

North Alabama Community Hebraic School

Registration Packet

5784 / 2023-24



Contents

Letter to Families	1
Mission & Goals	4
Curriculum Overview	4
Classes	7
Calendar	8
Tuition	10
Registration	11
Contact Info	12
Volunteer	12
Board	12

LETTER, JULY 2023

Dear Families,

Welcome! We are excited that you are looking to provide exceptional Jewish education for your child via the North Alabama Community Hebraic School (NACHaS), which was founded in 2010 as a joint program of Temple B'nai Sholom (Reform) and Congregation Etz Chayim (Conservative) in Huntsville, Alabama.

As we embark upon a new school year, the NACHaS board has made great efforts to update our Religious School program to better support everyone involved: students, families, teachers, aides, volunteers, and Jewish community members. Your feedback over the past months has informed our decisions in curriculum, schedule, and making overarching programmatic improvements.

With your feedback in mind, we are thrilled to partner with the Institute of Southern Jewish Life, whose curriculum is used amongst many communities our size and offers support and training for our volunteer teachers, scope and sequence of our program, and offers a wide array of methods to engage our students in the classroom.

We also know the importance of offering a more robust Hebrew program to support our students in developing a familiarity and comfort with our Jewish liturgy. Our selected Hebrew curriculum begins with common vocabulary and some basic letter recognition in the early grades, which is integrated within Judaics. For 4th grade and up, supplementary Hebrew sessions will now be offered on Sunday mornings, starting with a Primer level that focuses on decoding and reading fluency, and progresses to leveled sets of prayers, blessings, and songs that are used in Shabbat Services and at home. This liturgy forms the core elements of B'nai Mitzvah preparation, to be supplemented in 7th grade by individually focused efforts on Torah and Haftarah portions, mitzvah projects, and other expectations elucidated by Rabbis at each congregation.

In order to effectively implement these new curriculums, along with an updated Tefillah program, special events, and new occasions for family involvement, our new religious school schedule has 3.5 hours of learning opportunities: 2.5 hours of Judaics on Sunday from 9am to 11:30am for preschool - 7th grade, followed by an optional Hebrew class for 4th-7th grade from 11:40 am to 12:30pm. Jewish teen gatherings are currently under development by Rabbi Schwartz and will use a different schedule.

Dedicated Hebrew classes have not been offered at NACHaS in a number of years, and recent students sought outside tutoring if they wished to learn Hebrew, typically in preparation for their B'nai Mitzvah celebrations. In 2022-23, an effort was made to reintroduce some focused Hebrew language study for 4th-7th grade students, beginning with decoding and progressing to some liturgical content as allowed by the schedule in place at the time on Sunday mornings. While we had some success in this endeavor, it was also apparent that the time slot was insufficient to adequately teach multiple curricula and students were not well-served by condensed Judaics and "bonus" Hebrew. We'd like to see them more, and also provide more opportunities for fun whole school and family activities.

In light of the major changes occurring in our program this year, the NACHaS Board has created a new budget with an eye towards future financial sustainability. Tuition had remained almost constant since NACHaS began over a decade ago, which put us among the least expensive religious school programs, but also one with the fewest number of contact hours. At this time, tuition and fees are the primary income upon which NACHaS relies to cover expenses. Due to a variety of factors, tuition is increasing this year and will again in coming years - expanded programming, new curricula, and significant inflation are all driving the price change. However, in order to avoid increasing your costs too abruptly, we will be operating at a deficit this year, using reserves to fill the gap between income and expenses.

Further, we are offering a tuition payment installment plan, as well as scholarship opportunities. No family will be turned away from Jewish education at NACHaS for financial reasons, and we will continue to seek fundraising opportunities and creative means of supporting our kids. Tuition and registration details can be found later in this document.

In summary, based on your feedback and the expertise offered by our new TBS rabbi, curriculum partners, teachers, and board members, this year we are implementing many new and exciting changes at NACHaS. They include:

- Increasing the length of programming from 2 to 2.5 hours of Judaics for all students to provide more time for comprehensive education and whole school events
- Adding 1 new hour of dedicated Hebrew language instruction for grades 4+ to support additional connection to Jewish rituals and Torah study
- Implementing new curriculums for Judaics and Hebrew
- Expanding to create a new preschool/pre-K class for 3 & 4 year olds
- Developing and implementing a more robust teen program

- Adding new special school-wide programs throughout the year to increase student and family engagement
- Adding more opportunities for involvement and social activities for parents/caregivers throughout the school year
- Running one or more fundraising/friendraising events that are open to the wider community to showcase our program and provide an enjoyable and educational occasion for all attendees
- Supporting a site visit from a Program Associate of our curriculum partner, the Institute for Southern Jewish Life (ISJL)
- Supporting professional development and instructional quality to include attendance at the annual ISJL conference for one person in 2024, as well as updating tuition incentives and modest end-of-year gifts for our teachers and support staff, who are all volunteers

We hope that your family will join us again on this grand adventure in Jewish education, and bring friends as we put the “C” in NACHaS. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Nelson
Chair, on behalf of the NACHaS Board

Mission & Goals

At NACHaS, we believe our children should strengthen their faith in God, their love of Torah, and their identification with the Jewish people. We hope to inspire a strong sense of Jewish community and enrich their observance of Jewish practices, literacy, education and values. Our goals are to:

- Make a sincere effort to help each student cultivate a sense of pride in being Jewish, and find comfort and joy in their Judaism
- Develop a sense of respect and caring for each other and a greater feeling of spirituality leading to good deeds and faith in G-d
- Instill a sense of responsibility for ourselves and those less fortunate through active, personal participation in Tzedakah, T'filah and Tikkun Olam
- Familiarize students with Jewish observance through worship and prayer including study, attendance at religious services, and special holiday celebrations
- Familiarize students with Torah, Jewish ethics, Israel and convey an awareness of and appreciation for the richness of Jewish history and literature.
- Stimulate a process of continuous learning and living which extends beyond the Religious School and lasts a lifetime

Curriculum Overview:

Every 5 years, or so, NACHaS reevaluates all the curricula that are appropriate for schools of our size, often choosing a different one based on our current Rabbi, our current students, and our current needs. We are delighted to return to our roots with our purchase this year of the ISJL curriculum, as well as the Hineni liturgy-based Hebrew program.

Judaics

ISJL provides a spiraled Judaics curriculum in which students revisit key content areas with increasing sophistication as they progress through their education. These content areas include:

- Community / Relationship building
- Culture & Symbols
- Jewish Lifecycle Events
- Mitzvot and Jewish Values
- Jewish Holidays
- G-d
- Hebrew & Prayer
- TaNaKh (Torah, Prophets, and Writings)
- Jewish History
- Israel

		Key Content Areas									
		Community	Holidays	<i>Mitzvot</i>	<i>TaNaKh</i>	God	Hebrew	Israel	Culture	Life Cycle	History
Grade	ECE	✓		✓					✓		
	K	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
	1 ST		✓	✓		✓	✓				
	2 ND	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3 RD		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	4 TH		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	5 TH			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	6 TH			✓	✓	✓	✓				
	7 TH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
	8 TH							✓	✓		✓
	9 TH / 10 TH	✓		✓				✓	✓		
	11 TH / 12 TH	✓							✓		✓
	Adult Ed	✓		✓			✓		✓		✓

The ISJL curriculum is updated annually to reflect best practices, new lesson planning and program ideas, and effective means of imparting a high quality Jewish education within small schools. An ISJL Program Associate will be supporting us with implementation of this curriculum throughout the year. More information can be found at www.isjl.org.

Hebrew

Knowledge of Hebrew increases a student's ability to understand and feel connected to Judaism and the Jewish people. It is an integral part of our educational program.

In the younger grades, Jewish Life vocabulary and songs or prayers in the Hebrew language are incorporated within Tefillah and the Judaics curriculum.

In their first year of supplemental Hebrew studies, typically 4th grade, students will use primer-level workbooks, games, and music to learn how to:

- Read Hebrew letters
- Write Hebrew in block print
- Translate some Hebrew vocabulary
- Read fluently and understand Shabbat home blessings (Candles, Short Kiddush, Hamotzi)

In years two and three of Hebrew studies, students will use the [Hineni](#) Express series and other resources to:

- Review their letters (reading and writing in block form),
- Learn common “roots” and translate additional vocabulary
- Read fluently and understand a variety of prayers used in synagogue for Shabbat services: Opening prayers, Amidah, Peace, Torah Service, and Concluding Prayers
- Read fluently and understand holiday blessings in depth (Hanukkah, Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Purim)

During their 7th grade year, students are encouraged to undertake individual B'nai Mitzvah tutoring, including: continued practice with Hebrew reading fluency, Torah study, catching up on prayers or rituals not yet learned, cantillation, Torah and Haftarah portions, Dvar Torah, and service or leadership projects specified by their Rabbi or Congregation.

For the next few years, it may be desirable for 7th graders to “double up” on group Hebrew and individualized studies during this transitional period of reinstating focused Hebrew language in our religious school curriculum.

Classes

We anticipate offering the following five mixed-grade Judaics classrooms for NACHaS students: Preschool-PreK, K-1, 2-3, 4-5, and 6-7.

The Judaics curriculum will alternate between “A” and “B” years for each classroom, so that students will receive instruction for all grades by the time they complete their pre-B’nai Mitzvah studies in the 7th grade.

In 2023-24, we anticipate using the following ISJL “A” year levels: ECE, 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th grades. The following “B” year will focus on ECE, Kindergarten, 2nd, 4th, and 6th grade content.

Supplementary Alef-Bet and liturgy-based Hebrew classes are available for 4th grade and up. As is common practice for foreign language instruction, students will be grouped by ability and goals. We anticipate offering 3 or 4 levels of Hebrew, depending on enrollment and start-of-year assessments.

Enrollment in Hebrew at NACHaS is optional, but highly recommended. Families should contact their Rabbi regarding the suitability of alternative arrangements for their student(s) if they intend to become B’nai Mitzvah.

Rabbi PJ Schwartz of Temple B’nai Sholom will be leading an invigorating musical Tefillah every Sunday morning at the beginning of Judaics. Rabbi Steven Listfield of Etz Chayim will also participate in some class sessions or special events throughout the school year, as his part-time rabbinical schedule allows.

Teen programs are under development and may meet on weekdays or in other locations, using various curricular resources, as warranted by the needs of participants.

Teacher assignments are listed on the NACHaS website as they are available. NACHaS staff are all volunteers and are compensated via discounted tuition for their own children OR by modest gifts of \$150-\$200/year, depending on role. These end-of-year tokens of appreciation are a fraction of the market rate for provision of Jewish education. It is a mitzvah to educate our youth and a mitzvah to support our youth educators.

School Calendar

The new school year will begin on Sunday, August 13th, 2023 with a special program to introduce you to our new curriculum and kibbitz together.

NACHaS Calendar 2023-24 (Fall)			
Date	Activity	Schedule	Holidays
8/13	Class*	Special Program - Back to School	
8/20	Class	First Regular session Begins at 9am, Hebrew at 11:40	
8/27	Class		
9/3	No Class	Labor Day	
9/10	Class		Rosh HaShanah (15-17 Sep)
9/17	No Class		Rosh HaShanah day 2
9/24	Class*	Special Program - Holidays	Yom Kippur (24-25 Sep)
10/1	No Class	Fall Break	Sukkot, Shimini Atzeret, and Simchat Torah (29 Sept - 8 Oct)
10/8	No Class	Fall Break	
10/15	Class		
10/22	Class		
10/29	Class		
11/5	Class		
11/12	Class		
11/19	No Class	Thanksgiving Break	
11/26	No Class	Thanksgiving Break	
12/3	Class		Chanukah (7-15 Dec)
12/10	Class		Chanukah (7-15 Dec)
12/17	No Class	Winter Break	
12/24	No Class	Winter Break	
12/31	No Class	Winter Break	

NACHaS Calendar 2023-24 (Spring)			
Date	Activity	Schedule	Holidays
1/7	Class		
1/14	Class*	Special program - MLK Jr	
1/21	Class		T'u B'shvat (24-25 Jan)
1/28	Class		
2/4	Class		
2/11	Class		
2/18	No Class	President's Day	
2/25	Class		
3/3	Class		
3/10	No Class	Spring Break	
3/17	No Class	Spring Break	
3/24	Class*	Special Community Program - Purim	Purim (23-24 Mar)
3/31	No Class	(Easter Sunday)	
4/7	Class		
4/14	Class		
4/21	Class		Pesach (22-30 Apr)
4/28	Class		Pesach (22-30 Apr)
5/5	Class		Yom HaShoah (5-6 May)
5/12	No Class	Mother's Day	Yom HaAtzma'ut (13-14 May)
5/19	Class*	Special Program - End of Year Party	

* Indicates a special program. No Hebrew sessions on these dates.
Special programs will begin at 9am unless otherwise notified.

Tuition

The 2023-24 Religious School tuition and fee structure is shown in the chart below. Our updated tuition reflects a portion of our increased curriculum and facility costs, expanded programming for students and their families, better support for teachers and aides, peer models, and parental survey input.

	Judaics	Hebrew	Total
Day & Time	Sundays, 9am - 11:30 am	Sundays, 11:40 am - 12:30 pm	Sundays, 9am - 12:30 pm
# of Sessions	27, including special events (Purim, etc)	23 sessions (optional)	27 sessions w/ 5 special events
Preschool / Pre-K	\$275	n/a	\$275
K - 3	\$335	n/a	\$335
4 - 7	\$335	\$260	\$595

Snacks are included in tuition for the morning Judaics sessions as part of an entire school kiddush and recess break.

All children, regardless of congregational affiliation or lack thereof, are welcome at NACHaS. However, in order to encourage membership in a congregation that provides facilities and support for our students, there is a surcharge for households who are not members of Temple B'nai Sholom or Etz Chayim. In the first year of attendance at NACHaS for Kindergarten and up, the surcharge is \$100 per student. This surcharge will increase by \$100 per student in each successive year of non-affiliation.

No student, however, will be turned away for financial reasons. To support families and alleviate financial concerns that may result from this change in tuition structure, we are now offering a payment plan, available to anyone who desires it. Tuition may be paid in one or two installments, as needed, with the second payment (50%) due on January 7th, the first day of spring classes.

There is also an option on the registration form to apply for partial or full scholarships, confidentially, and support your student's education at NACHaS via non-monetary means. Depending on the extent of communicated needs

and available funding, TBS and EC congregation members may be prioritized for scholarships; however, unaffiliated families are also welcome to apply and will be supported as much as possible.

The teen programming items, schedule, and cost are not yet determined. Please use the registration form to indicate your interest in future participation, and reach out to Rabbi Schwartz at rabbischwartz.tbs@gmail.com. Families will be contacted as we set this up. The teen group will likely have monthly or bimonthly gatherings with a modest fee for expenses.

Registration

To streamline enrollment and ensure sufficient time to procure materials and supplies, families are encouraged to register online by July 30th, 2023.

Please fill out the registration form *for each student* attending NACHaS or expressing interest in teen programs.

2023-24 NACHAS Registration

Following registration, payments may be made via:

- Paypal, on the NACHaS website OR
- Check, in the NACHaS mailbox (TBS library) or given to Principals OR
- Cash, given directly to the Principals on the first day of class(es)

Single payments for 100% of tuition and fees are due on the first day of class (August 13th). Families utilizing a split payment option should pay 50% in August and 50% in January, by the first day of class for each respective semester.

If you utilize paypal, please add 3.5% to your total to cover transaction fees.

Contact

The majority of religious school classes will be held at Temple B'nai Sholom at 103 Lincoln Street, Huntsville, AL 35801. Special programs may be held at Congregation Etz Chayim or off-site. Details will be announced as they are available.

During religious school, teachers are engaged with students and are generally unable to take calls or texts. In emergencies during school hours, please call Principal Karen Hirsch at (940) 257- 7444 regarding anything affecting your child's attendance.

Co-Principals may be contacted at nachas.hsv@gmail.com.

Our calendar and other relevant information can always be found online at www.northalabamajewishschool.com

Volunteer

Our religious school would not exist without volunteers. Please visit our website or contact principals to find out more about specific needs.

Board

The NACHaS board for 2023-24 is composed of the following individuals who volunteer their time to set policies, create budgets, and ensure the smooth continuing operations of NACHaS:

Positions	Temple B'nai Sholom	Etz Chayim
Chair & Vice Chair	Jennifer Nelson	Barry Meyer
Treasurer & Secretary	Monna Harmon	Kathy Stora
Members	Alex Pols	Jordan Petroff
Principals	Joan May	Karen Hirsch
Ex Officio	Rabbi PJ Schwartz	Rabbi Steven Listfield

Bylaws may be found on the NACHaS website, in the About - Board section.