

Welcome to JCDS

Middle School Curriculum Overview



Introduction

At JCDS, we:

- 🔥 Honor the uniqueness of each of our students and nurture them as they develop and navigate adolescence
- 🔥 Recognize that central to our students' curiosity, emotional well-being and acquisition of 21st century skills, is an environment of derekh eretz (respect), tolerance, and empathy
- 🔥 Put great emphasis on our students' knowing the importance of being upstanders and understanding the 'other'
- 🔥 Value that our students graduate with quick minds, compassionate hearts and a love of learning

Middle School Structure

Fifth Grade

Fifth grade is a transition year into the JCDS Middle School.

Students gain greater independence and have additional classes and electives, while remaining in their own advisory/classroom.

Sixth through Eighth Grade

Sixth through eighth grade students belong to mixed-grade homeroom advisory groups. Advisories create meaningful student engagement and foster a deeper sense of community. A nurturing environment of multiage grouping enables students to enter the community as equals, while sharing common curriculum, developing a common language.

Middle School Curriculum

English

Students work to refine the crafts of writing and critical thinking. Mastering writing conventions and working with a variety of literature, our integrated approach gives students the opportunity to compare and contrast themes from both Judaic and general studies texts. Teachers continually encourage students to appreciate spoken and written language and look at English materials in more sophisticated and abstract ways.

History

Students explore how and why events in history occurred, the impact these events had and different interpretations and perspectives of these events. Students also learn to find reliable sources for information through research. Students learn how to become lifelong researchers and gain an appreciation for the themes that history teaches and how these themes relate to themselves and the world around them.

Math

We foster mathematical thinking through studying logic, operations, geometry, measurement, data collection and probability. Students are taught that math is all around us in our everyday lives. Students learn and practice calculations and learn the concepts behind the strategies they are learning to help them better explain why they are using certain strategies to solve certain problems. Our math curriculum is designed to help students use perseverance and creativity when solving problems which helps them become critical thinkers who think outside of the box to solve problems.

The Advisory Program

Students in Grades 6 – 8 are divided into four multi-age advisories. Most students remain in their advisory groups for all three years.

Your child's advisor is available for her/him throughout the school day. If you have general questions about your child's life at school, you can call your child's advisor, but you should call his/her teacher if you have subject-specific concerns.

Through an inquiry-based model in Advisory, we hope to challenge and help shape each child's moral, intellectual and social awareness. We will create whole school learning opportunities and employ common vocabulary, principles and concepts that can guide the integration of academic, social, civic and Jewish identity outcomes for students and the school.

In addition, in Advisory we pursue other educational goals, including social justice using materials from Facing History and Ourselves™, Health Education, planning for Chaggim (holidays), discussing current events, conversations about school issues, getting to know students in different grades and preparation for both leading and participating in T'fillah (prayer).

The fifth grade (Tamar) has its own advisory group, led by Samara Hendin Soiref. During Advisory periods, Samara will lead Tamar students in "The Power of the Mind" curriculum, which is designed to help the students come to understand themselves as learners.

Milestones

During yearly "milestone" events that showcase students' learning to family and friends, the children have the opportunity to study, teach and discuss Jewish texts together and as a larger community. The school gives each student a copy of a significant Jewish text to form part of the students' libraries for life-long Jewish learning.

Below is a snapshot of each of our grade milestones:

Grade	Title	Description
5th Grade	Pirkei Avot - Ethics of the Sages	When faced with hard choices about how to act toward, and react to, other people, one of the places that we turn for guidance and answers is to the wisdom of our rabbis. Join the fifth graders as they journey to the Batei Midrash of the rabbis of Pirkei Avot and learn who these great sages were and the wisdom and advice they have passed down through the generations to us.
6th Grade	M'dor L'dor - From Generation to Generation	As they prepare to become B'nei Mitzvah, our sixth graders stand ready to take their place in the adult Jewish community and continue the chain of Jewish traditions. To effectively shape the future, our students must first understand the past. Through the combined efforts of Tanakh, Teshuva, and Humanities, the students explore the national, communal and familial legacies that they have been given. Standing on the shoulders of those who came before, these young adolescents will shape the future of the next generation of Judaism and of the world.
7th Grade	Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Typically, between 6th and 8th grade, every student at JCDS celebrates her or his bat or bar mitzvah in some fashion. The JCDS community has developed a tradition for the middle school to hold B'nei Mitzvah community services for fellow students. The celebration includes Aliyot for parents, teachers and the community. The community honors the Bar or Bat mitzvah by embracing them in a tallit and having a teacher speak about their classmate.
8th Grade	Reflections	The Reflections Ceremony is an annual milestone event preceding Graduation, at which each eighth grade student, in a powerful and uniquely individual way, expresses his/her personal passage through JCDS.