

Youth and Family Learning Annual Report

2023-24

Submitted by: Barbara Fink, Director of Youth and Family Learning
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Summer:

Over the summer we spent time reviewing and updating the Religious School curriculum. New teachers were hired because we are growing! I also spent time looking into different ways to give our families more ownership of their learning during our family programs.

School Year:

This year our school community grew by 18 new families with 27 kids; plus younger siblings who did not enroll in Religious School. Of the new students, 10 were in kindergarten and 4 were in first grade. This was mostly due to our member incentive program.

We kicked off our Religious School year with a breakfast prepared and sponsored by our Brotherhood! Families were so appreciative to be back together and the food was delicious!

Our Religious School classes worked hard learning about holidays, prayers, Torah and Hebrew reading. They all eagerly volunteered to lead parts of *t'filah* each week.

Our 3rd graders led parts of the service on a Shabbat morning in March as they were given their first siddur. What a delight it was to see them dressed in their best and showing off their Hebrew reading skills.

Our 6th graders each read Torah in our family services. And the 5th graders read Torah for the first time in April!

Our 4th graders learned about Israel and made connections with Yad Lakashish, which was a highlight for our kids.

Our 2nd graders learned so many torah stories this year that they created their own torahs, decorated covers for them and took them home to cherish!

Rabbi Small, Cantor Risman and Barbara facilitated seminars for our **b'nai mitzvah classes**. 7th graders and their families learned about the responsibilities of Coming of Age, and the importance of Healthy Communication between parents and kids. Our 6th graders and their families learned what it means to Take Hold of Torah and How to start Building their Jewish lives. The 6th graders were given their *Tanachim* as they begin to learn about how to write and deliver a *D'var Torah*.

Barbara worked with CBI, Beth El, Sinai, and Kol Haverim. BSBI and USY to create two community programs. The first was a 3rd and 4th grade Tu B'shevat program at Auer Farm and our 3rd annual Field Day- this time for Passover.

In the fall we brought back the **Haunted Shul!** With the help of parents, we decorated Koret to be spooky and creepy. We started the program in the lobby with The Witch from Endor who conjured up the spirits of the Israelites' enemies. This year we learned about the Ushpezin that we invite to our sukkot through science experiments. This program continues to be a student favorite and an educational way to engage students during this very distracting season.

Over 75 people came out to Westmoor Park for **Havdallah and Hayrides** on a beautiful Saturday night in November. We got to ride on a hayride and make S'mores while Student Cantor, Max Silverstone, played his guitar around the fire.

Our 3rd graders and their parents decorated siddur covers for their new siddurim.

Our 6th graders piloted a new to us curriculum called The Box which loosely followed the teachings of Pirkei Avot. The Students were challenged by the unfolding mystery of a box filled with a variety of items that they had to endeavor to solve the problems presented, The teacher's role was to open the door to learning, but not to "spill the beans," as the element of surprise helped to drive this year's curriculum. They also read The First Thirty by Greg Forbes Siegman. The book tells the story of a young person who tries to make a difference in the world outside his window. The book sparked a lot of conversations about how our kids can do the same. They had the opportunity to zoom with the author and begin to think about their B'nai mitzvah projects.

On Superbowl Sunday we celebrated the **World Wide Wrap** with all of our families and in conjunction with the Torah Restoration project. We called the program, **Torah, Tefillin and Me.** We taught our families in a museum style program all about the mitzvot of creating a Torah and Tefillin. Then Rabbi Small and Moshe Pinchover taught our 6th and 7th graders (and some adults) how to wrap Tefillin. Brotherhood once again sponsored and prepared a delicious breakfast for us.

Our 6th graders planned a pretend **trip to Israel** for our Kindergarten and first grade classes. They were the flight attendants on El Al and when they landed they "took" them to the Dead Sea, the *Kotel*, *Eilat*, a Bedouin Tent, and through basic training for the IDF.

We continued with another great year of Hebrew Through Movement. We focused on our younger grades on Sunday mornings giving them a much needed movement break while also learning Hebrew commands, adjectives and providing silliness and fun to our day.

We also provided 1 on 1 tutoring for our 3rd through 6th graders. This 20-30 minutes a week of individualized instruction allows for our kids to become more confident Hebrew readers.

This year our student Cantor, Max Silverstone, taught music to every grade when he was here. It quickly became a highlight to everyone's Sunday!

We ended the school year with workshops and a show from The Bible Players, a Jewish Improv group.

Out in the Community

Barbara Fink, Max Silverstone and Cantor Risman, have spent many a Friday at the JCC's Shabbat Club interacting with our members and potential members. Barbara Fink also was the guest speaker at RELISH, the Friday morning Shabbat program at SSDS.

Shabbat Programming:

Tot Shabbat and a **family service** are each once a month. While the attendance was sporadic it was clear that families came when their kids were reading torah in the family service.

This year we instituted incorporating each class on the bimah during **Friday night Services** when we had a Shabbat **Dinner** after. This increased our number of families attending both services and the dinners. It created a lot of community within the classes and the community at large.

Early Childhood Programming

With the help of Cantor Risman and Josh Cohen we continue hosting **Kibbitz and Nosh** every Thursday in the lobby. It continues to be a highlight of many families. Each week about 3 moms or nannies and their kids ages 0-4 come to eat lunch and play.

Holiday Observance and Celebrations

On the **High Holy Days** we offered an early childhood service, a family service for families with children in K-7 and a teen service. All of them went really well. We made use of our outdoor spaces on Rosh Hashanah and needed to be inside for Yom Kippur due to weather. **The Children's Museum** did 3 programs with us. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah they facilitated 2 programs on life cycles and beginning a new; one for our early childhood service where 1 animal was brought out to learn about and 1 for our family service where multiple animals were used to teach about life cycles. On Yom Kippur all ages were invited to join Museum educators who took us through the process of metamorphosis and how important it is to change our ways. Many of our teens joined in for the animal fun.

We brought back for the first time since the pandemic, our board game room for Yom Kippur where school aged kids had a space to play while being supervised. And new activities were added to the boxes around the sanctuary for kids to have something to do while in the main service.

We enjoyed *Pizza in the Hut* during **Sukkot** and we danced with Torahs on **Simchat Torah!** The highlight was the unrolling of the Torahs and seeing so many Torah readers!

We celebrated **Chanukah** together with The Emanuel community on Wednesday. With the help of Josh Cohen, the clergy and the arms we put on a wonderful glow party with glow in the dark mini golf, face paint and crafts.

For **Tu B'shevat** our USY advisors, Max and Marissa Beade, planned a community wide program for 3rd and 4th graders at AuerFarm. 3rd and 4th graders from Beth El, Sinai, CBI

and The Emanuel gathered for a Tu B'shevat seder and activities. They even met some goats!

Purim night had a late start, so we put our family program funds into a Community wide Carnival that was hosted here at The Emanuel on Purim day. There were inflatables, games, hamantashen and more. A fun time was had by all!

We held for our annual **Mishloach Manot fundraiser**. The theme was "Take me out to the Ball Game" and all the items were baseball themed!

For **Pesach**, the Religious School kids learned different parts of the Seder and were able to show off at their own Seders!

USY:

Our USY advisors, Max and Merissa Beade have been actively reaching out to our teens to encourage them to join more regional programs and we had a nice number attend the regional convention at Camp Ramah and other regional events. They continue to do the monthly chapter programs alternating between The Emanuel and Beth El.

Finally, we thank all of our Religious School staff for the hard work and dedication that makes our school as wonderful as it is:

Sarah Baden
Janice Barshay
Rachel Blustein
Ruth Cion
Sarah Cohn
Fern Cohen
Doron Feller
Nancy Fichman
Lance Goldberg
Mira Klein
Gilana Levavi
Gail Mackey
Jennifer Molinari
Cantor Daniella Risman
Beckie Sahl
Karen Schlossberg
Max Silverstone
Mark Simon
Rabbi David Small
Joseph Ward

And our Teacher Aides:

Milo Cohen
Adam Diaz-Matos
Rebecca Diaz-Matos
Hannah Fink
Barak Goldberg
Abigail Kropsky
Hannah Leef
Ryan Leef
LJ Magalhaes
Aaron Malley
Alanna Malley
David Medvedovski
Jonah Resnick
Max Resnick
Jonah Rosenberg
Jonah Schulman

And our Board of Education:

Sarah Laskowski
Jeni Magalhaes
Joselyn Raub
Elaine Manno
Amy Wilson