

Kesher FAQs 2020-2021

What does it mean that Kesher (formerly Religious School) is online? Will my student still get the same education?

The decision to put Kesher online is about safety and health. We want to ensure that we can provide the safest learning conditions possible for our students. The quality of the education will not change. Online learning enables us to utilize advanced technological resources while ensuring excellence.

The length of the classes will also be different than it would be in person. We know that developmentally, some of our students are not able to be on zoom for an extended period of time. Younger students will only be on zoom for 30 minutes, and older students will have class for up to an hour at a time. Students in Grade 3 and up will also have Hebrew for one half hour a week in small groups. Please find the schedule [here](#).

Therefore, our older students will receive 1.5 hours of synchronous (live) learning. In order to supplement that learning we also provide some asynchronous (not face to face) learning opportunities for students to participate in.

We will be offering more significant learning opportunities, than what was offered in the Spring of 2020.

How will Hebrew learning take place? Will there be opportunity for 'extra help' /tutoring?

In line with the changes we made in the Spring, Hebrew learning will take place over zoom, in small groups of 3-4 students. Students will meet with their teacher at the same time every week. Parents may write in time and class requests in the sign up form (link above). Any students who feel they need extra help or tutoring should be in touch with Rabbi NB. Families may elect to pay for extra tutoring/Hebrew opportunities.

Will my child fall behind with Hebrew instruction?

In short, we don't think so. We found that having Hebrew classes online in the spring, with students in small groups, meant our students excelled in Hebrew and made great strides. Families and students alike really enjoyed this new way of learning and were excited to show up to learn each week. More than anything, our students got to know their teachers on a more individualized level.

What if my child has special learning needs?

Please contact Rabbi NB to discuss any special learning needs or concerns you may have and she will assist you in meeting your student's needs.

Are there any options to be in person?

Our Kindergarten and first grade students will begin the year meeting outside, in small groups, while following mask and social distancing protocols. This provides for the developmental needs of these students while simultaneously allowing them to become familiar with their teachers and each other.

Once the first few weeks pass, we will hopefully bring each grade, following all necessary protocols, onto campus at different times.

We know that some students and families are not comfortable or able to be in person. Therefore we are committed to providing livestream or zoom learning for those families.

As the year progresses, our hope is to provide in person options by grade, in small groups. All we offer, will be guided by the principles set forth by the CDC and state/local government. We look forward to making these decisions moving forward. We will revisit this decision for the Spring.

What role will Keshet as an online program serve for my child(ren) as they near their B'nei Mitzvah dates?

We expect all 7th grade students to participate in our Keshet program, as part of the B'nei Mitzvah process, as we did when we were fully in person. This will allow students to get the support they need to continue working on the prayers they will help lead for the service (in small group Hebrew classes) as well as feel connected to their grade-level cohort.

What's the plan for teachers?

A silver lining of the decision to bring Keshet online allows us the opportunity to hire exceptional educators from around the country. Most of our educators from last year are returning, and we are excited to welcome a number of new faculty. Each educator will receive specific training on using online resources so that they can provide the best learning for the students.

If schools are opening, why can't Kesher?

More than anything, we want to help mitigate risk. Knowing that our students come from many different schools, we want to minimize how much we bring distinct communities together in an enclosed space.

Will there be a change in the cost/tuition for the program vs. the traditional on-site learning?

Tuition will remain the same. Tuition helps defray the cost of training and supporting our faculty, as well as providing other wonderful opportunities to connect. In addition, we will provide other opportunities for our students to connect through "electives" we will offer each week. We will also provide a monthly Shabbat service specifically designed for our Kesher students and families. If you have other questions about tuition, please contact lgoldberg@tiwestport.org.

Will we have choices for days to sign up? How soon do we have to decide?

Yes, you do have choices for student scheduling. Traditionally Kesher classes are offered on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays and we will continue to offer classes on these days. This means all students can sign up for a Sunday option. Students in grades K-3 can choose Sunday or Monday options, while students in grades 4-6 can choose options on Sundays and Tuesdays. On the enrollment form (link above) we have asked you to select days and times. We ask that families sign up for what works for them and then let Rabbi NB know should your circumstances change. If you aren't yet ready to select days / times, please email Rabbi NB your intent to participate in the fall.

Can I pick my child's group for Hebrew or Judaica?

Yes! You can request one or two friends whom your child wants to learn with this year (on our form).

How will you address the communal and social aspects that may be lacking from an online religious school program?

We plan to offer in-person small group, socially distanced experiences by grade while the weather permits. In addition, we will provide family learning and other opportunities to be together in the community. We know that many students have missed the social and communal aspects of Kesher this past spring. In order to address that, we plan to incorporate social emotional learning components into everything we offer this fall. Students will have opportunities to share how they are feeling and also process the changes to their world.