



CONGREGATION
AGUDAS ACHIM

P.O. Box 28400
Austin, Texas 78755-8400

22 Sivan, 5777

June 16, 2017

Dear Agudas Achim Community,

In the past year, our community has been working toward greater inclusion of individuals with diverse needs. You may have participated in a survey on this topic earlier this year. If so, thank you. Your responses and comments have been heard and are informing the growth of our community.

We also aspire toward greater inclusion of our youngest members by making Congregation Agudas Achim's Religious School (CAARS) more responsive to students with learning differences and unique social-emotional needs. As a licensed psychologist who works with children and families, I will be partnering with CAA to provide confidential consultation to help CAARS implement accommodations, as able, in the religious school classrooms.

Therefore, if you have a CAARS student with 504 Accommodations or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) at your child's public school, we invite you to share your child's report and the relevant accommodations so that we can strive to implement them in the CAARS classroom as well. We will, of course, provide appropriate confidentiality with the material you share with us.

If your child has not been formally evaluated, yet you suspect special needs emerging, we invite you to share your observations with us so that we can collaboratively create a plan that will be helpful to your child. If you are in the process of having your child's learning needs assessed, the structured setting of the CAARS classroom, consisting of a different teacher and peers, may help inform the assessment process.

If you have any questions about these efforts or would like to take the next steps in discussing potential accommodations for your CAARS student, please contact me directly at 512-550-8305 (drbhersh@gmail.com) or contact Dr. Harvey Raben, CAA Director of Congregational Learning, at 512-735-8422 (harvey.raben@caa-austin.org).

In sum, it is our goal to make CAARS as meaningful an experience as possible for our children and families as we work together to educate and inspire the next generation of Jewish leaders.

Sincerely,

Brooke Hersh, Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist
CAA Board Member

Harvey Raben, Ed.D.
Director of Congregational Learning