



# Congregation B'nai Tikvah

25 Hillcroft Way Walnut Creek, CA 94597

Office 925/933-5397 Fax 925/933-6833 Email [office@tikvah.org](mailto:office@tikvah.org) [www.tikvah.org](http://www.tikvah.org)

---

Summer 2011

Shalom to all Prospective Parents and Children of Congregation B'nai Tikvah's Religious School!

***"Blast the shofar...strum the strings...toot the flutes...clang the cymbals...beat the drums..."***  
***(Psalm 150)***

As the year winds down, it is time to look back on the school year that was. Reflecting on my first year as Director of Education at CBT, many new programs were introduced that enhanced the quality of our educational offerings. Some of those include:

- ✧ ***Tweaking the beginning of each Sunday morning by allowing the whole school community to come together for communal prayer, learning, and singing.***
- ✧ ***Enhancing that prayer experience with a new religious school siddur (prayerbook), funded by a generous anonymous donor.***
- ✧ ***Fine-tuning the curriculum to stress the importance of learning Hebrew beginning at Kindergarten.***
- ✧ ***Creating and/or expanding on the concept of all-school programs, including a Hanukah Zimriah (musical festival), Purim Carnival, Pesach Seder, and a Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration.***
- ✧ ***Instituting more open communication between the school and the parents, which included monthly newsletters sent by me and weekly emails sent by the teachers.***
- ✧ ***Instituting new family ed programs, including the Fourth Grade Kabbalat Torah program and the Seventh Grade Meal of Many Blessings.***
- ✧ ***Encouraging the teachers to organize class gatherings outside of school (i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Havdallah, 5<sup>th</sup> grade Shabbat dinner).***
- ✧ ***Making a big push for students to attend Jewish Summer Camps of all kinds, especially residential ones. (This summer we have more than 40+ students attending either URJ Camp Newman or Camp Tawonga – a more than 200% increase from the previous year.)***
- ✧ ***Being able to attend the national conference of the professional organization which I am a member (NATE – National Association of Temple Educators) and bringing back valuable information which is being integrated into the school curriculum. (The cost of the conference was generously funded between 2 individuals and the synagogue.)***

We never rest on the laurels of our past accomplishments, however, because out of every great accomplishment comes new understanding of how success came about. It is these learning opportunities, coupled with our strong commitment to provide quality Jewish education, which drives me to harness the best from each moment. Also, the discussions I have had with many of our parents, along with my own evaluation and observations, lead to new ideas and new ways of thinking about structure and content of the Religious School program. Innovation remains foremost in the minds of our Education Committee and me as we prepare for our fall academic year. With innovation comes change. I know that change is difficult but necessary for us to continue to stay ahead of the curve.

In striving to be innovative while meeting the needs of our constituents, our Education Committee and I work very hard to improve and change. This work we have been engaged in over the course of the past year, which includes listening intently to parents' feedback and ideas that have been raised in parent forums and one-on-one conversations, as well as feedback from our teachers, has resulted in some adjustments to the program for the academic year 2011/12:

- ★ We will be integrating a weekend retreat as part of our 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum. This will take place in October at URJ (Union for Reform Judaism) Camp Newman in Santa Rosa.
- ★ As a means of strengthening our community, and increasing family connections, we will be instituting grade-level brunches periodically throughout the school year on Sunday mornings.
- ★ Tuesdays will be the only weekday option offered for our 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders (with our large 7<sup>th</sup> grade class being the only class to be offered Wednesdays as an option).
- ★ The school year will begin with a Parent Orientation meeting on **Tuesday, September 6 from 7:00-8:30pm** for all grades (K-7) whereby you will have the chance to meet with myself, the grade level teacher, and to hear about the year, the goals of the program, the curriculum, the structure of the Sunday schedule, and to ask any questions you might have prior to the beginning of school.
- ★ A new and revamped 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum will be instituted, along with the introduction of 2 new teachers.
- ★ An exciting change will be introduced to enhance our Madrichim (religious school teen aides) program. We will be hiring a Madrichim Coordinator and this person, along with all of our teens and the teens of Congregations B'nai Shalom and Beth Chayim, will take part in a new Madrichim initiative funded by a grant through Contra Costa Midrasha.

**Please complete the attached registration form for each child who will be attending Religious School** and return the form to the B'nai Tikvah office along with your synagogue membership forms.

You will also find a sample school calendar which highlights each session school will be having classes. The first Sunday class of the 2011/12 school-year is September 11<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any questions about any of the program offerings, please don't hesitate to call me at 925-933-5397 or email me at [philhankin@tikvah.org](mailto:philhankin@tikvah.org).

Thank You,



Phil Hankin, MAJE  
Director of Education