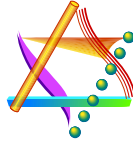


BUILDING JEWISH IDENTITIES and CREATING JEWISH MEMORIES at Gesher School at Congregation Dor Hadash



Parent Handbook 2011-12 / 5772

Congregation Dor Hadash 4858 Ronson Court San Diego, CA 92111
(858) 268-3674 eddiretor1@dorhadash.org
www.dorhadash.org



Gesher School Staff

Education Director: **Betsy Schneider** Rabbi: **Yael Ridberg**
Education Committee Co-Chairs: **Raquel Greene and Ilene Durst**
Madrichim Program Coordinator: **Brenda Hanes**

Teachers

Gan/Alef (PreK, K, 1st grade): **Marcia Berneger**
Bet/Gimel (2nd, 3rd grade): **Giza Braun**
Daled/Hey (4th, 5th grade): **Mindy Nnambi**
Vav/B'nai Mitzvah (6th, 7th grade) **Carolyn Harris, Rabbi Yael, and Holly Gail Baumann**
Hebrew teachers: **Mindy Nnambi and Giza Braun (with Naomi Jensen)**

Class schedule

PreK-3 rd grades	Sundays 10:00am -12:00pm
4 th -5 th grades	Sundays 9:00am -12:00pm
6 th -7 th grades	Sundays 9:00am -12:00pm and Tuesdays 4:00-6:00pm
7 th graders also attend	Thursdays from 4:00-6:00pm
Teens/Madrichim	Sundays 9:00am or 10:00am-12:00pm



The Educational Goals of the Reconstructionist Movement

The Reconstructionist movement is dedicated to intellectually honest inquiry combined with faithfulness to our tradition and commitment to the continuity of the Jewish people.

- We seek to understand the human spirit that lies behind diverse Jewish understandings of God and encourage individuals to reflect on the meaning of godliness in their own lives.
- We present Torah as the ongoing, creative, and sacred search for meaning in life, a record of human encounters with the Divine.
- We recognize that the Jewish people's experience of God, Torah and peoplehood has changed and grown throughout history.
- We recognize that praying and participation in ritual and text study are expressive modes of Jewish spirituality that can shape Jewish lives.
- We encourage egalitarian participation in a sense of responsibility for the Jewish community.
- We draw students of all ages into caring, committed and knowledgeable relationships with the land and people of Israel.
- We teach Hebrew as the language uniting all Jews and provide opportunities to develop Hebrew skills that enrich connections with Jewish civilizations of the past and present.
- We understand the concept of *Mitzvah* as obligation and perpetuate Jewish values reflected in deeds of social justice and acts of loving kindness.

The Geshher School Program's Additional Goals

- We believe that Reconstructionism provides a viable framework for living as a Jew in the modern world. Students are taught Reconstructionist philosophy within the set curriculum.
- We believe that the best atmosphere for our children's education is one that fosters freedom of expression and positive interpersonal relationships and increases the student's desire to explore Judaism through student-centered learning activities.
- Judaism is family-centered. Therefore, the celebration and learning of Judaism is primarily the responsibility of the family in conjunction with the synagogue. The Religious School supplements and reinforces this family process and is always there as a resource as you pursue your own study.
- We educate Jewish children realizing that there are many paths to understanding what Judaism means. We encourage the students, through text study, prayer development and experiential learning to find their own personal truths within the context of Jewish learning.

THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee meets FIVE times this year on Sunday morning during school, and ALL parents are welcome and encouraged to be on this committee.

Fundraising (Supporting the Geshher School):

The 'Hadash Nosh Café'

Students purchase simple healthy snacks from madrichim, and all profits from the Hadash Nosh Café help to offset the expenses of the Geshher School. If your child wishes to nosh, s/he should bring some money each Sunday (besides their tzedakah money). This fundraiser is sponsored monthly by parents by class.

Other fundraising projects this year are the Used Book and Toy Sale, Hamantaschen Bake, and several Souplantation Dinners.

The CDH **Child Education Fund** supports special purchases for the school as well as scholarship fund assistance to families with financial need. We encourage you to assist this vital effort both with your time and your checkbook when making donations to the synagogue.



Hebrew and Prayer Expectations

Gan/Alef students will know:

- 3 Shabbat blessings and Chanukah blessings
- Sing along with the Four Questions
- Lecha Dodi (chorus)
- Oseh Shalom
- The Shema
- The Barechu (with bowing)

Bet/Gimel students will be able to recite and sing the above plus:

- V'Ahavta
- V'Shamru
- Eliyahu Ha'Navi
- Mi Chamocha (chorus)
- Havdalah blessings
- Mi Shebeirach

Daled/Hey students will be able to recite and sing the above plus:

- Shalom Aleichem
- Kiddush for Shabbat
- Torah Blessings (Reconstructionist version)
- Ahavat Olam
- Opening of the Amidah (with bowing)
- Chatzi Kaddish & Mourner's Kaddish
- Aleynu (Reconstructionist version - with bowing)
- Shehechyanu

Vav/B'nai Mitzvah will focus on Shabbat morning blessings.

The Independent Learning Program – 'ILP'

Each student in the Daled (4th) through Vav (6th) grades participates in a self-directed program of Jewish learning having five key components: Service Attendance, Outings and Trips, Jewish Study, Family Life, and the Arts. A minimum of thirty hours (or thirty significant activities) of Jewish learning must be undertaken by each student.

TEEN PROGRAMS at the GESHER SCHOOL

Madrichim (guides)

This year's 'Madrichim Program' meets on Sunday mornings from 9:00 or 10:00 am-12 noon and includes: volunteering in the Sunday Gesher School classrooms, Jewish Education classes, an ADL Holocaust curriculum, Mitzvah Projects (volunteer opportunities in the community), youth activities, and participation in Shabbat and holiday services.

No'ar Hadash ('New Youth') is the Youth Programming Network of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF). By attending regional and national events, teens build a network of friends and discover Judaism at an age-appropriate level. "With events like the unbelievable North American Teen Kallah, summer experiences at Camp JRF, and amazing weekend retreats across North America, No'ar Hadash has something for everyone." (from the website <http://noarhadash.org>)

SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Eligibility for Enrollment

The Gesher School is open to all Jewish children of Dor Hadash members in good standing. Classes begin in pre-kindergarten and continue through the Madrichim Program for high school students. **Fees must be paid in full by December 31st.** We understand that there may be extenuating circumstances in fulfilling your financial obligations. The Discretionary Committee of the Board of Trustees will deal confidentially with these issues on a case-by-case basis.

Interfaith Families

CDH welcomes interfaith families who are raising their children as Jews. Our education program is sensitive to the needs of non-Jewish family members while maintaining the integrity of a Jewish education. Students are taught respect for all paths of religious learning.

Visitors

Children and parents who are interested in touring or visiting the Gesher School should contact the Education Director to make arrangements and to get their questions answered. **We ask that students refrain from bringing friends or relatives as this can be disruptive to the class.**

Parent-Child Classes

Parent-Child Classes are the soul of our school. Parents are invited into the classroom throughout the school year to study together with their child and create an environment for personal exploration of Jewish study. *No prior knowledge is required for parents, so be sure to attend with your child!* (If you can not attend a Parent-Child Class, please send your child with another adult; grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, friend...).



Tzedakah

The word *Tzedakah* comes from the Hebrew word meaning 'justice' or 'righteousness'. At Dor Hadash, our children are taught the value of *tzedakah* and follow Maimonides' belief that *tzedakah* is best when given anonymously. Money will be collected each Sunday, and at the end of the year, each class decides where to donate their collection.

B'nai Mitzvah at Dor Hadash

In order to become a B'nai Mitzvah at Dor Hadash, students must be THIRTEEN years old, and have attended the school (or equivalent) for at least two years. They are also required to complete the entire B'nai Mitzvah course of study. All members of the congregation are invited to attend B'nai Mitzvah services and share in the simcha.

Transfer and New Students

The Gesher Program willingly accepts students who have studied in other synagogues when their families choose to become members of Congregation Dor Hadash. In addition, students may join in the upper grades (8th +) without previous formal religious education.

Gesher School Attendance Policies

Our teachers have an exciting program of sequential activities planned for each week. Therefore, **regular Gesher School attendance is critical to your child's success.** The teacher or the Education Director will contact parents if a significant number classes are missed. *Participation in the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program may be delayed if a student has not attended on a regular basis.*

Parent-Child Classes must be attended by both the child and a parent or guardian.

Discipline

Every teacher has the right to teach, and every child has the right to learn. Students who disrupt either of these rights will be held accountable for his or her behavior.

If a student is disruptive in class, the teacher will follow these guidelines:

- 1st incident: child will be redirected by the teacher
- 2nd incident: child will be referred to the Director
- 3rd incident: Director will call parents while child is present
- 4th incident: Possible conference with the parent, the director and the teacher, and possible out of school suspension (amount of time to be determined).

In some cases, parents will be invited to join the child in class to assist with redirection and behavior control.

Tardiness

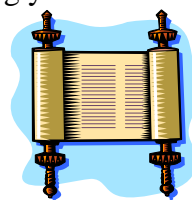
Please make sure that your children arrive at school on time. It is disruptive to the class and the teacher if a student arrives once the class has begun. We thank you for your cooperation in arriving on time. ☺

Homework

Teachers may assign homework. **All Hebrew students are expected to practice reading Hebrew at home in order to reinforce what they learn in class.** Please ask your child if s/he has any homework during the week. The assignment may be interactive, requiring your participation.

Mitzvah Projects

Students will be encouraged to participate in Mitzvah Projects throughout the year, beginning with our ‘mini toiletries project’ and our on-going FOOD DRIVE to benefit local families in need. If you have an idea for a mitzvah project, please contact the office and begin to help make a difference in the world.



Progress Reports

Students’ progress is evaluated twice a year. We encourage you to discuss your child’s progress with the teacher and also to request appointments with your child’s teacher or the Education Director when concerns arise. Specific questions about class placement or school-wide issues should be discussed with the Director.

Communication

HaKeshet, our monthly newsletter, our wonderful website www.dorhadash.org, and our email “shmeers” are three ways that you can find out what is going on in the Congregation. You will also receive weekly e-newsletters from Betsy to keep you posted on Geshet School happenings. Feel free to reply to these emails with questions. **When your children see you participating at the synagogue and enjoying Jewish living and learning, they will see it as a norm and join in wholeheartedly.**

Tutors

After consultation with a child’s teacher, it may be determined that it is necessary for the family to hire a tutor. Students with regular attendance and who review their work at home should have no need for a tutor. Students with special needs who have done their best in the classroom will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. There are also several Hebrew software programs that we can recommend for home use. A basic level of Hebrew competency is required for all students prior to the beginning of the B’nai Mitzvah year.

