop and clarify a Jewish ethical base for making decisions. Through this process, we hope to provide our students with the skills to be ambassadors of our faith. Students throughout the year will share and teach the wisdom of our faith to students of other religious communities. Student also will participate in a number of mini-units including units on Israel, relationships and sexuality, and contemporary issues.

Our Confirmation program is a two-year commitment. Students in our confirmation class will also be a part of a citywide interfaith program called Amazing Faiths.

Weekly Hebrew for all Grades

The goal of our Hebrew program is to enable students to feel comfortable in Jewish worship settings and to develop respect, pride, and understanding for our Jewish heritage. This program is designed to ensure that every student at HCRJ will learn to read the language of our faith.

Religious School Schedule

Religious school starts at 9:30 AM and ends at 12:00 Noon. Children in pre-K through 5th grade attend a Sunday worship service from 9:30 to 10:00 every Sunday. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend the service with their children. During this half hour, 6th and 7th graders receive individualized Hebrew instruction, and the confirmation class is in session. All children should be picked up promptly at 12:00 noon.

Weekly Worship for all Children Through Grade 5

Every Sunday, Rabbi Gross leads a morning worship service from 9:30 to 10:00 AM for children in Pre-K through 5th grade. During these services, the Rabbi will teach and work to build a sense of community through sharing and prayer. This service is considered part of Religious School. *Parents are invited and encouraged to attend.*

Special Days and Programs

Holiday Programs

Throughout the year, our Religious School will be participating with the rest of the HCRJ community in educational programming concerning the holidays. In order for these programs to be most effective, parents should accompany their children to both the educational and celebratory aspects of the holiday observance.

Family Education Programs

Family Education programs bring parent and children together for a fun, Jewish learning experience. These family programs not only reinforce classroom learning, but they provide opportunities to strengthen our congregational community. Specific information about these programs will be provided throughout the year. We invite you to become a part of your child's education. We promise it will make a significant difference in the quality of learning and overall experience that you and your child(ren) will have in our religious school.

Family Shabbat Services

Family Shabbat Services are held on the **first Friday night of the month**. They are designed to foster a sense of community while bridging the gap between what students learn in class and what is practiced in our congregation. Children in grades two through five will actively participate in two services during the year. Please mark your calendars for the following dates that your child will be involved in our family Shabbat services:

November 5: 2nd grade will perform

February 4: 3rd grade will perform

March 4: 4th grade will perform

May 7: 5th grade will perform

These innovative, dynamic services are geared toward families with children of all ages. A family dinner is served before services from 6:15 – 7:15 (\$5.00 per person).

Religious School Family Breakfast

On the first Religious School Sunday of the month, families gather for breakfast at 9:00 AM in the social hall. The goal of our monthly breakfast is to build a strong community in our religious school. New this year, each monthly breakfast will be organized and sponsored by a specific grade level. Please let us know if you would like to help with a monthly breakfast! **Dates are published on the calendar included in this packet.**

Special Days and Programs, cont.

Families with Young Children

We are excited to introduce a program for pre-elementary aged children (ages 1-5) and their families. The goal is to develop a community around the love of Torah and Jewish heritage while having fun! We will have several programs throughout the year, with our first program on September 12th. For more information and to get involved, please contact Hilary Kamin at Hilaryk@hcrj.org.

Pick-Up/Carpool Policy

To ensure the safety of all of our children, please read our drop-off and pick-up policy carefully, and follow our guidelines. With everyone's cooperation, we can facilitate a fast, smooth and safe carpool line.

Pick-Up Time

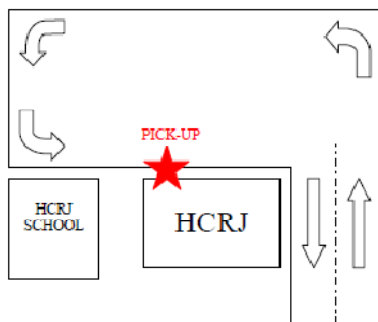
Your children will be ready for pick-up at 11:55 AM. Please be prompt as our wonderful Religious School teachers and faculty count on your timely arrival.

Carpool Guidelines

- All parents must drive through our carpool line to pick up their children unless they choose to park in the circle drive and walk in to the building.
- At Open House on August 29, you will receive a sheet with the names of your child(ren) to place on the dash of your car. If you don't get one, need an extra one or lose yours, please just write their first and last names on an 8.5 x 11 sheet and place it on your dash. This will be a big help!
- Enter our drive and proceed straight to the BACK of the parking lot. Make a large U and drive around to far left parking lot lane and then continue towards the Synagogue's front entrance.
- As you reach the front of the line, one of our staff will look for your name placard (or ask you for your child(ren)'s name). Please stay in your car and one of our staff members will get your child(ren) from the building and walk them to your car.

Early Pick-Up Guidelines

If you must pick your child(ren) up early, please send a note to school with your pick-up time and ask them to give it to their teacher. When you arrive, please park in a designated spot, enter the building and sign out your child with either Hilary Kamin or Malorie Barbee.



Contact Us

If you have any questions about our religious school, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism: **(713) 782-4162**

Steven Gross, Senior Rabbi: **rabbigross@sbcglobal.net**

Malorie Barbee, Religious School Principal: **religiousschool@hcrj.org**

Hilary Kamin, Director of Education: **hilaryk@hcrj.org**

Elisabeth Lindheim, Religious School Committee Chair: **elindheim@comcast.net**

Melissa Wolfson, Temple Administrator: **hcrj@hcrj.org**