



2021-2022 CJCS Information

Wherever you are in your journey, you are welcome here.

ABOUT CJC AND ITS RELIGIOUS SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

Columbia Jewish Congregation, founded in 1971, is the first synagogue established in Howard County, Maryland. Through its curriculum, faculty and activities, our religious school strives to expose its students to diverse Jewish perspectives- historic, religious and cultural - and to do so in a positive manner. We believe this approach best equips students to make informed decisions of their own when faced with the many monumental choices of life in general and Jewish life in particular.

Columbia Jewish Congregation is affiliated with the Reconstructing Judaism movement. The religious school makes a concerted effort to present the beliefs and practices of Reconstructionist Judaism, which is a contemporary, progressive approach to Jewish life that emphasizes community, culture and spirituality. It is respectful of Jewish text and tradition, but is also open to modern interpretations and embraces new and innovative religious practices.

The congregation and its religious school embrace students from interfaith families and non-traditional family structures. We also strive to be sensitive to and accommodating of students with special needs and other challenges. We welcome all who seek to expand their Jewish awareness and involvement in the community.

OUR APPROACH

- We strive, at all times, to maintain a positive and safe environment for our students, parents and staff.
- We believe that the educational process is a partnership between teachers, students and parents; towards that end, we emphasize mutual respect, open-mindedness, and acceptance of other people and ideas.
- We seek to develop awareness and appreciation for the full scope of Jewish values, beliefs and practices.
- We strive to give our students an understanding of Jewish history and the ways in which it has shaped Jewish life and thought, while reaffirming a contemporary, progressive approach to modern life.
- We affirm that Hebrew is an essential element of Jewish education.
- We believe it is important to motivate students to make Judaism a way of life and to maintain membership in the Jewish community.
- We believe that Jewish education is a lifelong endeavor; we strive to provide a foundation and encouragement to continue learning after departure from CJCS.
- Monthly L'Dor V'Dor services are an integral part of our program where students help lead the service, and are expected to attend these services as part of their Jewish education. We encourage families to attend these services together.

PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

There are two overall components to the CJCS program; Hebrew and Judaics.

HEBREW

CJCS places emphasis on teaching its students how to read Hebrew, how to achieve proficiency in the recital of a series of core Hebrew prayers and to grapple with their meaning.

For Pre-K thru 3rd grades

- Some Hebrew instruction for our youngest grades may be minimally provided into the weekly in-person class sessions described in the Judaics section further below.
- We will ALSO offer weekly, virtual tutoring sessions conducted by Student Aides. Each Pre -K thru 3rd grade student will be assigned a Student Aide who will help oversee and augment the individual progression of the students' Hebrew learning to ensure Hebrew reading proficiency by 3rd grade.
- We will aim to teach, progressively, Hebrew letter recognition and "de-coding", beginning Hebrew reading skills, initial blessings and prayers, and popular Hebrew songs.
- We will provide age-appropriate textbooks, CJCSsings! materials, song sheets, and You-tube links for Hebrew songs.

For 4th thru 7th grades

- While we will use some class time to prepare and ensure that our students are ready to lead prayers at L'Dor V'Dor services, the primary method of Hebrew instruction will be one-on-one tutoring.

- Each CJCS student will be assigned a Hebrew tutor. Tutors will provide 30 weekly Hebrew tutor sessions of 20 minutes in duration that will be conducted virtually. Where feasible and by mutual agreement, some students may be paired with another student(s) with similar Hebrew skill levels and learning needs. Multiple students will allow for longer sessions.
- These will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time for teachers and students/families. Where possible and mutually desirable, tutor-student matches will be maintained over the course of multiple years at CJCS.
- Additional Hebrew tutor sessions may be provided by student aides, either upon advance indication of a special learning need, or upon the recommendation of the Hebrew tutor. These may be utilized to provide both short and long-term assistance.
- We also have consultants available who specialize in addressing dyslexia via the Orton-Gillingham method.
- As students approach their b'nai mitzvah, additional tutor sessions tailored for that purpose will be provided by the cantor.
- Each student is equipped with a copy of the Behrman House-produced "Hineni" textbook (a series that focuses on Hebrew prayers) that is appropriate for their current age/Hebrew reading level.
- Each student receives access to self-guided Hebrew lessons and weekly homework assignments that will correspond to the above.

JUDAICS

CJCS places emphasis on exposing students to key subjects during the course of their education in varied, age-appropriate ways. To avoid repetition, our school will institute a cyclical curriculum. We will continue to offer field trips and special school-wide programs. Each year, 4th – 7th grade students will be asked to read TWO Jewish books related to our curriculum. CJCS also has an extensive collection of Jewish books, along with some videos and Jewish songs on CDs. We encourage students to check it out – then check one out!

Class sessions will be conducted on a mostly weekly basis on Sunday afternoons, from 3:00 – 4:45pm. We anticipate the groupings below and the overall curriculum to consist of the following:

For Pre-K thru 3rd grades

*Each year we designate different particulars of the following elements to focus on: Bible stories (Genesis), Jewish Folk Tales, Jewish Values & Mitzvot, Jewish songs, Jewish holidays, plus age-appropriate Hebrew learning.

4th & 5th Grades

Year 1: Bible (Exodus thru Deuteronomy); Israel (Geography & Culture)

*Books: "Alan & Naomi" + "Sarah's Journey"

Year 2: Bible (Joshua, Prophets & Kings); American Jewish History

*Books: "Letters From Rifka" + "Number the Stars"

6th & 7th Grades

Year 1: Jewish Values-Based Decision-Making, Origins of Anti-Semitism & The Holocaust, The American Jewish Community of Today

*Books: "MAUS" & "The Wave"

Year 2: Life Cycle Events, Israel (History & Politics), Jewish Communities around the World,

*Books: "Gideon's People" + "TBD"

For Teens (Grades 8 thru 12)

Sundays – Student Aides assist teachers and students in many ways. They will help provide one-on-one tutoring to individual students, help facilitate virtual learning sessions, and assist with activities in classrooms and at special programs. Aides receive modest pay for their service.

All Student Aides must also be enrolled in the CJCS Thursday night teen class or be actively involved in an alternative form of Jewish education - formal or informal - e.g. - BBYO.)

Thursday Evening Teen Class: 7:00pm-7:30pm - Pizza & Social Time 7:30pm – 9:00pm - Contemporary Jewish Issues for Grades 8 – 12

Independent Study: Post-b'nai mitzvah students may opt for an independent course of study. CJC/S staff will assist in identifying a suitable topic and a plan of study and will review each student's progress.

Special Needs

CJCS is committed to educating ALL Jewish children with varied learning needs, including children with disabilities. We will generally provide additional tutoring services to students who need added assistance learning Hebrew. We operate on the premise that students can function in both a virtual and in-person classroom environment. Parents should alert us if this is not the case, and/or if a child has additional learning needs. CJCS will work with parents to create a collaborative plan to accommodate each child's unique learning needs and reserve the right to ask families to help pay for services that entail additional costs.

Educational Director, Jerome (Jerry) Kiewe has served as the part-time Education Director of CJCS since January, 1995. Jerry holds Masters Degrees in Social Work, Jewish Studies and Jewish Education. Simultaneously with his role as a Jewish educator, Jerry has served in executive level positions with the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO), PANIM, the Baltimore Zionist District, and the JCC of Greater Baltimore and is a past President of KEHILLAH: The Association of Jewish Communal Professionals of Greater Baltimore. Since 2007, he has been the full-time Executive Director of Ohr Kodesh Congregation in Chevy Chase. He has led numerous overseas trips to the former USSR, Poland and Israel and domestic Judaic programs in the U.S. and served as an adjunct instructor for the Baltimore Hebrew University. Jerry resides in Pikesville with his wife, Suzanne. They have three adult children, Zephan, Micah and Tamar.