



Welcome to Enrollment 2024-2025!

We are so thrilled you're here! This packet contains information about the Institute for Jewish Enrichment's offerings for the 2024-2025 school year.

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Enrollment Overview

We are so excited to learn with your children! Here are a few highlights for the coming year, for infants - 5th graders:

- Two extraordinary weeks of full day August Camp before Labor Day. If your child is already in school, send them to us in the afternoon! August Camp is open to all families, including those who are not enrolled in Sunday/Afterschool.
- Sunday morning *Shalom Chaverim* ("Welcome, Friends!") group for children from birth through age 3 with their grown-ups!
- So much flexibility! Nursery 3 - 2nd grade children may enroll for Monday through Thursday afternoons, and 3rd - 5th grade children may enroll for afterschool and Sunday mornings. Kindergarten and older choose at least one "A" day and one "B" day. Children welcome for up to 4 sessions / week.
- **New this year: Fridays after school!** Shabbat cooking, crafts, and mixed-ages play, Special Day-style. Enrollment for Fridays is separate from "A" and "B" days.
- So many magical Special Days, full days of Jewish enrichment, throughout the year when schools are closed. Reduced pricing for early enrollment! Share the news with your friends! Special Days are open to all families, including those who are not enrolled in Sunday/Afterschool.

And, for middle (6th - 8th grades) and high school (9th - 12th grades) youth:

- A choose-your-own-adventure middle school platform! Want to participate in weekly study group? Wonderful! Want to do twice quarterly social programs? Fabulous! Choose from one or more components of our middle school platform, including learning, social, volunteer, and family options, open to all Jewish middle schoolers.
- Weekly study group for high schoolers on Wednesday evening.
- Looking for a volunteer position to fulfill a school requirement? We welcome high school sophomores doing volunteer service and offer training for working with young children.
- Join the Education Team! Children who grew up here and are now at least 16 years old are invited to apply for paid positions as *kevtzah* (group) assistants and gain valuable work experience.



How exciting! How do I enroll my child(ren)?

Enrolling your child(ren) for August Camp?

- Complete the registration form at <https://classbug.com/businesses/7025/offerings>.
- Registration is open already!

Enrolling your child(ren) for 3 or more days per week?

- Complete the registration form at <https://classbug.com/businesses/7025/offerings>.
- Registration opens on Monday, May 13th, 2024 at 10:00 AM.

Enrolling your child(ren) for 1 or 2 days per week?

- Complete the registration form at <https://classbug.com/businesses/7025/offerings>.
- Registration opens on Wednesday, May 15th, 2024 at 10:00 AM.

** Some days fill quickly. If you feel strongly about specific days, we recommend enrolling right away.*

Calendar

Regular Session and August Camp Dates:

- August Camp:
 - Week 1: *August 19-23, 2024*
 - Week 2: *August 26-30, 2024*
- First Day of Session 5785:
 - *Tuesday, September 3, 2024* (First - Fifth grades)
 - *Sunday, September 8, 2024* (Infant/Toddler - Kindergarten)
- Winter Break:
 - *December 21, 2024 - January 5, 2025*
- Spring Break:
 - *March 10-17, 2025*
- Passover Break:
 - *April 21-23, 2025*
- Last Day of Session 5785:
 - *Wednesday, June 11, 2025*

*For a complete list of dates, including Special Days and Summer Park Days, please visit the calendar:

<https://jewishenrichment.org/field-school/family-resources/> (Password: IJE5784).



Session Days and Times

What days of the week do you offer programming?

Infants, toddlers, & their grown-ups:

- Sunday mornings: 10:00 - 11:00 AM

Nursery - second grade children:

- Monday - Thursday: after school - 5:45 PM

**Children in kindergarten - second grade must enroll for at least one A day (Monday or Tuesday) and one B day (Wednesday or Thursday).*

Third - fifth grade children:

- Sunday mornings: 9:00 - 11:45 AM
- Monday - Thursday: after school - 5:45 PM

**Children in third - fifth grade must enroll for at least one A day (Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday) and one B day (Wednesday or Thursday).*

Middle and high schoolers:

- Middle School Study Group: Wednesdays, 4:30 - 6:00 PM
- High School Study Group: Wednesdays, 6:00 - 7:30 PM
- Middle school social and family programs will be scheduled on weekends throughout the year.

Friday afternoons:

- After school - 5:15 PM (does not count as an "A" or "B" day)



Age-Based Groupings

Infants, toddlers, & their grown-ups: *Shalom Chaverim* (“Welcome, Friends!”)

Shalom Chaverim children attend with a grown-up.

Description: Sunday mornings filled with stories, singing, art, playing, and more. Our youngest children explore Judaism through the textures, sounds, sights, smells, and rhythms of the Jewish year.

Day/Time: Sunday mornings, 10:00 - 11:00 AM.

Nursery 3 - Kindergarten Children: *Shorashim* (“Roots”) and *Shteelim* (“Saplings”)

Description: *Shorashim* and *Shteelim* children explore Judaism, Jewish texts, and Hebrew language through play, creative arts, music, construction, science, stories, games, and more. Children become familiar with different modes of expressing their ideas, develop facility with various artistic materials and techniques, and practice social awareness and relationship skills for collaborative, long-term projects. While children decide how they want to play with Hebrew, using magnets, games, blocks, stamps, or other materials, *Shteelim* also offers a more structured introduction to Hebrew language and writing for children who are ready. *Shorashim* and *Shteelim* children must be comfortable using the toilet with minimal assistance and attend class without their grown-ups.

Days/Times:

- Nursery children enroll for one or more days - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday (after school - 5:45 PM).



- *Kindergarten* children enroll for at least one “A” day (Monday, or Tuesday) and one “B” day (Wednesday or Thursday), after school - 5:45 PM.

First and Second Grade Children: *Nitzanim* (“Buds”)

Description: *Nitzanim* children develop Jewish literacy through long-term, project-based exploration of Jewish ideas and Hebrew language. *Nitzanim* express themselves through art, drama, spoken word, and writing, and build listening, thinking, and questioning skills while learning to value multiple perspectives. *Nitzanim* also offers a more structured introduction to Hebrew language and writing for children who are ready.

Days/Times:

- *Nitzanim* children enroll for at least one “A” day (Monday, or Tuesday) and one “B” day (Wednesday or Thursday), after school - 5:45 PM.

Third and Fourth Grade Children: *Anafim* (“Branches”)

Description: *Anafim* children continue to acquire foundational Jewish literacy through long-term, project-based learning, with greater independence and choice in projects and materials. *Anafim* children explore personal connections with Judaism and Jewish community while focusing on skills for text interpretation and community dialogue. Hebrew language learning in *Anafim* supports deeper engagement with text and each other.

Days/Times:

- *Anafim* children enroll for at least one “A” day (Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday) and one “B” day (Wednesday or Thursday).
 - Sunday: 9:00 - 11:45 AM
 - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, after school - 5:45 PM.



Fifth Grade Children: *Alonim* (“Oak Trees”)

Description: *Alonim* children continue to develop foundational Jewish literacy while grappling with a broader range of texts and historical information. Children experience more choice in their projects. *Alonim* children are familiar with *chavruta* (partner text study), and use the process comfortably to explore their own relationship with Judaism. *Alonim* children decode Hebrew with ease, and children work on reading fluency and on grammatical principles for translation. A major focus of the *Alonim* Hebrew curriculum is Jewish prayer and the structure of Jewish prayer services.

Sixth grade children may choose to stay in the flagship Sunday and after school program, or enroll in the middle school study group. See below for program description.

Days/Times:

- *Alonim* children enroll for at least one “A” day (Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday) and one “B” day (Wednesday or Thursday).
 - Sunday: 9:00 - 11:45 AM
 - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, after school - 5:45 PM.

Middle School Youth (6th - 8th Grade)

Description: Our middle school platform allows families to choose from different learning, social, and volunteer opportunities.

Enroll for one or more components depending on your child’s interests:

- **Weekly Study Group:** Meet as a cohort to explore questions of self-identity, community, and Jewish life today. For example: How can I be a good friend? What are Jewish views on tattoos? What are different kinds of holiday celebrations? What happens when people die? What

responsibilities do I have to other Jews? To all people? The study group explores questions through Jewish text study, book and internet research, *yetzirah* (art/creativity), interviews, field trips, and more.

- **Madrichim (Leadership program):**
 - Quarterly Weekend Social Gatherings: In past years, we have hosted Chanukah candle lighting + ice skating on the Midway and Chocolate Seder for Passover.
 - Quarterly Family Programs: Examples include our Family Heritage Night, which supports children in learning about their family's history.
 - Volunteer Training and Placement: Middle school youth can set up a regular volunteer commitment with the younger children's groups after school, on Sunday mornings, or on Special Days (full days of Jewish Enrichment when local schools are out). We also connect youth with other local volunteer opportunities.
 - Connections to broader Jewish community: We connect middle schoolers with local Jewish organizations they may wish to get involved in, like the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs or Keshet.

Days/Times:

- Middle School Study Group: Wednesdays, 4:30 - 6:00 PM
- All other middle school components will be scheduled separately.

High School Youth (9th - 12th Grade)

Description: High Schoolers may choose to join a study group, volunteer, or work for pay at the Institute for Jewish Enrichment.

- **Study Group:** High School Study Group determines their own study topics. Previous topics have included: biblical archeology and ancient near



Eastern history; how the ancient rabbis gained political power and what they did with it; the Jewish-Roman Wars; the kosher food industry; medical ethics, and more.

- **Volunteering:** High school youth can set up a recurring and regular volunteer commitment in younger children's groups on a weekday after school, Sunday mornings, or on Special Days (full days of Jewish Enrichment when local schools are out). We encourage 10th grade teens to fulfill their volunteer requirement through a year-long placement at the IJE.
- **Paid Employment:** Juniors and seniors may apply for paid positions as *kevutzah* (group) assistants.

Days/Times:

- High School Study Group: Wednesdays, 6:00 - 7:30 PM
- Volunteer and work opportunities will be scheduled with individual youth.

Hebrew

Hebrew at the Institute for Jewish Enrichment builds a child's foundation for this ancient language. Our curricular focus is on Hebrew that opens the door to classical Jewish texts, Hebrew vocabulary for modern Jewish life, and chanting prayers.

- Institute for Jewish Enrichment children learn this Hebrew:
 - Master Jewish life vocabulary, i.e., a set of Hebrew words connected to Jewish holidays and tradition. Mastery of this vocabulary affords children a comfort and familiarity in Jewish community and spaces.
 - Learn to decode (sound out) Hebrew in preparation for future Hebrew learning (e.g., B-Mitzvah, college courses).

- Ignite wonder about how Hebrew unlocks the code of Jewish texts. Becoming familiar with the structure and grammar of Biblical and/or liturgical Hebrew allows children to experience the power of Hebrew words and phrases as they echo through the text.
- Become familiar with Jewish prayers and the structure of the Jewish prayer service.
- All children do Hebrew everyday. All children in nursery - fifth grade have Hebrew exposure every time they are onsite. Hebrew is embedded in the language of our routines, and as part of our visual and auditory environment. In addition, children in first - fifth grade have a dedicated *zeman Ivrit* (Hebrew time) as part of their session. Children learn Jewish prayers through our communal *Shirah/Tefillah* (Singing/Prayer) at the end of each session.
- When children leave early, they are not able to participate in Hebrew and prayer learning. We understand that sometimes children need to be picked up before 5:45 PM. Please be aware that if children are frequently picked up before 5:45 PM, they are likely to miss Hebrew learning time. *Zeman Ivrit* (Hebrew time) is often scheduled for the last part of the session. In addition, we find that children who often miss *Shirah/Tefillah* (Singing/Prayer) [5:30-5:45 PM on weekdays], struggle to master prayers by the time they reach our fifth grade *tefillah* (prayer) curriculum. Singing and learning prayer from a young age reinforces children's Hebrew language learning and Jewish literacy.

Wait, there's more!



Special Days: Full Days of Jewish Enrichment!

When local schools close for national holidays and parent-teacher conferences, we offer Special Days: full days of Jewish enrichment for children in Pre-K - fifth grade. On Special Days, we discover and explore a Jewish person or idea, culminating in a big project by the end of the day. On previous Special Days, children have written and illustrated their own comic books, performed a play about the Chanukah story with costumes and sets, painted giant Mark Rothko art, and cooked four different kinds of *charoset*. Special Days ROCK!

The yearly schedule of Special Days is available on our website at <https://classbug.com/businesses/7025/offerings>. Enrolling for the whole quarter? Unlock a reduced price! Tell your friends about Special Days! Special Days are open to all families, including those who are not enrolled in Sunday/Afterschool.

**If your child is enrolled in session on a day that is also Special Day, you may bring them at their regular arrival time at no additional charge.*

August Camp!

Institute for Jewish Enrichment: August Camp (for rising Pre-K through fifth grade) will run for two weeks at the end of the summer, **August 19 - 23, 2024** and **August 26 - 30, 2024**. We spend our camp days playing fun games, making amazing art, and laughing lots! At previous camps we've designed our own stamps for Rosh Hashanah cards, taken field trips to see Marc Chagall's art around the city and designed our own art inspired by his style, and created mosaics inspired by archeological digs at Huqoq. Camp is AWESOME! Registration for August Camp is open on our website: <https://classbug.com/businesses/7025/offerings>.



Tell your friends about August Camp! August Camp is open to all families, including those who are not enrolled in Sunday/Afterschool.

Friday Afternoons!

New this year: Super fun Shabbat play after school on Fridays! Children will enjoy Shabbat cooking, crafts, and mixed-ages play, Special Day-style. Friday Afternoon care is open to all Jewish children, ages Nursery 3 - Fifth Grade, even those families who do not attend Monday - Thursday.

Tuition Overview

Tuition at our flagship Sunday/Afterschool includes an entire school year of regular Sunday and weekday sessions, project materials, family and community programs, and planned Saturday sessions for older children.

We care very much about our offerings being accessible to your family. Tuition will increase by 5% in the coming year. Field School tuition remains competitive with most other local after school programs, and is significantly lower than Jewish after school programs around the country. The cost per day of our flagship Sunday/Afterschool program is roughly \$46 per day. For members of Congregation Rodfei Zedek, there is a tuition subsidy available.

Tuition support is available, and we'd like to spend every dollar in our tuition support fund, every year. Please reach out to Rabbi Larry Edwards for a confidential conversation at lle49@comcast.net if cost is a barrier to your family. We appreciate being in community with you, and value the opportunity to work with your children.



School Year Program Registration Fee

- \$50/child: *Early Registration (May - July 25)*
- \$100/child: *Rolling Enrollment (After July 25)*

Tuition for Shalom Chaverim (“Welcome, Friends!” for infants, toddlers, and their grown-ups)

Includes an entire school year of regular Sunday morning sessions, dedicated early childhood educator, and all family programs. No registration fee required.

- *\$350 per year, or \$150 per quarter. (No registration fee)*

Tuition for Sunday/Afterschool

Includes an entire school year of regular Sunday and weekday sessions, project materials, family and community programs, and planned Saturday sessions for older children.

- *1 day/week (Nursery children only): \$1,534*
- *2 days/week: \$2,894*
- *3 days/week: \$3,953*
- *4 days/week: \$5,325*
- *5 days/week: \$6,657*

**Congregation Rodfei Zedek subsidizes its member families' participation. Contact the Institute for Jewish Enrichment for more information.*

Tuition for Pre-Teens and Teens

Tuition for the weekly study group includes an entire school year of weekly sessions, project materials, family and community programs, and a teen educator who supports teens in getting involved in Jewish life in ways that matter to the teen.



- *Weekly study group: \$1,534*
- *Madrichim (Leadership program): \$350*

Special Day Tuition

Special Days run from 8:30AM - 3:30PM. Late Afternoon runs from 3:30PM - 5:45PM, and on Fridays until 5:15PM. **N3 children may enroll in Special Days!*

- *\$70/day for children who enroll by quarter; \$60/day for siblings*
- *\$80/day for children who enroll by day; \$70/day for siblings*
- *\$90/day for children who enroll within 3 business days of a Special Day (space permitting)*
- *Late Afternoon: \$30/day per child*

**Families who enroll in advance will receive discounted Special Day tuition.*

August Camp Tuition

August Camp is offered for children entering Pre-K through 5th grade. Camp runs from 8:30AM - 3:30PM. Late Afternoon runs from 3:30PM - 5:45PM, and on Fridays until 5:15PM. **Children must have turned 4 years old and been enrolled in school for at least a year before camp.*

- *Before July 15: \$330/week first child*
 - *\$280/week second or third child*
 - *Late Afternoon: \$30/day per child*
- *After July 15: \$380/week first child*
 - *\$330/week second or third child*
 - *Late Afternoon: \$30/day per child*
- *After August 1: \$430/week first child*
 - *\$380/week second or third child*
- *Late Afternoon: \$25/day per child*



Friday Afternoon Tuition

Includes an entire school year of regular Friday afternoon sessions, craft project materials, and baking supplies. **Note that Fridays are separate from our flagship Sunday/afterschool and do not count toward a child's "A" or "B" days.*

- *Weekly Shabbat-themed Friday afternoons: \$1,534*

Transportation

We offer van service from the University of Chicago Lab schools. Does your child attend a different school, and you'd like more information on transportation options? Please reach out to us at admin@jewishenrichment.org. More information on sign-up for 2024-2025 to come!

Financial Support

The Institute for Jewish Enrichment offers financial support to families. Confidential conversations are held with Rabbi Larry Edwards. To connect with Rabbi Edwards, please e-mail him at lle49@comcast.net. Neither the Director nor the Board plays a role in determining financial support for families. *Financial support is available for up to 50% of a family's tuition, including registration fees.*

Withdrawals and Refunds

By submitting the enrollment form, your family confirms your commitment to pay tuition and fees to the Institute for Jewish Enrichment for the full academic year. The \$50 registration fee is not refundable. **There will be no charge for school year program cancellations prior to July 1, 2024. Transportation costs will not be refunded after August 15th.**

No refunds will be given for children withdrawing or in case of absence due to illness, holidays, snow days, or vacation. When possible, we encourage families



to send children on a different day during the same 7-day period so children's learning stays on track. We reserve the right to request withdrawal of a child in certain circumstances. Tuition may be refunded proportionally in such a case.

Cancellations for special programming, such as August Camp or Special Days, must be made at least 3 full business days in advance. We reserve the right to charge full price for the day if the Institute for Jewish Enrichment does not receive a cancellation notification in writing.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Institute for Jewish Enrichment?

The Institute for Jewish Enrichment offers a mindset and methodologies for raising a child's voice in Jewish learning. We operate a laboratory Sunday and after school in Hyde Park, Chicago, and share our educational approach nationwide through workshops, training, and coaching.

Founded in 2011, we empower children to build their own personal relationship with Judaism, in a diverse Jewish community that prizes empathy, critical and creative thinking, artistic expression, and family involvement. The Institute for Jewish Enrichment is recognized nationally as an exceptional model of deep, personal Jewish children's learning.

What Jewish denomination is the Institute for Jewish Enrichment affiliated with?

The Institute for Jewish Enrichment is not affiliated with any denomination or movement of Judaism, and our community represents a wide range of Jewish beliefs and practices. Many of our families are affiliated with other synagogues



or temples in the Chicago area; many of our families are not affiliated with any other Jewish institutions. Our curriculum encourages children to explore Jewish texts and traditions, and to develop their own personal interpretation of, and relationship with, Judaism. Our children and families have a wide range of beliefs and practices around God, Jewish holidays, and Jewish texts.

What ages does your program include?

We run Sunday morning programming for infants and toddlers, and Sunday morning plus Monday - Thursday afternoon programming for three-year-olds through fifth grade children. We offer a diverse platform of programs for middle schoolers, including weekly study group on Wednesday afternoon, quarterly family events, twice quarterly social programs, and volunteer opportunities. High school youth meet for study group weekly on Wednesday evenings.

My partner isn't Jewish / I'm a single parent / I'm raising my grandchildren / My child has two parents of the same gender / We don't celebrate Jewish holidays at home. Will our family fit in?

Yes.

What days should we choose? How many days should we choose?

Choose the days that work best for your family. We foster community among the children no matter what days of the week they're enrolled in. Plus, we offer several age-based and IJE-wide opportunities throughout the year for children and families to get to know each other.

Our project-based curriculum makes it possible for children to ask the questions that matter to them, and to wrestle with their questions in ways they prefer, in a community of peers, as part of the long tradition of Jewish conversation. Every



session here reflects the mix of children and ideas present that day; every session offers something new.

Why do children attend at least two days/week starting in kindergarten?

The kind of creative, communal, long-term project work we do with children requires them to trust each other, collaborate, and take risks. It takes time to build and sustain the kind of relationships that support this intensive work.

In addition, children need to revisit their thinking about the current theme at least twice during the week in order to continue developing their ideas. To learn Hebrew in a natural way (i.e., through the auditory environment, through play), children need to hear and play with the language multiple times/week.

Do you teach Hebrew? Does my child need to learn Hebrew?

Hebrew is embedded into the auditory and visual environment, and in the routines of our day, so children pick up the language naturally. Children of all ages play games in Hebrew, often choosing how they would like to engage with the language that day. Hebrew is woven into our physical playtime for younger children, and older children master Hebrew prayers. Comfort with the Hebrew language, and a working vocabulary, are essential to developing confidence in owning the texts of our centuries'-old Jewish conversation. A child who owns these texts can play with Judaism, creating their own meaning in Jewish life and community.

Why do you have multiage groupings?

The Institute for Jewish Enrichment offers multiage groupings in all *kevutzot* (groups). With a broad range of ages, children learn from each other through role modeling. This stimulates younger children intellectually, and allows older



children to develop self-reliance and responsibility. Multiage groupings also promote friendship between children of various ages, which strengthens the community as a whole. Multiage groupings make it possible for children to see that each one of us brings strengths and a unique perspective to our community.

Do you offer Jewish enrichment when school is closed?

Yes! We offer Special Days: full days of Jewish enrichment for children Nursery 3 - Fifth Grade when local schools are closed for national holidays and parent teacher conferences. We also run full weeks of Jewish Enrichment Camp during selected school breaks. We spend our Special Days and Camp days playing and exploring a Jewish person (e.g., Marc Chagall) or idea (e.g., the tastes of Passover), culminating in a big project by the end of the day or week. The full schedule of Special Days is available on our website at <https://classbug.com/businesses/7025/offerings>. Special Days and Camp are open to all families, including those who are not enrolled in Sunday/Afterschool.

Do you offer summer programming?

Yes! In summer 2024, we'll meet on three Sundays to play in parks around the city, including some IJE-style fun. We also run August Camp (for rising Pre-K through fifth grade: **August 19 - 23, 2024** and **August 26 - 30, 2024**). Enroll at <https://classbug.com/businesses/7025/offerings>.

Will my child be ready for a Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah?

Yes. Children at the Institute for Jewish Enrichment develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence to design their own lifelong relationship with Judaism. Starting at an early age, children develop a relationship with the Torah, learn to express their own ideas about Torah and Judaism, and dialogue respectfully with peers. Children learn Hebrew, and they learn Jewish prayers



and about Jewish prayer services. By the time children reach the age of B-Mitzvah (a gender neutral term) at the Institute for Jewish Enrichment, they have acquired foundational Jewish literacy, and also developed their own ideas about what Judaism means to them.

Can we celebrate our child's B-Mitzvah with the Institute for Jewish Enrichment?

Yes. We partner with families to design a B-Mitzvah experience that reflects the family's Jewish life as well as the individuality of the child. Our process proceeds within a family's lifelong relationship with Judaism and aims to launch children into the next stage of responsibility in their lives. Children who celebrate becoming B-Mitzvah with the Institute for Jewish Enrichment engage in a personalized, long-term project emerging from their strengths and interests, learn to chant from the Torah, and participate in a ritual that reflects their own and their family's values. *See below B-Mitzvah FAQ for more information.*

Wait, I have more questions! Is there someone I can chat with?

Yes! Please reach out to us at admin@jewishenrichment.org, and a member of our team will respond and connect your question to the right person.

B-Mitzvah Information

What is a B-Mitzvah?

In traditional Judaism, on a young person's thirteenth birthday (twelfth birthday for girls), they become B-Mitzvah: their status changes from child to adult in the eyes of Jewish law.



At that age, the young person becomes eligible to lead communal religious services, to count in a religious quorum, to form binding contracts, to testify before religious courts, and to marry (although even the ancient rabbis didn't believe youth were ready for *that*). The change of status takes place whether or not it's recognized with a public celebration.

Whereas long ago, the ceremony may have consisted simply of the Bar Mitzvah boy being called up to the Torah, today, our B-Mitzvah ritual often takes a longer form. The ritual is regularly held on a Saturday (Shabbat) morning, and may include the young person leading prayers, reading from the Torah and/or the Prophets, sharing a few thoughts about Judaism, and having some sort of party.

None of these elements are mandatory, though. Families enjoy wide flexibility in how they mark this special time. Your family (or extended family) may have strong expectations about what your child's B-Mitzvah will look like. There are existing structures you might follow and personalize, or you might choose to create a ritual. They're all good choices, and we're ready to help you with whatever path you choose.

Will my child be ready for a B-Mitzvah celebration?

Yes. Children at the Institute for Jewish Enrichment learn Hebrew. They learn the major prayers. Starting at an early age, children develop a relationship with the Torah. They learn to take part in our ever-unfolding Jewish conversation through the centuries, and they become comfortable sharing their own text interpretation. That is, by the time they're 12 or 13, these children can give a D'var Torah (a talk interpreting Torah text) that'll knock Grandma Clara's stockings off. They have foundational Jewish literacy and *also* a confidence in their own Jewish identity.

They know, too, that there's much, much more to Judaism beyond what they've experienced. Our children are ready.



What will my child do at a B-Mitzvah celebration?

It depends, actually. What is meaningful to your child and to your family about being Jewish? Some young people chant Torah or Haftarah (a selection from the Prophets). Some young people lead prayers. Some young people include a long-term social justice, academic research, or artistic project as part of a preparatory year, and proudly share their extensive work during the ceremony. Other families use this special time of life to build a young person's skills for adulthood, like how to plan and cook meals, navigate a train schedule, or manage finances.

Some families celebrate on a Saturday morning. Other families celebrate at other traditional times for Torah reading, i.e., Saturday afternoons, Monday or Thursday mornings, Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of a new Hebrew month), and Jewish holidays.

Some young people prepare and lead an entire holiday service as their B-Mitzvah ritual, like a Passover seder or Purim megillah reading. Some make their own ritual items, like a *tallit* (prayer shawl) or *kippah* (head covering).

All of these are real examples from our community.

In summary: there isn't something that Must Be Done for the ceremony to be real. Make it yours, in the ways your family loves to be Jewish. Let your young person's personality shine.

When will we begin talking about a B-Mitzvah celebration for my child? Who do I work with?

We begin discussing B-Mitzvah with enrolled families in fifth grade. Some families choose to prepare for the ceremony with a local synagogue, while other



families find the Institute for Jewish Enrichment to be their right fit. Congregation Rodfei Zedek has an “open rabbi” policy in which a family may choose any rabbi to officiate at life cycle celebrations. Rodfei families may confidently choose any rabbi, or no rabbi, for a B-Mitzvah.

Your child may require a private tutor. A tutor helps prepare young people to lead a prayer service or chant Torah or Haftarah. Tutoring generally begins 6 months to one year prior to a B-Mitzvah celebration. If your family is preparing for a B-Mitzvah celebration with the Institute for Jewish Enrichment, we will work with you to find an appropriate tutor. Local synagogues also support families in finding tutors.

If your family will be celebrating B-Mitzvah at a local synagogue, we recommend that you begin bringing your child to any one of the wonderful services available locally, so that your child can begin to become familiar with the melodies and practices of this service.

Have more questions? Please feel free to reach out to us at admin@jewishenrichment.org.