Curriculum Overview - Kindergarten through 6th Grade

Each grade spends time in two core areas, Judaics and Hebrew, and two supplemental areas, music and art, to augment this learning.

Judaics

For Judaics our school uses two curricula: The Chai Curriculum by the Union for Reform Judaism (www.chai.urj.org) for our younger grades and Shalom Learning (http://www.shalomlearning.org) for our older grades.

Chai Curriculum – Kindergarten through 2nd Grade

According to their website Chai is a flexible educational system for Reform congregational schools based on the values of Torah, Avodah (worship and prayer), and G’milut Chasadim (acts of loving kindness/Jewish values). The CHAI lessons follow a curriculum model known as "backward design," as outlined in the book Understanding by Design (UbD) by Wiggins and McTighe. This approach and that of the CHAI curriculum is designed so that student learning will go beyond the specific classroom activities and will reach a deeper enduring understanding, establishing the basis for later Jewish learning and living.

Enduring Understandings of the Program:

Torah is an ongoing dialogue between the text and its students. Torah is real in our daily lives; it goes with us wherever we are. Developing the skills to study Torah is essential to integrating Torah into our lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Enduring Understanding (Torah)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am part of the ongoing story of Torah and the Jewish people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Torah teaches me how to be part of the Jewish people.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Avodah is the work we do to find sacred connections to God, community, and self. Engaging in the work of avodah can bring order, beauty, meaning and insight to our lives and our community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Enduring Understanding of Avodah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My Jewish acts help me discover the beauty and order of sacred time and my place in the Jewish story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jewish stories, celebrations and rituals help me understand and express my relationship with God.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

G’milut Chasadim: We have a responsibility to perform personal acts of g’milut chasadim to make the world a better and holier place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Enduring Understanding of G’milut Chasadim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am a part of the ongoing story of the Jewish people when I perform acts of g’milut chasadim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>We make the world a better place by performing acts of g’milut chasadim in our everyday lives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shalom Learning Curriculum: Third through Sixth Grades

The interactive, values-based curriculum helps children develop a positive Jewish identity. It’s based on values we all share, like “Using your inner strength to do what’s right” and “Taking responsibility for your actions.” The curriculum includes engaging and innovative Jewish educational content, including videos, text studies, blessings, and stories.

Each grade focuses on learning a Jewish value through a developmentally appropriate aspect of one’s life, building out from the third grade to the sixth grade in concentric circles.
The curriculum focuses on teaching holidays, history, and parshiot (Torah portions) through a lens of Jewish values, or middot. The 7 values covered throughout the year are:

1. Teshuvah: Taking responsibility for your actions.
2. B’tzelem Elohim: Honoring the image of God in ourselves
3. Gevurah: Using one’s inner and outer strength
4. Achrayut: Doing what you can to make the world a better place
5. HaKarat HaTov: Seeking joy and being grateful
6. Koach HaDibbur: Understanding the power of words
7. Shalom: Helping to create a calmer, more peaceful world
Supplemental Judaic Learning

Kindergarten

Let's Celebrate Set from Behrman House: The Jewish holidays are colorfully and playfully presented to young children. Stories, songs, and activities add fun and meaning to the retelling of the holiday story and its rituals and values.

Teach Me Torah Set from Behrman House: A richly illustrated Bible program for young children, introducing 16 classic Bible texts and the Jewish values that can be drawn from them. The back page of the folder includes an "Ask at Home" section with discussion questions based on the biblical story or Jewish value for students to explore with their parents.

1st grade

Let's Explore Being Jewish Set from Behrman House: Students explore the key concepts of Jewish life. Each magazine addresses one major area of Jewish identity, utilizing photos and art, activities, stories and vocabulary.

Let's Discover Shabbat Set from Behrman House: Introduces young children to the traditions and rituals of Shabbat through age-appropriate poetry, vivid photographs, artwork, engaging stories, activities, and games. Carefully crafted to hold the interest of early readers.

Let's Discover the Holidays Set from Behrman House: Introduce young children to the holidays with this series filled with lush photographs, lively artwork, playful activities, and clear text students can understand - bringing the holidays to life. The "My Family and Me" sections suggests practical holiday activities for children and their families to do together.

2nd grade

Child's Bible 1: Lessons From the Torah and Child's Bible 2: Lessons From the Prophets and Writings by Seymour Rossel: Authentic and moving retellings of the great Bible stories highlight their timeless moral and spiritual truths, and apply them to the personal concerns of today's children.

My Jewish Year by Adam Fisher: The story of each holiday is presented, along with the rituals, symbols, traditions and legends. Blessings and key vocabulary is taught.

3rd grade

Explorer's Bible by Scott E. Blumenthal: Combining faithful but accessible translations with thematic connections between the narratives and student’s daily lives, critical-thinking exercises, and a sense of wonder.
Sefer Ha-Aggadah: The Book of Legends for Young Readers by Seymour Rossel: The stories in Sefer Ha-Aggadah were the magazines, books, radio, television, movies, and Internet of the Jewish people throughout the ages. Each story is based closely on the original text yet rendered in appealing modern language and richly illustrated in full color.

Rediscovering the Jewish Holidays by Nina Beth Cardin: Invites students to not only share in the treasures of Judaism, but also enrich our tradition by making their own contributions to modern Jewish life.

4th grade

Welcome to Israel by Lilly Rivlin: Presents the miracle of the Jewish state with a sense of wonder, humor, and pizzazz. It introduces students to Israel's history and geography, as well as its political, commercial, and cultural life.

5th grade

The Book of Jewish Holidays by Ruth Kozodoy: Students will learn about the feasts, fasts, and festivals that mark the Jewish year. Modern customs and celebrations are presented alongside each holiday's history and ancient traditions.

The History of the Jewish People by Jonathan D. Sarna & Jonathan B. Krasner: Presents Jewish history from our earliest ancestors in the Land of Israel to our dispersion in the Diaspora through the Jewish experience in America in the 1880’s.

The Gift of Wisdom, The Books of Prophets and Writings by Steven E. Steinbock: Familiarize students with the historical background and the literary aspects of Prophets and Writings. Also includes questions designed to encourage students to look for lessons in the texts that apply to their lives.

6th grade

I Have Some Questions About God from Torah Aura Productions: An inquiry-based approach to teaching about God to children using stories from six incredible rabbis to inform students’ exploration of theological issues.

Ten Thousand Children: True Stories Told by Children Who Escaped the Holocaust on the Kindertransport by Eva Abraham-Podietz & Anne L Fox: How can we educate young children about the Holocaust without scaring them? With simple stories told from the perspective of children who escaped.
Hebrew

For Hebrew our school uses several Hebrew curricula for various grades.

For Kindergarten: Sam the Detective's Reading Readiness and The Aleph Bet Story.

According to the publisher’s website (http://www.behrmanhouse.com/store/product-sku/362) for Sam the Detective’s Reading Readiness: In these easy, fun-filled steps, children learn to recognize all 22 Hebrew letters—what they look like, what they sound like, how to tell them apart, and how to get used to scanning a page from right to left. This is done through repeating the name of the Hebrew letter, sounding it out, tracing it, recognizing it, and coloring it. Then there is an illustration with items on the page that begin with the same sound. For example, the picture for pay contains pajamas, a parrot, a penguin, a pencil, a piano, and more.

The Aleph Bet Story, according to the description on Amazon, is a fun, unique storybook teaching the Hebrew letters to learners of all ages. Corners, curves, toes and tails? In this innovative presentation of the Aleph Bet, Sarah and David (and their friends Ben and Rachel) take you through their adventures one letter at a time. Gimel is like a high-heel shoe? Mem is losing its marbles? The Aleph Bet Story promises to eliminate the confusion between similar looking letters while helping you remember the shape and sound of each letter. A must have tool for anyone learning the Hebrew alphabet.

For 1st Grade we use: The Alef to Tav Activity Book and Let’s Discover the Aleph Bet

The Alef to Tav Activity Book according to the publisher Torah Aura: In this forty-four-page coloring book, students master the twenty-two initial letters of the Alef-Bet, as well as a vocabulary word for each letter. Each two-page lesson of BJL Beginnings Alef to Tav Activity Book has one page of coloring the letter and the word, and a second page of each lesson has a discrimination exercise and a fun "find the letter" game written by Laurie Bellet. By the end of the year students will master twenty-two Hebrew letters and key vocabulary words of Jewish life. Vocabulary introduced includes shofar, tallit, lulav, degef, torah, kippah, nerot, havdalah, ehad, mezuzah, hanukkiyah, gemilut hasadim, kehillah, etz, brakhah, Vashti, rav, tzedakah, seder, yisrael, pri and z’man.

Let’s Discover the Aleph Bet, according to the publisher Behrman House: n this entertaining and exciting set of twenty-four 4-page folders. Presented in the order of the alef bet, each folder introduces one letter and includes:

- A key Hebrew word - with an accompanying English explanation - to teach the new letter
Inventive activities to reinforce the shape and sound of each letter
- Additional Hebrew vocabulary words beginning with the new letter
- Playful exercises to engage the child's artistic and creative interests
- "In School or At Home" - an activity to be used in the classroom or sent home to encourage family participation
- Clever riddles to entertain young audiences

Each set includes a review folder and a family education folder featuring - a letter to parents, learning games, and alef bet playing cards. Children will enjoy marking their progress on the alef bet chart, as well as using the Hebrew picture dictionary to reinforce letter recognition.

For 2nd Grade we use: Shalom Alef Bet: A Pre-Primer Shalom Uvrachah

According to the publisher's website (http://www.behrmanhouse.com/store/product SKU/693): In 96 full-color pages, your students will become familiar with the Hebrew alphabet's letters and vowels. They will practice single-syllable letter-vowel combinations and systematically practice letter-to-sound and vowel-to-sound relationships.

Goals of Shalom Alef Bet!
- Introduce the Hebrew letters and vowels.
- Demonstrate that Hebrew is read from right to left.
- Present single-syllable letter-vowel combinations.
- Develop simple decoding skills.
- Offer a basic cultural vocabulary.
- Prepare students for entry into Shalom Uvrachah.

Special features of Shalom Alef Bet!
- Letters and vowels are presented in the same order as Shalom Uvrachah, offering a natural progression from pre-primer to primer.
- Special exercises help students master specific letter-sound and vowel-sound correspondence.
- New and innovative activities based on the latest research about foreign language phonics study accelerate letter recognition.
- Picture cues link new letters to heritage words (shofar for shin, bat mitzvah for bet, haggadah for hey).
- Tracing models reinforce Hebrew letters.
- Cumulative review and practice activities allow periodic monitoring of student progress.
- Interactive games (Rings, Bingo, and Ladders) reinforce new material and encourage students' cooperative play.
For 3rd Grade we use: Shalom Uvrachah: The New Hebrew Primer

According to the publisher’s website: Shalom Uvrachah: The New Hebrew Primer teaches decoding skills from key cultural words and concepts. For example, students learn the letters *kuf* and *tzadee* from the word *tzedakah*; they learn *tet* from tallit and *zayin* from mezuzah. Shalom Uvrachah makes use of the best contemporary educational theory:

- Meaningful words teach decoding skills.
- Vowel sounds are systematically introduced in small, manageable increments.
- Confusing look-alike and sound-alike letters are introduced separately.

Exercises include:

- Visual discrimination practice.
- Similar letter-sound and vowel-sound drills.
- Writing practice to reinforce the forms of the letters.
- Exercises allowing teachers to customize reading practice for each class.
- Checkpoints to monitor student progress.

For 4th through 6th Grades we use: Mitkadem by the Union for Reform Judaism and Back to School Hebrew Reading Refresher (for 5th and 6th grades); and Shalom Ivrit (for 5th and 6th grades)

Designed as a follow-up to Shalom Uvrachah--The New Hebrew Primer, the Back to School Hebrew Reading Refresher can be used after this or any other primer for 3-4 weeks at the start of the school year: Review Hebrew letters and words; Drill Hebrew reading and remediate reading problems; Practice writing skills; Enrich cultural concepts; and Serve as a bridge between a primer and Book 1 of any Hebrew series.

Shalom Ivrit continues to teach students how to read, write and understand modern Hebrew. Shalom Ivrit is a graded, sequential curriculum. Its goal is to teach students to read and comprehend modern Hebrew language. It keeps grammar rules to a minimum, and presents them clearly and simply, through the language experience itself. At the earliest levels, the story lines are short and rhythmic. Vocabulary is controlled, useful for every day, and often accompanied by pictorial representations. Periodic "Checkpoints" reinforce and review students' mastery of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and language skills. Full-color illustrations and photographs ground the language in real-life experience. Each level is built on a central theme: Shalom Ivrit 1 on holidays and Shalom Ivrit 2 on Jewish values.
According to the publisher’s website (http://urj.org/learning/teacheducate/hebrew/mitkadem/):

**Mitkadem** is an exciting Hebrew curriculum where students will learn to read Hebrew and enjoy a sense of accomplishment as they progress through a series of well-organized, stimulating, and self-paced *ramaot* (levels).

The Mitkadem program is constructed of 23 *ramaot*, or levels. Students may work independently, with another student at a similar level, or with another student in a "tutorial" relationship. Ramot each teach a different prayer using five curricular topics (explained below).

Each *rama* presents a single prayer or group of prayers and continues to develop the students' abilities to read and understand the Hebrew language of prayer. Each *rama* is structured in the same way so that students will become familiar with the system very quickly. Before beginning the work of the *rama*, the student receives a contract outlining the requirements to pass the *rama*. As the student completes each of the five components of the *rama*, the teacher signs the contract, showing that the student successfully completed the work. After completing the required work for the *rama*, the student completes a written assessment and a reading assessment before advancing to the next *rama*. Each *rama* has these five components and are color-coded:

**Hakdamah/Introduction**
Students always begin with this component that introduces the prayer or group of prayers. After completing this introductory section, the student works on the next four components in any order he or she chooses. The student keeps all of the components in a personal folder until the student is ready to advance to the next *rama*.

**Kri’ah/Reading**
In the reading component, students are guided to read alone or to read to a partner. There is an accompanying CD that helps the student/s practice reading and chanting the prayer correctly. This CD will contain all of the reading sections for all 23 *ramaot*, so that a class may purchase one CD and make individual tapes for the appropriate *ramaot*.

**Otzar Milim/Vocabulary**
The vocabulary component teaches all of the vocabulary associated with the prayer or group of prayers. It includes written and creative activities to reinforce the meaning and definitions.

**Dikduk/Grammar**
The grammar component teaches the essential words, roots and phrases found in the prayer. It includes written activities to reinforce the concepts.
Divrei T'filah/Words of Prayer

This component helps to make prayer relevant and meaningful to our children. It includes interesting questions and activities that encourage our children to participate in the prayers of Jewish holidays, ritual, life cycles, and traditions. In this section, students have a chance to investigate central themes of the prayer book and Jewish thought.

The following is a limited description of the prayers and skills mastered and concepts introduced or reinforced in each ramah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Prayers</th>
<th>Concepts Introduced and Reinforced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mechinah/Preparation</td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Short blessings</em></td>
<td>Thanks and Praise; Blessing Formula; <em>Mitzvah</em>; Miracles; Gender Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sh'ma</em></td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God; <em>Mitzvah</em>; Symbols and Signs; <em>Brit/Jewish Continuity</em>; Love of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Shabbat Kiddush</em></td>
<td>Holiness; Creation; God as Redeemer; Chosen People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sh'ma, V'ahavta</em></td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God; <em>Mitzvah</em>; Symbols and Signs; <em>Brit/Jewish Continuity</em>; Love of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Torah blessings</em></td>
<td>Blessing Formula; <em>P'tichah/Chatimah</em>; Chosen People; Giving of the Torah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Barchu, Yotzer Or, Ma'ariv Aravim</em></td>
<td>Creation; <em>L'olam va-ed</em>; Times for Prayer/Variations; <em>Minyan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Avot V'Imahot</em></td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God; <em>Mitzvah</em>; Gender Issues; God as Redeemer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>G'vurot</em></td>
<td>Miracles; Creation; Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Mi Chamocha</em></td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God; Thanks and Praise; Miracles; God as Redeemer; Times for Prayer/Variations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Aleinu</em></td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God; Thanks and Praise; Chosen People;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Kaddish, Chatzi Kaddish</em></td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God; Thanks and Praise; Holiness; <em>L'olam va-ed</em>; <em>Minyan</em>; Faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Torah service</em></td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God; Giving of the Torah; <em>Eretz Yisrael</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Haftarah blessings</em></td>
<td>Names/Attributes of God; Thanks and Praise; Blessing Formula; <em>P'tichah/Chatimah</em>; Holiness; Faith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our 3rd through 6th Grades also participate in a special musical T’filah (prayer) curriculum. Led by our t’filah specialist, Mallie Duboff, the students meet weekly in the sanctuary to learn more about the prayers, practice singing them, and leading their peers in worship.

Students journal about each prayer and create their own siddur, or prayer book, using only Hebrew prayers without transliteration.

This year we will be adding the “Making T’filah Meaningful” curriculum to augment the ramot the students are already learning. Students will dig deeply into the meanings of prayers, and explore questions like Why do we pray? What meaning can prayer bring to our lives? How does prayer relate to our lives? Through study of specific Jewish prayers they will explore themes of gratitude, love, kindness, holiness, mindfulness, comfort, respect, family, and community.