

**What a
Solomon Schechter
Eighth Grader
Should Know
and
Be Able To Do!**

Judaic Studies
Language Arts
Mathematics
Science
Social Studies

דשננתם לבניד

“And you shall teach
your children...”



**SOLOMON SCHECHTER
DAY SCHOOL OF NASSAU COUNTY**
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A Message to the Reader

This brochure lists skills and abilities in Judaic Studies, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies that students should acquire by the end of the Eighth Grade to earn promotion to the Ninth Grade. It answers questions that everyone in the school community needs to ask, such as:

- What are students expected to know and be able to do?
- How are their achievements measured?

This document is the product of extensive work by our faculty and administration, taking into account guidelines published by the New York State Education Department, the Board of Education of the City of New York, and the unique needs of our school community. Besides detailing the curricular goals and objectives of this particular grade, this document is designed to be part of the overall K-12 curriculum of Solomon Schechter Day School of Nassau County/Solomon Schechter High School of Long Island. Similar brochures can be obtained for other grades. If you have any questions or suggestions, please be sure to contact your child's school principal.

Mission Statement

The mission of Solomon Schechter Day School of Nassau County/Solomon Schechter High School of Long Island is to provide a caring and nurturing environment within which Jewish students grow educationally, culturally, socially, and spiritually; and to promote the observance of mitzvot and traditions that are the foundations of the Jewish religion.

Statement of Purpose

Solomon Schechter Day School of Nassau County/Solomon Schechter High School of Long Island is a co-educational private Jewish day school affiliated with the Conservative Movement. Through the efforts of a dedicated and qualified staff, the school offers rich and innovative curricula for students from Kindergarten through 12th Grade in both general and Judaic studies, and strives to help students and their families lead meaningful lives instilled with the values of American democracy, pluralism, and the love of Israel.

Judaic Studies

Hebrew Language

Grade 8 Hebrew students attend a class that is conducted in Hebrew in order to expand their aural comprehension skills. Preparation for the Hebrew Regents exam is intensified, as most of these students take the exam in June. In the area of written expression, students methodically integrate their grammar and vocabulary studies by writing letters and short stories. In their in-depth study of grammar, Eighth Graders review the *Pa'al* and *Nifal* regular and irregular verb forms, and are introduced to the *Pi'el* and *Hifil* verb forms. Reading materials and activities are selected from a variety of textbooks to create the most meaningful experience for the students.

In addition to regular coursework, Eighth Grade Hebrew students engage in a variety of activities that are geared towards enhancing students' personal connections to Jewish religious values and experiences in addition to the Hebrew language. Many of these events focus on holiday celebrations such as Hanukkah, Purim, Pesach, Yom haShoah, Yom haAtzmaut and the like. Other activities include the hobby fair, a literary magazine, and Israeli current events.

The *Gesher* program is designed for students who are new to the study of Hebrew language or who will benefit from greater individual attention. These students study at a more individualized pace. Teachers adapt materials to meet the needs of the class, teaching in both Hebrew and English in order to develop aural comprehension skills and to ensure student understanding. Students engage in hands-on activities, such as art projects, role-playing, and acting, as well as engaging in activities that are centered on reading and writing.

Bible

The Bible is the source of our sense of history as a people. We study Bible as one of the basic texts to understanding our identity as a Jewish people. In the Middle School, there are goals and objectives common to all grades, as well as specific goals and skills for each grade level.

In general, the goals of the Bible curriculum are to learn the source of the *mitzvot*, to develop pride in the Jewish people, to have the students recognize that we are a unique nation, to learn the importance of the unity of the people and the important role of the nation's leaders, and to encourage the students to see themselves as future leaders. We teach Jewish values and concepts through the material in the texts and the opinions the students express about them. We encourage the development of skills to enable the students to continue to learn Bible in high school and on their own. We also try to present the text as relevant to their lives so that they will desire to do so.

The texts studied in the Eighth Grade include: *Numbers*: chapters 13-17; *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Deuteronomy* (verses about holy days, comparison of the Ten Commandments as they appear in *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy*), *2 Samuel*, *The Book of Esther*.

Eighth Grade Bible Goals and Skills

- Understand the text based on vocabulary, the chapter context, and the theme of the unit.

- Use classical commentators including: Rashi, Ramban, Abarbanel, and look in the text for the difficulties they explain. Both Hebrew and English commentaries are used.
- Compare sources in different Biblical books such as *Chronicles* and *2 Samuel*.
- Learning various laws such as those concerning mourning and *shmitah* (7th year agricultural laws) with both their Biblical and modern applications.
- Express opinions on the text and connect them to students' own life experiences.
- Acquire moral values and Jewish concepts such as love of Israel (people and land) and the importance of Jerusalem.
- Evaluate the personality and actions of the characters found in the text, particularly the leaders such as David and Moses.
- Analyze political, geographic, economic, and military situations that leaders must face.

Rabbinics

If the Bible is the source of our sense of history as a people, Rabbinic literature is the manner in which that initial inspiration has been manifested over time. We study Rabbinics to understand how our Jewish religious traditions regarding holiday celebrations and ritual observances have developed in response to perceived "gaps" and uncertainty in the Torah. The course of study includes an overview of Jewish history from the Biblical period (David, Solomon, the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile, Ezra and Nehemiah, the destruction of the Second Temple, and the establishment of the Academy at Yavneh).

In general, the Middle School adopts a thematic approach to the study of Rabbinics with these specific goals: to familiarize students with a wide variety of Rabbinic materials (Mishnah, Gemara, midrash, various commentaries); to have students understand the Rabbinic approach to interpreting halacha; to have students understand the Conservative Movement's philosophy concerning the historical development of halacha.

Skills

- To understand the relationship between the Written and Oral Law.
- To recognize key Rabbinic terms.
- To understand the Mishnah and Gemara with Rashi commentary.
- To follow the ideas behind Rabbinic arguments and decisions.
- To understand and give examples of the development of the halacha over time.

Eighth Grade Themes

1. Qualities and Dangers of Leadership
2. Rosh haShanah, Yom Kippur and Succot
3. Tamudic Attitudes to Revelation
4. Shabbat
5. "Olam haBa"—Jewish perspectives on death and the "world to come"
6. Purim/Talit—with emphasis on ritual responsibilities of women
7. Sanhedrin—procedures of Jewish criminal and civil law
8. Marriage and Divorce

English Language Arts

Reading

By the end of the school year, students should:

- Read and understand
 - At least 10 books.
 - At least four books about one subject, or by the same writer, or in one genre in literature.
 - Informational texts (such as reference materials, newspapers and magazines, and textbooks).
 - Functional documents (documents that explain how to get things done).
 - Public documents (documents that focus on public policy or civic issues).
- Show evidence of understanding their reading both in writing and classroom discussion.
- Skim texts to get an overview of content or locate specific information.
- Evaluate how accurately and effectively an author communicates information, opinions, and ideas.
- Compare and contrast several books, forming questions to guide further reading.
- Look at a text from different perspectives (for example, political, personal, and literary).
- Read a series of steps to accomplish a task (for example, complete a science experiment).
- Use computer software to support reading and use on line and electronic databases.
- Keep a daily journal responding to specific reading assignments.
- Keep a record of the year's reading, reflecting goals and accomplishments.

Writing

Student writing should go through a process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing before it is considered a finished product. By the end of the school year, students are required to produce four types of writing:

- Informational writing, such as a news story or feature article with facts gathered from several sources. This writing should be written for a specific audience.

- A response to literature, such as an essay comparing and making judgments about different books with similar themes. This writing should express the student's thinking about how particular authors use language and should use examples from the books to support his or her ideas.
- A story, fictional or autobiographical. This writing should use a variety of strategies to create interest, such as dialogue and suspense, and should describe characters' movements and expressions.
- Creative writing that explores different genres such as fairy tales and mysteries.
- A narrative procedure explaining how something is done. This writing should lay out clear steps that are easy to follow, and should anticipate anything that may be confusing to a reader.
- A persuasive essay that uses reasons, anecdotes, and examples to create a convincing argument.

All finished writing should have a beginning, a middle, and an end; should use correct punctuation; and should spell most words correctly.

Speaking, Listening, and Viewing

Students will participate in whole class lessons, small group meetings, and one-to-one conversations with a teacher, in order to:

- Identify information important enough for note taking.
- Respond thoughtfully to questions, using details and examples.
- Use knowledge from other subjects and personal experience to understand different points of view.
- Listen to an oral presentation and analyze what the speaker did to keep a listener interested.
- Present a monologue to the class.
- Take turns speaking, respond to each other's questions and comments, and work together to come up with group decisions and ideas.
- Share data, facts, and ideas, and back them up with sources and explanations to persuade a listener.

Students will prepare and deliver an individual presentation in which they:

- Present reports at least seven minutes long for teachers and other students in all subject areas.
- Organize what they will say using notes or other memory aids, and give credit to their sources of information.
- Begin by stating a main idea or purpose, support it with details, examples, and reasons, and end by summarizing main points.

Students will make informed judgments about television, radio and film productions.

Grammar and Usage of the English Language

By the end of the school year, students should demonstrate correct use of:

- Grammar, including all parts of speech.
- Paragraph structure, including tone and appropriate language.
- Attention to minimizing words.
- All conventions of punctuation.
- Construction of an analytical essay.
- Sentence construction, including pronouns with clear antecedents.
- Spelling strategies for Eighth Grade content area vocabulary.

By the end of the school year students should be able to revise work by:

- Making their writing easier to understand.
- Rearranging the sequence of words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- Adding or deleting details and explanations.
- Using dictionaries, reference books, and style manuals to assist in editing.
- Using word processing software, including charts and graphics.

Literature

Using the literature read during the school year, students should be able to:

- Compare the way similar themes are approached in different books.
- Look at how an author's decisions about content and word choice may be interpreted in different ways.
- Examine and compare how an author's point of view affects understanding.
- Think about the reasons for a character's actions, comparing them to similar situations in the outside world and from other books.
- Draw conclusions and make predictions about events, characters, settings and themes from books, using evidence from the text.
- Produce written work in at least one genre of literature (for example, essay).

Mathematics

The Eighth Grade includes both Regents and non-Regents levels of study. While both courses generally follow the same curriculum, the Regents level class is conducted at an Honors level pace with the expectation that those students will successfully pass the Math A Regents in the middle of their Ninth Grade year.

By the end of the school year students should:

Number and Operation Concepts

- Know number facts and rules.
- Use scientific notation to express and compare very large and very small numbers.
- Explain integers (positive and negative numbers).
- Add, subtract, multiply, and divide fractions, decimals, and integers, accurately.
- Compare fractions, decimals, and integers.
- Apply ratios, proportions, and percentages.
- Develop an understanding of number theory (primes, factors, multiples).
- Use grouping symbols.
- Apply the laws of mathematics and algorithms.

Geometry and Measurement Concepts

- Determine and understand length, area, and volume.
- Estimate and measure angles, weights, capacity, time and temperature using appropriate units.
- Use tools (protractors, compasses) to construct geometric shapes.
- Recognize symmetry.
- Estimate, make, and use measurement in real-world situations.

Function and Algebra Concepts

- Discover, describe, and generalize patterns.
- Identify obvious and hidden patterns.
- Find solutions for unknown quantities in linear equations and inequalities.
- Represent relationships with tables, graphs, and verbal or symbolic rules.
- Analyze tables, graphs, and rules to determine functional relationships.

Statistics and Probability Concepts

- Collect, organize, and display data with tables, charts, and graphs that are appropriate for the data.
- Consider the effects of missing or incorrect information.
- Formulate hypotheses to answer a question and use data to test hypotheses.
- Analyze data with respect to frequency and distribution.
- Represent and determine probability.
- Make predictions based on experimental and theoretical probabilities.
- Use estimation to check the reasonableness of results.
- Estimate the probability of an event.

Mathematical Process

- Use information pertinent to solving problems.
- Use problem-solving strategies such as illustrations or tables.
- Verify and interpret results of a problem.
- Make justified logical statements.
- Use mathematical language accurately.
- Show an understanding of mathematics by explaining ideas.
- Explain and show solutions in a variety of ways, including words, numbers, symbols, pictures, charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, and models.
- Determine how to break a problem into simpler parts.
- Solve for unknowns.
- Find solutions for unknown quantities in linear equations and inequalities.
- Use patterns and functions to represent and solve problems.

Science

The following list includes examples of Science activities, content, and skills for Eighth Grade. Science skills are as important as content understandings and students will be encouraged to use these skills to explore topics or themes in depth. The Eighth Grade includes both Regents and non-Regents levels of study in Earth Science. While both courses generally follow the same curriculum, the Regents level class is conducted at an Honors level pace with the expectation that those students will successfully pass the Earth Science Regents examination at the end of the Eighth Grade year.

Science instruction for students in Grades 5-8 is based on The New York State Intermediate Science Core Curriculum (Grades 5-8) and The New York City New Standards Performance Standards in Science (Middle School Level). By the end of Grade 8, therefore, all students should have received instruction in all areas of the Intermediate Level Science Core Curriculum.

By the end of the school year, through inquiry activities, students should:

Earth and Space Sciences Concepts

- Describe the characteristics of the Earth's air (atmosphere), water (hydrosphere), and land (lithosphere).
- Understand and explain how the Earth's air, water, and land continuously interact, evolve, and change,

such as how the movement of plates causes earthquakes, and uneven heating of the Earth's surface leads to weather changes.

- Understand and explain how the Earth's air, water, and land recycle, such as water recycling through evaporation and condensation (water cycle), and rock materials transforming from one type of rock to another, such as limestone transforming into marble (rock cycle).
- Understand the forces that create change, including erosion, weathering, earthquakes and volcanoes.
- Describe how the Earth has evolved by discussing concepts such as erosion and movement of plates and using evidence such as fossil remains and the impact of asteroids or comets to support arguments.
- Describe the motion of planets, moons, and other objects in the solar system and how their motion leads to days and nights, months, seasons, years, tides, moon phases and eclipses.
- Describe how the Sun is the major source of energy for occurrences on the Earth's surface, such as weather and climate.
- Understand that substances, such as carbon dioxide produced by automobiles, can enter Earth's air, water, and land from human activity, and can affect weather, climate, and living things.
- Understand ways to manage natural resources, such as developing and using alternative fuels.

Scientific Connections and Applications

- Understand and describe examples of the importance of scientists, science, and technology and the impact that they have on our lives, such as how astronomers discover new objects in space.
- Develop and describe, orally and in writing, appropriate choices leading to good personal health, including choosing healthy ways to reduce stress, such as participating in sports.
- Understand big ideas and unifying concepts, including the relationship between form and function (e.g., the composition of a rock affects its usefulness in construction); order and organization (e.g., the Earth in the Solar System); change and constancy (e.g., how the movement of crustal plates changes landforms); cause and effect (e.g., how acid rain affects building materials, such as masonry and metal).
- Understand the planning, problem-solving, and decision-making process in which the designed world is created (e.g., before building a solar-powered plant, the reasonableness of different locations has to be considered).

Scientific Thinking

- Ask appropriate questions, and use evidence and concepts learned from observations and reliable sources, as well as common sense, to construct explanations for experiment results.
- Work individually and in teams using appropriate methods to collect, describe, record, and share information and ideas such as building a cross-section model of the Earth to show its structure.
- Identify the variables that could affect the results of an experiment, such as how temperature, sunlight, and air currents affect the evaporation of water.
- Propose and critique alternate explanations for observations, and distinguish between fact and opinion.
- Plan and evaluate an investigation in order to solve a problem.

Scientific Tools and Technologies

- Use technology and tools such as microscopes, triple-beam balances (scales), thermometers, and computers to observe and measure objects, organisms, and phenomena.
- Collect, analyze, and record data using mathematical concepts such as mean (average), mode (most frequent amount), and probability (the likelihood of something happening).
- Use a variety of media, such as data tables, graphs, and databases, to record information.
- Recognize possible sources of bias and perspective in data, such as the perspective of a fruit growers' organization on a study it has sponsored on the healthfulness of fruits.
- Acquire information from observation, experimentation, print, and nonprint sources.
- Use manipulatives (calculators, compasses, internal and external types of protractors).
- Conduct measurements in metric units.

Scientific Communication

- Use information gathered from experiments and other sources to explain and defend conclusions and resolve disagreements.
- Represent data and results in a variety of ways, including tables, graphs, drawings, diagrams, art-work, and both technical and creative writing.
- Critique published materials as well as written and oral explanations.
- Explain a scientific concept or procedure to other students.

Scientific Investigation

- Plan and conduct at least one of these investigations: An experiment with controlled variables, such as how the contour of a landform affects erosion; Field work, such as observing clouds and precipitation; Design, such as designing appropriate clothing and shelters for various planets in the Solar System; Secondary research, such as researching the causes, effects, and reduction of acid rain.

Social Studies

The Social Studies program in Grades 7 and 8, which is based on the New York State Education Department's Social Studies Core Curriculum, focuses on United States and New York State history in chronological order from the 1500's to the present. In Eighth Grade, students study the political, geographic, economic, and social events of the United States as they relate to New York State from the end of the Civil War to the present. While exploring Eighth Grade Social Studies themes, student should demonstrate a variety of skills and strategies. These are followed by examples of tasks that Eighth Graders might be asked to do during the school year.

THEMES

The study of the United States and New York State history, geography, economy, and government from 1876 to the present includes:

- Division and Reunion
- An Industrial Society
- The United States as an Independent Nation in an Interdependent World
- The United States Assumes Worldwide Responsibilities
- The United States Between the Wars
- A Changing Nation—From World War II to the Present

SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

Students should:

Getting Information

- Collect information using different types of sources, such as maps, globes, graphs, charts, newspapers, magazines, primary and secondary sources, historical fiction, timelines, political cartoons, surveys, media, museums, interviews, diaries, posters, brochures, travel guides, the Internet, and other reference works.
- Skim texts to get an overview of content or to locate specific information.

Using Information

- Interpret and analyze information in multiple ways (e.g., graphs, political cartoons, maps, charts, diagrams, timelines, brochures, posters, multimedia).
- Make connections between information from different texts.
- Identify and summarize information from appropriate documents.
- Evaluate and support the accuracy of information, opinions, and ideas.
- Compare and contrast information to help in resolving problems.

Presenting Information Orally and In Written Form

- Produce a piece of informational writing (such as a news story, feature article, or Social Studies report) that meets Language Arts Performance standards and shows an understanding of Eighth Grade Social studies content.
- Write an essay using the process of planning, drafting, revising, and editing.
- Organize and present information using notes or other memory aids while giving credit to sources of information.
- Listen to an oral presentation and evaluate what the speaker did to keep a listener interested.
- Use computer technology to construct tables, graphs, timelines, and charts.

Collaborative Learning

- Research with others to come up with group decisions and ideas.
- Work with others to solve a problem.
- Give and take constructive criticism.

Identifying and Solving Problems

- Develop ideas by drawing conclusions and making predictions about historical events, characters, settings, and issues.
- Develop questions about a problem to research.
- Develop a product or solution to an identified problem.

EXAMPLES OF TASKS IN GRADE 8

Using a variety of skills and strategies, by the end of the school year students should:

History

- Create a timeline showing major events that lead to United States involvement in World War I.
- Gather information from primary and secondary sources showing specific Civil War events to identify new issues or problems created for the North and South.
- Design world maps and visual aids showing how the United States expanded its territories.
- Gather information from primary and secondary sources (surveys, interviews, etc.) and write an essay on the years between the World Wars.
- Work collaboratively in a group to create a multimedia presentation showing how the United States attained world leadership following World War II.
- Write and present a report showing how immigration has had an impact on New York City.
- Write an essay on the civil rights movements of African-Americans, women, or Native Americans using both primary and secondary resources.
- Compare the impeachment of Andrew Johnson with that of William Jefferson Clinton through the creation of political cartoons.

Geography

- Use the Internet to create a map showing major battles during World War II.
- Create a map illustrating the change in the American frontier and its impact on Native Americans.

Economics

- Use a spreadsheet to interpret key economics-related statistics.
- Write an essay explaining how the scarcity of resources during certain times shaped the United States (e.g., Great Depression, Imperialism, purchase of Alaska).
- Use graphic aids to illustrate the growth of population of the United States between 1870 and 1950.
- Write a business letter from a worker to his boss explaining how he feels about industrialization (e.g., labor unions).

Civics, Citizenship, and Government

- Gather and analyze information about United States Supreme Court decisions that show how individual rights are protected.
- Write a narrative account of how the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government work together.
- Draw a political cartoon expressing a specific point of view.

Interdisciplinary Study

- Understand an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Social Studies and Jewish studies during the Civil War era and to the present.
- Be able to compare and contrast American and Jewish values and approaches regarding such issues as leadership, slavery, private property, etc.



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