



ARJE EDUCATOR SEARCH APPLICATION

This application is intended to supplement your job posting to help ARJE educators understand how your job is in line with the values of ARJE and the Reform Movement and represents best practices in the field.

THE BASICS

Name of your Organization: Beth El Hebrew Congregation

City/State: Alexandria, Virginia

Date of Application Submission: October 23, 2022

VISION FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Please answer the following questions about the vision your institution has for Jewish education so that the applicant has a strong sense of who you are as an institution and what you value.

What is the vision and mission of the educational program at your institution?

Our goal in all our education at our congregation – whether intended for the youngest children or the oldest adults – is to open the windows of Judaism and teach that reform Judaism is exciting, relevant and important to the world. The religious school strives to provide its children with an enriching, inclusive, and innovative Jewish education laying the foundation for families to live engaged and spiritually fulfilling Reform Jewish lives.

The Religious School's mission focuses on teaching:

- **Torah** to focus on the moral behaviors, values, history and wisdom which are the foundation of Judaism
- **Hebrew Literacy** as the language of the Jewish people.: to be able to participate in services, while gaining an understanding of the prayers and developing a connection to Hebrew
- **History and Israel** to develop a sense of belonging to the Jewish community, past, present and future; developing an identity as part of a local and international Jewish community whose center is the State of Israel
- **Traditions, Customs, Holidays** to learn and participate in traditions, customs and holiday observances that have cultural and historical meaning, and to find personal meaning within their own families' lives

- **Mitzvot and Tikkun Olam** to teach the importance of living a moral life by doing acts of loving kindness and repairing the world through social action
- **Reform Judaism** to provide an enduring understanding of the tenets of Reform Judaism
- **God** to help students begin to develop their personal theology and relationship with God through prayer, study and acts of loving kindness

What values are most important to your educational program?

In addition to those values listed above, our education program reflects the mission and values of our congregation as a whole.

We are Beth El, a sacred Jewish community for all who seek connection, meaning, and healing.

- **CHESED/LOVINGKINDNESS:** We are bound by covenant and our shared humanity, embracing lovingkindness as our central value. **MISHPACHA/FAMILY:** We celebrate that our congregational family reflects the diversity of the human experience.
- **MESORAH/TRADITION:** We inherit the traditions of our ancestors, reforming them to meet our lives today.
- **CHOCHMAH/WISDOM:** We trust in Jewish wisdom and honor all paths that lead to peace.
- **YISRAEL/ISRAEL:** We devote ourselves to wrestling with our dreams for Israel.
- **TZEDEK/JUSTICE:** We accept responsibility to repair our unjust world.

Together, we are Beth El.

Project 2-3 years in the future—what does the education program look like at your institution?

With the leadership of our Education Director, we will critically evaluate our current educational program in order to strengthen our curriculum and teaching, nurture familial affiliation, and further embrace inclusion and the diversity of the Jewish people. The Director will use the evaluation outcomes to help drive and manage the growth of the religious school, ensuring that comprehensive systems are in place to encourage and support that growth. They will help to create a culture of supplementary religious education that continues through high school and responds to every learner's background and needs. And in the coming years, our evolving education program will encourage greater engagement of students post b'nei mitzvah while also inspiring greater parent involvement, ultimately fostering a stronger congregational community.



ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

Please fill out the following as thoroughly as possible:

A brief description of your organization including your affiliation with the Reform movement and the population you serve:

According to the 2017 Greater Washington, DC Jewish Community Demographic Study (the most recent of its kind), the Greater DC Jewish community numbers nearly 300,000 Jewish adults and children, making it the third largest Jewish community in the United States. The Greater DC Jewish community's size has grown by 37% since 2003. Northern Virginia is home to 41% of Greater DC Jews. Since 2003, the Jewish population of Northern Virginia has grown by 80%. Half of Virginia's Jewish adults are under age 50.

Northern Virginia (NoVA) is a large geographic area and Jews live throughout its eight local jurisdictions; Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, and Manassas. The NoVA community comprises one-third of the region's overall Jewish population of more than a quarter million people.

Coupling these demographic trends with the ongoing development of Amazon's HQ2 in nearby Crystal City (Beth El is the nearest Reform synagogue), Beth El Hebrew Congregation is on the cusp of a generational opportunity. We are seeking an education director who has a bold vision and is eager to pursue the vast opportunities available to us.

As the oldest Reform congregation in Northern Virginia (founded in 1871) with a robust tradition of volunteer support, our strengths are numerous. We are a warm, intergenerational community that cares deeply about social justice and civic engagement. We are proud of what we have accomplished, and we are committed to experimenting with bold new programs. Education begins with our in-house preschool, run jointly with the JCCNV (a source of membership growth), and continues through a dynamic religious school, post-b'nei mitzvah education, and adult education. We are sensitive to the needs of our intergenerational community, and we take responsibility for the world through tikkun olam and tzedakah.

Being welcoming is our starting point. We recognize that becoming an inclusive Jewish community is a constant process upon which we focus our lens, striving to include interfaith families, single-parent families, LGBTQ families and individuals, racially and ethnically diverse Jewish families and individuals, Jews by choice, and congregants of all abilities in all that we do and all that we are.

Describe the workplace environment/culture:

We are a small team of dedicated and passionate professionals who believe that talented individuals can accomplish great things. We share a vision of a “sacred Jewish community for all who seek connection, meaning and healing” and constantly look to make sure that everything we do is in alignment with this ideal.

Being part of a small staff means we work hard, we share our talents, and are generous with our expertise. We recognize the value of strong, supportive relationships as well as the beauty and fun in sharing a meal, a laugh, or a great find on Ebay.

How does your organization support professional development and ARJE membership? *Note: It is the standard in the ARJE to commit to paying employees ARJE membership and annual gathering costs. These should not be lumped into a sum for employee discretion.*

Beth El supports ARJE membership dues. See “Professional Enlargement” below.

Share the full benefits package and how you support your employees:

- **Healthcare Benefits: (Medical, Mental Health, Dental, Vision. Percentage and for whom)**
The Education Director may enroll in the synagogue’s group health and hospitalization insurance. 80% paid by employer, 20% paid by employee (for Education Director and family).
- **Short and long term disability, life insurance, and retirement benefits: It is the standard in the ARJE to offer 15% pension to the RPB and disability insurance.**
The synagogue will make a contribution to the Education Director’s pension. Life insurance policy of \$25,000 (up to age 65).
- **Free or discounted membership or tuition:** The synagogue provides a full family membership in the congregation with no dues or building fund obligations.
- **Paid family leave and sick time:** 10 days of paid sick leave. Up to 12 weeks of paid family leave for the birth/adoption of a child or family member’s sickness.
- **Vacation time/PTO:** In addition to Jewish and secular holidays listed in the synagogue employee handbook, 4 weeks of paid vacation leave per year.
- **Other benefits or information to share with candidates about how you support your employees:**
 - Incentive Bonus: For every 10% increase in the number of Religious School children in grades kindergarten through seventh, the Education director will be entitled to a \$1,000 bonus.
 - Professional Enlargement: Includes books, software, conventions, etc. provided specifically professional development (\$4,000)
 - Appropriate professional liability insurance
 - A cell phone and data plan at no cost

Other important information that you think candidates should know about the institution here:

We've included a brief summary of our educational offerings:

PRESCHOOL: In collaboration with The Pozez Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia (Pozez JCC), Beth El offers a full-time, Jewish, Reggio Emilia-inspired early childhood program. The Pozez JCC-Beth El Early Childhood Learning Center is located on site at Beth El but is managed by the Pozez JCC. Beth El and the Pozez JCC collaborate on educational programming and preschool students are encouraged to continue their Jewish education in our religious school beginning in kindergarten.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL: Our religious school includes classes for students in kindergarten through grade 12. Many of our students choose to continue their involvement in religious school by serving as teaching assistants in our classrooms from 8th-12th grade while also participating in our Netzer Teen Program.

The parent-led Religious School and Youth (RSY) Team strives to provide its children with an enriching, inclusive, and innovative Jewish education laying the foundation for families to live engaged and spiritually fulfilling Reform Jewish lives.

We strive to create an enjoyable and meaningful Jewish learning experience at Beth El. Through the study of Torah, Hebrew, history, ethics, prayer, social justice and tzedakah, we teach our youth the Jewish faith and tradition and work to forge a long-term connection and commitment to Judaism.

Our teachers provide a warm, positive, and fun environment that fosters enthusiasm for Jewish learning through an interactive classroom setting, art, music, family programs, and field trips. All grades (K-7) meet on Sunday mornings from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Students in grades K-7 take classes in Hebrew and Judaic Studies. Students in grades 8-12 take classes covering varying topics as a part of Netzer from 12:30 PM to 1:45 PM on Sundays, and serve as madrichim in the younger grade classrooms. Grade 10 consists of our Confirmation program. Grades 4-7 also meet on Wednesday evenings from 6:00 to 7:45 PM for additional Hebrew and Judaic Studies classes.

ADULT EDUCATION: Beth El encourages everyone to engage in lifelong Jewish learning. Our classes are open to congregants as well as to friends in the community. Each Saturday at 9:00 AM, lay-led Torah study meets on the week's Torah portion. Each Sunday during religious school, beginner and intermediate Adult Hebrew classes meet at 10:00 AM. The senior rabbi offers adult classes on Wednesday evenings. Our Brotherhood sponsors educational and political forums, and a lifelong learning committee organizes additional classes and events throughout the year.



COMMITMENTS TO SAFE, RESPECTFUL, AND EQUITABLE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

The ARJE is committed to Safe, Respectful, and Equitable work environments and promoting those organizations that share the same values. Resources for this work can be found on our website and are hyperlinked below.

- ❖ **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bias Work: What training has the search committee and/or professional involved in this hire done to ensure a culture of nondiscrimination and anti-bias? Include any trainings and/or commitments associated with the Reform Pay Equity Initiative you have participated in.**

The synagogue's board of directors participated in a session entitled "Conscious Bias" led by fellow board member Naomi Mercer (Naomi is Senior Vice President, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at the American Bankers Association). The search committee will engage in this same presentation, which also requires committee members to complete Harvard Implicit Association Tests as part of the curriculum.

- ❖ **Healthy and Safe Workplace Training: What training has your organization done to ensure a healthy and safe work environment for employees? Share if you a member of the Safety, Respect, and Equity Network, if your congregation has an ethics code, a culture of reporting, or is working on these areas.**

The synagogue staff has completed safety training with Robert Graves from Secure Community Network (SCN) and has participated in Alexandria's ALX Promise Gold to keep employees and patrons safe and help organizations recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ❖ **Child abuse prevention: What training has your organization participated in to ensure safety of children and prevention of child abuse? Share if you are part of the Aleinu campaign? worked with the Center for Hope? or with other trainers in this area.**

While our organization has not participated in the Aleinu campaign or worked with the Center for Hope, we are committed to engaging in this work.