



Congregation Beth Sholom Shabbat School & Community Program

What is this new Shabbat-centered program about?

We seek to enhance our youth's Jewish education and our life as a community by sharing sustained, joyful, and elevating experiences together on Shabbat.

Why are we doing this?

We want to deliver a curriculum that is more powerfully rooted in our core values of Torah, Tefillah (prayer), community, and Shabbat as the center of Jewish life and have invested many months of research and discussion in this process.

What does this mean for the religious school?

Our new model means that our students will attend religious school on Shabbat (Saturday) instead of Sunday. Weekday classes will remain the same as they have been in past years.

What will the students learn?

Our new school model will familiarize students with Torah through study of each week's portion and provide in-depth knowledge and familiarity with each component of the Shabbat morning service.

What will students do?

Students will actively participate and learn the Shabbat morning service and the weekly Torah portion in age-appropriate groups and through games and activities. Different grades will participate and/or lead various parts of the main service. At 12 p.m., they will come together with their parents and the whole congregation to actively participate in Kiddush.

What will parents and other adults get out of it?

Parents will be able to participate in the different Shabbat services plus Torah study (alongside all other adults in our congregation) and/or join their children and the rest of the congregation for a joyful Kiddush lunch at 12 p.m.

When does it start?

September 10, 2011.

What will a student be able to do by their B'nai Mitzvah year?

- Know and lead portions of weekday Shacharit
- Know the Torah service, particularly the blessings for Aliyot as well as Torah and Haftarah readings



- Know how to prepare and deliver a D'var Torah – a student will be able to present two conflicting teachings from traditional commentators, and reconcile them with a third teaching
- Know how to lay tefillin and use a tallit
- Know how to read and write prayer book Hebrew

What if my child has sports events on Saturday?

Sports events on Saturday are a reality of life in our city. Our more consistent and predictable curriculum will make attendance disruptions less of a problem, and our Rabbis are prepared to work with families to work out acceptable arrangements.

What if I don't want to be here with my child?

We strongly encourage parents to join us on Saturday mornings, but we understand that this is not always possible. There will be teachers here to welcome children in the morning, there will be staff supervision throughout the duration of the program, and we hope that you will join us for Kiddush after services at 12 p.m.

Is there a similar program anywhere else?

Yes. Many Conservative synagogues have already made the switch to a Shabbat-centered program, including local synagogues like Congregation Kol Emeth in Palo Alto, Congregation Netivot Shalom in Berkeley, and Ikar in Los Angeles. We've spoken to and visited these congregations. They've all shared valuable information with us along with very positive feedback from their communities and their plans to continue with this model indefinitely.