

Frequently Asked Questions: 2018-2019 Kulanu Program/Religious School

When is *Shabbat Kulanu* and what will be offered? *Shabbat Kulanu* is a new program on the **first Saturday morning of each month** and aims to bring families together on Shabbat to Bet Torah. Programming will include: multiple Tefillah (prayer) and learning experiences for different aged children, an opportunity for adults to explore prayers, an inviting environment for all to join in our community kiddush and, of course, a time for anyone to participate in the main Shabbat Services. The content of the learning on *Shabbat Kulanu* will be coordinated with the curriculum of our weekday class learning. *Shabbat Kulanu* educators will include some weekday/ Sunday teachers. *This is a key component of the Hey (5) and Vav (6) programs and monthly participation is expected.*

Why are we putting an emphasis on shift to more sacred time?

We are shifting when and how we spend our time together to help us better accomplish our vision and values including literacy and skills, family shared sacred time, student and family community building and opportunities for parent learning. We believe that this new program will allow families to participate in many ways throughout the synagogue such as *Shabbat Kulanu* (see above), community holiday celebrations, *Share Shabbat* (home celebrations with other families), social action projects and adult learning opportunities. Spending more sacred time together can mean celebrating Shabbat, attending the Purim Megillah reading, sharing a meal on Friday with another family with our Share Shabbat program, or even, saying a blessing at bedtime that was learned during a family program.

Why did we choose 5th and 6th grade to make significant changes first? And will the 3rd and 4th grade programs eventually have significant schedule changes? We chose to shift our time together for 5th and 6th graders for several reasons. Pre-teens face increased pressures from academics and extracurricular activities. At this age, friendships and long-term social connections become more of a focus, so intentional community building is critical. Also students are more focused on Shabbat morning as they come closer to the celebration of their B'nai Mitzvah. We want Bet Torah to be a safe haven from outside pressures; a place to build life-long friendships and relevant entry into Jewish adulthood. Regarding younger grades, we believe that younger ages are critical times for language development and require more focused instructional time. We will continue to evaluate our programs as we receive feedback and explore other potential changes in the coming years.

How does parent involvement and engagement factor into these changes? We consistently heard from parents during our *Project Kulanu* process that they wanted to learn and engage with their children. We hope that these changes enable parents to continue to explore how Bet Torah can support their Jewish journeys. For some people that might mean taking an adult beginner Hebrew class or it could mean attending services when your student is participating in the *Shabbat Kulanu* program. For some families, enhanced engagement could mean scheduling time to participate in group walks and learning as part of Bet Torah in the Trees (coming again this Spring!), or considering the new Share Shabbat program. We value parent engagement and we hope to continually provide formal and informal opportunities for your family to live Jewishly.

Are we going from a three a day week school to a two day a week school? We are shifting when and how we spend our time together to help us better accomplish our vision and values including literacy and skills, family shared sacred time, student and family community building and opportunities for parent learning. We believe that this new program will allow families to participate in many ways throughout the synagogue, such as, *Shabbat Kulanu* (see above), community holiday celebrations, *Share Shabbat* (home celebrations with

other families), social action projects and adult learning opportunities. For the upcoming year 2018-2019, Hey (5) and Vav (6) students will have reduced instructional classroom time which we believe will free up time for families to engage in multiple ways in our community. A third optional day offers, through Club Ivrit, enrichment opportunity at no additional cost, including focus on areas such as conversational Hebrew and special community building activities.

Will the children still know the same amount of Hebrew with reduced class time? Instructional classroom time is one of many ways that children learn and grow in their understanding of Hebrew and prayers. By shifting more of our time to experiences and celebrating, we believe that children and families will learn and relate to Hebrew through prayer and Jewish life. For example, classroom learning about the Shema and V'ahvata leads to saying the Shema during *Shabbat Kulanu* and maybe at bedtime. When we emphasize the authentic moment, using Hebrew in coordination with skill building during class instruction, Hebrew learning comes to life.

Why is there no class on Thursday?

We consider flexibility in scheduling an important goal when considering changes in the program. However, we have historically experienced unusually low attendance on Thursdays for all grades. In order to maximize resources and also create community amongst our grades, we have eliminated Thursday class, but we have maintained schedule choices on other days.

What is "Club Ivrit"? Is Club Ivrit drop in or do we sign up for the full year?

Club Ivrit is an optional program for Hey (5) and Vav (6) students on Wednesdays from 4-6 pm. There is NO additional cost for *Club Ivrit*. We will be working with a team of parents and teachers to determine the best way to enable and encourage Hey (5) and Vav (6) students to try *Club Ivrit*, while also encouraging students to commit to the program for a certain length of time. Stay tuned for details about how to sign up.

What is happening with tuition?

There is no change in tuition at this time. Our tuition rates are comparable to other programs in our area. The synagogue budget supports the religious school because, as with most supplemental religious schools, our expenses exceed our tuition revenue. Tuition only covers approximately 65% of our expenses. There is an additional fee for the Hey (5) and Vav (6) retreats that goes towards covering 80-90% of the retreat expenses.

What do students in Gan (K) through Dalet (4) do at Shabbat Kulanu? And those weekends do they still have class on Sundays? On *Shabbat Kulanu*, students in Gan (K), Aleph (1) and Bet (2) will participate in our existing and successful *Gan Shabbat*, an interactive early childhood service. Students in Gimel (3) and Dalet (4) will have a Tefillah (prayer) experience which is engaging and focused on student involvement, connects to their Hebrew curriculum and explores the Torah portion. Students in Gan (K) through Dalet (4) will have class as usual on Sunday mornings following *Shabbat Kulanu*.

Are there any changes with the youth engagement programs - Club 45 (4th & 5th) and Kadima (6th & 7th grade)? As part of our goal to intentionally strengthen friendships and relationships for our students, we will continue our fun and memorable youth engagement programs. Children are regularly invited to attend fun events with Bet Torah friends in a fun and social environment. Recent Club 45 and Kadima events include but

are not limited to a slime making party, a Chopped-style cooking challenge, Sushi in the Sukkah, Escape the Youth Lounge challenge, and a Tu Bishvat scavenger hunt.

What's next for my child after completion of 7th grade? Learning and engaging at Bet Torah does not end at the end of 7th grade or at your Bar or Bat Mitzvah celebration. We invite teens in 8th-12th grade to explore their rich Jewish heritage and challenging modern lives through a variety of learning and community building programs. We offer teens ownership of their own education, giving choices in topics and varied schedules for education, community service, and community building. Check out <https://bettorah.org/TLC> for current offerings.