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Senior Kindergarten Handbook 2020-21



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Philosophy

We educate students to be creative, caring and sensitive individuals. We encourage them to experience the joy of their Jewish history, traditions, values and culture. We start them on the road to becoming “mensches.”





At Vancouver Talmud Torah we are fortunate to have one of the finest early education centres in the province. Our well-equipped classrooms provide an exciting, stimulating environment in which our students may learn and live life to the fullest. Our excellent facilities enable us to provide a wide range of activities to meet the needs of all the students, enabling them to achieve the fullest measure of growth. All activities presented are carefully planned to promote the perceptual and conceptual development of the children, essential for later academic success.

Our philosophy is to educate students to be creative, caring and curious individuals. We encourage them to experience the joy of their Jewish history, traditions, values and culture. By teaching the students to treat others as they would treat themselves, we launch them on the path to becoming a “mensch.” Students should be equipped with the tools and skills to help them meet the challenges of our complex society. Through the learning process at Talmud Torah, we believe they will be better able to make responsible choices as Jews in today’s world.

Play is the avenue by which children learn. Play is indeed the work of childhood and it is through play that children come to know themselves, their peers, and their environment. At Vancouver Talmud Torah, we are committed to providing a dynamic and playful curriculum that encourages children’s innate sense of curiosity and creative potential.

Nurturing loving, trusting relationships at school are necessary so that children feel secure to confidently pursue their interests and to take academic and social risks. The atmosphere we provide is one of freedom within carefully defined limits, with a balance of structured and unstructured activities. We develop students’ abilities to self-regulate and model empathy, integrity, respect and compassion in all of our interactions. Students learn to cooperate with each other to be responsible citizens of our classroom and our school community. We build their feeling of self-esteem by providing tasks at which they can succeed and help them achieve the acceptance and friendship of others. We encourage them to develop their unique talents and abilities so they may take the next step in the educational process with ease and confidence.

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Our Kindergarten Program

Our Senior Kindergarten program provides an enriched learning environment that promotes students' ability to EXPLORE, DISCOVER, CREATE, and LEARN.



Learning is designed to be engaging, interactive, and personalized in nature. Through this student-centered approach, children become competent thinkers and communicators. Students are given the opportunity to make choices, interact with materials and peers, and participate in imaginative play. They learn to collaborate, inquire and problem-solve, develop physical and motor skills of coordination and manipula-

tion, and develop their oral language, communication and critical thinking skills. Throughout the day they learn to be responsible for themselves and respectful of others.

Our teachers thoughtfully plan and prepare each day so that the needs and strengths of each child are maximized. Although teaching styles, classroom schedules, and personali-

ties vary from classroom to classroom, all faculty work collaboratively and share the commitment to provide the very best educational experience.

Developing Social-Emotional Learning

Vancouver Talmud Torah is committed to developing socially responsible students. Our Senior Kindergarten program is designed to enhance student behaviour and foster a greater sense of belonging and accountability. The safe, orderly and predictable learning environment encourages a positive school culture. Our students are taught to be active, caring and thoughtful members of our school community.

Our Senior Kindergarten program teaches social-emotional learning skills to our students in a meaningful and engaging manner. Using cognitive neuroscience, positive psychology and mindful awareness, students learn to regulate their behaviour, improve their academic performance, increase their feelings of connectedness and develop empathy and compassion.

Judaic Program

Our Judaic program incorporates Hebrew language readiness activities. The children are introduced to the Hebrew Alef-Bet and they learn to recognize and print their Hebrew name. They play sequencing, visual and auditory discrimination games and activities. Woven into the curriculum are Hebrew language experiences. The students learn greetings, how to count, names of colours and familiar objects, blessings for food, and songs and prayers. Every Friday the students welcome the Sabbath (*Kabbalat Shabbat*), experiencing all the traditional rituals of Shabbat. All religious holidays are observed and interpreted to the students at their developmental level. Bible stories are recounted and discussed. All this is done in the spirit of joy and spontaneity. Students are encouraged to develop meaningful spiritual connections. Recognizing that the earliest experiences of life are often the most lasting, we strive to foster a warm and positive attitude in the students towards their Jewish heritage.



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Intellectual Development

We give students an opportunity to engage in rich and meaningful early learning experiences in literacy, numeracy, science and social studies.

Language Arts

Our language arts program gives students an opportunity to engage in rich and meaningful early literacy experiences. This environment fosters and supports strong literacy skill development and provides the necessary groundwork for success. Students participate in playful language activities, respond to and create text, and develop the ability to think critically, creatively, and reflectively. Through stories based on fiction or fact, poetry, and themed digital content, students enhance their experiential background, enlarge their vocabulary, and foster a love of literature and reading. We are also proud of our reading readiness program through our annual phonological assessment of senior kindergarten students. Through multi-sensory learning experiences and independent and group work, the students learn the letter names and sounds and record their thoughts, ideas and questions in a myriad of ways. Teachers use a balance of modeling, direct instruction, guided instruction and independent practice to develop student's literacy skills.

Mathematics

The development of mathematical concepts and understandings are an integral part of our daily instruction. Students are given the opportunity to explore, interpret and describe their mathematical world through meaningful, hands-on learning. Activities are structured to encourage both independent and collaborative thinking, as students develop the following mathematical concepts: change, constancy, number sense, patterns, relationships, uncertainty and spatial sense.

Science

Science activities are part of each day's program. Through these inquiry-based activities each student will develop an awareness and appreciation of the natural world, develop powers of scientific observation, and a problem-solving attitude. We follow their interests--pursuing their curiosity as far as the students are able to go--and provide as many related first-hand experiences as possible. Field trips supporting educational goals enhance the students' classroom experience.

Social Studies

Through the study of society, students will learn about the diverse and rich communities around us. They will be encouraged to ask questions, analyze and interpret ideas and communicate their thinking to their peers. A concentration will be placed on making personal connections and becoming global citizens.



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Physical & Artistic Development



Physical Development

Senior Kindergarten students play outdoors every day - even in the rain! Large muscle co-ordination is developed through the running, jumping, balancing, climbing, and digging activities available. They learn to perceive spatial relationships and judge distance. Fine motor skills are developed through play, crafts and independent work activities. The students also participate in a weekly program with a qualified PE instructor. The program helps develop gross motor co-ordination and skills in an atmosphere of fun. While learning and following the rules of the games, the students acquire the important value of good sportsmanship. They also learn the parameters of safe and healthy play.

Art

A wide range of art activities are available each day to provide the spiritual satisfaction of creating as creativity itself promotes independence, concentration and critical thinking skills. Artistic activities help the students develop initiative to work independently or in a group and foster confidence in working with creative media that will give them life-long grati-

Fine and gross motor skill development as well as an engagement and exploration of the arts are all part of the Senior Kindergarten experience.

fication. Manipulating scissors, crayons, paint brushes, and other materials helps develop fine motor skills.

Music

The Senior Kindergarten students enjoy a rich tradition of music education. Music activities are part of our daily program. Children have the opportunity to explore, create, perceive and communicate thoughts and feelings through music. They experience the joy of making music together, creating songs and rhythms, and responding to music through dance and movement. During COVID-19, our music instruction follows the Ministry of Health & Ministry of Education guidelines. For more info, visit VTT's Health & Safety Plan on our website.

Dramatic Play

Integrated into the daily routine, students participate in dramatic play activities. Through the medium of dramatic expression, they are encouraged to explore ideas, feelings, and events through imagined roles and situations. They participate in games of concentration, communication and teamwork, thus enabling them to learn how to work cooperatively and creatively. Activities are developed and designed to make make-believe accessible and enjoyable for all participants.



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School Routines & Procedures



School Hours

Teachers are ready to welcome students into their classrooms from 8:15 a.m. This year, due to COVID-19, anthems will be broadcast at 8:35 a.m. (as opposed to 8:30 a.m.) All students must be in their classrooms by 8:35 a.m. and prepared to start the day.

This year, due to COVID-19, dismissal will be staggered, beginning at 2:55 p.m. Parents will be assigned a window to pick up their children. Morning drop off and afternoon pick up procedures will be communicated in a separate email. All students must be picked up no later than 3:30 p.m. (unless enrolled in an after school program).

If your child must leave before dismissal, please inform the teacher and office (office@talmudtorah.com) in advance.

At VTT, we respect all levels of religious observance and Jewish affiliation. Please be sensitive by not scheduling birthday parties and celebrations on Shabbat or Jewish holidays.

Morning Arrival

In an effort to develop independence, we strongly encourage parents to say a confident but reassuring good-bye at the classroom door. Students will be warmly welcomed each morning by their teacher and will promptly engage in a “morning starter” activity. For a smooth start to the day, parents are asked to leave the building immediately after drop-off.

Communicating with your Teacher

The teachers are very happy to talk with every parent about his or her child at any time during the year. Parents and the teacher can arrange a mutually convenient meeting time. Regular parent-teacher conferences occur twice a year.

Birthdays and Party Invitations

In Senior Kindergarten we celebrate birthdays by making birthday t-shirts. Please send a white t-shirt for the class to decorate and give to your child on his/her birthday on the first day of school.

At Talmud Torah, we respect all levels of religious observance and Jewish affiliation. Please be sensitive by not scheduling birthday parties on Shabbat or Jewish holidays. If you are not planning on inviting the entire class to a birthday party, please do not distribute party invitations at school.

Clothing

Please send your child dressed for outdoor play every day - rain or shine. The students should have a pair of boots read-

ily available in their lockers to account for rainy days and inclement weather. **PLEASE LABEL ALL CLOTHING AND LUNCH BOXES!**

Please send a full change of uniform in a labeled bag in case of accidents or puddles.

All Senior Kindergarten students are expected to wear a school uniform. Refer to our Parent Handbook for guidelines on school uniforms or visit our school website (www.talmudtorah.com) and search “uniforms.”

VTT Illness Policy

While the world is grappling with the **COVID-19 pandemic**, VTT must follow the strictest protocols as directed by the Ministry of Health and the BC Centre for Disease Control to ensure the health and safety of our entire community. **VTT has a zero tolerance illness policy.**

Daily Checks for Respiratory Illness and Staying Home When Sick

- All students, staff, parents and caregivers who have symptoms of COVID-19 or travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days, OR were identified by Public Health as a close contact of a confirmed case must stay home and isolate.
- Parents and caregivers must assess their child daily for symptoms of **common cold, influenza, COVID-19**, or other infectious respiratory diseases before sending them to VTT.
- Children who are ill, including children of essential service providers, are not be permitted to attend VTT.
- At drop-off the teachers will have a sign in/out binder. In addition to signing in/out the child daily, parents or caregivers will be required to sign that their child is healthy to attend VTT. If a parent or caregiver is unsure if a child should self-isolate, they should either use the **BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool**, contact 8-1-1 or the public health unit. They may also contact their family physician or nurse practitioner to be assessed for COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases.
- If a child becomes ill or develops a fever while at school, parents will be called to take the child home. When called, parents are expected to pick up their child immediately.

For Non-COVID related Illness:

- For respiratory illness, the individual must not have a fever within the last 24 hours without taking medication
- For gastric symptoms (nausea, diarrhea, vomiting and abdominal pain) individuals must remain away from school for 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

For COVID-19 like symptoms (with no screening complete)

- An individual may return to school when they are symptom free (except for mild cough) AND
- It's been a minimum of 10 days since the onset of symptoms

Returning After a Positive COVID-19 Case

- When Public Health has advised it is safe to do so.

COVID-19 Screening Returns Negative:

- When an individual seeks a COVID-19 screening and the result is negative, return to non-COVID-19 related illness guidelines stated above.

Senior Kindergarten Snacks and Lunch

Each day please include ready to eat fruit and/or vegetables for a healthy snack. Please do not send candies or other “junk” food. Peanuts and nuts are forbidden at school. Please ensure all food allergies are reported so arrangements can be made to ensure all students are safe. Students require lunch and two snacks. The teachers do not have food to supplement growing appetites. Please ensure sufficient amounts are sent. Our full service caterer, The Perfect Bite, can also provide daily hot meals for a fee. Visit munchalunch.com to see what’s on offer.

