Meeting Needs in Youth and Family Education

In our large Youth and Family Education program, we view each child as created *b’tzelem Elohim,* in the image of God. In striving to provide a positive and meaningful educational experience for each and every student, we do our best to ensure that no one “falls between the cracks”. We also know that everyone benefits from diverse classrooms filled with many kinds of learners.

We value and encourage open communication and work closely with families to make the accommodations and adjustments that will enable students with a variety of special needs to be part of the learning community and to successfully participate in our programs. To this end, we have developed a set of forms and procedures to document our work, and we provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of all the children in the program:

At the beginning of the year, Flora Kupferman, the Student Services Coordinator, alerts the teachers to individual student needs, including learning and health issues, allergies and dietary restrictions, medications, and any other areas of concern.

At weekly meetings with the teaching teams, Flora provides teachers with suggestions and resources for matching teaching techniques with learning needs as well as classroom management strategies.

Flora visits each Havurah and all of our Weekday Torah classes to observe students based on teacher referrals. Using information provided by parents on registration forms, by previous teachers’ evaluations and through these direct observations, we determine who would benefit from individual assistance, and then pull students from the larger classes for short one-on-one tutoring sessions as needed. Students who miss a number of classes and fall behind also receive one-on-one catch up sessions. Communication with the students’ adults is an ongoing part of the process.

Children who require one-on-one attention at all times in order to have a successful classroom experience are matched with a Caring Companion. Most of our Caring Companions are teen teachers who have completed the Madrichim teacher training program and who have the maturity and desire to work closely with children who have special needs. Caring Companions receive training from Flora, meet their students before classes start, and form close bonds during the year. Flora communicates regularly with the Caring Companions, the Lead Teachers, and the children’s adults throughout the year.

Flora is also integrally involved in our B’nei Mitzvah program, tracking students’ progress and working with students who need individual assistance. We tailor each student’s Bar or Bat Mitzvah preparation and ceremony to his or her abilities and needs.

In an effort to successfully serve all the children in the Youth and Family Education program, we are increasing our efforts to reach out to families and encourage them to share information about their children. The more we know, the better equipped we will be to provide the best educational experience to all our students. It is our goal to meet the special needs, whatever they may be, of all our students to the extent possible, and we view parents and guardians as our partners in this sacred task. All our students are special, and when they require special education of any kind, they receive it.