

# WELCOME TO JCA

Where families enjoy learning about their Judaism.

A place to meet and make new friends.

A place to sing, to dance, to draw, to create, to imagine

To read a new story, to write a new prayer

To do Torah, and to be Torah

A place to count all of our blessings, and to be a blessing,

To explore Judaism with

our minds,

our bodies,

our hearts

and

our souls.

## Lifelong Learning

Rabbi Benjamin Weiner

Jody Rosenbloom, Director of Lifelong Learning, [eddir@j-c-a.org](mailto:eddir@j-c-a.org)

Rachael Goren-Watts, Director of Teen Programming

For information: [edassist@j-c-a.org](mailto:edassist@j-c-a.org)

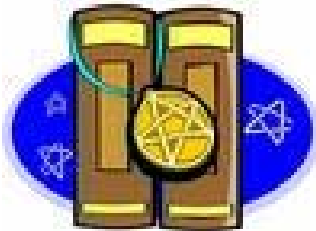
## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>OUR VISION</b>	
<b>DESCRIPTION AND SCHEDULE OF PROGRAMS</b>	
<b>Registration: How to Enroll Your Children</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What We Have for Young Children</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Our Classroom Education in a Nutshell</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Grades 1-6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>7th Grade</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Prayer Services: When Can Families Learn About Prayer With The Community?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Students with Special Needs</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What We Have for Teenagers</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Regional Programs for Jewish Youth</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>What's Happening Over The Summer?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORT</b>	
<b>How Can I Get Involved To Support The School?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Parent Volunteers</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>School Committee</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Education Committee</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Adult Education: Take a Class or Come to an Event</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Fees: What Will School Cost?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Books</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>School Announcements: Ways to Stay Informed</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Parent/Teacher Communication</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Guests in the School</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Monitoring Hebrew Progress</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Tikkun Olam/Repairing the World</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Behavioral Expectations: KAVOD CODE</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>To Facilitate Coming and Going</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Procedures for Emergency School Closings</b>	<b>14</b>

## OUR VISION

The Jewish Community of Amherst is dedicated to creating a dynamic, open, spiritual, and participatory Jewish community that is central to its members' lives. We believe that a strong commitment to Jewish values provides us with a foundation for a community that both embraces the spiritual richness of our traditions and shapes them to meet the contemporary needs of a diverse membership.

The JCA School provides our families with opportunities to explore an evolving civilization and range of religious Jewish ritual and practice. We value safe, respectful and diverse community wrestling with ethical issues, individual and communal responsibility, and our relationship as Jews in the world. The school is committed to using traditional and innovative approaches to teaching, along with integration of the creative arts, family education, and the involvement of parents and other community members. We encourage children to explore their connection to Judaism and their understanding of what God means to them, to participate in synagogue life, to develop a love for Torah, and to act towards themselves and others in their homes, their neighborhoods, and the world with compassion and with loving-kindness.



More formally, over 1994-1996, a vision was developed that resulted in recommendations adopted in April of 1996 and the hiring of a full time educator. In the summer of 2002, the congregation affiliated with the Reconstructionist movement and continues to explore the ways affiliation can enrich our resources and school. In 2003 the Education Committee formed a curriculum task force to survey the curriculum priorities of households with children in our school. We thus have a core curriculum based on Sacred Texts, Klal Yisrael (Jewish community), Jewish Values (Tzedakah, acts of kindness and social action), Hebrew Reading/Prayer, and Holiday Celebration. In June 2008, a five-year plan was developed by the Education Directions Task Force. Each year the Education Committee sets goals in keeping with this vision.

## DESCRIPTION AND SCHEDULE OF PROGRAMS

### **Registration: How to Enroll Your Children**

Registration in the JCA School is currently open to children of members of the synagogue. Registration can be made at any time during the year, although parents are strongly encouraged to enroll their children in time to begin the academic year in September. Registration forms can be obtained from the JCA office or online at [j-c-a.org/school.html](http://j-c-a.org/school.html). Upon receipt of a completed application and deposit, each child is assigned to an appropriate class.

The JCA School typically opens after Labor Day and concludes before Memorial Day. Our vacation schedule follows the Amherst Regional School system and Jewish holidays that fall during the academic year.

## **What We Have for Young Children**

### **Pre-Kindergarten**

Havurah Ketanah

Age level: Pre-kindergarten and younger

Meets: One Havdallah per month on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday afternoon. No registration is necessary. A monthly informal potluck, hosted at participants' homes. The afternoon includes song, art project, and brief Havdallah ritual. Watch the weekly email for dates and location or contact Madeleine Charney at greenzinnia@hotmail.com.

Email list: Let us know if you want to be on a designated email list or check the JCA Thursday email and [www.jewishcultureconnect.com](http://www.jewishcultureconnect.com) for what's going on at the JCA and in the region for families with children this age, making use of our region's rich offerings at, e.g., the National Yiddish Book Center, the Springfield Jewish Community Center Family Music Jam or PJ Pals at the Lander Grinspoon Academy.

### **Shalom Sunday**

Age level: Children who are in nursery school or kindergarten and who are four years old by September 1st

Meets: One Sunday a month: 10:00 AM -12:00 at the JCA.

The Shalom Sunday program is a two-year cycle designed as an introduction to the JCA School and the richness of our Jewish heritage. It includes opportunities for both parents and children to learn about holidays, rituals, practice and customs. Stories, games, songs, and crafts are presented in a developmentally appropriate way to satisfy the learning needs of young children. Parents are asked to remain in the building during class time and join the school for Learner's Minyan from 11:45-12:15. Every other month there is a concurrent parent discussion.

### **Our Classroom Education in a Nutshell**

Age level: Grades 1-6

Meets: Sunday 10:00 AM - 12:15 PM  
Grades 3-6 come an additional day:  
Wednesday 4:00 - 5:30 PM (includes a 10-minute recess)

The JCA School program builds community through *Torah* (study), *Avodah* (practice), and *Gemilut Chassadim* (acts of kindness) in keeping with a quote from *Pirke Avot* (the Sayings of Our Ancestors). We encourage students to begin their formal studies in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Our program increases in scope as the children move through the grade levels.

TORAH: Each grade has exposure to different Jewish sacred texts, history and Hebrew language. Using a variety of textbooks, stories and discussions help students learn and integrate the grade level goals. The progression of learning Hebrew accelerates in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

AVODAH: Students have opportunities to learn about and practice Judaism through the *mitzvot* of prayer, holidays, blessings, the use of ritual objects and exploring their relationship with the Divine. Students sing, paint, dance, act and create as they learn. Students become familiar with the prayer book. Each grade level joins together for a Shabbat dinner. The entire congregation and community are invited to participate with the school for Community Education Programs.

GEMILUT CHASSADIM: We encourage students to build relationships with each other, informed by Jewish values such as *chesed* – kindness and *tzedek* – justice. Weekly, students have the choice to bring food for the Survival Center, describe a mitzvah they have done over the week, or bring money for *zedakah*. Grade levels both develop individual community service projects and share activities with other classes in the school.

## **1<sup>st</sup> Grade**

This year is an overall sensory introduction to Judaism and key concepts associated with holidays, prayer and mitzvot. Students participate in a ceremony to celebrate beginning their formal Jewish studies, Kedushah La Torah (Consecration).

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Grade**

Students look at the calendar as a cycle of holidays, review basic blessings, learn about ritual objects, and begin learning short prayers. They explore the synagogue as a spiritual home and physical space. Key bible stories are read. Hebrew is introduced as the language of Torah and prayer. Reading readiness includes learning some letters by sight and sound.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade**

Students focus on connections as they explore the cycle of Torah reading and Jewish life cycle observances. Students learn to read and write the Hebrew alphabet (block letters) and begin putting words together (Text: Shalom Uvrachah).

## **4<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Students learn basic Hebrew grammar using Hineni—Hebrew Through Prayer Book 1, which presents basic prayers and blessings with key roots and concepts. They learn about the synagogue as a *Beit Midrash* (house of study). They look at *klal yisrael*, how these connections are manifest in Jewish communities around the world. They enrich their range of mitzvot by meeting “mitzvah heroes,” working in the text The Mensch Handbook and exploring ways they can help others. Families participate in a workshop: “Introduction to B’nai Mitzvah.”

## **5<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Students explore Jewish civilization beginning with the ancient land of Israel. Students are introduced to the Rabbinic period, and the evolution of Jewish law (*Halachah*) and the Talmud. The tools of historic inquiry are introduced. Students study key periods in Jewish history through the Middle Ages and the Golden Age of Spain. Students also study the lessons of our prophets, understanding that b’nai mitzvah often read *Haftorah* taken from these books of the *Tanach*. Hebrew studies include prayers and blessings from the *Amidah*, using Hineni—Hebrew Through Prayer Book 2. We cover a prayer’s meaning, its place in the flow of the service, and reading the Hebrew text comfortably. Families participate in a Tefillah workshop.

## **6<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Students continue to study history including the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust, the Eastern European Shtetl, the state of Israel, and American Jewry. They are asked to explore modern issues using traditional Jewish sources and their own experiences. Hebrew reading fluency is practiced, with emphasis on the Torah service, using Hineni—Hebrew Through Prayer Book 3. Students explore leadership issues with participation opportunities in our prayer services, holiday programs, and tzedakah projects. Families participate in two workshops: Tallit: Introduction to the Prayer Shawl and Torah: How to Give a D’var Torah.

## **7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Age level: 12 & 13 years old

Meets: Saturday morning class, attendance at 20 services; and  
Wednesday afternoons 4:00 - 5:30 PM; and  
Friday Night Shabbat Dinners (Pilot Program 2010-2011)

Our goal is to provide 7<sup>th</sup> graders with opportunities to study prayer and attend services as entering adult members of the congregation, to foster a sense of community with all 7<sup>th</sup> graders participating together, and to encourage them to become role models for younger students. Religious School participation is required (see – Bar/Bat Mitzvah Requirements in next section).

Saturday programming emphasizes the weekly Torah portion and understanding the prayer service. Weekday programming focuses on Jewish Journeys, history and building community to support the B'nai Mitzvah process for all students.

### **Becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah**

Children are welcome to become an adult in the congregation by leading a service as they become b'nai mitzvah. Two handbooks, the B'nai Mitzvah Preparation Student Handbook and the B'nai Mitzvah Manual: A Guide for Parents, are distributed with requirements and more specific information regarding options for study, practice and gemilut chassadim.

Generally, a student enrolled in the JCA School or an area Jewish day school is eligible to be called to the Torah on the Shabbat most closely following the celebrant's thirteenth birthday. A form is mailed to all eligible JCA families in March, two calendar years preceding the year in which the child will be thirteen. The process of assigning dates begins no earlier than April 1, two calendar years preceding a child's thirteenth birth date. If a family misses that deadline, the child's date for being called to the Torah will be scheduled on a rolling basis on the Shabbat date most closely following the child's thirteenth birthday that is available and workable for the JCA and the family.

### **Prayer Services: When Can Families Learn About Prayer With The Community?**

**Family Services\***: The first Friday of every month is set aside for a Family Service. This is most appropriate for school age children, and all families are invited to attend. During the school year each grade learns key prayers of the Friday night service, and students are invited to help lead that prayer at a Family Service with the help of their parents.

**Sunday Learner's Minyan\***: Each Sunday when school is in session, we end our morning with an all-school program/service. To build community, students gather to share learning and tefillah (prayer) from 11:45 AM to 12:15 PM. Parents and other family members are encouraged to attend as preparation for joining the congregation in prayer on Shabbat and other holidays. By 6<sup>th</sup> grade, students are able to participate in portions of Shabbat services.

**JCA Shabbat Services**: By 5<sup>th</sup> grade, we urge families to attend Friday evening and Shabbat morning services to become more familiar with prayer at the JCA.

\*We use the Reconstructionist Movement's children's siddur, *Kol HaNoar* (The Voice of Children) during these services in addition to the siddur generally used on Friday evenings and Saturdays by the congregation, *Kol HaNeshamah* (Voice of the Soul). Both of these prayer books are rich in visual images and commentary and are accessible to Hebrew and non-Hebrew readers!

### **Students with Special Needs—Brit Limud/Learning Covenant**

The registration form for the JCA School asks for information concerning special needs of any student who is enrolling in our school. Such information is important in determining teacher support and class placement for your child. We do our best to accommodate all children in our programs, but there are times when a child's educational needs cannot best be served in the setting that we have to offer. It is important for parents to alert us to any short- or long-term special needs a child may have so that we can work together to meet the educational needs for each child. We work with each student to determine a clear series of goals based on their own progress and the grade level curriculum. A learning covenant, which outlines a revised course of study or series of learning activities, may be determined in consultation with the Rabbi and/or Director of Lifelong Learning.

## What We Have for Teenagers

### **JEWISH COMMUNITY OF AMHERST REGIONAL TEEN PROGRAMMING**

The JCA houses teen programming for Jewish teens in grades 7-12 all over the Pioneer Valley. We offer a number of programs to teens to meet their needs, including: informal education, social programming, community service, leadership opportunities, and programs such as Ropes Course, Havdallah & Chinese Food, Panim el Panim, and Bling my Shabbat (just to name a few). Our goal is to nurture Jewish teens' identities and help build community, while offering a variety of programs with which teens can be involved. Contact [jcateens@gmail.com](mailto:jcateens@gmail.com) or [teendir@j-c-a.org](mailto:teendir@j-c-a.org) for more information

### **JCAT:**

#### **JEWISH COMMUNITY OF AMHERST TEEN GROUP**

JCAT is opened to Jewish teens in grades 7-9 in the Amherst and surrounding areas. We have a leadership board that helps to plan all the events and programs. Our past JCAT programs have included schmooze with the Jewz, MLK Sleepover, white water rafting, snow tubing, mini-golf, and movie nights, JCAT's programs include social events, leadership opportunities, community service mitzvah days, and programs on Israel, Jewish values, and holidays.

#### **KEHILA & CONFIRMATION PROGRAM**

Teens in grades 8-12 are eligible to attend Kehila, an informal educational program that meets twice a month on Wednesday evenings from 6-8pm. The evening includes a dinner and schmooze time, core curriculum class, snack break, and choice of electives. Students in grades 10-12 will be in Confirmation Class led by the Rabbi. Students can choose from a number of electives, including (but not limited to): Hebrew, Jewish Values through Theatre, Jewish Arts and Culture, and Jews in Film.

#### **WORK OPPORTUNITIES**

Post B'nai Mitzvah teens are eligible to apply to become a TA in our JCA school or in the office. TAs are paid an honorarium and receive basic training and support as necessary.

#### **JTOV: JEWISH TEENS OF THE VALLEY**

JTOV is open to Jewish teens in grades 6-12 in the Upper Valley. This collective is funded by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation Teen Initiative, Jewish Community of Amherst, Congregation B'nai Israel, Beit Ahavah, and Temple Israel in order to bring together teens from all over the valley. This program sponsors regional events, JVCorps: A Community Service Program, and It's A Girls' Thing: Rosh Hodesh Groups.

#### **JVCorps--Jewish Volunteer Corps**

JVCorps is a community service learning opportunity for teens in grades 7-10. Teens volunteer one Thursday afterschool each month at the Amherst Survival Center helping to prepare, serve, and clean-up from dinner. Parents volunteer to co-chaperone and supervise each month and lead sessions to reflect on the teens' experience.

#### **Rosh Hodesh: It's a girl thing!**

These are values-based, experiential and transdenominational monthly groups for female identified teens in grades 6/7 and 8/9 that help strengthen self-esteem and explore Jewish identity.

## **OTHER (NON-JCA SPONSORED) TEEN PROGRAMS**

### **B'nai Tzedek Youth Foundation**

Philanthropy program sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. Visit [www.hgf.org/bnai\\_tzedek/](http://www.hgf.org/bnai_tzedek/) for more information.

### **B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO)**

Teen-led Youth Movement with volunteer advisers with an Amherst-based chapter. Visit [www.bbyo.org](http://www.bbyo.org) for more information.

### **Harold Grinspoon Foundation Year Round Youth**

Teens are eligible to apply for funding for Jewish programs outside of Western Massachusetts. Visit [www.hgf.org](http://www.hgf.org) for more information.

### **Noar Chadash**

Reconstructionist Teen Movement with opportunities for regional and national programs. Visit [www.noarchadash.org](http://www.noarchadash.org) for more information.

### **What's Happening Over The Summer?**

1. Camp Shemesh. Each year the JCA organizes a summer day camp for boys and girls ages 6 to 11. Weekly sessions are offered from late June to early August that include a variety of indoor and outdoor activities with a Jewish focus. Activities include swimming, music, Israeli dancing, arts and crafts, Hebrew, nature study, and non-competitive games. The camp is held Monday through Friday, from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM on the campus of Amherst College. For more information, please email [shemesh@j-c-a.org](mailto:shemesh@j-c-a.org) or look for detailed information in the spring newsletter.
2. Camp JRF is the overnight camp of the Reconstructionist movement located in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, a mere four hours away. Learning is fun-filled and experiential. Register in the fall for optimal session choice. A perfect follow-up to Camp Shemesh. Visit [www.campjrf.org](http://www.campjrf.org) for more information.
3. The JCA Education Department also has information about Jewish camps, summer institutes, and Israel trips from a variety of organizations and religious movements. Information is posted on the bulletin board by the Education Department Office off the library.
4. Scholarships are often available for Jewish overnight camps and teen trips through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation Youth Experience. Brochures in the JCA lobby.



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

### **How Can I Get Involved To Support The School?**

Here are some ways parents can be involved with supporting their children's Jewish education as well as enrich their own Jewish journeys.

### **Parent Volunteers**

JCA parents are called upon primarily to support the school through volunteer efforts and fund-raising activities. These efforts are organized by the Education Committee, the School Committee, and the Director of Lifelong Learning. Parents may indicate their availability at the start of the school year on the Parent Volunteer Form or several weeks prior to the event or activity itself. Parental assistance and participation are critical to creating these special events.

### **School Committee**

2010-2011 Members: Cheryl Campbell, Deborah Evans, Karen Helfer, Amy Kroin, Jody Rosenbloom (Director of Lifelong Learning), Ted Trobaugh (Chair)

The School Committee facilitates the processes which determine JCA School policy, advocate on behalf of the school, work with grade-level volunteer parents, and monitor compliance with our goals within budget. Additional concerns are addressed as they arise. Committee members also help develop and assist with related fundraising and community events, such as the Dean's Beans coffee sales, the Purim Carnival, and parent discussion groups. Members represent different area schools or educational interests; one member represents JCA School on the Education Committee. Meetings held monthly.

### **Education Committee**

2010-2011 Members: Rachael Goren-Watts (Director of Teen Programming), Lisa Perl binder (Board Co-President), David Rabinowitz (Adult Education), Andra Rose (Community Education/Board Member), Jody Rosenbloom (Director of Lifelong Learning), Stacy Tobin (Board Member/ Teens), Ted Trobaugh (Board Member/School Committee), Ariella Schwell (Families with Young Children)

The Education Committee sets education policy and advocates for the range of educational programming at the JCA, develops the budget and financial supports (in consultation with the treasurer and Finance Committee), and monitors compliance with our long-term educational goals. The Education Committee facilitates coordination among Adult Education, School, Teen, Camp Shemesh, and Community and Family Education programs in collaboration with the Director of Lifelong Learning. Composition of the committee includes representation from the board, staff and different sub-committees and/or programming areas. Meetings held monthly

New committee members must be formally nominated by the nominating committee and approved by the Board. If parents have questions or concerns about any school policy, they may contact any member of the committee to discuss these matters.

### **Adult Education: Take a Class or Come to an Event**

Many committees at the JCA and in the region offer you the opportunity to participate in your own Jewish education. Watch our JCA newsletter and the Thursday email for the latest offerings with Adult Education; Book Group; Music, Arts and Culture; and Scholar in Residence. Your children can see the value of their education when they see that you too have a Jewish journey that is a lifetime of practice and exploration.

## ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

### **Fees: What Will School Cost?**

The tuition for the 2010-2011 school year is as follows:



*bar/bat mitzvah fee)*

Shalom Sunday*	\$130.00 (4-6 year olds only)
Grades 1 & 2	\$450.00
Grades 3 – 6	\$575.00
Grade 7	\$450.00 (this does not include the

*\*Shalom Sunday is open to non-members, but tuition is double the member rate.*

In order to honor our commitment to provide a Jewish education regardless of ability to pay, we offer scholastic aid. If any of the financial terms pose a hardship at this time, please contact the Education Assistant for a Scholarship Request Form at 256-0160x209 or edassist@j-c-a.org. Scholastic aid requests are confidentially reviewed by the treasurer and a representative from the School Committee. The JCA has a limited amount of funds available for students in the JCA School. If you wish to apply for a scholarship, please turn your registration forms in ASAP. Scholarships are awarded on a rolling basis. Scholarship funds will be extremely limited for registrations turned in later than SEPTEMBER 15.

In families with 2 or more children, the oldest child pays full tuition and then there is a 10% reduction for each of the younger children. Tuition rates are subject to review with the annual budget in January.

### **POLICIES FOR TUITION AND FEES:**

1. All tuition and membership dues from the prior year must be paid in full, and the current year Dues Form with payment (as per your family's plan) must have been received, before registration can occur. 50% of total tuition (as indicated on the JCA Household Tuition Invoice: p.2) is due by August 31, 2010. Payment for the remaining tuition and fees is due by December 15, 2010.
2. We refund all but \$150 in the case of withdrawal (e.g., move, we cannot meet a child's needs) within the 1<sup>st</sup> month of the beginning of school. THERE IS NO REFUND AFTER YOUR CHILD'S FIRST MONTH OF SCHOOL.
3. We pro-rate a reduction in tuition in the case of "late" enrollment for NEW members after October 30, pro-rated as per Treasurer's schedule.
4. Additional tutorial fees for students receiving extra assistance will be charged. Families will be contacted should this apply to their children.
5. JCA dues renewal information must be submitted in January 2011 to maintain membership and finish the school year.
6. All financial arrangements must be settled by August 31, 2010 or, for new members/students, within 30 days of enrollment.

### **Books**

A fee for books is included in tuition. Children are usually given books for Hebrew study at the beginning of the school year and are welcome to keep them at the year's end. Many books have the potential to be recycled and used again. Reusing books saves us money, which may be put to other uses in our educational program.

## **Funding Sources**

1. **Budget:** Each fall, the education program budget is formulated by the Director of Lifelong Learning in consultation with the Education and Finance Committees. The budget includes enrollment projections, tuition recommendations, salary ranges, books and supplies, and professional development monies. Any policy decisions that affect finances, either income or expenses, go to the Treasurer, Finance Committee or Board. The budget is recommended by the Board and approved at a community meeting in December. The JCA runs on a January to December budget, beginning 2009, in two-year cycles. Tuition covers about 50% of the total cost of the school.
2. **Grants:** Over the last ten years we have had access to yearly grant funding, through the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and the Resource Center for Jewish Education in Springfield, which has greatly enhanced our family education, teen programs and teacher development opportunities.

## **School Announcements: Ways to Stay Informed**

1. Read the weekly, community-wide email on Thursdays. The school information will be toward the end.
2. Listen to the Director of Lifelong Learning's voice mail (ext. 203) for immediate information.
3. Watch your email. We have all-school and grade-level email lists for specific updates and announcements.
4. Snail mail – post cards, announcements and confidential correspondence as needed.
5. Read the education column in the monthly JCA newsletter.
6. Check the JCA web site ([www.j-c-a.org](http://www.j-c-a.org)) – we continue to work on a link for updates and other information.
7. Join us for the Learner's Minyan from 11:45-12:15. See what students are learning and listen to announcements.

## **Parent/Teacher Communication**

Three pre-arranged formal contacts between parents and teachers take place during the school year: Opening day, parent conferences, and progress reports. Parents are welcome to contact the child's teacher or the Director of Lifelong Learning at any time throughout the school year if they have questions or concerns about their child's progress, or simply want updated information about how their child is doing.

1. Opening Day takes place in September. Parents are invited to visit their child's classroom and meet their teacher. Teachers send letters home or call to introduce themselves, offer parent-teacher communication guidelines and discuss their expectations for the year with regard to classroom behavior, textbooks, homework, student assessments, and parent volunteer opportunities.
2. Parent conferences are held in midwinter for grades 3-6. At this time, parents may confer individually with classroom teachers about their child's progress.
3. Written progress reports are sent to parents of students grades 1-7 in midwinter and at the end of the school year.

## Attendance

Taking into account holidays and school vacations, students meet for 27 to 30 weeks. It is essential to the continuity of their learning that students attend on a regular basis. In the event of an absence, students are expected to get the assignments and make up the missed work.

## Guests in the School

Any guest wishing to visit or sit in on class must check with the Director of Lifelong Learning **in advance** to ensure minimal disruption to programming. Visiting grandparents, sleep-over friends, etc. may be asked to wait in the lobby or library instead of joining class, at the Director of Lifelong Learning's discretion.

## Monitoring Hebrew Progress

### 1. **Working Groups:**

We begin each year with a brief Hebrew review and assessment for students in grades 4-6. Students are then grouped by progress level, learning style and/or compatible study partner(s). Teachers work with each group for 20-40 minutes every Wednesday to present new material and/or to guide independent study. Teaching Assistants lead review games and activities. Groups are reviewed and placements adjusted at mid-year.

### 2. **Brit Limud/Learning Covenant:**

We work with each student to determine a clear series of goals based on their own progress and the grade level curriculum.

### 3. **Homework:**

Homework assignments are designed to reinforce what has been taught in class and provide additional practice for a variety of skills. Assignments or family study opportunities of 15-30 minutes are given throughout the school year and may be in the form of reading and writing assignments, family discussions, or reinforcement of prayer reading skills. We encourage families to take seriously this component of their educational program and complete their assignments on time. We believe that Jewish literacy includes learning to decode the Hebrew language and to become familiar with key words and prayers. This requires regular exposure to Hebrew, rituals and a monitoring process with families to help us support their children.

## Tikkun Olam/Repairing the World

We model that *tikkun olam* is about repairing the world. Each grade level learns about a key Jewish value, organizations which respond to the value, and collaborate on a related class project. We also encourage students to respond to needs that "speak to them." Each Sunday, students are asked to do one of the following:

1. Bring something for the JCA food collection, which goes to either the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, the Amherst Survival Center, or individuals in need.
2. Describe an act of kindness or mitzvah they have done during the week, or
3. Bring money to give to the class *tzedakah* collection. Each class is asked to vote two organizations (one Jewish, one non-Jewish) to receive their *tzedakah* money. The organizations chosen generally tie into a grade level theme, an annual special event, or student project. Our goal is to average \$0.25/week per student.

Over the last ten years, students have donated over \$4,000 to local, regional and national organizations including the JCA Scholarship Fund, The Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society, The New Israel Fund, Mazon, and Doctors Without Borders. The bulletin board downstairs in the school hallway displays the thank-you notes from the prior year's donations and projects.

Behavioral Expectations: KAVOD CODE

**KAVOD** means “HONOR” or “DIGNITY.” All human beings have Kavod because they have been created in God’s image. All human beings deserve to be treated with dignity, honor and respect.

WE EXPECT OUR CHILDREN AND ADULTS TO HONOR THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES:

- Treat your classmates and teachers with respect
- Listen respectfully to others
- Speak thoughtfully and kindly
- Show respect for the things you are learning
- Take special care of our sacred space
- Respect each other's individuality
- Support each other in times of sadness
- Share in each other's joy
- Find respectful ways to resolve differences

IF A STUDENT AT THE JCA BEHAVES DISRESPECTFULLY OR DISRUPTIVELY IN THE CLASSROOM, TEACHERS ARE **REQUIRED** TO FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

- **STEP 1. TEACHER INTERVENTION:** The teacher will take steps in the classroom to curb the disruptive behavior. The teacher will inform the JCA School Principal of the behavior and discuss appropriate classroom management strategies.
- **STEP 2. JCA SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:** If the student continues to behave disrespectfully, he/she will be sent out of the classroom to the JCA School Principal. The JCA School Principal will address the problem by setting goals for future positive behavior and outlining consequences for disruptive behavior. Parents will be notified.
- **STEP 3. FAMILY CONFERENCE:** If the student is sent to the JCA School Principal a second time, a conference will be held with the student, parents, teacher and JCA School Principal. This conference is required before the student may rejoin the classroom community. At this meeting, an agreement is made among all parties involved regarding positive changes in behavior.
- **STEP 4. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:** If the student’s disruptive behavior persists without improvement, the student must be accompanied by a parent in order to re-enter the classroom. Prior to returning unaccompanied to the classroom, the student and parents will once again meet with the JCA School Principal.
- **STEP 5. SHORT-TERM SUSPENSION AND TUTORIAL:** In the most extreme cases of persistent disruptive behavior, the JCA School Principal will notify the parents that the student will be suspended from the regular classroom for an individually determined amount of time. In order to continue to fulfill attendance and academic expectations during suspension, a tutor will be engaged and assignments completed demonstrating mastery of the required material. The JCA School Principal will determine if and when the student may re-enter the classroom. Parents will participate fully and take financial responsibility for any outside resources required.

### **To Facilitate Coming and Going**

Only the parking lot main door may be used for picking up/dropping off children.

Children may be dropped off a few minutes before the beginning of class and no earlier than 15 minutes before class. If your child must arrive more than 15 minutes before the beginning of class, you must call well in advance (one week, if possible) to make specific arrangements with the Director of Lifelong Learning or the Administrative Assistant.

Once students arrive at the JCA, they are expected to check in with staff and stay on school grounds. During the week, if students are walking/busing from school to the JCA, parents are responsible for supervision and safety between school and the JCA, until 3:45 PM.

Please avoid late arrivals, as they are disruptive to the class. If a student is going to be late to class, a note must be given to the classroom teacher. Notes are also required if a child is to be picked up early from class or if s/he is leaving school with someone other than their usual ride. If there is someone with whom your child should **NOT** be permitted to leave, please send a special letter to the attention of the Director of Lifelong Learning. Any child who is going to be picked up before dismissal time must be met at his/her classroom and get his/her homework assignments before leaving. Children are not permitted to leave class and wait outside for early pick up.

### **Parking Lot Protocols**

1. Remember to keep alert and drive slowly always watching for pedestrians and scampering children.
2. Come in, park in the lot. Please **DO NOT** block traffic where the children exit the building. The driveway loop in and out of the parking lot is ONE WAY. **No car should be left in the driveway without a driver at any time.**
3. Students are to wait and be picked up in the waiting area/lobby.
4. Volunteers will be helping enforce these protocols to ensure safety and efficient pick-up and drop-off during dark winter months and as needed.

### **Procedures for Emergency School Closings**

It is advisable to call the school office (256-0160, ext. 203) during the winter or inclement weather if you are uncertain about whether school will be open. In the past there were a few occasions when weather/road conditions at 7am were treacherous, but everything was fine by school time. Parents brought children to school and the building was closed. If no special message has been recorded on the school answering machine, generally, school is in session. As an extra precaution, when dropping off your child, please see that your child enters the building before you drive away. Please be aware that, in stormy weather, the phone service between sections of the valley can be disrupted. When in doubt, use your discretion about attending.

### **Weekends**

A decision will be made by 8am as to whether school will be open on weekends. This is necessary to give us enough time to notify staff and for families to know how to proceed, especially if they live some distance away.

### **Weekdays**

Any school closings will be on the answering machine in the school by 2pm. To determine school closings, use the following guidelines:

1. If Amherst Public Schools are closed in the morning, there will be no JCA School in the afternoon.
2. If Amherst Public Schools are let out early due to bad weather, there will also be no JCA School in the afternoon.