



**The Danforth Jewish Circle (DJC)** is an inclusive, egalitarian community centered in the downtown Toronto area of Riverdale. We are committed to reflecting and responding to the broad spectrum of families and individuals who make up our vibrant neighbourhood, which includes many interfaith, multicultural, observant, secular, and same-sex households.

### **DJC Children's Jewish Studies Program**

Established by parents in 1998, our Children's Jewish Studies Program is designed and dedicated to provide our children with a positive Jewish experience, an understanding of their heritage and history, and a sense of belonging to a diverse community with a unique culture. Our objective is to ensure our students learn not just the *what*, but the *why* with an emphasis on arts, music, culture, and fun.

### **Themes & Goals**

Our program values Judaism as a dynamic living religion. Certain themes and goals are integrated throughout all levels of our program. Our students learn to question what it means to be a Jew and how being Jewish affects our values, beliefs, and behaviours. Together, students and teachers ask the question "*Who am I?*" and explore what a Jewish identity means personally, within the family, the Jewish community, and the community-at-large. A key component of the program is respect for the broad spectrum of multi-culturalism which exists within Judaism. These issues are explored through discussion and debate, music, drama, language, holidays, bible stories, family activity flyers, Torah, and Jewish rituals, as well as history and current events.

### **Program Overview**

Our curriculum reflects the DJC's inclusive nature and wide range of student backgrounds and experiences within Judaism. Each year builds on the year before, but we also look forward to having new students join at every level of study. Although each grade engages with the themes and topics central to Judaism, each grade also has its own specific themes.

After much thought and discussion, we recognized that in order to provide a fulsome Jewish studies education to all our young learners, we do not have the necessary resources to support a Junior Kindergarten classroom. Our goal is to deliver the best teaching and learning environment we can for families and teachers. Therefore, we invite you to enroll your child(ren) in the DJC Children's Jewish Studies program the year they begin Senior Kindergarten.

### **SK: Orientation to Jewish Life**

This general introduction to the Jewish community emphasizes traditions, rituals, and holidays within the context of family life. Arts and crafts, show and tell, and hands-on activities are used for exploring progressive Jewish values, symbols, and personal experiences at this level.

### **Grade 1: Holiday Traditions & Rituals**

Themes introduced in SK are deepened using each student's life experience, nature, and the environment, with the Jewish Life Cycle and its meaning in Jewish life.

## **Grade 2: Jewish Life Cycles & the Torah**

Jewish traditions, each student's personal experience, nature, and the environment will be linked with the Jewish Life Cycle and its meaning in Jewish life. In this grade, children will begin to develop an understanding of the Torah and its relation to Jewish rituals, the synagogue, and holidays.

## **Grade 3: Biblical Stories & the Jewish Calendar**

Jewish traditions, values, and symbols are linked to stories from the Torah. Students will explore the Jewish calendar and how it is applicable to them. In this context, the Torah will be considered as a book of Jewish stories, each relating to values and traditions which permeate modern Jewish life. Students will also begin to identify the origins of the stories underlying Jewish holidays.

## **Grade 4: Diaspora Jewry: Jewish Movements & Toronto Jews**

The students will learn about Jewish movements and sects by examining Diaspora Jewry, which has been a major aspect of Jewish life for over two thousand years. This will lead to a focus on Jewish communities in Toronto. They will examine how the DJC as a community fits into the Jewish world, including how religious and cultural diversity within one community can contribute to its prosperity.

## **Grade 5: Jews Around the World & Jewish Ethics**

Jews in different geographical locales will be studied and we will examine how country of origin affects practices of Judaism and everyday lifestyle. Students will learn about — and debate — how Judaism can impact relationships between people (i.e. through *mitzvot* governing *zedakah* or prohibiting gossip). During this year, students will also engage in an introductory study of the Holocaust.

## **Grade 6: Social Activism/*Tikun Olam***

Through links to Jewish traditions, history, and their own experiences, the students will learn about social activism and its meaning for our people. As *tikun olam* is an essential ingredient of Judaism and Jewish values, students will be encouraged to explore the importance of social activism in their own lives — both now and for the future. Participation in *tikun olam* projects outside the community will play an important part in this program.

## **Grade 7: Graduation/B'nai Mitzvah Program**

The final year will be a review of modern Jewish history and the students' personal connection to that history. Important themes of the Jewish experience (i.e. assimilation and exile) will be revisited. An independent *tikun olam* project will allow students to consider how they might help 'repair the world' as they become Jewish adults. As a group, they will develop a ceremony representing their vision of themselves as young Jews. This ceremony will incorporate various elements (music, speeches, Torah *parsha*) of a traditional B'nai Mitzvah with a reflection of the students' personalities and the inclusive, progressive values of the DJC.



## **Funding**

The Danforth Jewish Circle membership generously supports our children's program by providing core funding and tuition bursaries to families in need.

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*For more information, please contact us.*

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