

OPENING DAY ACTIVITIES - GETTING TO KNOW YOU. These are a little different:

Fortune cookie: Using slips of paper the size you get in a fortune cookie, have the students write down such things like: What they do well; favorite Jewish activity; favorite sport/game; Mother or father's name, and that is about all that will fit on such a small piece of paper. These are clues as to who they are. Give each student a small film canister (free at photo shops). Place the slip of paper in the canister. Mix them all up in a box. One student at a time picks out a canister and reads the clues. The whole class is to try and guess who it is.

Breakfast sale: You will need big, clean cereal boxes which are not torn. (Children can bring their own or you can get parents to save them and bring them for the first day of class.) Also drawing paper the size of the box, scissors, markers, glue.

Greet the children and talk about how attractive the breakfast cereal boxes look. Have one for them to see. Tell them they are to create their own breakfast cereal box cover to sell themselves! Include on the box their name, nickname, create a logo, members of their family (including pets), something they do well, favorite Jewish activity/holiday; favorite Jewish song, sport/game, etc. They place on their box everything they want others to know about them and be sure to include a picture of yourself. When completed, share their boxes with their neighbor and their neighbor introduces them to the class.

Store front sale: Remind the students how a store displays their goods in their windows. How they emphasize the best there is. Give the students drawing paper and markers and ask them to design a "store window" and the merchandise they will be selling is themselves. Include a list of what is best about you. Show what is important about you and add pictures and colors show yourself off at your very best.

Radio announcements - or TV news cast:

Another way to sell yourself. Write out a radio or TV newscast which tells all about you! What you do best, what you like to do and what you have done lately that you are proud of. Describe what you have done in a radio or TV script and announce it to the class.

Wave your flag!

You will need construction paper, popsicle sticks, tape, colored markers. Give each student a sheet of construction paper, popsicle stick some tape and a variety of colored markers. Give them some scratch paper too, to outline their flag before they place it on the construction paper.

Ask students to think about all the different things they do well, what they like to do, how Judaism influences their life, their family, friends, etc. They are to design a "flag" that tells all the good things about them, along with their family and friends. Give them time to outline the design. When they are ready they can draw it on their construction paper flag. Upon completion, they can stand up and "wave their flag" to introduce themselves to the rest of the class.

OPENING DAY ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Here are a variety of opening day activities to get your class off to a good start:

Name Tags

Let the children create their own individual, collage-type name tags—whatever size and shape they want. Provide boxes of supplies: markers, pens, scissors, glue, scraps of cloth, foil, wrapping paper, pipe cleaners, wire, string, yarn, glitter, sequins, magazines and old workbooks with pictures, etc. Tell the children to create name tags that include not only their names, but their likes and dislikes, their favorite Jewish holiday, what they do well, and what they hope to learn in religious school this year. When the name tags are completed, have the children share their name tags with one another before posting them around the room.

"We Are the Stars" Bulletin Board

Before school begins, prepare your bulletin board with a colorful background and head it "We Are the Stars." Cut out large Jewish stars from colored paper, making one star for each child in the class. Cut out some smaller stars and scatter them around the bulletin board. You might even place some cotton balls on the board to give the effect of clouds.

On the first day give out stars and ask the children to draw self-portraits on them, or take Polaroid pictures of the children and place the photos in the center of the stars. Have the children hold up their stars and introduce themselves. When they are done, put their portraits on the bulletin board.

We Are One

You will need a large ball of string or yarn for this activity. Have everyone stand up. Hand the ball of string or yarn on from child to child, with the children, in succession, wrapping it around their wrists and introducing themselves as it comes to them; if you prefer, carry the string around the room instead of passing it from child to child.

Begin by giving the ball of string to a child and tying one end of the string around the child's wrist. After saying, "My name is _____," the first child passes the ball of string to the next child, who does the same thing, and so on. Continue until all the children are "tied up" and have introduced themselves.

Point out that there are X number of children in the class and each of them is a unique individual. Then add that they all have something in common, *they are all Jews!* Next, unwind the string, beginning with the last child, who again says, "My name is _____," but also introduces and unties the next child. The second child introduces the next child and unties the string. Continue in this manner until each child has introduced the next child and everyone is untied. The last child can introduce the teacher.

Place Cards

Marking each child's place with a simple name card will make the children feel at home in the classroom. Place cards can be made from 6 x 8 index cards or oaktag cut to the same size. Fold in four parts to make a triangle that can stand alone. Paste the ends together. Get some smile stickers or make your own stickers out of contact paper. If you make your own, decorate them with Jewish symbols. Cut out the stickers and paste them on pieces of oaktag of the same size. Glue to the top of the place card. Print the child's name on bright colored glow paper and glue it onto the place

Holiday Match-Up

This is a good opening day activity. You will need 3 x 5 index cards. Collect pictures covering all aspects of a Jewish holiday. Mount a picture on each card; laminate it or cover it with clear contact paper. Cut the cards into two puzzle pieces. As the children enter the room, distribute the puzzle pieces, one to each child. When all the children have arrived, ask them to find the partner with the matching piece. When they have identified their partners, they are to introduce themselves to each other. They are also to get to know each other better by asking such questions as:

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

What is your favorite Jewish holiday?

What game do you like best?

What is your favorite color?

Once the partners are acquainted, have them introduce each other to the whole class and tell about each other.

Name Mobile

For this activity you will need long strips of colored yarn, colored markers, a hole puncher (unless you punch the holes in advance), colored construction paper, and hangers. Cut out a variety of Jewish symbols. Make enough for each child to have three or four different symbols. Tell the children to print their names on one symbol and use the others to describe things they like (e.g., Jewish songs, holidays, hobbies, pets). Children who do not know how to write can draw pictures representing what they want to tell the class about themselves. Punch holes in the symbols, thread the yarn through them, and hang each set of symbols on a hanger as the children introduce themselves to their classmates.

Welcome Puzzles

Children enjoy puzzles, so greet your pupils on the first day of school with a "welcome" puzzle. Prepare decorative welcome puzzles by writing "welcome" or "welcome to school" in Hebrew and English (*baruch haba levet sefer*) on colored paper or tagboard. Decorate as desired with Jewish symbols, smiles, etc. Cut into puzzle pieces—small pieces for older children, large pieces for the younger children. Place one puzzle in an envelope for each child with the child's name on the outside. Hand out the envelopes as the children arrive. They will have fun putting the puzzles together.

A Class Tree

Make a class tree—a tree of learning or knowledge. Begin this activity on opening day and continue it throughout the year. Have the children cut out leaf designs from red, orange, yellow, and green construction paper. Take a Polaroid picture of each child, or have the children bring pictures of themselves from home. Have the children glue their pictures in the center of one of the leaves. On a large piece of butcher paper, draw a large tree with many branches but no leaves. Mount each child's picture leaf on a different branch of the tree—one branch to a child. Whenever a child learns something new or accomplishes something major, have the child decorate a leaf with a symbol or drawing representing the new achievement. Add the leaf to the child's personal branch.

OPENING DAY ACTIVITIES FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

Who Am I?

Have the students draw self-portraits on 9 x 12 drawing paper. Then, with construction paper, they are to create disguises (e.g., moustaches, beards, thick eyebrows) and glue them atop their portraits. Next tell them to print nouns that begin with each letter of their name randomly around the paper, as well as at least three more words that are not nouns. Collect the papers and redistribute them, making sure the recipients do not get their own papers. Everyone must now identify the disguised student on the paper just received; this can be done by crossing off the words that are not nouns and, using the first letters of the nouns, constructing the name.

Write a Riddle

Have the students write riddles about themselves. The riddles should include clues about their physical characteristics, hobbies, etc. They are to draw illustrations around the riddle and sign their names on the back of the paper. Collect the riddles and redistribute them, making sure the recipients do not get their own riddles back. Each student, in turn, reads a riddle aloud, and the class tries to identify the person to whom it pertains.

A Getting-Acquainted Puzzle

On posterboard, draw a picture or write a quotation that has something to do with your unit of study. Use a black marker to section off pieces for a puzzle, then cut up the puzzle on the black lines. You will need one puzzle piece for each student and one for yourself. Give the students their puzzle pieces as they arrive for class. Ask them to work together to complete the puzzle. Put your piece in last. Once the puzzle is assembled, make sure everyone knows everyone else's name, then discuss the picture or quotation you used for the puzzle.

Name Sheets

There are plenty of name games, but this one is a little different. Prepare a name sheet with outlines of different Jewish symbols (ie: Star of David, shofar/etrog, menorah, chanukiot). For each Jewish symbol, give the students different instructions. For example:

Star of David: Write the names of those who have blond hair

Shofar: Write the names of those with brown hair.

Menorah: Write the names of those with blue eyes.

Lulav/Etrog: Write the names of those with brown eyes.

Chanukiot: Write the names of the girls on four branches, the names of the boys on four branches.

This can go on and on, using many different ways to write the names of everyone in the class.

FOUR CORNERS ACTIVITY

Ask students a question. Depending on the answer, they go to a specific corner of the room. When they get to the corner of the room, they share their answers to a second question with each other. After one "round," students come together for another "round" of questions.

Sample Questions (You can also make up your own):

Where are you in your family?

1. Oldest 2. Youngest 3. Middle 4. Only

Tell each other about yourself and your family. What school do you go to? What extra curricular activities do you participate in? Where do your parents work?

What is your favorite color?

1. Blue or Green 2. Red or Orange 3. Yellow or Purple 4. Black or White

Tell each other your favorite movie.

Pick a number from one to four:

1. One 2. Two 3. Three 4. Four

Why do you like that number?

Which of the following Jewish foods do you like the best?

1. Challah 2. Latkes 3. Hamentaschen 4. Kugel

If you could be a Jewish ritual object, what would it be and why?

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

Half the students sit in chairs facing inside a circle. The other half of the students sit in chairs in an inner circle facing the students who are in the outer circle. Ask a "get-to-know-you" question. Each student tells the student facing him/her the answer to the question. Then, the outer circle students get up and move one chair to the right. Another question is asked and the process proceeds as above. Each time a new question is asked, the students in the outer circle get up and move one chair to the right.

CREATE A STORY

The group sits down in a circle. The first person says five words to begin a tale. The successive person continues the tale with five more words. This mixer helps to break down barriers between the individuals as they create a goofy story together, collaborating to make it fun.

KILLER

To prepare, everyone stands in a circle with their eyes closed. The leader walks around and taps a few people to be the killers. Then, everyone mingles freely. They have to go up to someone new, introduce themselves, shake hands, and tell one bit of information about themselves (it can be pre-determined that they have to say their favorite color, or animal, or hobby, etc.). If the person you're introducing yourself to blinks at you (in an obvious fashion, of course), you are dead. It is advisable to wait a bit before dying so that the killer is not apparent. The winner is the person who guesses one of the killers before being killed. The amount of killers varies according to how many participants there are.

License Plates Bulletin Board

Bring in several old license plates, from different states if possible. Show these to the class so that everyone can see what designs and information the license plates contain (name of state, county indicator, a picture/slogan/logo, numbers, etc.). Give each student a piece of tagboard cut to the size of a license plate. Ask the students to design license plates that will represent them as Jewish students. They can write, draw, cut out pictures, even make their plates three-dimensional. Have the students place their personal license plates on their desks with two-way carpet tape or hang them on a license plate bulletin board after introducing themselves.

A Self-Collage

Have the students describe themselves in collages made on sheets of 9 x 12 colored construction paper, using words, logos, and pictures. Suggest that they include such things as favorite Jewish holiday, last Jewish celebration, and Hebrew name. They can cut pictures from magazines or draw their own, write poems, create logos, etc. Upon completion, combine all the collages to make a bulletin board.

Letter of Introduction

Having youngsters write letters of introduction to someone they do not know is a good way to get them to describe themselves thoroughly. Ask them to tell all about themselves, so that the recipient will know "the real you." Remind them to include physical descriptions, hobbies, family, school and activities, sports they like, pets, favorite Jewish holidays and events, and anything else that is important to them. Upon completion, have the students exchange letters several times till they know more about one other. Or collect the letters and read them aloud, without giving the writers' names. The class is to guess whom each letter is describing.

Billboard Ad

Use this one for an opening day activity when you have a group whose members don't know each other very well. You will need colored markers, construction paper, magazines, scissors, and glue.

Explain to the youngsters that they are to create billboard ads advertising who they are, what they do well, and what their many talents and abilities are. Ask them to think of jingles, slogans, and commercial ads for the billboards. They can either draw pictures or cut pictures out of magazines for their ads.

Upon completion, have your students share their personal ads. Post them on the bulletin board or on a large sheet of butcher paper mounted on the wall. You can use the ads as a border, then add class events and achievements as you go through the school year.

YOUR BIO POEM

Welcome to sixth grade Religious School. The following are directions for you to write your own Bio Poem, a guess-who kind of game we'll play to reconnect as a group and give some clues as to what makes each one of us unique.

Follow the directions carefully, be creative, and enjoy sharing part of yourself with us. At the end of our session, another person in the class will read aloud your poem about you, and the rest of us will guess who wrote the poem.

FORMULA FOR YOUR POEM

- LINE 1 Your hair and eye color
- LINE 2 4 adjectives that describe you as a person
- LINE 3 Sister/Brother/Friend of
- LINE 4 Who loves (3 things, people or ideas)
- LINE 5 Who feels (3 items)
- LINE 6 Who fears (3 items)
- LINE 7 Who would like to see (3 things, people or places) in Israel
- LINE 8 Who would like to know why...
- LINE 9 Resident of(city), student at (school)

EXAMPLE: MY BIO POEM

Hair brown, eyes of blue,
loving laughter, thoughtful, dreamer, cares a lot
sister of Linda and big brother Ken
Who loves chocolate ice cream, the ocean, tangerine sunsets
Who feels bad about war, happy when life is a smooth song, a seeker of harmony
Who fears prejudice, insensitivity and global warming
Who would like to see Jerusalem, Safed again, and her sons becoming Bar Mitzvah on top
of Masada
Who would like to know when there will be Peace on our Planet
Resident of Encinitas, teacher of children.

PEOPLE BINGO

Before class-- prepare a list of 10-15 statements such as

Find a student who:

has a birthday the same month as yours

is new to Temple Solel Religious School

has one of the same hobbies as you

has the same favorite Jewish holiday as you...

To play--

List the students' names on board.

Students write the names of classmates on "Solel" sheet in any square they choose.

Empty squares are okay.

Read aloud the first statement.

Students walk around the room talking to each other.

Each time they find a student that matches the statement they put a checkmark by the name of the classmate.

After a few minutes signal the students to stop.

Encourage class to mingle with as many students as they can.

Continue with statement 2, then 3, etc.

Have students share who they met and what they learned at the end of the game.

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Name: _____

Questionnaire

Ethical Issues

1. What school do you go to? _____

2. Is this your first year at Temple Solel Hebrew School? _____

3. Do you like acting? _____

4. Do you like arts and crafts? _____

5. Do you like to read in front of others? _____

Would you like to tell me anything about yourself that will help me be your teacher? _____

7. Explain what "ethical" means to you. _____

8. What is your favorite Jewish holiday? _____

Why? _____

GAME #1

Have students stand in a circle. Using a small, safe object (such as a koosh ball) toss the ball to any student in the circle saying their name, or a color, or a number. That student then tosses the ball to another student saying another name/color/number. This continues until everyone has tossed the ball. Now tell the students they have to repeat the pattern of tossing the ball in the same order to the same people saying the same name/color/number. Time how long it takes. Tell the students how long it took them to go through the process one time and ask them to estimate how much faster can they complete the pattern. Let them try and complete this task to a faster time. Encourage them to problem-solve to find a method of decreasing their time. The idea is for the class to set a goal that they work together to meet. After going through this activity four or five times, discuss the process. Ask kids to explain what they just did. Are there other methods they can think of that would have given them faster results? How did they work together? Did someone take a leadership role?

GAME #2

Another activity is **Build the House**. Bring an empty poster board and one marker to class. Have the students sit on the floor in a circle and explain that this activity has to be completed in total silence. The objective is for a house to be drawn on the poster after it has gone around the circle. Pass the poster around with the marker. Each student can draw one line (long or short, horizontally, vertically or diagonally) on the poster board and then pass it on to the next person in the circle. Stress that this must be done in total silence. After the house is drawn look at it with the students. Discuss all the features of this house. Is there a foundation for this house to stand on? Walls, doors, windows? Use this model to set up the classroom community. What is the foundation of our house (i.e. trust, cooperation, mutual respect, etc.)? Talk issues through. How did they interact with each other during the game? Did they trust each other that a house would be built at the end? Where are our limits? What is acceptable or unacceptable in the house?