

**OLD YORK ROAD TEMPLE – BETH AM
MENSCH LAB**

#WEAREALLINTHISTOGETHER



Welcome and welcome back to the Rabbi Harold B. and Elise Waintrup Religious School. Our school is more than a conveyor of Jewish facts. Gone is the time when Jewish connection was built solely on factual knowledge (if ever it was). We are here to educate our children not just to know things, but to become someones. We are in the business of crafting souls; of building character; of creating mensches (people of integrity). And rather than passing knowledge to our students, we co-create and jointly explore with them. After all, the *menschim* we are creating are *them*...and *they* must learn to author their stories and their *menschlichkeit* (menschiness). We are guides. As co-explorers, our classrooms become not lecture halls, but labs.

As such, our school has a new “nickname”: **The Mensch Lab**. Honoring both the *menschlichkeit* of our original namesakes (Rabbi Harold B. and Elise Waintrup) and the character of our students, the Mensch Lab is the place where we grow our Jewish future in the souls of young Jews.

The theme for our year of the Mensch Lab is, “We Are All In This Together.”¹ Each month our school will focus on a Jewish value that, cultivated, helps our students to become the best they can and to be responsible for one another.

We aim to teach our students with very few hours per week. Within these short hours we plant seeds of Jewish inquisitiveness, character and exploration that will last them through their vibrantly Jewish adult lives.

We hope that you, as a member of our community, will consider joining us on Sunday mornings starting Sept. 16 for our 9:30-10:00am morning *tefillah* (worship service) that will be part of the Mensch Lab. And further, please help us continue to build this identity by using our nickname when you talk about our K-10 school.

May we each find these weeks leading to Season of Repentance a path toward greater *menschlichkeit* in each of us; may we each chart our way to our best Beth Am and to our best selves.

¹ Special thanks to our student, Chelsea Cohen, who designed this year’s logo above and came up with our year’s slogan and hashtag.

Kol Tuv - It's All Good.

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Introduction

The enclosed manual presents the policies and programs proposed by the Education Committee and then discussed, evaluated, and finally ratified by the Board of Directors of Old York Road Temple-Beth Am. These policies represent the general framework by which our Mensch Lab will function and operate. The policies and protocols presented here are all directed toward providing a Jewish education and nurturing a strong Jewish identity for your children. We look forward to you partnering with us at the “Mensch Lab” to make for a meaningful experience for your family.

Statement of Philosophy

The purpose of a Mensch Lab education is to create students who understand their beliefs as a Jew. Each child will have the basic knowledge of the core traditions, values, language and history that comprise the Jewish religion. The objectives of our Mensch Lab are: (1) students feel comfortable participating and praying (2) recognize and appreciate Jewish history while embracing tolerance, and pluralism within the contemporary Jewish community; (3) foster social relationships among the diverse students and parents to create one Beth Am family

Parent-Teacher Communication

The Mensch Lab's faculty is committed to your child's Jewish education. Our teachers welcome open and direct communication to enhance your child's education. If you have a concern, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher or the administration.

Schedule of Classes

| <u>GRADES</u> | <u>DAY</u> | <u>TIME</u> |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Kindergarten – 3 rd | Sunday mornings | 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. |
| 4 th to 6 th | Sunday mornings Tuesday afternoons | 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. 4:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. |
| 7 th | Sunday mornings | 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. |
| 8 th -10 th | Tuesday evenings | 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. |

Attendance Requirements

Thank you for selecting to be part of our Mensch Lab! Enrollment is a choice fostered by a commitment made between our staff, students, parents and lay leaders. In order to give your children, the best possible Jewish education, regular attendance is mandatory. This allows a child to participate in class activities and develop a thorough understanding of all instructional information. In the event that a long-term illness or other circumstance forces a student to be absent for a prolonged period of time, the Rabbi - Educator and Vice President of Education will determine the appropriate intervention while in consultation with parent(s)/guardian and child.

Early Dismissal

We discourage early dismissals from the Mensch Lab as students attend for just a few precious hours each week. On Sunday morning, children may be picked up at 10:30 a.m. or 11:30 a.m. only. Tuesday afternoon early pick up from school will be at 5:15 only. We are proactive with student safety. Please understand that we will not allow any student at any time to wait outside alone.

In the event that your child must leave early, the following procedures must be followed:

1. The student must give his/her teacher a note signed by a parent or guardian.
2. Parent/guardian must come into the school office to sign the student out. Please be respectful of our learning environment and do not go to the classroom.

Policy for Missed Instructional Time

There are times when an absence is unavoidable. Students are not excused from homework or classroom assignments due to absence. It is the student's responsibility to contact either a classmate or teacher to ascertain what was covered in class and homework.

If a child is absent for a prolonged period of time due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, or if a parent knows of an impending absence, it is beneficial for your child to keep up with classroom instruction. Please contact the school office, as each teacher will be more than happy to provide necessary assignments.

Lateness

A student who arrives late to class is disruptive to the teaching process and may disturb other students. Please arrange your car pools with sufficient travel time. We request that your child should be in their classroom at least 5 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

School Closing

In the event of school closings due to inclement weather or some other emergency, please check online on our website www.oyrtbetham.org. We follow Abington School district and will not hold classes when they are closed due to inclement weather.

Parking and Pick-Up/Drop-Off

- Please be courteous of others during pick-up and drop-off. The *speed limit is 15 mph*. The safety of our children is paramount.

- Please do not leave your car unattended unless you are parked in a marked spot.
- Drop-off is in the front of the building.
- Pick-up is at the back of the building.

Drop-off and Parking Procedures

- Do not plan to park in the back of the building.
- Use the main entrance if you plan to walk your child into school; park in the first open spot you see, as this is a one-way street and you may pass the closest spot!
- If you are dropping off your child, pull into the “cut out” at the synagogue front entrance.
- Do not park in Penn State’s lot; you will receive a ticket.

Pick-Up Procedures

- Grades K-2 - Pick up from their classroom by an adult or previously approved older sibling.
- Grades 3 and up – A line for carpool pick-up will begin at the overhang at the rear entrance of the building. To pick up from inside the building, please find the children and their class in the back lobby with their teacher. You should inform the teacher when you are removing the child from the premises.
- For early dismissal, you must come to the Religious School Office to sign out and pick up your child.

If you would like special permission for your child to walk to your car in the front of the building or to wait unaccompanied for pickup in our front lobby, you must send an email to JCheifetz@oyrtbetham.org in advance of us allowing your child to do so. If this is your regular method of pick-up, you only need to send this message once.

Textbooks and Supplies

Each family will pay a material fee for each child at the beginning of the year for textbooks, digital resources and other supplies. It is essential that books and supplies are brought to class each day. All students, unless otherwise instructed by the teacher, should bring two pencils, an eraser, a pen, an assignment book and notebook.

Behavioral Expectations and Protocol

Beth Am's Mensch Lab is committed to providing its students with an outstanding Jewish education. This can be done only in a positive and pleasant school environment. As a team we will work together to achieve the best learning experience for each child. Unfortunately, on occasion classroom problems do arise which must be addressed.

The following procedures will be followed:

1. If a student is sent to the Rabbi-Educator due to a disciplinary issue a telephone call will follow to the parents.
2. A third visit to the Rabbi-Educator will require an in-person meeting of the Rabbi-Educator, the student, and parent(s)/guardian. The student will not be permitted to return to the classroom until this meeting takes place.
3. If the problem persists, a disciplinary committee consisting of the Rabbi - Educator, Vice President of Education, and an additional rabbi will meet with the parent(s)/guardian. The committee may

recommend various avenues for resolving the issue which may include alternative learning methods, a student/teacher/parent contract, or if necessary, expulsion from the Mensch Lab.

Ritual Practice

On Tuesday afternoons grades 4-6 will participate in an evening prayer service in the Molish Sanctuary or in the Temple Beth Torah Chapel. Students are required to participate to the best of their abilities.

Communication during School

Student use of cellphones during school is strictly prohibited. A teacher may ask students to shut off, put away, or if necessary collect all electronic devices. Calling a student during class time is disruptive. If you have an emergency, please call the office at 215-886-6030.

Resource Center for Special Needs

Beth Am is committed to excellence in education and a belief that all Jewish children are entitled to learn about their heritage. We are proud to offer support through the Amanda Sham Resource Room for Children with Special Needs. We understand that children utilize different modalities to learn and progress at various speeds. The Resource Center, staffed by experienced special education professionals, will utilize progressive and innovative teaching techniques with a diverse scope for our entire school population. This program will service students in kindergarten through grade 6. For further information, contact Rabbi Tornberg.

The Roberta ז"ל and Dr. Herb Kronstadt Scholarship Fund

We are excited to share with you two scholarship opportunities for students in our community each year. First, a scholarship is available for a student with special needs whose family requires assistance in paying for their Mensch Lab education and b. mitzvah training. The second is for a student with special needs who would like to become b. mitzvah, but whose more severe needs prevent them from participating in our Mensch Lab program. Please let Rabbi Tornberg know if you know of a family (whether or not they are Beth Am members) who are interested in learning more.

Progress Reports

We assess our student learning all the time at the Mensch Lab both formally and informally. It is the only way we can judge the effectiveness of our teaching. As such, student performance in each class is formally assessed in the form of a progress report in January and at the end of the school year. Progress reports will be emailed to parents. If you have any questions about the process please contact the Rabbi – Educator, and we may schedule a meeting between the teacher, administration, and parents. If you have questions about a child's progress, please do not feel the need to wait until you receive the progress report.

Tzedekah

One of our school's goals is to teach students the necessity of helping others less fortunate than themselves. For this reason, we emphasize Tzedakah (justice and righteousness towards others). We teach the mitzvah of tzedakah through collecting money each session during school. Please remind your child to bring in some of his/her own money for tzedakah. We decide as a Mensch Lab community on the recipients of our collected funds.

Shabbat Service Attendance

Students in grades 4 through 7 are *required* to attend a minimum of four (4) services, all of which must be Shabbat services. Two services must be at Beth Am and two may be elsewhere with a note from the parent with date of the service and the name of the synagogue. One year prior to B'nai Mitzvah, students must attend eight (8) services (depending on B'nai Mitzvah date – see Bar/Bat Mitzvah Manual). When Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah take place on Shabbat, these Shabbat services will not count towards the service requirement.

This policy was enacted so children, along with their parents, have the opportunity to practice the rituals and traditions taught in our Mensch Lab. This type of enriching experience permits our children to better understand what it is to be Jewish, but, also helps our children develop a connection to our worship services. You are strongly encouraged to attend with your children.

Policy: Students will attend at least two services before receiving their B'nai Mitzvah date and student(s) will have attended four services prior to beginning B'nai Mitzvah training. All students will complete the remaining service requirement by the end of the Mensch Lab year.

Family Services

The first Friday evening of each month we celebrate Shabbat with (H)Our Shabbat—a hour-long family service during which students lead portions of our music and worship. Beginning at 7:00 p.m. when older kids help lead (grades 4-7) and beginning at 6:30 p.m. when younger students help lead (grades K-3; these evenings there will also be a small dinner served for these young families at 6:00p.m.). (H)Our Shabbat is geared towards our school-age children and their families to enjoy a relaxed, music-filled Shabbat evening service with the Rabbis, Cantor and Junior Choir. We will also usually celebrate the month's birthdays together on this evening. (H)Our Shabbat services can be used to fulfill Shabbat service attendance requirements. Please check our website, Temple Topics and the calendar as occasionally service times may change.

Judy and Julian Weinstein Family Education Programs

There will be times through the year when we have family programs. We request your presence with your child. As we respect your contribution of time, these programs are designed for social and educational benefit of your family.

Junior Choir

Junior choir for grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 will meet on some Sundays from 12:00-12:30 p.m. under the direction of Cantor Zarkh. Students have the options of preparing to participate in our annual Abington Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, the Old York Road Kehillah's Chanukah Concert and two special Junior Choir Shabbat services at Beth Am, including May's Education H(O)ur Shabbat service. Rehearsal dates will abut performance dates and interested singers may pick which performances work for their schedules.

Music

Students in grades kindergarten - tenth will have music as part of their regular curriculum. Students in Grades K, 1, 2, 3 and 7 will have music on Sunday mornings and grades 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 on Tuesdays with Cantor Zarkh.