

The Joseph and Belle Braun Anshe Emet Religious School

First Grade Contemporary Jewish Life



We don't just teach Hebrew; we nurture a growing Jewish soul.

Contemporary Jewish Life: Who Are the People in Your Synagogue Community? Lesson 1 Program & Youth Staff (and How They Make Holidays Happen)

- Look on your synagogue's website
 - Who are the people who work for the synagogue?
 - What kinds of things and activities are happening at the synagogue this month? (If this information is not on your website, can you find it somewhere else? Newsletter? Social media?)
- Invite the person or people at the synagogue who are responsible for making all these activities happen - the program director, youth director, etc. - to join you in class, or go meet them in their office
- Prepare interview questions with your students, for example:
 - Why do you like to work here?
 - How many programs do you plan every week?
 - Every month?
 - How long before a holiday do you start planning for that holiday?
 - How do you let people know about your programs?
 - What is the best or most fun program you've ever created?
 - Do you prefer dark or milk chocolate?
 - How long have you worked here?
 - What's a fun thing coming up we should tell our parents about?
- Assign a question to each student
- Keep the interview to under fifteen minutes
- Take some photos of the students with the staff person
 - Start a Google slide show with the photos and some quick outtakes from the students after the interview (what does this person do? What do they like? what other things do you wonder about them? when might you see them again?)
 - Share with parents and community (and the staff person, of course)
- Be sure to make a thank you card!

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Know the people in the synagogue community and the roles they play in making life and community happen
2. Understand how each person is important in building the synagogue community
3. Feel connected to the people who build and sustain the synagogue community

Contemporary Jewish Life: Who are the People in Your Synagogue Community? Lesson 2 – Rabbis

Coach's Voice:

The goal of the lesson is for students to understand who the rabbi(s) at their synagogue are, and what they do. All questions asked and interaction should be in service of those goals.



- Brainstorm with students: What does a rabbi do?
 - Make a list you can add to later
- Can the students name all the rabbis (or at least some, if there is more than one) at your synagogue?
- Where is the rabbi's office (or rabbis' offices)?
- If you want to talk to a rabbi, can you just pop into their office?
 - Who are the people who support the rabbi and help them get their work done?
- Invite a rabbi to join you in class, or go meet them in their office
- Prepare interview questions with your students. For example:
 - Why do you like to work here?
 - We made a list of what we think you do
 - How did we do?
 - What did we miss?
 - Do you prefer dark or milk chocolate?
 - How long have you worked here?
 - What do you like to do when you're not here at synagogue?
 - Do you have any pets?
 - Who are the members of your family?
 - Why did you want to be a rabbi?
- Assign a question to each student
- Keep the interview to under fifteen minutes
- Take some photos of the students with the staff person
 - Start a Google slide show with the photos and some quick outtakes from the students after the interview (what does this person do? What do they like? what other things do you wonder about them? when might you see them again?)
 - Share with parents and community (and the staff person, of course)
- Be sure to make a thank you card!

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Know the rabbis in the synagogue community and the roles they play in making life and community happen

Contemporary Jewish Life: Who are the People in Your Synagogue Community? Lesson 3 – Maintenance & Security Staff

Coach's Voice:

The goal of the lesson is for students to understand who the Maintenance and Security staff at their synagogue are, and what they do. All questions asked and interaction should be in service of those goals. Take care, especially with the security staff, to investigate how they keep the synagogue and its members safe without letting the conversation get too scary or focused on potential threats.



- Brainstorm and investigate with students:
- What does the maintenance staff do?
 - Make a list you can add to later
- Where is their office?
- Who is in charge of the maintenance staff?
 - What is that person's title?
 - Are they listed with the staff on the synagogue's website, if the staff is listed on the website?
 - Why does that matter?
- What does the security staff do? Make a list you can add to later.
- Where is their office?
- Who is in charge of the security staff?
 - What is that person's title?
 - Are they listed with the staff on the synagogue's website, if the staff is listed on the website?
 - Why does that matter?
- Can the students name all (or at least some of) the maintenance and security staff at your synagogue?
- Invite a member of each the maintenance and security staff to join you in class or go meet them in their offices or work areas
- Prepare interview questions with your students, for example:
 - Why do you like to work here?
 - We made a list of what we think you do
 - How did we do?
 - What did we miss?
 - Do you prefer dark or milk chocolate?
 - How long have you worked here?
 - What do you like to do when you're not here at synagogue?
 - Do you have any pets?
 - Who are the members of your family?
- Assign a question to each student
- Keep the interview to under fifteen minutes
- Take some photos of the students with the staff person

- Start a Google slide show with the photos and some quick outtakes from the students after the interview (what does this person do? What do they like? what other things do you wonder about them? when might you see them again?)
 - Share with parents and community (and the staff person, of course)
- Be sure to make a thank you card!

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Understand how each person, such as maintenance and security staff, is important in building the synagogue community

Contemporary Jewish Life: Who are the People in Your Synagogue Community? Lesson 4 – Cantors, Ritual Directors, & Song Leaders

Coach's Voice:

The goal of the lesson is for students to understand who the cantors/ritual directors/song leaders at their synagogue are, and what they do. All questions asked and interactions should be in service of those goals.



- Brainstorm with students:
- What does a cantor/hazzan do?
 - Make a list you can add to later
- Where is the cantor's office?
- Who are all the people in the synagogue who help lead tefillah or singing?
- Can the students name the cantor and other musical staff at your synagogue?
- Why is it important to have a person in charge of the music at the synagogue?
- What are some favorite Jewish songs or tefillot the students like to sing?
- Invite the cantor to join you in class, or go meet them in their office
- Prepare interview questions with your students, for example:
 - Why do you like to work here?
 - We made a list of what we think you do
 - How did we do?
 - What did we miss?
 - Do you prefer dark or milk chocolate?
 - How long have you worked here?
 - What do you like to do when you're not here at synagogue?
 - Do you have any pets?
 - Who are the members of your family?
 - Why did you want to be a cantor?
 - Will you teach us your favorite song?
- Assign a question to each student
- Keep the interview to under fifteen minutes
- Take some photos of the students with the staff person
 - Start a Google slide show with the photos and some quick outtakes from the students after the interview (what does this person do? What do they like? what other things do you wonder about them? when might you see them again?)
 - Share with parents and community (and the clergy person, of course)
- Be sure to make a thank you card!

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Know the cantors/ritual directors/song leaders in the synagogue community and the roles they play in making life and community happen

Contemporary Jewish Life: Who are the People in Your Synagogue Community? Lesson 5 – Lay Leaders

Coach's Voice:

Synagogue lay leaders - board and committee members - are typically not visible, especially to first graders, in the way that rabbis or teachers are. It is important for first graders to understand these behind-the-scenes leaders and how they help build community, even if they are not up-front leading prayer or youth groups.



- Wonder with students:
- Who are the people that help make the synagogue run every day?
 - Are they listed on the synagogue website?
- Does the board president have an office at the synagogue?
- What kinds of decisions might the lay leaders make?
- Invite the Synagogue Board President to join you in class
 - If there is a parent in class that serves on the board, they are a good choice, too
- Prepare interview questions with your students, for example:
 - What do you do as the Board President (or member of the board)?
 - Why do you want to be a lay leader here?
 - Do you prefer dark or milk chocolate?
 - How long have you been a lay leader here?
 - What do you like to do when you're not here at synagogue?
 - Do you have any pets?
 - Who are the members of your family?
 - What are your hopes and dreams for the synagogue?
- Assign a question to each student
- Keep the interview to under fifteen minutes
- Take some photos of the students with the staff person
 - Start a Google slide show with the photos and some quick outtakes from the students after the interview (what does this person do? What do they like? what other things do you wonder about them? when might you see them again?)
 - Share with parents and community (and the staff person, of course)
- Be sure to make a thank you card!

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Know some of the lay leaders in the synagogue community and the roles they play in making life and community happen

Contemporary Jewish Life: Who are the People in Your Synagogue Community? Lesson 6 – Educators

Coach's Voice:

The goal of the lesson is for students to understand who the educators at their synagogue are, and what they do. All questions asked and interactions should be in service of those goals.



- Brainstorm with students:
 - What's an educator?
 - Who are the educators at your synagogue?
 - What do they do?
 - Where is their office?
- Invite the director of the religious school or other educator to join you in class, or go meet them in their office.
- Prepare interview questions with your students, for example:
 - Why do you like to work here?
 - We made a list of what we think you do
 - How did we do?
 - What did we miss?
 - Do you prefer dark or milk chocolate?
 - How long have you worked here?
 - What do you like to do when you're not here at synagogue?
 - Do you have any pets?
 - Who are the members of your family?
 - Why did you want to be an educator?
- Assign a question to each student
- Keep the interview to under fifteen minutes
- Take some photos of the students with the staff person
 - Start a Google slide show with the photos and some quick outtakes from the students after the interview (what does this person do? What do they like? what other things do you wonder about them? when might you see them again?)
 - Share with parents and community (and the educator, of course)
- Be sure to make a thank you card!

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Know the educators in the synagogue community and the roles they play in making life and community happen

Contemporary Jewish Life: Different Kinds of Jewish Families

Lesson 1- Interfaith & Interracial Families

Coach's Voice:

In first grade, students immerse in contemporary Jewish life by looking at who is around them - people in their synagogue community, and different kinds of Jewish families. As you explore different kinds of Jewish families, it is important to notice who is in your class, and include books and lessons that validate the families in your class. This curriculum includes lessons and resources for teaching about interfaith Jewish families, multiracial Jewish families, Jewish LGBTQ+ families, and Jewish families with family members with disabilities. If you have families in your class that are exceptional in other ways, maybe a single parent, or grandparents raising children, or blended families, it is worthwhile to find resources that validate all the families in your class. This resource can help you structure your conversation about "What is a family?"

https://assets2.hrc.org/welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Lesson_What_is_a_Family.pdf



Suggested Activities:

Family Brainstorm

- Write down everything students suggest about what a Jewish family might look like on a board or easel
 - Don't push too hard, but try and elicit a wide variety, which includes all the family make-ups represented by the class, and then includes a wider diversity
 - Help students think about number of parents, skin colors, gender of parents, abilities and disabilities of family members, etc.
 - Make sure the list is made without judgment and without elevating one kind of family as better, or more authentic
- Read the book *Chicken Soup Chicken Soup* by Pamela Mayer*
 - The story is about a girl with two grandmothers: one Asian American and one Jewish American
 - Here is the reading guide from PJ Library:
<https://pjlibrary.org/getmedia/61ab8967-8faa-4962-bb51-24342aa32870/Chicken-Soup-Chicken-Soup.pdf>
 - What happens when Sophie mixes together the traditions of her two grandmothers?
- Read *Ezra's Big Shabbat Question* by Aviva Brown
 - Watch a video of the author reading the book here:
<https://fb.watch/2YK7V-F-0F/>
 - This article describes why the author wrote the book
 - While this article is mostly for background information, it is important to share with students that sometimes it is hard to find

picture books that represent all kinds of different Jewish families (although it's starting to get easier):

<https://www.kveller.com/i-couldnt-find-kids-books-that-reflected-my-black-jewish-family-so-i-published-my-own/>

Get in the Kitchen

- Take inspiration from *Chicken Soup Chicken Soup*, and make two similar Jewish recipes from two different cultures
- Consider using the recipes found at the end of *Chicken Soup Chicken Soup* for Chicken soup, Kreplach and Wontons
- Invite parents in to help with the cooking
- Depending on the makeup of your class, consider making other complementary recipes that have something to teach each other, like the chicken soups of the two grandmothers
- For example:
 - Dosas, traditional Indian pancakes, and latkes
 - The book *Queen of the Hanukkah Dosas* by Pamela Ehrenberg will support this activity
 - Ethiopian Dabo and challah:
<https://jwfoodandwine.com/article/2019/09/13/bless-bread-pan-cooked-shabbat-dabo-ethiopia>

Supply Needs:

- Story books
- Recipe ingredients

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Understand that Jewish families in America have different skin colors, speak different languages, have different customs, and are all part of the same Jewish family

Contemporary Jewish Life: Different Kinds of Jewish Families

Lesson 2- LGBTQ+ Families

Coach's Voice:

In first grade, students immerse in contemporary Jewish life by looking at who is around them - people in their synagogue community, and different kinds of Jewish families. As you explore different kinds of Jewish families, it is important to notice who is in your class, and include books and lessons that validate the families in your class. This curriculum includes lessons and resources for teaching about interfaith Jewish families, multiracial Jewish families, Jewish LGBTQ+ families, and Jewish families with family members with disabilities. If you have families in your class that are exceptional in other ways, maybe a single parent, or grandparents raising children, or blended families, it is worthwhile to find resources that validate all the families in your class. Here is an article on various Jewish views of LGBTQ issues and people:

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/judaism-and-the-lgbtq-community-an-overview/>



- Read a book about a Jewish LGBTQ family or celebration with a gay or lesbian couple
- Consider:
 - *The Flower Girl Wore Celery* by Meryl Gordon*
 - Wonder with students:
 - What are the things that surprised Emma in the book?
 - Which of these things surprised you, too?
 - Have you been to a Jewish wedding?
 - What was similar to the wedding in the story?
 - What was different?
 - Do you know any families like Hannah and Alex's family?
 - Do you think Hannah and Alex had a girl who could be Emma's flower girl?
 - Or a boy to be her ring bearer?
 - *The Purim Superhero* by Elizabeth Kushner*
 - Wonder with students:
 - Have you ever wanted to be just like everyone else?
 - What made Nate's family different from other families he knew?
 - What makes your family different from other families?
 - What kind of hamantaschen fillings do you think Nate's Daddy and Abba like best?

Envision your community

- On a large piece of butcher block paper, invite students to draw the community – as they know it and as they imagine it
- As a class, agree on the setting – the sanctuary or the synagogue playground or the social hall – and sketch in a few key walls or swing sets
- Invite students to draw their families, as well as people they have seen or met in the community
- Invite them also to draw people they haven't met yet
 - Think back to a previous lesson on diverse Jewish communities
 - Invite students to include in their drawing multi-racial families, families with same-sex parents, and interfaith families
- Invite students to include some of the synagogue leaders they have met this year (and their families)
- Leave room to add more families in the next lesson

Supply Needs:

- Story books
- Markers or colored pencils
- Butcher Paper

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Feel part of a wide, diverse Jewish family

Contemporary Jewish Life: Different Kinds of Jewish Families

Lesson 3- Families with Disabilities

Coach's Voice:

In first grade, students immerse in contemporary Jewish life by looking at who is around them - people in their synagogue community, and different kinds of Jewish families. As you explore different kinds of Jewish families, it is important to notice who is in your class, and include books and lessons that validate the families in your class. This curriculum includes lessons and resources for teaching about interfaith Jewish families, multiracial Jewish families, Jewish LGBTQ+ families, and Jewish families with family members with disabilities. If you have families in your class that are exceptional in other ways, maybe a single parent, or grandparents raising children, or blended families, it is worthwhile to find resources that validate all the families in your class. It is important to remember that not all disabilities are visible. While you may be able to see when family members use a wheelchair or a hearing aid, you cannot necessarily see if there are family members with mental illness or a chronic autoimmune disease. The enduring understanding is that Jewish families in the community face challenges, such as supporting a family member with a disability, and part of being a Jewish community is caring for all families in the ways they need support.

Supporting friends with disabilities



(This lesson adapted from <https://jewishlearningventure.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/JDAIM-Online-Lesson-Plan-K-2.pdf>)

- Watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLCP7qeYlsw>
- Wonder with students:
 - What are some loud places in our community?
 - Have you been places that have been too loud?
 - How does that feel to be in a place that is too loud, or bright, or cold?
 - How might you make it better for someone like Julia, when it is too loud for them?
- Consider watching this report of students who created a silent prom for one student: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhwlgIQMyO4>

Jewish text

- Share this text with students: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor." (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a)
- Wonder together:
 - What are some things you don't like that you should not do to others?
 - Why do the rabbis tell us to do this (or act like this)?

- How is taking care of other people a Jewish thing to do?
- Read *We Can Find a Way - a Hachnosas Orchim Inclusion Story* by Dina Rosenfeld
- Notice with students:
 - What are the different needs of the guests invited to Bubbie's birthday party?
 - How do Eli, Zev and Leah find a way to include everyone?
 - Why was it important that they try to include everyone?

Expand the community you envision

- Take out the large piece of butcher block paper on which you invited students to draw the community - as they know it and as they imagine it - in a previous lesson
- Invite students to add families with disabilities to the community they've drawn and envisioned
- Take a walk around the synagogue, to look for ways that the space invites or excludes people
- Is there a way for people using wheelchairs to easily enter the building?
 - How about a way to reach important places, like the Bima or bathrooms?
- Are there large print siddurim for people who can't see as well?
- Are there siddurim with transliteration for people who don't read Hebrew?
- Is there anything in the synagogue environment that lets people know, even before they ask, that the synagogue welcomes and supports children, teens, and adults with disabilities and mental health conditions, and their families and caregivers?
- Make a list of the things that include and exclude people
- As a class, write a two-part letter to the rabbi and the board president
 - Part 1: Commend them on the steps the synagogue has already taken to make the space inclusive of people with different needs
 - Part 2: Offer suggestions on how to improve on the things that exclude people, such as installing ramps or investing in a supply of magnifying sheets or fidgets

Supply Needs:

- Story books
- Butcher paper
- Writing and drawing supplies

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of the lesson, students will:

1. Feel part of a wide, diverse Jewish family