



MELVIN J. BERMAN HEBREW ACADEMY

PARENT GUIDE

2018-19

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Parent Guide

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN BERMAN AND THE HOME

We pride ourselves in communicating effectively with our parent body, whether it be related to academic, emotional, or just logistical matters. We also encourage our parents to contact teachers, principals, or other administrators if they have specific concerns about their children's progress or welfare.

REPORT CARDS AND PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

The Upper and Middle Schools operate on a quarterly system; parents are informed of their children's progress by means of four written report cards, as well as by parent-teacher meetings and interim reports between report cards. Grades K-5 operate on a trimester system and report cards are issued three times a year with interim reports as needed.

Conferences may be arranged at any time during the year with teachers or administrators. To schedule a conference, parents should either e-mail the teacher or call the teacher's voicemail and leave a message for the faculty member, who will contact the parent at his/her earliest convenience. If a faculty member feels a need to meet with parents concerning a student's progress, parents will be contacted. Parents should always feel free to call their child's teacher first if they have concerns regarding their child's progress.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

For those students who have special needs requiring modifications to the regular educational program, the following procedures will be followed:

1. When the special needs have been identified prior to admission, a conference with the appropriate staff members will be set up within the first trimester. All appropriate testing should be completed by this time. If the child's needs can be met within the school setting, educational goals and specialist assistance will be outlined.
2. When the special needs of the child are not identified until after entry into the program, the teacher will send a referral to the Director of Educational Support Services of the relevant division. The Director or her designee (one of the learning specialists) will contact the parents within two weeks of the referral. At this time, the necessary steps for identification of special needs will be discussed. With the appropriate information gathered and documented, a formal education plan will be developed. After the Director of Educational Support Services, guidance counselor, and parents have signed the plan, it will be shared with all the student's teachers and implemented.
3. Should a student require tutoring or enrollment in a special academic program, such determination will be made by the school's administrator in consultation with parents. Appropriate fees are charged for these services.

4. For those students whose needs cannot be met within the school program, alternate educational placement will be required. The parents will have until the end of the semester to find alternate placement.

MEDIA CENTER

The Media Center/Library circulates general, Judaic, and Hebrew books to students in grades K-12. Books are due three weeks after they are borrowed. Books may be renewed once; however, they must be presented at the circulation desk for renewal.

Special category materials such as “overnight only” books, seforim, and special class/teacher requested material are due the next morning.

Students will not be permitted to receive report cards or diplomas unless library obligations have been cleared. Furthermore, no transcripts will be sent to institutions of higher learning (or transfer schools) unless library obligations have been satisfied.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Decisions to close school or delay the opening of school are made by taking into account the conditions in and around the school site and the main Jewish communities in the area. We do not necessarily follow the Montgomery County Public School system in making these decisions. Please call the information line, (301) 962-9400 ext. 5555 after 6:00 am or check our website, www.mjbha.org for all inclement weather decisions. Information will also be announced on WTOP.

On days that school closes or closes early due to the weather, all activities, including sports meetings, etc., are also canceled.

On late opening mornings, classes begin at 10:00 am. All students should daven and eat breakfast at home. Carpools should arrive at school no earlier than 9:45 am. There will be no supervision before 9:45 am. on these days. Late opening information will be available on our information line, our website, or on WTOP after 6:00 am.

In the event that during the school day the weather requires that we dismiss early, please be advised of the following:

If conditions worsen in the morning, announcements will be made on the school information line (301) 962-9400 ext. 5555, our website, and WTOP. The school has also contracted with an emergency texting service for any emergency notifications. Signup for this service will take place at the beginning of the school year.

There will be no day care available after the designated inclement weather closing time. The staff will supervise the children until parents arrive. When parents cannot be reached, children will be sent to your designee or taken home by a staff member to his/her home. Please make sure that

you have filled out your emergency form giving the school explicit instructions. Please do not call the front office.

As part of our information line message on inclement weather days, we include bus information. Please listen for possible changes to our bus routing plan. Because our buses enter narrow streets on their door-to-door routes, when there is snow or ice on the ground, parents may need to bring their children out to designated spots for bus pick-up.

In extreme weather conditions, if school is opening late or closing early, we may not offer bus service at all. In such a situation, parents will need to provide transportation to and from school. This information will be available to you on the information line and website.

HEALTH ISSUES

NO-NIT LICE POLICY

Berman follows the Montgomery County Public Schools' No Nit Policy requiring anyone found to have head lice and/or nits to be sent home with instructions for treatment. Before being allowed to return to class, any child who has been sent home must come to the health room with a parent to be checked to see if he/she is free of nits. Students will not be allowed back into school until they have been properly treated. (Periodic lice checks are done in classes throughout the year. If lice have been found in your child's class, you will be notified by email.)

IMMUNIZATION

Parents should check with their pediatrician to ensure that all immunizations are complete. Children will not be allowed to attend school unless all immunization information is on file as of the first day of school. All dates of immunization and vaccination must be provided prior to admission.

This is particularly important with respect to the measles (rubella) vaccine which must have been administered after the child's first birthday. There are no exceptions. If the measles vaccine was administered prior to one year of age, the child must be revaccinated or proof of immunity must be furnished by a positive rubella HA I Titer of 1:4 or greater. No child is permitted to enter the school unless he/she has received at least 3-4 doses of each of the vaccines against diphtheria, polio, tetanus, and pertussin; and one dose against measles, mumps, and rubella. The last dose of vaccine received must be in accordance with the recommended schedule of immunization as outlined on the back of Maryland Immunization Certification Form #896.

ACCIDENTS AND ILLNESS – EMERGENCIES

Minor injuries such as superficial cuts and bruises will be handled in the class room, front office, or the health room. If there is any question as to the severity of injury, parents will be called. If a student feels ill in school, parents may be contacted. Parents should make all possible arrangements to have their children picked up when it is decided that they should go home.

It is important that each parent keep the school informed of the current telephone number where he/she can be reached during the day should an emergency occur, as well as current numbers of friends or relatives who are authorized to act on behalf of the parents if parents cannot be reached. No child will be permitted to attend school until all emergency information is on file.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MEDICATIONS

Children who need to receive medications on a regular basis or keep medications at school for an emergency must send in a medication permission form, signed by the child's pediatrician, along with the medication in the original pharmacy bottle. Only the nurse or a designated representative may dispense medications. Medication is kept in a locked area and all administration of medicine is recorded. For the safety of the children all medicines — prescription or otherwise — must be administered by our nurse (unless other arrangements are made with permission of the nurse and prescribing physician in consultation with the parent and student).

Parents will be called when medications run low, but it is a parental responsibility to ensure their refill. Parents must notify the nurse if and when medication is changed or discontinued. Changes in medication must be accompanied by a physician's note or direct call to the nurse. Verbal orders will be accepted by the nurse from a physician or nurse as long as written documentation follows.

Any medication taken at home on a regular basis can cause side effects or change the mechanism of other drug actions. Parents should inform the nurse of all medications a student takes at home so the student can best be served with a complete health profile. All medical information is considered confidential, with only the nurse and appropriate administrators having access.

Please remember that even non-prescription drugs have side effects and interactions which may be significant. The school nurse provides over-the-counter medications as deemed necessary to students, provided that she has written or explicit verbal permission from the parents, as any long-term or serious problems should be addressed by the student's parents and physician. The school nurse is available to advise and assist in any areas where parents are unsure as to the nature and seriousness of a problem.

Repeat health room visits will be discussed with parents. Any health problem at school should be discussed with the school nurse.

Students suffering from minor colds or other illnesses, who are well enough to attend school, should be sent with tissues, cough drops, and whatever other supplies they may need to remain comfortable and reduce time spent out of class.

We recommend that children with fevers above 100 degrees be kept home for 24 hours after the fever ends. Middle and Upper School students who are tired are expected to stay in class — the health room is not generally available for quiet rest.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Berman is committed to providing the best possible and most appropriate learning experiences for all children. Occasionally, there are factors in a student's appearance and behavior that lead to suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

Maryland law requires that all educators and other school employees, including volunteers, report suspected abuse or neglect to the proper authorities so that children may be protected from harm and the family may be helped.

Our school supports Maryland laws in this regard and requires that all school staff report suspected abuse and neglect to the Department of Social Services, Protective Services Division, and the local police department. At all times, the intent is to protect children from harm by providing services to maintain and strengthen the child's own family.

Should there be questions regarding this information, feel free to discuss them with one of the educational administrators or school guidance counselors.

FOOD SERVICE

LUNCHESES

Our school's kitchen provides a hot lunch for all students for a charge of \$5.00 daily (\$4 for Preschool and Kindergarten students, as well as those in First Grade for the major part of the school year when they eat in their classrooms). Menus, which include both dairy and meat lunches, are posted every month on our website. Students in grades K-12 must sign up for lunch each day during breakfast or before 9:30 a.m.

Lunches are purchased by means of tickets, which are available on any day of the week from the school office. If a student loses a lunch ticket, the office will lend him or her one and a replacement should be brought the next day. Borrowing of lunch tickets is restricted to students in grade 4 and below and is intended for emergency use only. A simple way of preventing this unnecessary monetary loss is to pin the lunch ticket to your child's clothes.

On the days that a child does not wish to purchase a lunch, he/she may bring a dairy or pareve bag lunch to school. Students may bring meat lunches on Monday through Wednesday only. Students who are eating meat must sit at specified meat-only tables with tablecloths. If you pack your child's lunch, please make your child aware in the morning whether he or she has meat for lunch that day.

Ordering out may only be done with prior permission from a principal.

The school is a peanut-free zone in order to protect children with severe allergies. Please do not bring in any food that contains actual peanut products.

In the operation of the Child Feeding Programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age, or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whittan Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410.

BREAKFAST — GRADES 6 – 12

Berman's school day begins with tefilat shacharit. Our tradition views prayer as central to one's religious experience, and it takes priority over all other morning activities, including breakfast. Students eat breakfast in the school's cafeteria after shacharit. Breakfast is provided for a charge of \$3 per day. Breakfast tickets may be purchased in books of 10 for \$30.

BRINGING FOOD INTO SCHOOL

It is our policy not to serve home-cooked foods or baked goods at school even when celebrating someone's birthday. All foods served in the school must have been prepared by our food service staff or purchased in a recognized kosher establishment with kashrut endorsement approved by the Rabbinical Council of Greater Washington. Before serving any food in the school, please obtain the approval of a principal.

Food may not be consumed in any classroom or hallway without teacher supervision. Snacks will be sold after mincha only to Upper School students as long as trash from such sales is not found on the floor or in classrooms and corridors.

BAR/BAT MITZVAH PARTIES

The Middle School administration asks to be notified when your child will be bar or bat mitzvah and makes the following recommendations for bar and bat Mitzvah celebrations:

1. The party should be appropriate for marking the new responsibilities of Jewish youth to their people.
2. All the boys in the grade should be invited to a bar mitzvah and all the girls in the grade should be invited to a bat mitzvah. We recommend that boys not be invited to a bat mitzvah nor girls to a bar mitzvah. This is appropriate for their age group.
3. All activities at the party should conform to halacha. Mixed dancing does not promote the message of bar and bat mitzvah — the entry of a child into the realm of Torah observance.

ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

We educate our children to follow the dictates of the Torah in all aspects of their lives and we expect the home to support us. All activities hosted by Berman students for their classmates should keep to the following guidelines:

1. The gathering should be planned so as to contain nothing objectionable from a halachic point of view. The kashrut of all food must be assured. Movies and other forms of entertainment should be carefully chosen with an awareness of the maturity of the children involved and with respect for our Torah's laws and values. Alcoholic beverages should never be made available, even on Shabbat and Purim. All forms of recreation and entertainment should be planned in a manner to allow all Berman students to feel comfortable.
2. Parents must supervise and take responsibility for any of their children's parties. The school expects parents not to allow parties unchaperoned by adults to take place in their homes and not to allow their children to attend such gatherings in the homes of others. This includes students of all ages. We further strongly urge parents not to leave their children (including upper grade high school students) at home unsupervised by adults overnight, on weekends, or during vacations.
3. Birthday party invitations for parties held outside of school are to be mailed outside of school. Delivering invitations in school often causes hurt feelings of students who do not receive invitations and disrupts precious minutes of class time. Care should be taken not to exclude a small number of kids from a grade from any party or gathering.
4. The rules of conduct set forth in this handbook that relate to basic behavior, respect and *derech erez* are expectations that are independent of any one place or time. It is the hope of the school that our students will incorporate these most important aspects of their education into their daily lives and serve as *kidushei Hashem* (exemplars) as well as ambassadors of Berman wherever they go. Students who engage in illegal, unsafe, or otherwise antisocial activities outside of school endanger their own welfare, the welfare of their fellow students, and undermine the integrity of our entire learning community. We reserve the right to impose consequences for such behavior, up to and including asking the student to leave the school.

CLASS TRIPS AND FIELD TRIPS

During the course of the year, for educational as well as for extra-curricular purposes, Berman students take field trips. While on these trips, students should keep in mind that they are b'nai Torah, representatives of Berman and of the Jewish community. They should act and dress appropriately. On such occasions where tefila will be necessary during the trip, siddurim will be brought along and students will daven together (with a minyan if possible). If meals are eaten during the course of the trip or activity, students are responsible for washing, saying hamotzi or other appropriate brachot, and for benching with a mizuman. Leaders for davening and benching will be appointed before the activity. No snacks are to be purchased whose kashrut is questionable. Students should leave any areas that they have used in a proper, clean, and orderly state.

Parents are often welcome to join the school field trips as additional chaperones. Parents who are accompanying our students should follow the same dress code that applies to our students.

At the beginning of each school year, students are required to submit a general permission slip signed by a parent, allowing them to participate in all Berman field trips which take place during regular school hours. Parents not wishing students to participate in a given field trip must so inform the school, in writing, in advance of the trip. All school rules are applicable during field trips.

MONEY BROUGHT TO SCHOOL

Any money to be turned in for payments for class parties, trips, plays, etc., should be placed in an envelope and clearly marked with the student's name, amount, and the function to be covered. Envelopes should always be given to the child's teacher or a member of the administration unless instructions are given otherwise.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost and found articles, including seforim and textbooks, are arranged in cupboards in the front office. This area should be checked by parents and children on a regular basis. Items properly labeled will be returned to their owner; all other items will be given periodically to charity. For Preschool and Lower School students in particular: All outerwear and easily removed garments (such as kippot and sweaters), backpacks, and lunchboxes must be labeled as children in these divisions find it easy to misplace belongings.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Parents whose children are registered for bus transportation will receive a separate booklet detailing the rules and regulations of bus travel.

ROLES & EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS: A PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION

The day-to-day operation of the school is in the hands of the administration and faculty who report to the President of the Board of Directors. Matters related to the day-to-day educational and operational aspects of the school should be directed to the relevant staff member. The Head of School's decision is final in all educational matters.

Berman recognizes that, as active participants in educating children, parents and the school have mutual responsibilities to each other. The following guidelines approved by the Board of Directors outlines the school's and parents' responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL

- To communicate regularly and in a timely fashion with parents about all aspects of the school's program and activities, through:
 - individual letters and email

- Newsletters (Weekly announcements, Head of School’s Message, Lower School Link, Middle School Mind, Upper School Advisory, and special publications)
- Media coverage
- Back-to-School Nights
- Parent-Teacher conferences
- The school will communicate about the following:
 - School events
 - Yeshivot and college planning meetings
 - Updates from the Education Committee to the parent body regarding deliberations of that committee that explain and clarify
 - *Specific approaches to education*
 - *Overall school emphasis or themes*
 - *Expectations of students and parents.*
 - Major issues under consideration and time frame for input (if appropriate).
 - Avenues for providing input
- To solicit parent input into their children’s education and school experience and to provide parents reasonable access to administration and faculty through:
 - Parent-teacher conferences
 - Guidance counselor conferences
 - Orientation programs
 - Open houses
 - Parent get-togethers
 - Participation in parent advisory groups
 - Participation in PTO
- To welcome parent input and give it serious consideration in the decision-making process
- To work with the school’s Education Committee towards continual improvement of all aspects of the school’s academic program
- To continuously and vigorously improve the educational program of the school
- To conduct all school matters with professionalism
- To recruit and retain outstanding teachers
- To provide ongoing professional development
- To implement an evaluation process for all faculty and programs supported by the school
- To clarify and communicate for all parents the roles of the Board and its various committees, the administrative structure, and governance of the institution

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARENT BODY

- To be well informed by actively participating in:
 - Advisory committees
 - PTA Partnership
 - Parent “coffee”
 - Parent conferences
 - Orientation programs
 - Open houses
 - Back-to-School Nights
 - Planning meetings
 - School events (sports events, drama, choir, siddur party, etc.)

- To read and respond (where necessary) in a timely fashion to all school communications
- To adhere to all school policies as set forth and approved by the Education Committee and Board of Directors
- To meet all financial obligations in the time and manner prescribed by the school
- To avail themselves of volunteer opportunities in both PTA and fundraising events to help the school meet its educational and financial goals
- To support the school by seeing that students adhere to all requirements and policies including, but not limited to, attendance, dress code, conduct, and discipline as outlined in the Handbook
- To set a good example for their children by treating all members of our school community with respect

PTO/VA'AD HORIM

The PTO/Va'ad Horim provides a range of services and programs to students, parents, and teachers. A leadership council of parent volunteers organizes parent connections, fundraising events, chesed opportunities, and programming. Services for parents include welcoming new families, coordinating room parents for the Lower School, assigning parent liaisons to facilitate communication between parents and administrators, and arranging parent education programming. The PTO/VH also coordinates an extensive after-school activities program for students in Preschool through Middle School; hosts fundraisers such as the challah sale, giftwrap drive and book fair to raise money for the school, and provides a variety of services to busy parents. The PTO/VH works to enhance relationships between parents and staff by sponsoring major recognition programs like “Staff Appreciation Week” and presenting small tokens of appreciation throughout the year. PTO proceeds help subsidize school cultural arts programs, the purchase of large equipment and teacher training. We urge all parents to become involved in PTO activities and support its continual fundraising efforts.