The Ansche Chesed Hebrew School

Family Handbook

2026-2027~ 5787

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New York, New York 10025

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http://www.anschechesed.org/learning/ac-hebrew-school-kids/

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Ansche Chesed Staff Directory

All extensions can be reached by calling 212-865-0600

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The Vision of the Ansche Chesed Hebrew School

At the Ansche Chesed Hebrew School, we –

Build a Spiritual Home: Fostering an intimate sense of connection in our classrooms, among our families, and within the greater Ansche Chesed community.

Live the rhythms of Jewish life: Engaging in the spiritual practice of *Tefillah* (Prayer); developing familiarity and comfort with the Hebrew language; and celebrating our sacred times as we gain the competence and skills to participate in Jewish community.

Recognize ourselves in the ongoing story of the Jewish people: Inspiring curiosity and joy in our study of Torah and connecting to the people and land of Israel across time.

Become *Ansche Chesed* (People of Kindness): Acquiring *Middot* (Jewish virtues and values) and internalizing a commitment to our Jewish responsibilities toward ourselves, others, and the world.

Priority Goal

In order to put our vision into practice, we need to express it in terms of a goal statement, which will enable us to focus our efforts toward a particular component of our vision. This goal statement is known as a Priority Goal. A Priority Goal serves as a 'north star' for our school, guiding our focus onto long-term lived outcomes for our learning.

Our chosen Priority Goal is: ***Learners will be on a journey of applying Torah to daily life***.

Through their experience at ACHS, our learners will develop the knowledge, the sense of belonging, the values, and the skills and habits to make daily decisions guided by Jewish teaching, Torah understood in its broadest sense. These decisions can be interpersonal, ethical, and/or ritual in nature. At ACHS, our learners discover how to lead lives steeped in the ideas, practices, and community that make up the Jewish Tradition.

Curriculum

In keeping with the aims of our Priority Goal of applying Torah to daily life, each grade level takes a different approach to that goal.

Nitzanim (PreK)	Celebrations
Gan (K)	A Hands-On Introduction to Sacred Time and Sacred Objects
Alef (1st)	Sacred Stories & Sacred Language
Bet (2nd)	Cycles of Discovery - Torah Study, Hebrew Language, and the Jewish Calendar
Gimel (3rd)	Mitzvot and Middot - Tools for Jewish Living
Dalet (4th)	Jewish Citizenship - *Menschlichkeit* and Modern Israel
Hey (5th)	Living a Jewish Life - Text and Tradition
Vav (6th)	Jewish Identity - Self and Community
Zayin (7th)	Growing Up Jewish - Identity, Rights, and Responsibilities
Halutzim (8th):	*Gemilut Chesed*: Study and Practice

Methodology

With our priority goal, “Learners will be on a journey of applying Torah to daily life,” in mind, we see our role as nurturing our students, so that they grow into adulthood rooting their personal journeys in the lessons of Judaism. Our approach to education at ACHS is known as Whole Person Learning.

Whole Person Learning understands learning as taking place in four distinct domains:

- **Knowing:** the essential knowledge and skills learners will acquire so they can participate in a real-life Jewish experience or practice.
- **Doing:** the authentic Jewish experience or practice that learners will actively participate in and shape.
- **Believing:** the core beliefs and values learners will be able to explore and articulate according to their own perspectives and understandings.
- **Belonging:** the opportunities for caring, purposeful connections to other, to God, and to the worldwide Jewish community.

In addition, our teachers consider the following questions and needs when developing their lessons and class activities:

- *Multiple Intelligences*: How will this lesson reach students who are auditory learners? Creative writers? Dramatists? Artistic? Kinesthetic learners? Is there a balance in the types of activities and projects offered?
- *Joy*: How will students have fun and feel satisfaction from this material/activity?
- *Meaning*: How will students connect to this material and make personal meaning of it?
- *Family Involvement*: How can students take their learning home with them, bringing their families into the experience?

We encourage our teachers to think creatively, collaborate often, and be flexible so that students can maximize their experience at ACHS.

***Chagim* (the Jewish holidays) at ACHS**

The Jewish holidays are essential mile-markers through our year. They allow us to celebrate different aspects of our biblical history, bring families together, and infuse joy into our daily experience. Our students, particularly in the younger grades, spend time in class learning about the history, rituals, and themes of the holidays. However, our holidays cannot be experienced through classroom learning alone. Our goal at ACHS is to contextualize our learning through lived experience.

***Mesibot*: Nitzanim, Gan, Alef, Bet**

As each holiday approaches, our youngest students will celebrate with a *mesibah*, a special holiday party. These *mesibot* will enable us to experience various aspects of each holiday as a community and also to encourage socializing among children from different grades. Emphasis will be placed on connecting the themes of each holiday to students' lives.

***Ivrit* (Hebrew) at ACHS**

Hebrew is a key component of the Ansche Chesed Hebrew School curriculum, an aspect of ACHS that distinguishes us from many other Jewish educational programs in New York City. Our Nitzanim and Gan students primarily focus on hearing and using Hebrew conversationally. In Kitah Alef, students learn the letters of the Alef-Bet, and by the end of Kitah Bet, students are reading multi-syllabic words with vowels. In Kitah Gimel, when classes go to two afternoons a week, and moving forward through Kitah Vav, the focus in our Hebrew learning shifts to prayer. Students in these grades use Hebrew curriculum that allow for highly individualized learning, while keeping a sense of class cohesion. Students in Kitah Hey and Kitah Vav will also devote time to learning aspects of modern conversational Hebrew.

Experiential Education at ACHS

While the learning that takes place in our classrooms is rooted in experience, we also find many opportunities to extend our learning through special programs that take place both regularly in our week and scattered throughout the year.

***Tefillah* – All Grades**
Tefillah (prayer) offers us an opportunity to connect with ourselves, with the community, and with the Divine. Each grade will have an opportunity to participate in communal Tefillah each week. Our goal is to offer students the experience of prayer both as *keva* (the established prayers of our tradition) and *kavanah* (the personal, spontaneous character of prayer). The Tefillah experience will also provide opportunities for our students to practice and experiment with the prayers they are mastering in the classroom.

***Kehillah* (Community) Time**
ACHS is more than a school for our students – it is a community. Our students thrive when they have the opportunity to interact with each other outside the typical classroom experience. During this time, our students will participate in a variety of activities that put experience at the fore. *Kehillah* time feels more like youth group, and less like school.

***Gemilut Chesed* (Acts of Loving Kindness)**
The Ansche Chesed community is tremendously committed to acts of *Chesed*, and our school is no different. As part of our *Kehillah* time, ACHS will undertake a school-wide *Tzedakah* project. Our students will determine our priorities in giving; choose a recipient for our project; conceive of the various aspects of the project; advertise and recruit for participation; supervise gathering and distribution to our recipient; and share the results of our *Tzedakah* giving with the broader community. Guided by our faculty, Education Director, and clergy, our students will truly experience what it is to participate in an ongoing act of *Chesed*.

***Kippot/Kissui Rosh* (ritual head coverings)**
All of our students are invited to cover their heads during Hebrew School. Gan students will learn about the practice of covering our heads and decorate their own *kippot* or head-coverings that they can wear each class. In addition, students are invited to bring favorite *kippot* from home.

Arrival & Dismissal

Snack
We provide a small snack to all of our students each day. Snacks are enjoyed together in class, either at the beginning of class time or in the middle, as part of our Hafsakah (break time). Students will learn and say the appropriate blessings for their snacks. We do our best to accommodate all allergies and food sensitivities, as well as to provide a kosher snack within the confines of our budget. Students are also welcome to bring their own snacks with them to school. If your child brings snack to eat at Ansche Chesed, please make sure that the snack has a kosher symbol and is nut-free. (Additionally, if you do send a snack with your child, please make sure to avoid candy and other high-sugar 'junk' foods.) Students are permitted to bring their own water bottles. Students are not permitted to eat candy or chew gum in class.

If you would like to provide snacks for your child's class for a special occasion or on a regular basis, please contact the Hebrew School office.

ACHS 2026-2027 Session Start and Dismissal Times

Wednesdays

GAN	3:45-5:00 PM
ALEF	3:45-5:15 PM
BET & GIMMEL	3:45-5:30 PM

Thursdays

DALET, HEY, VAV, ZAYIN	4:00-5:45 PM

Tuesdays

HEBREW PODS	4:00-5:00 PM

Attendance & Tardiness

Regular attendance at Hebrew School is imperative for a meaningful education. Teachers take attendance daily. Students who are absent for any reason are responsible for making up classwork that they might miss. **Having more than four absences during a semester is considered excessive.**

It is important that students arrive on time to class. **If your child will be coming late on a given day, please alert the Hebrew School office.** The teacher will be notified in turn.

If a student is absent or tardy for two (2) sessions in a row, the teacher is asked to contact the parent/caregiver to inquire after the child's well-being, and the Education Director may also contact the family.

Dismissal Procedures and Times

At the end of class, students will be escorted by their teacher to the AC lobby for dismissal. Students must be picked up by authorized adults. If you have a new caregiver or a friend doing pickup, please write a note or e-mail to the school in advance. Only students who have been given permission by their parents/caregivers to walk home alone may do so.

Shabbat Attendance

Since participation in synagogue life both supports and enriches a child's learning in the Ansche Chesed Hebrew School, all students are encouraged to attend adult or children's services on a Friday night or Saturday morning. This can be either at Ansche Chesed or at another synagogue.

For your convenience, below please find a list of service times and options at Ansche Chesed:

Friday Evening Kabbalat Shabbat Services:
5:30 pm Eastern Standard Time; 6:30 pm Daylight Saving Time

Shabbat Morning Services:
Sanctuary Service: 9:45am every Shabbat morning (Sanctuary)
Minyan M'at: 10:00am every Shabbat morning (5th Floor North)
Minyan Rimonim: 10:00am, 1st and 3rd Shabbat each month (6th floor)
West Side Minyan: 10:00am, 2nd and 4th Shabbat each month (6th floor)

Shabbat Morning Family Services
11:00am, most Shabbat mornings
- Mishpacha Service – parents/caregivers and children, Preschool age and younger (2 North)
- Yigdal Service – parents/caregivers and children or drop-off, Kindergarten-Grade 2 (2 South)
- Bnai Chesed - Children only, Grade 3 and up (Chapel)

Health & Safety

Discipline

We believe that discipline is a skill that students develop from within, rather than something that is enforced from outside. At the beginning of the year, each class develops a *Brit*, a set of class rules and expected behaviors. Additionally, teachers will employ a number of different positive reinforcement techniques to ensure that the class environment remains supportive, calm, and orderly. If a child is disruptive in class, the teacher will first refer to the classroom rules generated by the class and speak with the student directly and privately about his/her behavior. A child who continues to be disruptive will speak with the Education Director, after which point the child's parent/caregiver/s might be called. The goal of this call is to allow teacher and parents/caregivers to best respond to a child's needs.

Damage

Students who damage property will be held responsible for the cost of repair or replacement. **Please note that balls (footballs, soccer balls, basketballs, etc.) are not to be brought to school.**

Injury & Sickness

If your child sustains a minor injury while at school, appropriate first aid treatment will be administered. In a case of a more serious injury, parents/caregivers and the child's physician and/or dentist will be notified immediately. If we feel it is necessary for the child to have immediate medical attention, the paramedics will be called. If your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you or the emergency contact/s listed on your Hebrew School application. Please notify the school if your child contracts any contagious diseases, especially chicken pox or head lice. If your child has, or develops, any unique health requirements, it is your responsibility to inform the Hebrew School office.

We do not dispense medications (including aspirin or ibuprofen) without the explicit permission of a parent/caregiver or designated childcare provider.

If your child has a medical condition or allergy that requires them to have medicine on-hand (such as Benadryl or an Epi Pen), please notify the Hebrew School office before the beginning of the school year. Please deliver the medicine in a sealed, labeled, plastic bag, with clear instructions for use and signed parental/caregiver permission for Hebrew School staff to administer as needed. Parent/caregiver and head teacher must discuss the medical protocol for your child during the first week of Hebrew School. If medicine needs to be "on-hand" – it will be stored safely in the portable "Teacher Box." Otherwise it will be stored in the Hebrew School office.

Cell Phones & Valuables

We understand that many students carry cell phones. However, cell phones must be off during class. If you must reach your child during class hours, call 212-865-0600 x216, x217 or x208.

The Hebrew School does not take responsibility for the loss of valuables. In the event that a child brings a valuable item to school, he or she may leave it in the Hebrew School office for safekeeping.

Drills

We take safety and security matters seriously at Ansche Chesed, while also striving to live our values of being welcoming and building a strong community. We hold various drills throughout the school year, including Fire Drill Evacuations and Safety Drills (commonly called "Lockdown Drills"). The Safety Drill is designed to shelter children and adults within a locked space should there be an intruder or immediate threat to the safety of building occupants. Prior to the drill, we will tell the children it is coming later in the day, and we will review the procedures in an age-appropriate way. Despite the implications of potential danger, it is our goal to normalize safety practice drills so that our community is well prepared should we ever be faced with a true emergency.

ACHS Teacher Babysitting & Drop off/Pick up Policy

We do not give recommendations or references for ACHS teachers to serve as individual family babysitters, including picking up children at school and bringing them to ACHS or bringing them home after ACHS. Other than when teaching or at ACHS-sponsored events, our teachers are not acting in an official Ansche Chesed capacity and are not covered by our insurance, nor are we responsible for their actions. If families inquire about teacher availability for roles outside ACHS, we are happy to ask our teachers, and then families and teachers can connect separately based on availability.

Communication

Family-Teacher Communication

Your child's teacher(s) will contact you in the beginning of the year to introduce him/herself and to learn more about your child. A teacher might also call during the year if he or she believes more frequent or direct communication is needed.

Teachers write two student evaluations, called *ha'arachot*, which are sent home at the end of each semester. These evaluations are for the purpose of communicating the class goals and student progress in class.

Parents/caregivers are always welcome to contact the teacher(s) directly with any concerns, suggestions, or questions.

School-Family Communication

Each week, we send a weekly email newsletter to families. This allows us to save paper and ensure that information gets to parents/caregivers. The weekly newsletter arrives on Friday before Shabbat. Reading it will allow you to better understand what your child is learning and allow you to engage him/her in conversation about his/her studies. We will also offer your family relevant questions or activities designed to extend your child's learning together as a family.

We will also be using an Emergency Text Message system called "Remind." We will only use this text message system in case of Emergency. We will test the Remind system in mid-October.

Contacting the School Office

Aliza Sebert is always happy to hear from parents/caregivers.
Aliza Sebert: asebert@anschechesed.org / (212)865-0600 x217

Calendar

The Ansche Chesed Hebrew School Calendar can be found on the ACHS page of the Ansche Chesed website, and will be distributed by email at the beginning of the school year.

Tuition Policies

Tuition

Returning Families: Outstanding Balances

Outstanding balances on tuition from previous years must be paid in full or otherwise addressed with our Executive Director before reenrollment. To discuss any outstanding balances, please contact Amy Shapiro-Kessler, Executive Director, at 212-865-0600 x 209 or ashapirokessler@anschechesed.org.

Non-Refundable Deposit

A non-refundable deposit of $200 per student is required to hold your child/ren's space for the school year.

Tuition Due Date

Tuition is due in full by December 15, 2026. If tuition is not paid in full before the start of school, post-dated checks are required for the remainder, which must be paid in equal monthly installments. Checks must be dated September 1, October 1, November 1, and December 1. Bounced checks are subject to a $25 penalty.

Financial Need

The Ansche Chesed Hebrew School will not turn away any student due to financial need. Contact Amy Shapiro-Kessler, Executive Director, at 212-865-0600 x 209 or ashapirokessler@anschechesed.org for confidential discussion about scholarships.

Membership

By the time students are in Kitah Gimel (3rd grade), families are expected to be dues-paying members of Ansche Chesed. For more information about membership, please contact Ansche Chesed's Executive Director, Amy Shapiro-Kessler, at 212-865-0600 x 209 or ashapirokessler@anschechesed.org.

Getting Involved

ACHS Parent Committee

Our Parent Committee meets a few times a year to discuss our vision as well as practical elements that make our school run. Contact Aliza if you are interested in joining us.

Class Parents

Class parents are responsible for communicating important information to families through phone or email communication. Although requiring minimal time, this role is very important to building community at the Ansche Chesed Hebrew School. Class parent contact information will be distributed in the Fall. If you'd like to be a class parent, please contact Aliza.

Volunteering

You can contribute to your child's religious education by volunteering during the year, helping in the classroom or with special events. Your volunteering is also important role modeling for your child. Please contact the Hebrew School office if you can volunteer to shop, assist with the Purim Carnival (our annual FUNdraiser!), or wish to serve ACHS in another way.

Family Programs

ACHS Programs

ACHS hosts special programs throughout the year. Each grade level has at least one special event scheduled over the course of the year. Additionally, there are holiday parties, multi-grade programs, and other special events that enhance our learning and our community. Please stay tuned to email for an on-going list of programs and dates.

AC Family Programs

Ansche Chesed has a wealth of programs and opportunities for our families. Our programs helps build connections between our Jewish learning and our everyday lives.

Parents/caregivers and kids:

- Build community with other like-minded families.
- Engage in relevant learning that connects to daily life.
- Explore Jewish ideas and traditions both in the synagogue and out in the world.

Emergency Procedures

School Cancellation

In the event that school is closed due to inclement weather, the Ansche Chesed Hebrew School follows the New York Public School closings: If the public schools are closed, we are closed. We will send an e-mail notification to alert you of any cancellations.

Emergencies

In case of an emergency, and you are having difficulty reaching the religious school office, please call the security desk at 212-865-0600 x203 or Reena Bromberg Gaber at 212-865-0600 x201. They will assist in finding Aliza.

B'nei Mitzvah at Ansche Chesed

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation

Most families with children approaching the age of *bar* and *bat mitzvah* in the Hebrew School make arrangements for small group or individual lessons with a tutor. The Ansche Chesed Hebrew School can assist families in finding a tutor.

Please note the expectation and courtesy that a student invites all the members of his/her Hebrew School class to his/her *bar/bat mitzvah*.

To schedule a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* at Ansche Chesed, contact Reena Bromberg Gaber at 212-865-0600 x201.

Project *Aliyah*

Project *Aliyah* offers multiple portals through which Ansche Chesed families with *b'nei mitzvah* in the coming year may reflect, learn, and grow. Project Aliyah offers chances for families to study together on Shabbat morning, socialize together, and do acts of *Chesed* together. Project Aliyah is open to all families in the Ansche Chesed community celebrating *b'nei mitzvah* in the coming year and is part of the Kitah Zayin (7th Grade) Family Education curriculum.

Other Faiths

At Ansche Chesed, we know that life is enriched when we learn from cultures and faiths different from our own. Our community is dedicated to Jewish identity, in richness, depth and commitment. While we can learn from other religions – including from family members who may practice those faiths – Jews cannot practice anything but Judaism.

At Ansche Chesed, therefore, children cannot celebrate bnei mitzvah in our community (or attend the Ansche Chesed Hebrew School) if they regularly attend services in another faith, or receive education in another faith. This statement is not intended to exclude enrollment at secular private schools (e.g. Trinity or Cathedral) that have chapel components, but does

exclude enrollment in formal religious training (e.g. Bible study, catechism, training in worship) analogous to that received in Jewish day schools or supplemental schools.

We concur with the 1995 recommendation of the Union for Reform Judaism, and subsequently reaffirmed, that dual faith education is harmful and unfair to children and their families. (Our Conservative movement has no formal policy statement, but would surely take the same position.) Rather than broadening perspective, this approach undermines a person's ability to enter a spiritual community whole-heartedly.

Resources

Ansche Chesed Library

The Ansche Chesed Library is a wonderful resource for parents/caregivers and children. Please contact Aliza if you need any further resources to enhance your child's learning.

Adult Learning

Ansche Chesed offers a host of learning opportunities for adults each year, including a beginning Hebrew class and a Talmud class taught by Rabbi Kalmanofsky. You can access a schedule of classes on-line at www.AnscheChesed.org or by contacting Aliza to find the right fit for you. If there is any Jewish topic that you are interested in learning more about, please contact Aliza. She can work with you one-on-one, or if there is greater interest, arrange a class or workshop.

A Brief Outline of Programs Located at Ansche Chesed

As you know, or will soon discover, Ansche Chesed is a very busy place, teeming with children and adults at all hours of the day. Below is a brief introduction to some of the regularly occurring programs at the synagogue that you might encounter. While these programs are not all formally affiliated with Ansche Chesed, they are part of our communal fabric, and thus being aware of them is important.

Yaldaynu: A Jewish preschool that meets on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Ansche Chesed building. Yaldaynu and Ansche Chesed run a number of programs cooperatively.

Morningside Montessori: A preschool located on the 6th floor.

Discovery: A program run in Hirsch Hall and the Upper Hirsch Hall Lobby during the week offering music, dance, gymnastics, and other activities.

Morning Minyan: Morning Minyan currently meets on Zoom throughout the year. Minyan currently meets in the Chapel as well for hybrid services on Mondays, Thursdays, Sundays and holidays. On Mondays through Fridays, services are at 7:30, and on Sundays and national holidays, services begin at 8:30.