

Inter-Congregational Sunday School Parent Handbook 5779/2018-2019



***“You shall teach them faithfully to your children”
Deuteronomy 6:7***

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ICSS Co-Directors

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Educational Philosophy

Our ICSS is one of the longest running combined Reform and Conservative religious schools in the country; a joint educational venture in Oklahoma City between Temple B'nai Israel and Emanuel Synagogue.

Mission: Every Jewish child can grow up to be a competent and confident member of the Jewish community. The Inter-Congregational Sunday School (ICSS) provides traditional and experiential Jewish education from Reform and Conservative perspectives to supplement family practice and congregational participation.

Respecting where students are on their Jewish journeys, ICSS strives to present an array of perspectives that challenge learners forward.

In partnership with family engagement and congregational participation, ICSS students learn to:

- Appreciate Torah and its relevance for today.
- Understand prayer from Reform and Conservative perspectives.
- Apply *mitzvot* (commandments) and Jewish values to daily living.

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Message from the Co-Directors

Whether you are a returning ICSS family or registering for the very first time, *bruchim haba'im*: blessings, and welcome. We are very happy that you are entrusting us with the holy task of proving your children with a Jewish education. The ICSS staff is dedicated to assisting your child in growing up to be a competent and confident member of the Jewish community. It is our hope that ICSS will be a second home for our children: a place for them to have extended family; a place to feel safe and secure to ask any question; and a place for them to grow cognitively, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. We emphasize a caring environment and programming dedicated to the Jewish educational enrichment of our students and their families. Our school program commences with pre-kindergarten and continues through the tenth grade.

This Handbook is designed to answer most of the questions you may have about our school. However, no handbook can take the place of regular communication between parents and teachers. Please keep in close touch with us during the year so that together we can provide the best experience possible for your child. Each person's Jewish journey is unique and special. Let us work together to achieve all that we can. If you have any questions or special concerns, please feel free to contact either of us.

This year you can stay on top of all the ICSS activities by liking us on Facebook and following us on Twitter.

Facebook	OKC Inter-Congregational Sunday School ICSS
Twitter	@ICSSOKC

In addition, be sure to check Emanu-mail, What's Nu, the Temple website, and keep an eye out for our bulletins for more information.

Thank you for trusting in and partnering with us. Your attention and family involvement will help to ensure that your children will be competent, confident, and capable Jewish adults. On behalf of the ICSS team, ICSS Joint Education Committee, and all of our teachers, we wish you a happy and sweet new year, and a wonderful and exciting school year.

Looking forward to a wonderful year,

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Inter-Congregational Sunday School Calendar 2017- 2018/ 5778 (Fall Semester)		
August 2017		
Sunday, August 26	9am -12pm	ICSS Teacher In-Service
September 2017		
Sunday, September 2		NO ICSS - Labor Day
Sunday, September 9		Erev Rosh Hashana
Sunday, September 16	10am - 12pm 1pm – 5:30pm	Pre-K - 5th: ICSS 6th - 10th: Interfaith Youth Tour
Sunday, September 23	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, September 30	10am – 12pm	ICSS / Simchat Torah Celebration
October 2017		
Sunday, October 7	10am – 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, October 14		No ICSS / Fall Break
Sunday, October 15		NO ICSS - Fall Break
Sunday, October 21	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, October 28	10am - 12pm	ICSS
November 2017		
Sunday, November 4	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, November 11	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, November 18	10am - 1pm	ICSS at Federation Mitzvah Day
Sunday, November 25		NO ICSS - Thanksgiving Break
December 2017		
Sunday, December 2	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, December 9	10am - 12pm	ICSS / Chanukah Celebration
Sunday, December 16	10am - 12pm 12pm– 1:30pm	ICSS Teacher Appreciation / Training
Sunday, December 23		NO ICSS - Winter Break
Sunday, December 30		NO ICSS - Winter Break

Special Dates to Remember:

September 16th	Opening Day / Interfaith Youth Tour
September 30	ICSS Simchat Torah Celebration
November 18th	ICSS at Federation Mitzvah Day
December 9th	ICSS Chanukah Celebration

Inter-Congregational Sunday School Calendar 2017- 2018/ 5778 (Spring Semester)		
January 2018		
Sunday, January 6	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, January 13	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, January 20	10am - 12pm 6pm-8pm	Pre-K - 5th: ICSS 6th - 10th: MLK Program at Temple B'nai Israel
Sunday, January 27	10am - 12pm	ICSS
February 2018		
Sunday, February 3	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, February 10	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, February 17	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, February 24	10am - 12pm	ICSS
March 2018		
Sunday, March 3	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, March 10	10am - 12pm	ICSS
Sunday, March 17		NO ICSS - Spring Break
Sunday, March 24		NO ICSS - Spring Break
Sunday, March 31	10am - 12pm	ICSS
April 2018		
Sunday, April 7		NO ICSS - Passover
Sunday, April 12-14	Friday-Sunday	ICSS at Spring Camp
Sunday, April 14	10am - 12pm	ICSS at Emanuel Synagogue
Sunday, April 21		NO ICSS / Passover
Sunday, April 28	10am - 12pm	ICSS
May 2018		
Sunday, May 5	10am - 12pm	Last Day Of ICSS / Consecration / Teacher Appreciation
Sunday May 12		NO ICSS / Mother's Day
Sunday May 19	10am - 12pm 12pm - 1pm	Last Day of ICSS / Consecration Teacher Appreciation

Special Dates to Remember:

January 20th	MLK Program
April 12-14	ICSS at Spring Camp
May 19th	Last Day of ICSS / Consecration / Teacher Appreciation

Class Locations and Hours

All classes will be held at Temple B'nai Israel for the 5778 (2017-2018) school year from 10am – 12pm. It is important that children arrive on time, as children who come in late are disruptive to the class, take away from class time, and miss instruction, activities, and peer interactions

Temple B'nai Israel
4901 North Pennsylvania Ave
Oklahoma City 73112
405-848-0965

Weather Cancellations

If bad weather develops during the day or on the weekend, parents will be notified of school cancellations through the Remind application and email by 8:00am. This information will also be posted on the ICSS social media (Facebook and Twitter). Weather conditions may vary throughout the metropolitan area. Parents should use judgment about the conditions at their location.

Enrollment

Enrollment in the Inter-Congregational Sunday School is open to the children of members in good standing of either Temple B'nai Israel or Emanuel Synagogue. New students are assigned to Sunday School grades corresponding to their secular school grade. Students may enroll in the Pre-Kindergarten if they will be four years old by August 31st, 2018.

Registration

Registration will be available on both the TBI and ES websites in the late spring for next year. Tuition and fees are set by the joint ICSS Committee in collaboration with the ICSS Co-Directors and should be paid to the congregation of which the parents are members.

Scholarships

No Jewish child will be denied enrollment because of financial hardship. A request for scholarships should be made in writing at the time of registration. A representative from either the Synagogue or Temple will contact you regarding scholarship information.

Homework Policy

Appropriate homework advances student learning, particularly when classes have only one session per week. Teachers may assign a reasonable amount of homework, especially to foster parental involvement or help class to function more efficiently. Additional homework or make-up activities might be assigned at the discretion of the teacher and/or Co-Directors to compensate for student absences.

Attendance Policy

Jewish education happens best in community, and our teachers work hard to make class time rich in learning experiences. Regular and consistent attendance is vital to your child's growth and the progress of their class. Encouraging regular attendance at religious school makes a positive statement to your child about the importance of Jewish education. Students absent from class are responsible for the work covered in class and all assigned homework. Students missing more than 25% of the year's sessions may be asked to complete make up work before progressing to the next grade.

Special Needs

At ICSS, we believe that every child is created *b'tzelem Elohim* (in God's image). We value the uniqueness of each student's place in our community. We will do everything we can to make our religious school a positive learning experience for every child. Accommodations and supports will be implemented within our means and within the structure of our program on a case by case basis. We are committed to building open communication and partnership with families so that we can most effectively meet the needs of each child. Our program, and our commitment to serving children with a range of learning needs, continues to evolve to meet the ever changing needs of our students.

If your child has a learning disability, a medical condition, or if your family is experiencing any special or significantly stressful circumstances (e.g. birth, illness, death, divorce, change in employment), please inform the ICSS Co-Directors. This will help the school be sensitive to and proactive around your child's individual needs.

Drop Off and Pick Up

This year we are focusing on building *kehilla* (community). To help build community, we are inviting all parents to park and come into the building to drop off and pick up their children. Parents are encouraged to arrive by 10:00 and join our school community for *tefillah* (prayer) with their children. New this year, we have created an adult lounge, complete with wifi and snacks. We would love for you to stay and schmooze during ICSS hours. Students will be dismissed from their classrooms at 12:00pm. Parents may pick up their children in the lobby of Emanuel Synagogue.

Textbooks

Teacher and student textbooks are the property of the school unless a teacher has made arrangements with the ICSS Co-Directors for the students to keep their books. Student activity and workbooks are kept in the classroom but should be taken home when completed or at the end of the year, with textbooks remaining the property of ICSS. Some classes use texts or workbooks that include family activities or information for parents. We encourage parents to complete the family activities with their children at home.

Communication between Parents and Teachers

Parental communication is very important and will enhance your child's religious experience. Please discuss any issues related to your child's development and progress with your child's teacher or the Co-Directors at any time during the year. In an effort to improve communications, teachers will communicate every week with the parents through a short message on Sunday which highlights discussion questions, topics covered or other relevant information. Likewise, a weekly school wide email digest ("THE SHMOOZER") is sent to all the families detailing current and future events and short summations of what each class covered in a particular date.

Familial Involvement

Educating your child in their Jewish heritage requires a partnership between the home and the school. To this end, the school encourages adult family members to help with class projects, events, or activities when asked. The more interest that families express in their child's learning, the more motivated a child will be to learn. Guardians are welcome to visit their children's classrooms by arrangement. Please call the ICSS office to schedule your visit. Guardians can also become involved in and enhance their children's Jewish education by participating in worship services at the congregations and attending Shabbat and holiday services together.

The religious school does not mandate specific home and family religious observance, but it teaches students to practice Jewish observance in accordance with the guidelines of the Conservative and Reform movements.

Religious Observances

Religious observances and Shabbat are important parts of our religious school curriculum. We teach our students about the joys and beauty of Shabbat, also teaching them to become proficient members of the Synagogue and Temple communities. In an effort to coordinate what our students learn in the classroom and what they practice in their daily lives, ICSS encourages students to attend services regularly.

Electronics in School

So as not to disrupt the educational experience of our students, we ask and expect that all cell phones and other electronic devices be turned off during religious school hours. These devices should be kept in the students' bags. There may be some occasions when students will be asked to use their phones for research during class. In such cases, cell phone use will be monitored by the classroom teachers. If a teacher needs to intercept a child's use of electronics during class, the device can be collected after dismissal.

Guest Policy

Students may bring non-enrolled guests to the classrooms with permission from the teacher and the Co-Directors. This permission should be requested and approved **BEFORE** the day of the proposed visit. A visitor is expected to follow all appropriate behavior and dress code guidelines. An unexpected visitor may be asked to sit in the office during class time and may not be permitted to participate in the ICSS activities of the day. Please pre-arrange visitors with the Co-Directors and teacher.

Disciplinary Policy

ICSS values the strength and safety of our classroom and school communities. Making our community a place where every student can learn and feel safe is of utmost importance. We expect that children engage in appropriate behavior while in school and that all students are safe from verbal and physical aggression. Since we are all created *b'tzelem elohim* (in God's image), the way in which we treat each other is central. Our discipline policy reflects mutual respect and responsibility.

In each classroom we follow these four rules:

1. Exhibit *kavod* (respect) for all people by using appropriate tone of voice and language.
2. Maintain the *kedushah* (holiness) of the *kehillah* (community) by taking care of all physical property.
3. Be students of *talmud Torah* (study of Torah) by following directions and positively contributing to the learning atmosphere.
4. Uphold *shmirat ha'guf* (protecting the body) by keeping hands and feet to yourself.

If a student misbehaves in class, the teacher will issue a verbal warning. If the student fails to respond to the warning, the teacher may send that student to the ICSS Co-Director's office. Then:

First time: The Co-Directors work with the student to make *tshuvah* (repentance) and return to class. The parents are notified after the students return to class.

Second time: The teacher or ICSS Co-Director contacts the parent or guardian to discuss the issue and possible solutions.

Third time: The ICSS Co-Director calls the parent or guardian, and the student is not be permitted to return to class unless accompanied by a parent or guardian, who must remain in class with the student for one complete session.

We are committed to every one of our students. In the rare circumstance when discipline problems occur, we will work them out with the student and parents. Our philosophy is to ultimately achieve a positive learning situation for everyone.

Entering and Leaving the Building

Because there are a variety of programs under our roof on Sunday mornings, unnecessary comings and goings create confusion and disrupt the normal flow of the school. The cooperation of parents, students, and teachers is required to provide a pleasant and productive atmosphere.

- ***No student may leave the building during school hours for any reason except under the personal supervision of his or her teacher or if checked out by a parent or guardian.***
- ***Any student who leaves without a parent or guardian's formal permission may be suspended.*** If this occurs, the ICSS staff will attempt to notify parents/guardians promptly. A student who leaves without permission may return to school only if accompanied by a parent/guardian. The duration of the suspension will be determined by the ICSS Co-Directors and the parents/guardians. A major concern of the ICSS is the safety of its students; this safety cannot be provided if a child leaves the school area.

Dress Code

In order to encourage a sense of reverence and respect for our educational system and our houses of worship, ICSS requires that students dress appropriately. Clothing should be neat, clean, and inoffensive. If a student is unsure whether his/her clothing is appropriate for religious school, it probably is not.

Head Coverings

Students of Emanuel Synagogue, regardless of gender, are required to wear a head covering (such as Kippah, hat, doily, wide headband) at all times whether at the Synagogue or Temple. Students of Temple B'nai Israel are permitted and encouraged to do the same, but not required to do so whether at the Synagogue or the Temple.

Illness and Emergency

In case of an emergency such as illness, one of the Co-Directors will call the student's home to notify his/her parent. ICSS staff cannot store or administer prescription or non-prescription medication for students. Parents are asked to arrange to administer required medication before or after school hours. Students should not bring medication for self-administration unless it is needed to treat a life-threatening condition. Medical information that parents or doctors provide to the religious school is considered confidential.

In case of an emergency, please call Rachel Opatowsky at 661-361-3661.

Life-Cycle Events

Families with children in the ICSS may celebrate Consecration, B'nai Mitzvot, and 10th grade Confirmation while enrolled in our religious school program. Consecration is a community celebration of the Kindergarten class' beginning of religious studies. The ceremony is held during ICSS on the last day of Sunday School. B'nai Mitzvot and Confirmation are held at the congregation of the family's primary membership.

Kashrut

Food served by the ICSS: Food served at Emanuel Synagogue is certified kosher or approved by the rabbi of Emanuel Synagogue. Food served at Temple B'nai Israel is *milchig* (dairy) or *pareve* (neutral).

Food brought by students: Any food or beverages that students bring to Temple B'nai Israel during ICSS must be *milchig* (dairy) or *pareve* (neutral). Any food or beverages that students bring to Emanuel Synagogue must be *milchig* (dairy) or *pareve* (neutral) *and* must be certified kosher or approved by the rabbi of Emanuel Synagogue. Teachers may take custody of any food that does not meet these guidelines and return it to the student at dismissal.

Snacks

Aside from special programming, NO snacks will provided during ICSS. Parents should make sure that their children have a sufficient breakfast before arriving.

Tzedakah

Every Sunday, we collect *tzedakah* in all classes. The school keeps a tally of each class' contributions. At the end of each semester, the class that collected the most *tzedakah* is acknowledged and rewarded. Unless an urgent local or global need arises, the winning class decides where to allocate the funds.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do I need to join the Temple or Synagogue in order to enroll my child in religious school?

- ICSS supplements family engagement in our congregational communities. It is not designed to be a stand-alone experience for Jewish education. We welcome all families to join either congregation and become a part of our community, and you are welcome to enroll your child and join a congregation at the same time. For more information about membership, please contact the Temple or Synagogue office.

What if my child is starting ICSS for the first time this year?

- We welcome all new students to join us, regardless of age or previous education! We encourage you to meet with the ICSS Co-Directors to learn the specifics of our school. Please note: If a child enters ICSS during the intermediate grades, an individualized plan may be created with Co-Directors and the family to meet their needs.

Do I need to make special arrangements if a caregiver is to pick up my child?

- Parents/guardians provide the names and phone numbers of people, besides parents, who are authorized to pick up their child. In order to protect the safety and well-being of our students, we will not release your child to someone without your permission, either in writing or by phone.

I'd like to receive electronic communication. How do I do that?

- Please send a message to our ICSS Co-Directors at either rabbi.juan.okc@gmail.com or tbieducator@coxinet.net and you will be subscribed immediately to our E-Newsletter service, "THE SHMOOZER." Please download the Remind application for cellphones to receive weekly reminders as well.

The registration form has a lot of information. Do I need to complete it?

- Yes! Our ICSS Registration Form is designed to get all the information we need to serve our families. This form gives us all the information that we require to permit your child to participate in our program: emergency contact information, health and safety information, family information, etc. It is absolutely crucial that parents fill out this form completely so that we have all the information we need to not only provide a quality education for your child and to protect your child in case of emergency.

I need to get a message to my child during Religious School hours. How do I do this?

- Because we see it as our pleasure and responsibility to be with our students during the school day, we will not be easily accessible by phone. In case of emergency or if some essential information needs to be relayed to your child, please call or text Rachel Opatowsky at (661)361-3661.

2018 – 2019 ICSS Joint Education Committee

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation for all of the hard work and dedication provided by the 2018 – 2019 ICSS Joint Education Committee. We are grateful for their efforts in making our community a welcoming and inspiring place for young Jewish students to grow. Please be sure to take the time to thank these individuals for their hard work when you have an opportunity:

Larry Heyman, Chair | Temple B'nai Israel
Jennifer Weiss, Chair | Emanuel Synagogue

Deborah Cossey | Temple B'nai Israel
Matthew Hallowell | Emanuel Synagogue
Felicia Jackson | Temple B'nai Israel
Ari Klein | Emanuel Synagogue
Robyn LeFever | Emanuel Synagogue
Angela Reinstein | Temple B'nai Israel

Vered Harris, Rabbi | Temple B'nai Israel
Abby Jacobson, Rabbi | Emanuel Synagogue
Rabbi Juan Mejia, Co-Director | Emanuel Synagogue
Rachel Opatowsky, Co-Director | Temple B'nai Israel