



Katz Hillel Day School

Middle School Judaic & General Studies Curriculum Overview

English Language Arts

The Middle School English program at Hillel focuses on building and enhancing students' skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Progressing from fourth to eighth grade, students gain exposure to a diverse array of literary forms and experience both frequent and assorted opportunities for self-expression. Guiding students through a skill-based and developmentally sequenced curriculum, we place a strong emphasis on fostering sound grammatical aptitude, accuracy in punctuation, and an elevated and varied working vocabulary. At Hillel, our middle school curriculum integrates every element of the English Language Arts program with the aim that every student, at each grade level, can demonstrate content mastery through sophisticated and well-organized written language. From grade to grade, the curriculum hones students' understanding of language usage and refines their tools for critical thinking and analysis, always sharpening students' mastery of effective writing techniques.

Supporting differences in learning styles, our curriculum is designed to provide a student the necessary instructional support to develop skills at his own pace while still promoting high standards and expectations. For all students, our fundamental objective is that they evolve into capable and confident communicators who express their own voices, opinions, and knowledge with conviction and expertise.

Mathematics

The Middle School Mathematics program at Hillel focuses on using problem solving, mathematical communication and mathematical reasoning. The Pre-Algebra course reviews basic mathematical skills and focuses on introducing algebraic concepts and properties. Emphasis is placed on equations using positive and negative integers, fractions, decimals, and percentages. Solving word problems as well as working with graphs, measurements and introductory geometry are included. In the Algebra 1 course students gain a solid foundation of basic algebraic skills and concepts through discussion of topics including operations with rational numbers and integers, relations and functions, simplifying and combining fractions, factoring polynomials, linear sentences and systems, ratios and proportions, graphs, inequalities and operations with polynomials. Problem solving strategies are emphasized and reinforced throughout the curriculum to provide students with tools necessary to solve problems in an organized way.

Science

The sixth grade science curriculum serves as a hands-on introduction to Middle School science education. The program assists students in becoming life-long learners who grow in their understanding of the world. An introduction to characteristics of living things is used as a springboard for other topics including classification, ecology, environmental/earth science, and space science. Measurement and lab equipment are introduced as students get their first real hands-on laboratory experience. Other teaching strategies used to deliver the curriculum include: textbook information acquisition and note taking techniques, scientific illustrating, critical thinking and problem solving activities, cooperative group projects, science research projects, directed teaching, and authentic assessment. Students are encouraged to be inquisitive and analytical. Lifelong enthusiasm for science is fostered with science based fieldtrips and real world experiences including a 3 day trip to the Newfound Harbor Marine Institute SeaCamp in the Florida Keys.

The seventh grade Life Science course is designed to build a foundation in biology, chemistry and some physics in preparation for further science studies in high school. The living things around us serve as the subjects of study for this course, including a more complex understanding of cell life and structure, life processes, body systems, and change as a result of the transmission of genetic information from generation to generation. Every effort is made to interest, motivate and engage students. This is done by hands on relevant activities that address the topics within the lab classroom and video demonstrations.

The eighth grade program looks at the Physical Sciences of chemistry and physics. The understanding the nature and structure of matter and characteristics of energy are stressed. Here, the major topics are matter and energy, and how they can be changed for the good of man. Major areas covered by the standards include the organization and use of the periodic table; physical and chemical changes; nuclear reactions; temperature and heat; sound; light; electricity and magnetism; and work, force, and motion. This scientific view defines the idea that explanations of nature are developed and tested using observation, experimentation, models, evidence, and systematic processes based on logical thinking. Inquiry skills at this level include organization and mathematical analysis of data, manipulation of variables in experiments, and identification of sources of experimental error.

Social Studies

In 6th grade, our Geography curriculum will provide our students with a fundamental understanding of the physical environment of the earth, as well as the human societies spread across the globe. Our students will locate, describe, and compare the geographic features, climatic conditions, political divisions of the major regions of the world, and will examine how human culture interacts with the natural environment and the way that locations and places can have an impact on people.

In 7th grade, our American Government curriculum provides an overview of the origins, development, structure, and functions of our American national government and political systems. We focus on studying the Constitution, the three branches of government and how

they interact, as well as our civil rights and liberties. Our curriculum also includes engaging classroom discussion of current events as related to the basic concepts of our American political system. For the second half of our curriculum, we study WWI, WWII, and the Holocaust. Students explore the history from the breakdown of democracy in Germany to the steps the Nazis took to transform German society, instigate world war and perpetrate genocide. Our approach to teaching the Holocaust will prompt our students to wrestle with the profound moral questions this history raises.

In 8th grade, our American History curriculum focuses on the political, cultural, and social development of the United States. The English colonies are studied and how conflicts with Britain lead to the American Revolution. We examine how our American Independence led to the creation of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Beginning with the Lewis & Clark expedition, Western expansion is explored along with the positive economic results it had on the country. Furthermore, students study immigration, industrialization, as well as the evolution of our transportation system and how it changed our economy. The course ends with analysis of the causes and consequences of the Civil War as well as the Reconstruction Era.

Hebrew Language

The Ivrit program continues to build on the language proficiency of our students in oral and written expression. Great emphasis is made on increased vocabulary and correct grammar usage.

The curriculum in the sixth grade continues from the point it was left off in fifth grade. At the beginning of the year, there is a general review of everything that was taught the year before. Students will strengthen their writing skills by learning the structure of a composition. They learn how to summarize a paragraph and to differentiate between what is important and what is of secondary importance. Punctuation is taught as a tool to improve writing skills, and as a means to comprehend better literature and poetry. The students will enrich their vocabulary by learning new nouns, adjectives, synonyms and antonyms, and will apply it all to their written application and oral expression. The definite article will be emphasized. In grammar, the conjugation of the verb "to be" in past tense will be strengthened, and the future tense will be taught. The paradigm of Binyan Pa-al is reviewed, and the paradigm of Binyan Nif-al is introduced to the students. They learn how to transfer sentences from active to passive form and vice versa. Irregular nouns are added to this grade level. Students will learn how to correctly use adjectives, numbers and verbs in conjunction with these exceptional nouns. Exercises in story analysis will be done. The ability to converse in Hebrew will be enhanced through the usage of all the grammatical concepts that are taught in the course of the year. Conversational Hebrew will be emphasized.

The seventh grade curriculum continues from that which was taught in the sixth grade. A comprehensive review will be conducted. The students will be challenged with the reading of more advanced literature and poetry. Different sayings, expressions and idioms are introduced to apply in oral expression. Homonyms, homophones, abbreviation and Gimatria will also be taught. The students will learn new forms of possession including Short Possession and the

Construct State, which will be utilized both orally and in writing. Mastery of description will be enlarged and applied. In grammar, a review of the previous paradigms (Pa-al and Nif-al) will take place, and the new paradigms of Pee-el and Poo-al and will be taught. The students will learn to conjugate verbs in the various paradigms according to the need, and apply that knowledge to their writings and their conversation. As in sixth grade emphasis is placed upon Hebrew conversation.

The eighth grade curriculum continues with what was taught in the seventh grade. After reviewing the material of the previous year concentration will be placed on reading comprehension of stories of a higher level. Complex verbs are taught in different paradigms. The conjugation of Hif-eel, Hoof-al, and Hitpael are mastered and applied in writing and conversation. The students learn the forms of direct and indirect speech and apply it in their written application and oral expression. More sayings, expressions and idioms are introduced throughout the year, and the students learn how to incorporate these into their writing and conversation. An emphasis on verbs and the nouns derived from the verbs are made in this grade level. As in sixth and seventh grades, throughout the academic year the importance of the Hebrew language as the Holy Language and the language of our ancestors is emphasized. The students are encouraged to communicate in Hebrew both in and out of the classroom.

Chumash

The Chumash curriculum continues to focus on the skills acquired in the primary grades but with more emphasis on higher order thinking skills. There are numerous goals in Chumash which we focus upon during the middle school years.

In the sixth grade they will continue to develop and improve upon their reading and translating skills, through focusing on shorashim and prefixes and suffixes. They will analyze the text and raise questions and attempt to answer their queries. The students will understand Rashi's methodology of scrutinizing the text and deriving questions and answers. Perhaps most importantly, they will feel a connection to the Torah and enjoy learning our holy texts. They will learn how to apply the lessons of the Torah to their daily lives. Grade six studies the book of Bamidbar through Parshat Chukat. Additionally, there is a Yediot Klalot program in which the students master basic Jewish facts such as the dates of holidays, the books of Tanach, and the words to certain brachot. They are tested weekly on this material and have a cumulative test twice a year. By the eighth grade, the students have mastered the skill of translating the psukim and Rashi's commentary and are now taken to the next level. They are exposed to many more commentaries, such as the Ramban, Ibn Ezra, Sforno, and Sefer Hachinuch. They learn how to compare and contrast the various opinions and discover the beauty of Torah and its many interpretations. We apply the lessons of the Torah to our daily lives and create a love for the Torah and Judaism. Grade eight studies the book of Dvarim through Parshat Reeh, focusing upon certain key topics such as the Aseret Hadibrot, Shema, and Moshe's rebuke to the nation.

In the 7th grade students will learn Chumash Vayikra. They begin with Parshat Acharei Mot, which teaches of the Service of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur. During the course of the year, the students will cover Parshiot Acharei-Mot, Kedoshim, Emor, Behar. The goal for the year is to gain an understanding the text as well as the religious and philosophical lessons

conveyed are both essential components of every Chumash lesson. There is a strong emphasis on strengthening textual skills, mastering reading, translating, decoding, and expanding Chumash vocabulary and grammatical skills. Commentary and concepts are discussed in a sophisticated way by learning the questions behind the commentary and analyzing the situations.

In the Parshiot the students will learn many laws pertaining to the Korbonot, Chagim, Mitzvot that can be kept only in the Land of Israel, and Mitzvot between “Man and Man.”

As is done in the sixth grade, in the eighth grade there is a Yediot Klalot program in which the students master basic Jewish facts such as the dates of holidays, the books of Tanach, and the words to certain brachot. They are tested weekly on this material and have a cumulative test twice a year.

In sixth grade, students learn Chumash Bamidbar with the focus on classic commentaries and the continuing decoding skills. In seventh grade, students learn from Chumash Vayikra (from Parshat Acharei Mot through Parshat Behar). Commentary and contemporary material is brought in to help the students appreciate the halachot and the relevance in our modern day lives. In eighth grade, the students learn Chumash Devarim. With the skills already mastered, students are much better independent learners and skills at analyzing text with classic and modern commentaries are used throughout.

Toshba

The Toshba (Torah She’baal Peh) curriculum begins in sixth grade with the foundational skills necessary for further Gemara learning. The Toshba curriculum is heavily focused on developing strong reading skills and strategies in deepening the understanding of Gemara text. Selected Sugyot are taught with emphasis on the skills and on relevance to the lives of our students. Differentiated instruction is utilized so that the needs of all the students are met at their instructional level. The use of iPads is also implemented to help students with multi-sensory approaches to learning.

The sixth grade toshba curriculum, which was created under the auspices of Gemara Berurua, focuses on the fourth chapter of masechet brachot and focuses on students answering essential questions about why and how Talmud came about as well as questions that relate to the fourth chapter of masechet brachot. Students also learn Aramaic key words, common words, and concepts that will help them develop into more independent learners of Talmud.

In seventh and eighth grade, the Talmud curriculum consists of selected sugyot from different parts of the Talmud. The criteria for choosing those sugyot are that the sugyot must be relevant to the students i.e. contain messages that students can internalize and act more morally and wisely. The sugyot must also help students build the skills they will need as they become more independent learners of Talmud. Some of the topics addressed in these sugyot are the power of speech, personal responsibility, friendship, the importance of being thankful, the importance of spirituality in life, etc. Like in the sixth grade Talmud curriculum, students focus on answering essential questions about the sugyot they learn. They also learn Aramaic

key words, common words, and concepts that will help them develop into more independent learners of Talmud.

Laws pertaining to the Chagim and the Jewish calendar are also taught in the Toshba classes.

Navi

In Navi, the students learn all of Sefer Shmuel, Melachim Aleph and a thorough study of Megillat Esther. The focus is on the sequence of events and storyline, the understanding of the central characters and the issues of leadership and nationhood that emerge through these texts.

The goal in Navi is to relate the events and to understand the origins of Jewish life and conquest of Eretz Yisrael as well as to learn the famous personalities that shaped the Jewish nation. Map skills are also necessary when learning Navi. Through Navi the students see Hashem's relationship with the Jewish people and His Hand which guides our destiny. Navi is taught three times per week in the sixth grade, and two times per week in the seventh and eighth grades for 50 minutes each period. In the sixth grade, the Sefer of Shmuel Aleph is covered with emphasis on the general content and concepts rather than word for word analysis. Students learn entirely from the text and all work is completed in Ivrit. In the seventh grade, students cover the entire Sefer of Shmuel Bet. Students will follow the life of David Hamelech, his triumphs, struggles, and emphasizing that throughout all of his life, David continues to remain faithful to Hashem. In the eighth grade, students cover the Sefer of Melachim Aleph. In this Sefer, the students will follow the life of Shlomo Hamelch, the division of Malchut Yehuda and Yisrael, and the influence of the Neviim on the lives of the Jewish people.

Zionism

Eighth grade Zionism classes prepare our students for the culmination of their Middle School experience with the trip to Israel. Students have a strong knowledge base of Biblical Eretz Yisrael and Modern Medinat Yisrael.

Tefillah, Dinim, & Hashkafah

In addition to the above curriculum students learn about Tefillah in sixth grade, Dinim of daily life in seventh grade and Hashkafah in the eighth grade. Tefillah is an essential lifelong skill. Students have Shacharit in our beautiful Beit Madrash where the students take the roles of Gabbaim, Chazanim and Balei Kriah. Mincha is also part of the daily routine in the Middle School.