

Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School

Curriculum Guide

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The Akiba-Schechter Education

MISSION

Akiba-Schechter Jewish Day School provides an excellent secular and Judaic education in Hyde Park to a diverse community of Jewish children from all over Chicagoland. Boys and girls study all aspects of our curriculum together in multi-age classes. By focusing on the individual gifts and needs of each student, our teachers create a caring family of learners who are committed to responsible citizenship and the performance of mitzvot.

COMMUNITY

Our school is unique in many ways. The students and teachers come from the entire spectrum of Judaism, forming a family whose members respect one another because of their differences - not in spite of them. New students are integrated into the Akiba family every year, through multi-age events and all-school programs.

SMALL CLASS SIZE

Akiba-Schechter has the advantage of being a small school. Its average student-teacher ratio is about 10-1 in all grades K-8. Teachers know all the students and students have a personal relationship with many of the teachers outside of school. With fewer students, everyone can be heard. A few minutes of *one-on-one* time with a student can lead to great gains in academic achievement. There are less discipline problems because students are more actively engaged. There is more mutual respect as there is more exchange of thoughts, opinions and philosophies. Small class size enables teachers to worry less about managing learners and more about managing learning.

A small classroom offers more opportunity for in-depth peer collaboration. Students know each other better, are more interdependent and therefore are more successful at group work. There are fewer and smaller groups and more time for students to share their own discoveries. Children have more opportunity to come to their own conclusions after "hands-on" experiences. Students learn best by doing.

MULTI-AGE CLASSROOM

Other factors unique to Akiba are its multi-aged classes, individualized instruction and flexible ability grouping. Each child is in various multi-aged groups during the school day, usually grouped in two-year spans. Each group of children is learning what it needs to know, according to the level it has mastered. Because children are periodically advanced in ability level during the year and certainly from year to year, children are very motivated.

The multi-age classroom at Akiba has many advantages. Each child may progress at his own rate. Indeed, he often progresses at different rates in various subject areas anyway. Self-esteem is fostered because each child is succeeding. He does not progress to more difficult work until he has mastered simpler concepts. Thus he experiences continuous progress. Because of greater opportunity for success, all children have a better attitude toward school, teachers and learning. In a traditional graded classroom, only the brightest or academically successful students *love* school. And even *they* don't always *love* it, because they are bored!

Children learn at various rates. In a traditional "graded" situation, any child who isn't synchronized with the school's curriculum schedule will forever feel *behind* and begin a spiral of failure. In a non-graded situation, he always has the opportunity to excel at a later time and *catch-up*. In the non-graded classroom, children are not *failed* - repeating material - or *skipped* - thereby missing material. Each child makes

continuous progress at his own rate. There is no expectation that every child be ready to learn a certain skill simultaneously; consequently children do not feel like failures.

A non-graded classroom is important socially, as well as academically. Multi-age settings foster cooperative learning skills that are necessary in a democratic society. They learn to work with older and younger peers. Few adults work with only same-aged colleagues. Cooperative learning in a multi-age classroom builds a sense of community. Children are not competing against one uniform standard, hence, they are less competitive. Instead, they are competing with *themselves* for individual progress. There is less emphasis on a grade and instead, a celebration of accomplishments. Competition is minimized because there are always many levels being mastered.

Amazingly, this type of learning promotes the most effective form of motivation: *self*-motivation. Children know that they are the sole determiners of their progress, and so they may fly to the stars and beyond. Consequently, many do. Children in a multi-age classroom become more self-reliant. Since students are learning at different rates, the teacher instructs only part of a class much of the time. Children learn to help one another or to be independent. Children **own** their learning when they are not totally dependent on the teacher to direct it.

In addition to this, remaining in the same classroom for multiple years provides every child with the opportunity to be both a learner and a teacher. As a new student in a multi-aged classroom, he learns from older/brighter role models. As he ages in the group, he will have the opportunity to teach others, build in redundancy to master concepts and become a leader to younger/slower students. Most people will agree that there is no better way to learn a topic than to teach it. In addition, no student should feel he is always at the top or bottom of a class. Because the classroom is a fluid learning community, he will be each at some point in time.

In this supportive, encouraging environment, children who have not succeeded at other schools find that they, too, are capable of progress. This system works for the gifted child too. Every student has a right to learn something in school in every class, yet often the gifted learn the least. Much of what they are asked to learn in a mixed ability class, they have already mastered. Teachers often make them classroom helpers or let them read books on their own. Consequently the gifted child is not given the opportunity to learn through "real struggle." If gifted students are not exposed to challenging material, they will not learn *how* to learn and will certainly not develop the study skills they need for future serious academic pursuits. Students who are not forced to struggle with their work will be utterly unprepared for the post high-school world, where universities and employers make demands of independent learning. The goal of an appropriate education must be to create optimal learning experiences for all.

FLEXIBLE ABILITY GROUPING

Flexible Ability Grouping is the process of grouping students on a subject-by-subject basis, according to their current performance. Often students are in the most advanced group in one subject area but not in another. Flexible grouping dictates that groups change in response to changes in students' needs, achievement levels, development, and motivation. Scheduling can be a nightmare and more human and material resources are needed than in traditional heterogeneous classrooms. However, if our goal is to educate all children to the best of their capabilities, then the time and effort is an investment in our future. In order to genuinely not leave any child behind, schools need to modify curriculum and instruction to insure student success.

Akiba's small and multi-aged classes, individualized instruction and flexible ability grouping are excellent and proven ways to educate and prepare lifelong learners and admirable human beings

- Miriam Schiller, Principal

Language Arts

Language is central to the students' intellectual, social, and emotional growth, and must be seen as a key element of the overall school curriculum. Language is a crucial tool for learning in all subject areas. Whether they are studying literature or history, learning science or Judaica, students need fundamental language skills to understand information and to express their ideas.

In recognition of this, Akiba-Schechter has always emphasized the teaching of reading and writing and has taken particular care to insure that children entering the school, normally but not always in first grade, develop these critical skills. A very great amount of time and attention is devoted to reading, both decoding and comprehension. In the lower school the writing process is taught, including spelling, punctuation, grammar and syntax. In the middle school writing skills are reviewed and developed in a variety of contexts, with the principal goal being the accomplishment of clear expository prose.

On all levels a wide range of reading material is used, beginning with stories and progressing to novels, short fiction, non-fiction prose, poetry, and drama. Annual book contests are used to promote reading for pleasure.

Language Arts	Kindergarten	1 st and 2 nd	3 rd and 4 th	5 th -6 th	7 th - 8 th
Reading →	Learning sounds; Sharing Big Books; Listening to chapter books.	Decoding; Comprehension; Reading aloud daily; Reading and discussing chapter books.	Reading and discussing chapter books, plays, historical fiction, non-fiction.	Writing techniques (foreshadowing, flashback) biographies, News articles, information articles, myths, historical fiction, plays.	Current news and journal articles Novels, Short stories, drama, poetry
Penmanship →		Correct formation of upper and lower case Manuscript letter	Mastering cursive Typing	Mastering cursive Typing	Typing is emphasized
Composition →	Writing with “inventive spelling”	Sloppy copy, edit, final draft; Fiction, non-fiction, letters	Journal writing; Monthly book reports; Fiction; Research reports; Spelling; Dialogue; Outlines; Note taking.	Newspaper articles; Persuasive argument; Interviews; Recognizing propaganda techniques; Research papers with bibliographies, Internet as a research resource; Creating a presentation.	Continuation of all 5-6 th grade tools. An emphasis on expository and persuasive writing
Grammar →		Capitals, commas, Declarative and interrogative sentence and punctuation; Nouns, pronouns, verbs.	Paragraph structure; Compare and contrast; Adjectives and adverbs; Diagramming sentences.	Conjunctions; Prepositional phrases; Review of all parts of speech.	Complex clauses Review of parts of speech as needed
Oratory →		Show and Tell Students read their own stories Students demonstrating projects	Oral reports, oral presentations, participating in various plays	Oral reports, oral presentations, participating in various plays	Debates, oral reports, oral presentations, participating in various plays

Social Studies

In Social Studies teachers and students examine and try to understand communities from local to global. Students learn about the heritage of various lands, how geography effects them and the nature of citizenship within those countries. They learn to understand the role of citizens in a democratic society such as the United States of America and they are taught democratic values.

Students also acquire skills of inquiry and communication through research projects using maps and globes and their knowledge of history. History involves examination of individuals, events, movements, institutions, nations and eras but it is taught by emphasizing themes rather than merely facts and dates. For example, the system of roads the Romans built throughout Europe spread the Latin language and resulted in today's pattern of romance languages.

Analytic techniques are taught to make sense out of data. These include graphing, charting, map reading and data manipulation. Whenever possible, original source material is used for teaching history. Students need to learn to examine information critically to solve problems and make decisions on issues relevant to their lives.

The ultimate goal is to inculcate in the children a curiosity and fascination with the world, to arm them with a love of data as the means for understanding the world, and to teach them the verbal and analytical skills they must have to communicate and interact with the world.

In the middle school, history becomes the principal component of the social studies curriculum. We teach two years of American history and two years of world history on a rotating basis. Geography, especially the use of maps, is treated as an important element of historical understanding. Other social science disciplines, such as macroeconomics and anthropology, are introduced on an as-need basis.

The school participates annually in the National Geographic Society "Geography Bee" and debates, mock elections and mock courts have been used as teaching and motivational tools.

Social Studies	Kindergarten	1st and 2nd	3rd and 4th	5th-6th	7th- 8th
Current Events→		Current Events	Current Events	Current Events	Current Events
Geography→		Basic geography and map skills	Geography and map skills	Geography and map skills	Geography and map skills
American History→		Historical times and place such as colonial times around Thanksgiving	Chicago History American History	Early American history beginning with the explorers and colonization to development and growth of the Republic in the early 1800's.	American History pre-Civil War life through the 20 th century Use of charts, tables, graphs
Anthropology→		Different Lands and Cultures	People of Israel		
World History→		Famous people that lived in the past such as Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King		World History exploring the development of early societies – ancient Egypt, India, China, Israel, Greece, and the rise and fall of the Roman Empire	Western Civilization begins with the Renaissance and continues into the 20 th century Use of charts, tables, graphs

Science Overview

Science is a form of knowledge that tries to describe and explain the natural and physical world and its place in the universe. Science is not only a body of knowledge but a way of knowing. Scientific investigation involves exploration, experimentation, observation and measurement and analysis and dissemination of data.

Our Science Program is designed to help further develop each of the following in our students:

- Understanding of the interrelationships among science, technology and society.
- Understanding of important science concepts, processes and ideas.
- Use of higher-order thinking skills.
- Ability to solve problems and apply scientific principles.
- Commitment to environmental protection.
- Interest in independent study of scientific topics.
- Social skills.
- Communication skills.

To accomplish these goals, a wide variety of teaching strategies are employed. The common denominator among these is their emphasis on *doing*. At all times, students are to be active and involved.

Each year students in Grades 3-4 are introduced to the concept of doing a science fair project. They learn how to plan an experiment, research background information, do the experiment and a lab write-up, and then explain the results of their experiment. By middle school, children are able to do these experiments and projects in a more independent manner and often complete these projects outside of school. Winners at the 7-8 Grade level can compete in the Regional Science Fair which takes place at the Museum of Science and Industry. Finally, those who win at the regional level are eligible to compete at the state level.

Science	Kindergarten	1 st and 2 nd	3 rd and 4 th	5 th -6 th	7 th - 8 th
Scientific Philosophy & Methods →	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Exposure to how things happen in the world to whet children’s interest in scientific learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Experimental methods (hypotheses, procedures, conclusions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How to write up a lab after conducting an experiment and how to present the results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The nature of science and the science of nature Conduct experiments, write up lab report and discuss results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Science in the news Conduct experiments, write up lab report and discuss results
Ecology and Life Sciences →		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Living and non-living •Plants, five groups of vertebrate animals •Human body, senses, nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Plant classification and uses. •Animal lifecycles, food chain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ecology and ecosystems •Photosynthesis. •Renewable and non-renewable resources. •Diversity of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The continuity of life •The cell •The diversity of life •Human biology •Ecological relationships.
Chemistry and Matter →		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Properties and states of matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Measuring matter, force, work and energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The structure, properties and interactions of matter. •Chemistry of food 	
Physics and Energy →		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Magnets •Simple machines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Electricity. •Sound. •Energy and machines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Waves, sound and light •Motion, forces and energy •Electricity and magnetism •Work, power and machines 	
Earth Sciences and Astronomy →		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Earth’s shape and composition •Sun, moon, and stars •Weather systems •Earth, air and water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Rocks and minerals •Oceans •Changes in the Earth •The solar system 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring planet Earth •The atmosphere and weather •Water and Earth •The Earth’s land masses •Astronomy• Earth’s past & future

Mathematics Overview

The Mathematics program from Grades 1-8 is designed to equip our students with the basic understanding and skills they need to be able to interpret both real-world and symbolic problems and find appropriate solutions.

Knowledge of mathematical language, structures and operations will help students reason logically and justify their conclusions. Problem solving is an important part of mathematical reasoning and starts with mental math in 1st Grade and continues as an integral part of the curriculum into Algebra and Geometry.

A Math Team meets once a week at lunch, under the direction of Mrs. Basa, to work out unusual and interesting problems. They take tests to compete with children in other schools.

Mathematics	Kindergarten	1st and 2nd	3rd and 4th	5th-6th	7th- 8th
Numbers and their Uses →	Comparing Counting Recognizing, reading, writing numbers to 12 1-to-1 correspondence	Greater than, less than, using graphs	Probability and statistics	Statistics – mean, mode, median, range	
Operations and Place Value →		Number line Place value – tens, ones, hundreds, rounding, regrouping (carrying & borrowing), Beginning multiplication Money systems	Common factors, place value to millions, Roman numerals Meaning of fractions, mixed numbers, reading decimals	Decimals, fractions, exponents, scientific notation, fractions to decimals and percent Proportions and ratios	
Geometry →			Area and volume of square or rectangle	Plane figures, Pythagorean Theorem, Surface area, volume of a cylinder	Advanced Geometry
Measurement: Scales and Indices →		Temperature Measurement – with ruler, scale, thermometer, liter, cup, pint, quart, gallon	Calendar, clock – hour, half-hour, 5 minutes		
Algorithms, Number Patterns, Advanced Algebra →		Fact families Counting by 2's, 5's, 10's, even and odd,	Prime numbers, Addition and subtraction 4-5 digits with regrouping, time regrouping, estimating Multiplying and dividing 2-digit and 4-5 digits		Algebra Advanced: Algebra II

Judaic Studies Goals

The Judaic Studies curriculum will enable the students to become motivated, knowledgeable and involved members of the Jewish community.

The curriculum's emphasis on Hebrew language skills will develop the necessary foundation for textual study, a greater understanding of Jewish liturgy, and a connection to Israel, its people and culture. The study of traditional Biblical and Talmudic texts will increase the students' knowledge, develop their values and sharpen their analytical skills.

As students become more knowledgeable, familiar and capable with the sources of their heritage, they will develop greater pride in their Judaism and an increased commitment to the Jewish community.

Judaic Studies	1 st -2 nd Grade	3 rd Grade	4 th Grade	5 th -6 th Grade	7 th - 8 th Grade
BibleStudies Chumash Navi→	Summary and key ideas of Weekly Torah Portion Bible stories Begin reading Bereishit	Summary and key ideas of Weekly Torah Portion Reading, translating and explaining roots, prefixes and suffixes of Bible text Stories from the Midrash and Rashi	Summary and key ideas of Weekly Torah Portion Master several verses per lesson Begin learning Rashi Find anomalies in the text which teach Values	Summary and key ideas of Weekly Torah Portion Build vocabulary by comparing words of the same root. Introduction to Navi (Prophets). Understanding Rashi's methodology	Summary and key ideas of Weekly Torah Portion <i>Chidon HaTanach</i> – broaden knowledge base
Talmud→				Mishna – Nature and development of the Oral Torah – Survey of texts representing major Judaic themes	Gemara – Relationship between Hebrew and Aramaic – Advanced study of the Oral Torah – Analytical thinking skills and structure of Talmudic dispute – Dynamics of Talmudic debate – Key Legal Terminology – Medieval Commentaries

Judaic Studies	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd-4th Grade	5th-6th Grade	7th- 8th Grade
Jewish Life and Practice			Calendar	Calendar	
	Calendar		Holidays	Holidays	Calendar
	Holidays	Calendar	Israel – holidays, geography, culture	Israel – holidays, geography, culture	Holidays
	Israel – holidays, geography, culture	Holidays	Introduction to Trope (Cantillation) – Torah reading skills	Mastering Trope (Cantillation) – Torah reading skills	Israel – holidays, geography, culture
Hebrew Language	Master reading Alef-Bet with vowels, in block letters	Master cursive handwriting			
	Learn basic vocabulary	Reading fluency	Read and translate comprehension questions on short stories		
	Become familiar with the sound and structure of Hebrew	Compose and understand simple sentences	Use present tense and past tense	Conjugate in all tenses	Ivrit B'Ivrit
		Understand oral classroom phrases	Introduction to future tense	Speak, understand and compose short paragraphs	Short Stories, Letters and Essays
		Gender matching	Conversational Hebrew	New verb forms	Discussion in Hebrew

Visual Arts Overview

Our Visual Arts curriculum features the traditional fine arts such as drawing, painting, sculpting and fiber arts, as well as crafts. The students develop creativity, skills and art vocabulary – they have fun problem-solving, brainstorming and exploring a wide variety of materials and techniques, as well as experimenting with both traditional and non-traditional methods and tools. Often, familiar household objects are used in order to develop in students an awareness that art is really all around us and that art can be made with anything! The study of visual arts is intended to enhance art appreciation, develop creativity and to encourage students to communicate with others through art.

During the process, the students build confidence as their own ideas unfold, their powers of observation become sharper and they develop their capacity to analyze works of art. The students will increase their familiarity with art from all over the world and from various historical periods and art movements. The goal is for them to understand and appreciate a wide variety of art.

Whenever appropriate, the visual arts will be linked with other subject areas or other art disciplines such as drama and music. Group discussions provide students the chance to develop and share ideas about the role of art in business and careers, in our homes and in our community.

Visual Arts	Kindergarten	1 st and 2 nd	3 rd and 4 th	5 th -6 th	7 th - 8 th
Drawing/Painting	Self-portraits; Still life: exploring basic forms and composition; Pastels, Chalk and Crayon: rubbing and blending; Oil and water resist; Drawn and painted lines.	Self-portraits; Realism vs. abstraction; Pictorial composition; Line, shape, color and space; Watercolor with sea salt; Pastels	Self-portraits; Ideological – self-concept; Master Artists; Exploring elements of style; Collage, multimedia.	Advanced self-portraits – detailed, personalized, Master Artists; Materials and techniques; Multimedia approach.	
Color Theory	Color Wheel; Warm/cool; Primary colors; Mixing your own secondary colors; Expressing feelings with color	Color mixing; Complimentary colors; Contrast; Review primary and secondary; Introduce tertiary tinting and shading.	Color Theory; Muting colors with opposites; Problem-solving with color.	Balance and rhythm via color; Creating illusions of space and depth; Varying intensity and color temperature to enhance perspective.	
3-D Construction	Wire sculpture; Paper 3-D construction; Simple Origami; Clay modeling; Quilling	Sculpture, multimedia: wire, cloth, paper, found objects; Papier-Mâché; Origami; Clay modeling; Textures, shapes and inclusions	Wire sculpture; Multimedia; Clay; Wooden sculpture; Papier-Mâché Puppets; Geometric construction: cubes and equilateral triangles.	Advanced wire; Wood and clay construction; Papier-Mâché Puppets; Clay; Geometric paper 3-D construction; Modular Origami; Drinking straw polyhedra; Understanding architecture.	
Fiber Arts	Yarn collage; Simple weaving; Cloth collage.	Yarn collage (pictorial); Weaving on objects, tree branches or nylon mesh, for example; Clothing for self designed clothes pin figures.	Radial waving; Macramé and braiding; Sewing; Puppet bodies.	Radial weaving with inclusions; Advanced macramé; sewing and embroidery wrapping and tying; Puppet bodies.	
Printmaking	Stamping; Hand-designed stamps; Vegetable prints; Monoprints; Repeat shapes; Stenciling.	Monoprints; Printing with hands and found objects; Sponge-stamping; Repeat shapes – many variations; Stenciling; Marbling, Tie-dye; Rubber-band method.	Block-printing; Monoprinting; Solid color, Multi-color, ink; Marbling; Tie-dye; Rubber band method.	Block-printing; Monoprinting; non-traditional tools; Experimental media; Experimenting with photographic materials and techniques; Tie-dye; Rubber band method.	

Visual Art	Kindergarten	1st and 2 nd	3rd and 4 th	5th-6 th	7th- 8th
Art History	Various artists; Art appreciation; Painting; Drawing; Sculpture; Art around the world.	Artists and their contributions; Student-centered exchange of knowledge and ideas: (how do various works of art make us feel?)	Artists; Biographical information and how they got started; Students subjectively discuss what they see in a variety of works and critique them aloud.	Art Exhibitions; Careers of various artists; Discussions of the role of art in businesses, our homes and the community.	

7-8th grade students attend classes at the Hyde Park Art Center. During the school year they take three to four courses with various artist/teachers and work in various medias. Some of the courses the classes have completed in past years are:

- Cartoon making
- Photography
- Mosaics (individual pieces and a collaborative class project)
- Ceramics
- Sculpting
- Book making

Enrichment and Extra-Curricular Offerings

The following are a sampling of some of the events that make Akiba-Schechter an exciting place for children to attend. They are not listed in any particular order.

1. **Newspaper** – This is a group of middle-schoolers who meet weekly to create a student newspaper. All articles are written and edited by the students. During meetings, students also learn basic journalism. Led by Danielle Kozin.
2. **Yearbook** – This is a group of middle-schoolers who meet weekly to create a yearbook. This includes photos, events, classes and other memories. Led by Danielle Kozin.
3. **Spelling Bee** – This is an annual state-sponsored competition wherein children in Grades 3-8 compete in spelling. Finalists go to the city wide level.
4. **Geography Bee** – This is fairly similar to the Spelling Bee; the content is instead geography.
5. **Chidon HaTanach** – In this program, students in Matty. Schinasi's Chumash class learn a select group of material selected by the World Zionist Organization. This material varies every year and always includes at least one book from the Bible, one from the Prophets, one from the Writings, and various commentaries. Students are tested on the material together with other participating schools in Chicago and finalists go on to New York to compete there. New York Finalists proceed to Israel for the International Competition.
6. **Music** – Led by Rhea Basa, music takes place once a week for all 1st – 8th Graders. In 1st Grade students start learning how to read notes. By 3rd Grade, children learn to play music, beginning with recorders.
7. **Choir** – Also led by Rhea Basa, this is an optional activity that meets at lunchtime. Choir students showcase their skills at various school assemblies and celebrations.
8. **Orchestra** – Also led by Rhea Basa, this is an after school activity that meets once a week and ends in time for students who live North to go home on the late bus.
9. **Computers** – This takes place during and after school. Students learn both how to maneuver through a computer and how to use it for word processing, web surfing, typing, Power Point and Excel.
10. **Annual Musical** – Led by Carole Groover and Rhea Basa, the all school musical is the culmination of hard work and group effort. The play is usually the reproduction of a musical and it focuses on the collaboration of pre-school, lower school and middle school. Students have the chance to participate in dance, music, drama and painting.
11. **8th Grade Fundraising** – In order to finance their 8th Grade Graduation Trip, 7th and 8th Graders combine to work on various projects: Honey Cakes, Hamantaschen, Chanukah Bags, Mother's Day Lox Boxes, Learn-a-thons and much more.
12. **Purim Carnival** – On this holiday, students and teachers dress up in masquerade and join together to listen to the reading of the Megillah, celebrate a Purim Feast and create a carnival. The booths in this carnival are led by the middle schoolers and are enjoyed by the lower school and pre-school. Prizes are for everyone.

13. **Lag B'omer** – To celebrate this holiday, students participate in a barbecue, talent show and color war. During the talent show, students may show off any talent they want, from piano playing to body-pretzels. Color war involves several teams, each composed of 1st – 8th Graders. Teams compete in various relays and group cheers. The purpose of the day is community and teamwork building.
14. **Chanukah Play** – For students in the lower school, the Chanukah play is a chance to show off not only their drama skills, but their knowledge of Hebrew. Performed at the all-school Chanukah Assembly, the play is done entirely in Hebrew and is led by the Judaic Studies staff.
15. **Yom HaShoah** (Holocaust Remembrance Day) – On this day, students have a chance both to learn and to commemorate. Led by Mrs. Schiller, the Middle School students watch holocaust-related films, visit an exhibit that deals with the historical aspect of the holocaust or hear eye witness accounts from a survivor of the times. The day is culminated with memorial services.
16. **Yom Ha'atzmaut** – To celebrate Israel's Independence Day, the students usually participate in several Israel-related arts and crafts projects and an Israeli feast. The day culminates with the Chidon Yisrael. Note: in the past, this day was marked by both in-school band and Israeli Dancing or by an evening dinner involving students as Israeli waiters.
17. **Science Fair** – Led by Michelle Rotfeld, the Science Fair involves children in Grades 3-8. Through it, students learn how to create and analyze a science experiment. They also learn such key skills as how to research and write a paper, the importance of scientific method, and how to conduct an oral presentation. Winners in the 7th-8th Grades continue to the regional level, from which they may proceed to city and state levels as well.
18. **Asher Essay Competition** – In this city-wide contest, students author stories, poems, or essays that deal with some sort of Jewish content. Winners receive a \$75 savings bond from the Associated Talmud Torahs.
19. **Book Contest** – Students in Grades 1-8 voluntarily compete in a reading contest to reach various page number plateaus. 80% of the students participate. The winners of the highest plateau go out to dinner with teachers.
20. **Gym Classes** – Students K-8 have gym class taught by instructors from the Hyde Park JCC in their gymnasium.
21. **7-8th Grade Art** – Taught by artist-instructors at the Hyde Park Art Center.
22. **Field Trips** – Trips are taken by individual or combined classes as reinforcement of subject content such as: 7-8th Graders attending plays that have been read and studied; Middle Schoolers going to Hebrew theatre or film; all Grades to museums; 1st-2nd Graders visiting a Chocolate Factory after reading *The Chocolate Touch*. Trips are also taken as all-school events for fun and to reinforce a sense of community.
23. **Springfield Trip** – 7/8th grade students travel to Springfield for a two-day trip where they visit many sites, among them the state capital, the Lincoln Museum, the Governor's mansion, and the state legislature.
24. **Passover Seders** – Model Seders are conducted at each grade level with students actively leading and participating in reading of the Haggadah. Children prepare by learning and cooking for the event.
25. **Rosh Chodesh** – The first day of each new month on the Jewish calendar is marked with special prayers and songs. Afterward, Grades 1-8 come together for a breakfast and Grades 5-8 participate in Israeli dancing.
26. **Mock Israeli Election** – Every few years, Middle School students participate in mock Israeli elections. The children are divided into multi-aged groups. Each group researches one Israeli party (There are many.) and a representative presents their platform to an audience of Grades 3-8. Posters, flyers, buttons, etc. are created preceding the election to campaign for their party and a vote is taken after speeches have been presented.

27. **Math Team** – Middle School children meet at lunch with Mrs. Basa to work out unusual and interesting Mathematical problems. Tests are taken to compete with children from other schools.
28. **Maot Chitim** – Children in Middle School participate in packing and/or delivering food for poor Jewish people in our city for the holidays of Rosh Hashana and Passover.
29. **Shabbatonim** – Middle School children participate in events related to Shabbat, usually around one of the student's Bar or Bat Mitzvahs. The Shabbat celebration begins with group dinners on Friday night and concludes with group dinners on Saturday night. Events are planned for Friday night and Shabbat after the synagogue services.