



Parent & Student Handbook

www.talmudtorahmpls.org

Talmud Torah of Minneapolis

Heilicher Education Center Barry Family Campus
4330 South Cedar Lake Road St. Louis Park, MN 55416

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The Mission and Goals of Talmud Torah

At Talmud Torah, we provide our students with a solid and well-rounded Jewish education. Our curriculum has been designed with the intent of giving our students the knowledge and experience they need in order to:

- Take pride in being Jewish and develop a strong Jewish identity
- Participate in and perform rituals and traditions in a synagogue and at home
- Feel a connection and sense of responsibility to Klal Yisrael (the Jewish people)
- Live their lives according to Jewish ethics and values
- Create a deep love for and connection to the land of Israel
- Become intellectually confident about the core beliefs, philosophy and theology of Judaism and their relevance to their lives
- Inspire them to pursue life-long Jewish learning, and possess the basic skills to do so.

The Structure of Talmud Torah

Our Three Divisions

There are three divisions of Talmud Torah.

- **Our Elementary Division is for grades 3 -5.**
 - Students in this program attend school for an hour and fifty minutes three times a week: either Monday/Wednesday/Sunday or Tuesday/Thursday/Sunday. Weekday classes are from 4:10 -6:00 p.m., and Sunday classes are either 9:10 – 11:00 am or 11:10 a.m.– 1:00 p.m.
- **Our Middle School Division is for grades 6-8.**
 - Students in this program attend school for an hour and fifty minutes twice a week: either Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday. Dalet classes (6th grade) are held from 4:10 – 6:00 p.m., while Hey (7th) and Vav (8th) are 6:10 – 8:00 p.m.
- **Bet Midrash is our High School Division for grades 9-12.**
 - Bet Midrash classes are offered on Sundays from 10 AM – 1 PM, and on Wednesdays from 6 PM – 9 PM. We offer 2 Hebrew tracks, CIS (College in the Schools, through the University of Minnesota) and our Ulpan program. In addition, we offer a variety of exciting electives, which can be taken along with either Hebrew track, or all by themselves. Please see the Bet Midrash Course Catalog for specific classes and further details.

Most of our policies and procedures in this handbook apply to all 3 Divisions. On the occasion when our Bet Midrash policies and procedures differ, they will be clearly noted at the end of each of the appropriate sections.

The Number of Classes for Each Grade Level

The number of classes established for each grade is based on the number of students in that grade. We try not to exceed 22 students per class, nor go below 8.

Assigning Students to Their Specific Class

- **Days of the Week:** Upon entry into our Elementary Program (usually in 3rd grade) and again upon the first year in our Middle School Program (usually 6th grade), parents will be asked which weekdays they prefer for their child: Mondays and Wednesdays, or Tuesdays and Thursdays- . We try extremely hard to accommodate this preference, but our registration is on a “first come first served” basis until the class size limit is reached. Once a student entering our Elementary or Middle School Program is assigned to specific days of the week, Talmud Torah will assume that the student will remain on those days of the week throughout the multi-year length of each of the programs.
- **Class (if more than one on same days of the week):** Each year, parents are given the opportunity to give Talmud Torah insight into their student and any important information they feel we should know about. This input will help administration assign students to classes.
- **In our BET MIDRASH High School Program,** there are class size limits as well. Our registration process is on a “first come, first served” basis, and each student must register only his or her self. If an elective is offered more than once, students may only enroll in it once during their tenure at Bet Midrash. Once a class has reached its maximum size, students will be placed on a waiting list but will be asked to select a different class as well.

On Wednesday nights, the last hour of Bet Midrash is devoted to our special Kehilla classes, and each grade (9th, 11th, and 12th) has its own class with its own curriculum. Tenth grade students have confirmation classes with their own synagogue Rabbi.

Requesting a Change in Class Assignments

- **To different days of the week:** If you wish to change the days of the week your student attends at any point during either their Elementary or Middle School years, you must discuss this with the Principal, who will make the decision after consulting with the teacher(s), and taking into account such things as reason, class size, gender distribution, and classroom dynamics. Please understand that changing days of the week may not always be possible.
- **To a different class the same days of the week:** You must discuss this with the Principal, who will make the decision after consulting with the teacher(s), and taking into account such things as reason, class size, gender distribution, and classroom dynamics. Please understand that changing classes may not always be possible, even though the days of the week remain the same.
- **In our BET MIDRASH High School Program:** During the first four weeks of the semester students who wish to transfer to another class, add another class, or drop a class must complete the appropriate form which is reviewed by the Principal and discussed with teachers as appropriate. Approval or disapproval will be given to the student within a week. Students who are not registered for a class may not attend without permission.

Talmud Torah Policies

Attendance

- Talmud Torah is dedicated to student learning. The process of education requires continuity: of instruction from trained professionals, of classroom contact, and of participation with peers. In order for students to get the most out of their Jewish education and to maximize their social integration, regular attendance is critical. We all share responsibility for this: parents, students, and teachers.
- We know our students and families are busy. Talmud Torah has made every effort to coordinate our schedule with those of surrounding school districts and affiliated youth groups.
- We expect Talmud Torah students to attend at least 70% of all class sessions, barring extended illnesses or other extenuating circumstances. While we know certain absences (illnesses, trips) are unavoidable, we ask that you make every effort to keep other interruptions to a minimum. Please make every attempt to schedule appointments or extracurricular activities around the student's Talmud Torah commitment.
- In our Elementary and Middle School Programs, we expect our students to be in school the grade-appropriate number of days per week. Students and parents commit to the schedule in its entirety, and may not attend just selected days of the week. If you feel it is truly impossible to avoid missing classes on a certain day of the week for a specific, limited time period, you must speak with the Principal, who will attempt to work out something that meets everyone's needs. Of course, this might not always be possible.

Absences

- Parents are expected to notify the school in advance when a student will be absent from class. This may be done by calling the school office, **952-381-3300**, or by sending an email to **administration@talmudtorahmpls.org**. The office will then notify the appropriate teacher(s).
- Attendance is taken by teachers at each class, and is recorded. The number of absences, particularly when they exceed 30%, will have an impact on many things, including progress reports, credits (for our **BET MIDRASH** High School Program), eligibility for scholarships, eligibility for participation in field and class trips, ability to graduate, and more. We also share information about individual students' attendance with their Synagogues.
- Attendance credit ("excused absence") is given for participation in organized Jewish programming, such as Jewish Youth Group programs, Synagogue programs, Israel programs during the school year, etc.... Such absences must be approved prior to the event by the Principal or Director of Guidance and Student Services.
- Students are responsible for obtaining and making up any missed work. Good communication between students, parents, and teachers will help ensure that students keep up to date with the material being learned by their classmates.

Tardiness or Early Departure

- Our classes begin on time, in order to cover the curriculum by year's end. Students should be here punctually to avoid missing any material. As part of attendance taking, teachers will note tardiness as well. If, due to extenuating circumstances, your child will be arriving late on a regular basis, please make sure to discuss this with our Principal.
- If a student needs to leave early, the office must be notified in advance. This may be done by calling the school office, **952-381-3300**, or by sending a note with the student, or sending an email to **administration@talmudtorahmpls.org**. The office will then notify the appropriate teacher(s). Students in our Elementary and Middle School Programs must wait in the school office until their ride arrives if they are being picked up early. For more information about picking up your student early, please see the section on Drop Off and Pick Up Policies.

Student Code of Conduct

דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה

PROPER RESPECT PRECEDES THE STUDY OF TORAH

As a school community, we strive to create an atmosphere that promotes the Jewish values we teach and cherish. In order to do so in a positive and growth-oriented manner, we have developed a set of guidelines for behavioral expectations for students at Talmud Torah. They clearly state what our values are, and clarify what the consequences will be if our school community is disrupted. Below are the guiding principles on which students are to conduct themselves at Talmud Torah:

ואהבת לרעך כמוך

TREAT OTHERS WITH RESPECT

- Students should speak to their classmates, faculty, staff, and others courteously and with appropriate language and behavior.
- Harassment of any kind – verbal, physical, or sexual - will not be tolerated.
- Interpersonal conflicts must be resolved in a non-aggressive manner.

לעסוק בדברי תורה

THE MITZVAH OF STUDYING TORAH: TREAT LEARNING WITH RESPECT

- Students should arrive to class on time ready to work.
- Students may not create situations (verbally or behaviorally) that disrupt or prevent teachers from teaching or their classmates from learning.

בל תשחית

TREAT PROPERTY (PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL) WITH RESPECT

- Students must be careful and not cause any purposeful damage to the Talmud Torah facility, books, displays, furniture, etc.....
- Damaging the personal property of fellow students and/or faculty is prohibited.
- Stealing of property or ideas (cheating and plagiarism) is forbidden.

פיקוח נפש

TREAT PEOPLE'S SAFETY WITH RESPECT

- No potentially dangerous objects or weapons are allowed anywhere on campus.
- The use or possession of drugs or alcohol is forbidden, as is smoking tobacco.
- Harassment or physical altercations will not be tolerated.
- Once on campus, students may not leave until dismissal time without parental consent.

Consequences: For a first offense, the teacher gives the student a verbal warning. The second time it occurs, the student is sent to talk with either the Principal or the Director of Guidance and Student Support Services. The third time it occurs, the Administration of Talmud Torah will meet with the student and parent(s) to determine an appropriate course of action.

Based on the seriousness of the offense, Talmud Torah reserves the right to determine which of the above steps to take, including the right to suspend or expel the student. Should this occur, tuition will not be refunded. Students and parents will be held financially responsible for any property damage, which a student may cause.

Students who feel they are being treated unfairly or with disrespect are encouraged to speak with their teacher(s) (or have their parents do so) so that the issues can be resolved appropriately. The Principal and Director of Guidance and Student Support Services are always available to any student and/or parent. Everyone deserves the right to be heard and have their issues and feelings taken seriously.

Food and Beverages

- Many students have food allergies. Some of these allergies may be truly life-threatening. Also, many parents have concerns about their children eating a healthy and balanced diet. In addition, Talmud Torah is a Kosher facility, thus ensuring that families of all levels of religious observance are comfortable eating here. For all these reasons, we strongly discourage bringing in food to Talmud Torah. For students who are hungry and thirsty, Talmud Torah sells a variety of snacks and beverages, all of which are certified Kosher.
- Any snacks or beverages brought to Talmud Torah must bear a Kosher certification on the label. Remember, there are many ways to recognize and celebrate a student's birthday or other special occasions without involving food. If you do want to send food for a class, you must first get permission from the teacher and have the teacher tell you what acceptable options there are for the class.
- Students are not allowed to use the vending machines in the building.

Kippot/Head Covering

The wearing of a head covering reminds us that God is always with us. Our tradition also requires us to cover our heads while praying or studying sacred texts. In addition, the wearing of a kippah also shows respect for one's studies, and for the sacredness of space. Therefore, boys are required to wear kippot while at Talmud Torah, and girls are strongly encouraged to do so as well. Teachers may, at their discretion, allow alternative forms of head covering during certain studies, but only kippot may be worn during prayer, sacred studies, assemblies, and in the Bet Knesset.

Books and Supplies

Talmud Torah will supply all necessary textbooks, workbooks, and worksheets to each student. If a book is lost, the family will be responsible for the cost of replacement.

A list of school supplies that each student should keep in school is sent home in our back to school packet before the beginning of the year. Students should bring these items, in a container, on the first day of school. Where possible, it is a good idea to mark each item with the student's name. It is a good idea for students to keep a kippah at school, marked with their name, in a plastic bag in the container with the rest of their school supplies. If things are taken home, parents are asked to make certain that students bring the necessary books, materials, and kippah each day they come to school. On occasion, students may be asked to bring additional items to class for special projects. In such instances, parents and students will be notified in advance.

Technology/Hand-held Electronic Devices

Talmud Torah is at the forefront of many exciting ways to integrate technology into Jewish education. We are proud to have several smartboards, a computer lab, wi-fi access, and more. Yet technology has its time and place, and in an educational setting it must be a part of the teacher's lesson plan or it becomes disruptive and distracting. Therefore, the use of technology of any kind (cell phones, MP3 players, any type or size of computer or internet browser, cameras, etc...) is not allowed in class except at the explicit invitation of the teacher. If a student uses a cell phone during class, the phone will be confiscated until retrieved at the end of the school day by either a parent or the carpool driver.

Graduation/Commencement

At Talmud Torah, we celebrate the completion of two of our programs: Our middle School program at the end of 8th grade, and our Bet Midrash/High School program.

- **Middle School:** In order to graduate from our 8th grade and to participate in any of the class events leading up to or related to graduation, students must maintain at least a 70% attendance rate and be able to show good comprehension of the curriculum content. In addition, a student must be continuously enrolled each year from the time they first enter Talmud Torah.
- **Bet Midrash:** Students earn 1 credit per hour of class each semester. There are alternative methods of earning credits as well, as enumerated in the Bet Midrash Course Catalog. In order to graduate from our program, students must be completing 12th grade and have accumulated at least 24 credits. Students who have earned more than 45 credits will graduate with honors.

Student Safety

Medical Emergencies and Services

If a student becomes ill or is injured, staff will use reasonable judgment in determining what first aid measures can be administered. Every effort will be made to contact parents. The school cannot dispense even over-the-counter medication (e.g., Tylenol, aspirin, etc...) without the express consent of a parent (usually by phone). If your child needs us to give prescription medicine during Talmud Torah sessions, we need both the signature of the parent and the physician. If your child has a medical condition that may require attention or special consideration, please note this on the student profile you complete and turn in (it is part of the back to school packet you receive before school begins).

Safety Related to the Building

The school building is equipped with fire detection and alarm systems. Each classroom has a map that shows the appropriate evacuation route to use in the event of fire or other emergency situations. Fire drills, tornado drills, and lockdown drills will be held each year to make certain that everyone knows and follow the proper evacuation procedures.

Dropping Off and Picking Up Students

The safety of our students is of great importance to us. In order to be certain that students do not cross lanes of traffic to get to or from cars, especially during busy times and in the dark, we ask that you follow each of these steps.

DROP-OFF PROCEDURES:

- Enter the school driveway that circles around the Campus at no faster than 5 MPH.
- Follow the driveway around to the front (main) door of the school using the LEFT LANE.
- Wait behind the last car and move forward until you reach the main school door.
- Drop off your student(s) at the door and the crosswalk, always following the directions of the traffic assistant at the crosswalk.

PICK-UP PROCEDURES (FOR REGULAR ENDING TIME)

- Enter the school driveway no faster than 5 MPH and pull up behind the last car in line in the RIGHT LANE.
 - Follow the car ahead of you until you reach the curb in front of the school.
 - Students may be picked up only at the curb in front of the school so that students avoid crossing lanes of traffic.
- Only parents who are both dropping off and picking up students at the same time can use the left lane to come to the crosswalk and drop off and pick up at the same time.
- **YOU MUST STAY IN YOUR CAR** while waiting, since this driveway is a fire lane. This way all cars can move up quickly to load students.

PICK-UP PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS WHO LEAVE BEFORE THE END OF SCHOOL

Students who need to leave early and whose parents have notified the office will wait for their ride in the school office. Please pick your student up at the entrance to Talmud Torah on the lower level. You may either come in to the office OR call the office, 952-381-3300, to let us know you are here and waiting before we release the student from the office.

School Closings Due to Weather or Other Emergencies

If Talmud Torah is being cancelled due to a weather-related or other emergency, we will have it broadcast over as many media as possible, but for certain we will have it announced on WCCO News and Radio, and TV stations KARE 11 and KSTP. In addition, you can call our weather hotline number, 952-381-3333, or check our website, www.talmudtorahmpls.org. **We have an automated system that calls all affected parents early in the day if school will be closed.**

The School-Parent Partnership

It is our sincere belief that parents are our partners in the education of their children. A successful partnership requires excellent communication, as only through an open exchange of information, thoughts, and ideas can we achieve our mutual goals.

Communicating with teachers and other staff

- Each teacher has an email address, which can be found on our website, **www.talmudtorahmpls.org**. Email is the quickest and surest way to initiate communication with our teachers regarding your student, assignments, issues or concerns.
- In addition, all administrators and other staff have email addresses which can be found at our website as well. We encourage you to contact them with any questions, concerns, compliments, or ideas. Our non-teaching staff are also more easily available to speak on the phone, so please feel free to call them at our main number, 952-381-3300.

Informational Updates

All Talmud Torah families will receive a school-wide newsletter every two to three weeks called ***Mah Chadash*** (“What’s New?”) containing news, schedule updates, and other important and relevant information. In addition, families will receive a weekly bulletin, ***This Week @ TT***. Once a month, families with students in our Elementary and Middle Schools will receive a class-specific update, informing them of what has transpired in their student’s class. When there is a special event at Talmud Torah, a flier with detailed information will be sent at least 10 days before the event.

All of our informational updates are done by email, so it is imperative that we have an accurate and up-to-date email address for both parents.

Report Cards

Teachers formally evaluate a student’s progress, in writing, twice a year at the conclusion of each semester. These progress reports, which are based on performance, attendance, behavior, level of effort and other factors, are sent to the parents so they remain well-informed of their student’s progress.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Twice each year, once during the fall and again in the spring, we hold Parent-Teacher conferences. Parents meet for approximately 15 minutes with their student’s teacher to have a face to face discussion about the student’s progress. Parents are notified about the dates the conferences will be held and are asked to sign up for a 15 minute slot. These conferences are the best way to become informed of a student’s progress and to discuss any concerns, so we urge parents to take advantage of these opportunities.

Homework

We know our students' lives are busy ones, and that they often get a great deal of homework from their secular schools. That is why we try not to add any stress by giving a great deal of homework. However, we also know that you have entrusted Talmud Torah to teach your child how to read Hebrew, an essential skill if we are to achieve our joint objectives. In order for an elementary school student to become a fluent reader, he/she MUST practice. Please make sure your student does all the reading assignments, and that you and your child allot about 15 minutes several times a week for reading practice.

In addition, we have a very full curriculum to teach within a very limited frame. Therefore, teachers may periodically assign other homework projects: e.g., a few pages of reading, a vocabulary list to memorize, a short research or opinion paper, etc... Please make sure you ask your child(ren) about assignments and help ensure their completion.

Field Trips and Special Events

As part of our curriculum, a student's class may be involved in a field trip. Parents will be notified in advance and will be requested to complete and return a permission slip for each field trip. They may also be asked to serve as chaperones or drivers, and we would greatly appreciate a positive response.

Talmud Torah also holds many assemblies, special events, and family education programs throughout the year. When parents and others are invited, they will be publicized through fliers, newsletters, our website, etc... When a program is designed to include parent-child interaction, it is important for parents to make every effort to participate. Often, our special programs need the assistance of adult volunteers, so we hope we can count on Talmud Torah parents

Student Code of Conduct

Talmud Torah of Minneapolis

תלמוד תורה במיניאפוליס

דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה

"Proper respect precedes the study of Torah"

TO PARENTS AND STUDENTS:

A student's right to an education should not be denied because of the disrespectful behavior of other students. In those instances, when students violate the rights of others, neglect their own responsibilities, or in other ways interfere with the climate of the school and its educational processes, the rules and the regulations will be used to maintain an orderly educational process. This will be done in a manner that respects the dignity of the students and promotes healthy and responsible behavior.

When despite all efforts to prevent discipline problems, they do occur, there will be logical consequences to implement the rules. These consequences are set forth in the Student Code of Conduct. These consequences are important to help students understand that they are responsible for their own behavior.

After you have discussed the expectations and rules set forth in the Student Code of Conduct and in the Summary of Discipline Policy, **please sign below and return this page to the Talmud Torah office by the first day of school.**

We have discussed together the above expectations and rules.

Student's name: _____

Class: _____

Student's name: _____

Class: _____

Student's name: _____

Class: _____

Parent/guardian signature and date: _____

Student signature and date: _____