

CAARS PARENT HANDBOOK



Congregation Agudas Achim

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

5785 (2024-2025)

Neil F. Blumofe, Senior Rabbi

Gail Swedroe, Associate Rabbi

Tamara Stone, Director of Youth Education

Zoe Steiner, Education and Engagement Coordinator

Jamie Artman, Education VP

Susan Klein, CAA President

(512) 735-8420 | theaustinsynagogue.org

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Zoe's Contact: edcoordinator@caa-austin.org

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Shalom CAARS Parents,

Welcome to the new year 5785 at CAARS! We are beginning registration earlier to ensure that we have proper staffing for our growing school. We encourage you to reserve spots by paying a deposit for your children before June 1st.

The theme of CAARS will be **Kavod תִּבְרָךְ (Respect/Honor)**! The intention is to honor and notice the good in every one of us and for our CAARS community to embody Kehillat Kavod, or a community of respect! We are so excited to have all of our returning students and we look forward to welcoming our new students this year!

Enroll now at early bird prices through June 1st. Registration deposits will be applied to your tuition.

We are launching a new **"Minyan Mensch"** program in 5785. All K-5th grade students who attend Shabbat services at least 10 times during the school year will be invited to a special celebration in May. Students will put a sticker by their name each week they attend any of the services including Friday night, Shabbat morning in the sanctuary, or Shalom Minyan.

See below for a grade-by-grade outline of when each class will meet.

Please read until the end for FAQs!

Pre-K; Sundays 9:30-12:00 pm; Twice a month

Pre-K is open to CAA members and non-members.

K-2nd grade; Sundays 9:30-12:00 pm

3rd-5th grade;

- **Sundays from 9:30-12:00 pm**
- **Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 pm**

3rd-5th grades learn Judaics as well as Hebrew on Sundays and Tuesdays. Tuesdays include community building over pizza dinner.

We understand that, for some families, extenuating circumstances may prevent students from attending in person on Tuesdays on a regular basis. For those who need an online only option, please mark "Online Option - Hebrew only" during the registration process. The online option only includes Hebrew learning. Date and time TBD depending on enrollment.

6th grade;

- **Shabbat Morning (Saturdays) 9:45-12:45 pm**
- **Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 pm**

Students will meet in the sanctuary at 9:45 am on Shabbat morning and have the opportunity to either sit b'yachad, together, with a parent or with a teacher/madrachim helping them follow along during Shacharit and the first part of the Torah service. At approximately 10:15 am, students will go to their classroom where they will engage in our 6th Grade curriculum focusing on *Parshanut*, study of the weekly Torah portion with commentary, as well as Torah Trope.

Our Shabbat morning program will continue to strengthen our b'nei mitzvah students' confidence with leading services and comfort in feeling a part of our beloved CAA community. By sharing lunch together each week, our students connect with one another and foster their love of Shabbat.

We understand that, for some families, extenuating circumstances may prevent students from attending in person on Tuesdays on a regular basis. For those who need an online only option, please mark "Online Option - Hebrew only" during the registration process. The online option only includes Hebrew learning. Date and time TBD depending on enrollment.

7th Grade; Shabbat Morning 9:30-12:45 pm

Students will meet in the Chapel at 9:30 am with Rabbi Swedroe to explore personal theology, the meaning of the Torah service, and Jewish values and holidays through the study of Rabbinic Literature. At 10:10 am students will move to the sanctuary to participate in the Torah and Musaf services and support their classmates celebrating becoming B'nei Mitzvah. At the conclusion of services, students will have lunch together each week, reinforcing their connection to each other and to our CAA community.

3rd-7th grade Shabbaton*; Jan 24th-26th

We are so excited to continue the tradition of hosting a CAARS Shabbaton at CYJ! The Shabbaton is an integral part of our CAARS year. As we expect all students in 3rd-7th will join us for this fun and experiential learning opportunity, there will not be any CAARS for grades 3-7 that weekend. Please save the date now and plan for your child(ren) to attend! Reserve your spot for the Shabbaton during enrollment. Shabbaton payment is nonrefundable. Please note that cost should not be a barrier to attending. Anyone needing financial assistance should contact Lanie Bailey, our account manager (lanie.bailey@caa-austin.org; 512-735-8410).

[*A Shabbaton is a programmed retreat over Shabbat. Our Shabbaton is held at Camp Young Judaea in Wimberley. Please see below for FAQs.]

8th-10th grade; Sundays 12:00-1:30 pm (lunch 12:00-12:30 pm)

11th-12th grade; Sundays 11:00-12:30 pm; Twice a month (lunch 12:00-12:30)

11th and 12th will meet with Rabbi Blumofe and will be invited to join the 8th -10th grades for a teen lunch until 12:30 pm.

Youth Groups

Zoe Steiner, our Education and Engagement Coordinator, will be the advisor for our youth groups. Fun and engaging activities for each age group will be held regularly throughout the year. During registration, please enroll your child(ren) in the youth groups to participate!

- Chaverim (K- 5th grade)
- Geshar (6th- 8th grade)
- USY (9th-12th grade)

Bivracha (With Blessings),

Tammy Stone

Director of Youth Education

Congregation Agudas Achim Religious School

FAQ:

3rd-6th Grade Tuesday

*Is there an additional charge for my child to have pizza? What if my child has special dietary restrictions/doesn't eat pizza?

No. There is no additional cost to families. If your child has dietary restrictions, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate them. If your child does not eat pizza, they are welcome to bring food to eat that is dairy or pareve.

*Will there be a weekday Judaics component available online?

No. Online weekday learning will be limited to Hebrew learning.

*What if my in-person student can't make it one week but can join in online? Will they be able to attend an online class?

No. The online groups are their own cohorts, similar to the in-person groups. We understand that students may sometimes need to be absent due to illness etc. Teachers may be contacted to find out what a student missed.

*If I sign up for the online option, will I be charged less?

No. Both in-person programming and online Hebrew pods will be the same cost due to the additional cost of staffing for online learning.

Shabbaton

*Will all students in a grade be in the same cabin?

Students will be assigned cabins by grade. Depending on the number of students, there may be other similar grade levels in that same cabin.

*What adults will be in the cabins with the students.

There will be an adult from CAARS in each cabin. In a few of the younger cabins we may have an extra madrich/a.

*Do you have a schedule of events for the weekend so I can prepare my student for what to expect while away?

Here is a [link to last year's schedule](#). The schedule for this year will be similar but will have a different theme and activities.

*Will kids be in their age group for activities?

Some activities will be by age group or by cabin. Other theme activities will be in mixed age groups. We want our students to get to know each other.

*Will the cabins be heated/air conditioned?

Yes, the cabins will be heated/air conditioned. Depending on the weather, it is recommended to send students with a warm sleeping bag.

*What if my child has never been away to camp before?

For a number of our students, this is their first time away from home. Our teachers are aware of this and are prepared to reassure the students. We have found that our students have a blast and that they cannot wait to go again next year!

*Can I call my student to check in on them?

No. In order to be fully immersed in Shabbat and our CAARS community, the Shabbaton is a device-free experience. We will call parents if there is an emergency. Parents will also have a number to call in case of an emergency at home. Beyond that, please trust that your child is having a great time.

K-10TH CAARS Calendar 5785

Kavod
Respect!
כבוד

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Aug 25:** Meet the Teacher
- **Sept 8:** First Day of CAARS
- **Sept 15:** 1st Grade Family Program
- **Sept 29:** 2nd Grade Family Program
- **Oct 8:** Off-Site Tashlich Family Program
- **Oct 26:** 6th Grade Kabbalat HaTorah
- **Oct 27:** Kindergarten Consecration
- **Nov 10:** 4th Grade Family Program
- **Nov 17:** 6th Grade Family Program/
Handbook Meeting
- **Dec 8th:** 3rd - 7th, Shabbaton
Information Session
- **Jan 19:** Mitzvah Day Family Program
- **Jan 24 - 26:** 3rd - 7th Grade Shabbaton
- **Feb 9:** 5th Grade Family Program/
B'nei Mitzvah Q&A
- **Feb 23:** B'nei Mitzvah Date Selection
- **Mar 2:** 3rd Grade Family Program
- **Apr 6:** 3rd Grade Kabbalat HaSiddur
- **May 2:** 10th Grade Bikkurim
- **May 18:** Last Day of CAARS

First and Last Day of School

Sun: K-5th, 9:30AM - 12PM
8th-10th, 12PM - 1:30PM

Tues: 3rd-6th, 4:30PM - 6:30PM

Sat: 6th, 9:45AM - 12:45PM
7th, 9:30AM - 12:45PM

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**Congregation
Agudas Achim**
RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

PK & 11TH - 12TH

CAARS
Calendar
5785

Kavod
Respect!
כבוד

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Aug 25:** Meet the Teacher
- **Sept 8:** First Day of CAARS
- **Jan 19:** Mitzvah Day Family Program
- **May 18:** Last Day of CAARS

First and Last Day of School

Sun: PreK, 9:30AM - 12PM
11th-12th, 11AM - 12:30PM

August

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September

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May

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1. Vision | Mission | Values

CAARS Vision: *The Why*

We will joyfully engage learners with Jewish experiences and skills, inspiring them to lead an empowered, Jewish life.

CAARS Mission: *The How*

Experience

We offer an experiential model of education, which allows each learner to explore and discover meaning and identity through Jewish tradition and thought. We emphasize creating positive relationships, joyful learning, questioning, and critical thinking through hands-on experiences. Our curriculum incorporates Hebrew language, Torah study, Jewish values, holiday celebrations, prayer literacy, learning about Israel's history and culture, and more.

Community

We come together with the understanding that we are ALL learners. We embrace our learners, seeking to build connections to history, community, and each other. We strive to “raise mensches” – preparing lifelong learners and active citizens of the world through a Jewish lens.

Partnership

We work in partnership with families to foster excitement and commitment to all that Judaism has to offer, seeking to address the needs of our community, through personalized and inclusive learning.

2. CAARS HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

***Updated August 1st, 2022**

Please note: CAARS meets quarterly and takes directives from the CAA Health Advisory Committee.

We look towards Austin Public Health and the Center for Disease Control to follow best practices at CAARS. **Community levels will determine whether we hold classrooms indoors or in our outside classrooms.** While masking is not mandatory, we strongly encourage and recommend following APH Covid-19 Risk-Based Guidelines Chart to help determine best practices in our community:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/page/covid-19-risk-based-guidelines>

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0811-covid-guidance.html>

Vaccination

We require all students to be up to date on their immunizations (vaccines) for their age (as required by the State of Texas.)

We encourage all members of the CAARS community to become vaccinated for COVID-19 if they are not already.

COVID-19 Screening

If you or your child are feeling sick, regardless of whether you're vaccinated for COVID or not, **please stay home and do not come to CAARS.** Contact your physician. If your child has attended CAARS and tests positive, please let us know as soon as possible so we can notify close contacts regarding an exposure.

3. Arrival and Departure

Carpool Safety:

When using the carpool line, please follow some basic traffic rules:

-Wait patiently in line

-Pay attention – and please hang up the phone!

-Please do not leave your car unattended in the drop-off or pick-up lane.

-Please do not block entryways

-When picking up more than one child, instruct your older child(ren) to go to the younger child's designated pick-up area on Sundays. Pick-up all children from the youngest child's pick-up area.

4. Drop-off and Pick-Up Procedures

Drop-off Procedures

PreK—2nd Grade

Parents and children in grades Pre-K through 2nd grade should be dropped off at the CAA main entrance circle drive. The drop-off window is 9:15-9:30 AM on Sundays.

3rd—6th Grade

Please drop your children off at the AJA circle drive in the back. The drop-off window is 9:15 – 9:30 AM on Sundays and 4:15-4:30 PM on Tuesdays.

Late Drop-Off

Late drop-off is arrival after 9:30 AM on Sundays and after 4:30 PM on Tuesdays. For late arrival, please bring students to the CAARS office through the door to the right of the CAA main entrance circle drive. A member of the CAARS faculty will escort your child to class. If you are unable to get in, please call the CAARS office at 512-735-8420 and we will open the door for you.

Drop-off Checklist

-Water bottle

-Dairy or parve snack for Sundays (Optional for Tuesdays)

Pick-up Procedures

PreK—2nd Grade

Please pick up your child at the CAA main entrance circle drive again. Older siblings should meet their younger siblings to be picked up together at this location on Sundays. Pick-up is at 12 PM.

3rd—6th Grade

Please pick up your child at the AJA circle drive in the back again. Older siblings should meet their younger siblings to be picked up together on Sundays. Pick-up is at 12:00 PM on Sundays and at 6:30 PM on Tuesdays.

8th—12th Grade

Students should enter CAA through the Social Hall doorway to the left of the CAA main entrance circle drive at 12:00 PM and go to lunch in the Social Hall. Students can be picked up from the CAA main entrance circle drive at 12:30 PM.

Early Pick-up

Please let us know in advance if your child will need early release by emailing your child's teacher, Zoe and Tammy or calling the CAARS office. Your child will be brought to the CAARS office at the time indicated. Please come to the CAARS office, to the right of the CAA main entrance circle drive, to pick up your child. Call the CAARS office at 512-735-8420 if you are unable to get in.

5. Inclement Weather/Emergency Closings

We will be watching the weather each week and will note any updates on expected severe weather in the newsletter on Thursday. We may need to reach out to you after Shabbat if we see any significant weather updates and commit to notify you via email by 7AM, Sunday if classes are canceled. For Tuesdays we will follow Austin ISD cancellations for the day as well as for after school activities and we will notify you via email as soon as those decisions are announced.

6. Attendance and Absences

Attendance is extremely important to each student's success at CAARS. We take attendance towards the start of each class. **Please notify your child's teacher(s) directly and the CAARS Office via email if your child will be absent.** Please include your child's name, their grade and the dates that they will be absent. For a child's safety and security, it is very important for us to know when students are absent.

7. Communication

It is imperative that we have your most used and up-to-date email address on file, as our primary form of communication is via email. Weekly CAARS newsletters will be sent out on Thursdays.

8. Student Success

At CAARS we strive to support all learners. We believe all our students are unique and have a diverse set of needs both in and out of the classroom. We believe that CAARS families are engaged and collaborative partners with our educators and encourage parents to help our teachers by discussing learning differences, behavioral, and medical needs with CAARS administration and their child's teacher as soon as possible. This will greatly enhance our learning partnership as we work to ensure your child's individual learning goals are met. It is imperative that parents email the Director of Youth Education, Tammy Stone, tammy.stone@caa-austin.org, any IEPs or 504 plans that a student is on. This information will be kept confidential. We need to know how best to plan for student success. Should we believe a child needs guidance, assistance, or a behavior plan, we will be in touch to plan and collaborate, accordingly.

9. Classroom Behavior

CAARS is committed to providing an environment that is safe, orderly, and conducive to learning. This applies not only to the facility and program, but also to the behavior of the students in the school. We understand the need to be flexible and adjust to the needs of the students. However, it is important that students and parents understand the basic standards of the school. In general, the school will not tolerate behavior that poses a threat to the safety and integrity of students, results in damage to school property, or behavior that seriously disrupts the learning process.

CAARS expects students and teachers to maintain a high level of mutual respect and to act according to Jewish values. All students who attend CAARS should understand and agree to the following expectations:

- Respect others. Name calling, teasing, swearing, threatening and embarrassing others is not acceptable in our school. Students don't have to be friends with everyone, but they must treat everyone with courtesy and dignity. Also, hitting, kicking, biting or unwanted touching is not acceptable and may be grounds for immediate removal from class.

- Respect school property. Take care of your books, use chairs and tables properly so they do not get damaged, honor bulletin board displays by not touching them, and keep the school clean by throwing away trash after recess, lunch, and in the bathrooms and not writing on school property (graffiti).
- Respect other people's property. Use what is yours; ask permission before you use something that belongs to someone else. Don't go into another person's cubby, desk, or backpack without asking. If you use something and it gets ruined, replace it.
- Respect the learning process. Wait your turn, share materials, let the teacher work with others, don't distract or disrupt others, follow instructions as best you can; in this way everybody gets to learn.

To help clarify these community practices, students practice the different behaviors that are expected of them (walking together in the hallways, getting dismissed, etc.) at the beginning of each year and as needed to reinforce those behaviors. Each teacher uses a variety of techniques to help maintain an appropriate standard of behavior.

The teacher will work with students on issues or problems in the classroom. If that is unsuccessful, the parents will be notified, and a conversation will be held to determine a plan of action. At times, a formal conference with the administration may be necessary. Our expectation is that parents, teachers, administration, and students will work as a team to solve issues so that everyone can be successful in the classroom.

10. Cell Phones and Technology

At CAARS, our goal is to build community and connections among students. In order to facilitate face-to-face communication during our limited time, we ask that students not bring technology such as cell phones/tablets/laptops etc. to school. If a student brings a device for safety purposes, we ask that it be kept in a bag during CAARS time. If a device is seen, we will ask that it be turned into the office or a designated place in the classroom until the end of the CAARS session. Teachers may choose to incorporate technology into specific parts of lessons and CAARS has technology to enable those lessons.

11. Food/Snacks

Please provide snacks (on Sundays) and a water bottle for your child. We ask that **snacks are either only DAIRY or PARVE snacks** (vegetables, pretzels, fruit, etc.) Please do not pack any kind of nut (peanut or tree nuts) as many students have nut allergies.

12. Parent Partnership

We strongly believe in parent partnership and family engagement. Please reach out to Sarah Shapiro, Zoe Steiner, or Tammy Stone should you be interested in learning more about how you can join the CAARS Advisory Committee.

13. Tzedakah

Students are encouraged to contribute tzedakah for their class on both Tuesdays and Sundays. At the end of the school year, each class will decide how to distribute their tzedakah funds.