

Introduction and Overview

Why send your child to Peretz when there are so many other great Jewish schools in Vancouver?

There are a lot of reasons why Peretz might work for you:

You are looking for an inclusive, non-dogmatic approach to Jewish culture.

You are looking for a intellectually rich education that doesn't just focus on Hebrew, Israel , Holidays and Bible stories, but teaches Jewish history, ethics, literature, culture, music, and art as well.

Your family practices more than one faith or is not religious.

You are looking for your child to learn in an environment which is truly open-minded and welcomes all points of view.

Your child is not interested in Synagogue life.

Torah, prayer and Israel are not the primary way your child connects to Judaism, or your child has no connection to Judaism and you want them to find their own way into Jewish tradition and history, not have that way chosen for them.

Peretz

Peretz offers a secular approach to Jewish culture which emphasizes the humanist, progressive, and universalist aspects of our heritage.

We focus on Literature, Language, Ethics, Music, Art and Dance. See below for an overview of our subjects and cohorts, or browse through the specific sections for a detailed look at our curriculum.

Community and Pedagogy at Peretz

Parents are encouraged to be part of your child's education at Peretz. The year is also dotted with holiday celebrations which everyone can attend: our Tu B'shvat and Passover Community Seders and Purimspiel, Tikkun Olam activities, picnics and Shabbat dinners.

Our bi-weekly Family Education Program Sundays begin with a thirty minute session where families of children in Cohort One and Two (5-9 yrs old) join in songs, teachings about the annual holiday cycle, and insights from the weekly Torah portion discussed and debated in a lively, non-dogmatic manner where all points of view are welcome.

The Pnei Mitzvah ceremony ending the two year Pnei Mitzvah education of Cohort 3 is entirely planned and organized cooperatively by parents. In the past years this has been a wonderful opportunity for community building, new friendships, and celebration of the always incredible growth that the students have undergone.

Overview

Language

Children at Peretz will learn to read Hebrew and choose how deeply they want to pursue mastery with the help of our teachers. Children will also learn Yiddish words, phrases and songs and can choose to delve deeper into the *mameloshn* (Ashkenazi “mother-tongue”) if they choose.

Literature

Children will receive a grounding in Jewish literature, starting with Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), Mishna, Talmud and Rabbinic thought, with a focus on the Jewish ethical tradition. As they progress they will then study Jewish novelists, poets, and philosophers of the classical and modern eras.

Music

The children will also study Jewish contributions to modern music, from Bob Dylan to Gene Simmons (ok, maybe not Gene Simmons).

Art and Dance

Children will be exposed to major Jewish artists in a variety of mediums and explore ways that Jews have used art to create beauty or make the world a better place.

Ethics

Children will learn virtues and values basic to the Jewish tradition, from studying tikkun olam and how to care for the stranger to Jewish contributions to ethical and political theory in the modern era.

Growing Up At Peretz

Education at Peretz is broken up into three cohorts: Early Explorers (4-6); Growing Learners (7-9) and Pnei Mitzvah (10-13). The age ranges of the groups are approximate and which group is right for your child will be decided between you and the teachers.

Early Explorers and Growing Learners meet bi-weekly on the same Sunday. After gathering together for learning, singing and activities together with their parents for the first half an hour, the two groups separate for the rest of the afternoon.

Pnei Mizvah meet on the alternate Sunday with their teacher for a two hour session.

Pnei Mitzvah (10-13):

The Pnei Mitzvah program is a two year program where children gain a comprehensive understanding of Jewish culture and history whose breadth and richness is not matched anywhere else in Vancouver.

In **Year One** the students learn pre-modern Jewish history and culture, studying the major narratives of the Hebrew Bible and being introduced to the Mishna, the Talmud, and Rabbinic thought. Students also learn the basics of Kabbalah and Jewish prayer liturgies. All subjects are taught as literature and their meaning and significance are examined and debated by the students with the children given space to find their own relationship to the texts. No question or thought is out of bounds.

Students also study Jewish history from the time of the closing of the Biblical canon up to the modern era are introduced to topics like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, great Rabbis, Jewish women in history, the development of Jewish thought and religious practice, and how Jews went from a people in ancient Israel to a global presence.

In **Year Two** students explore Judaism in the modern world. Beginning with the Jewish enlightenment (haskalah) and the fall of the ghetto walls, we examine the thought of great modern Jewish thinkers, revolutionaries, artists and scientists. The students are introduced to Jewish film, music, art and literature of the modern period, and study modern Jewish history including Jewish political movements, the Holocaust, and the creation of the state of Israel.

At the end of the second year students prepare a Pnei Mitzvah project where they present an aspect of Jewish culture that they have connected with and wished to research and explore in whatever medium they choose. In past years this has taken forms from a book report, art, dance or video to learning to chant the traditional haftorah.

Pnei Mitzvah In Detail

Session One:

Genealogy

Jewish Birthday

What is a Jew? Ways of Being A Jew; Different Kinds of Jews

The High Holidays: Rosh Hashanah

Assignment: Create A Family Tree

Session Two

High Holidays Part Two: Yom Kippur

What Is Teshuvah? Watch a Film Clip Showing Character Transformation
(eg. Maleficent)

Watch Teshuvah scene from Les Miserables

What is Torah pt 1: Tanakh

Assignment: Read a Jewish Short Story That Reflects Jewish Cultural
Sensibilities (eg. "And Weep Like Alexander", Neil Gaiman)

Session Three

What Is Torah Part 2: Mishna, Talmud, Codes and Rabbinic Responsa

Assignment: Read and Discuss Section of Talmud With Parents

Session Four

What Is Torah Part 3: Kabbalah, Torah of Nature

Chanukkah: What Is It?

Assignment: Find One New Story About Jews or a Jewish person to discuss

Session Five:

Jewish History 1 An Overview of The Story of The Tanakh From Abraham to
The Second Temple Period

Hebrew Bible 1 Creation; Adam and Eve

Session Six

Hebrew Bible 2 Cain, Abel, Noah and The Flood; The Tower of Babel

Jewish History 2 Graeco-Roman Rule; Jesus and The Birth of Christianity

Session Seven:

Hebrew Bible 3: Abraham and Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael

Jewish History 3: The Jewish Revolts; Masada and Yavneh (The Birth of
Rabbinic Judaism)

Session Eight:

Hebrew Bible 4: Abraham and Isaac

Jewish History 4: A Brief Introduction to Rabbinic Literature

Session Nine:

Hebrew Bible 5: Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Esau

Jewish History 5: The Birth of Islam; the history of Jewish and Muslim interaction

Session Ten:

Hebrew Bible 6: Jacob in Haran, the Twelve Tribes

Jewish History 6: The Growth and Shape of the Jewish Diaspora; the life and work of Rashi

Session Eleven

Hebrew Bible 7: The Story of Joseph and The Exodus

Jewish History 7: Maimonides and the Birth of Kabbalah; The Zohar

Homework: Write Your Own Midrash

Session Twelve:

Hebrew Bible 8: Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy: The Foundations of Jewish Law and Religion

Jewish History 8: Jews Under Christianity; Shabbatai Zvi

Homework: Watch Fiddler On The Roof

Session Thirteen

Hebrew Bible 9: The Book of Joshua and The Book of Judges (Samson and Delilah; Deborah the Prophetess)

Jewish History 9: The Development of Jewish Religious Practices

Summer Homework: Jewish Movie Watching List (Watch At Least 3)

Yentl

The Frisco Kid

The Chosen

Year Two

Session One:

Hebrew Bible 10: The Monarchy In Israel: Saul, David and Solomon

Modern Jewish History 1: Litvaks, Hasids and Maskils, Oh My.

Homework: Hebrew Alphabet

Session Two

Hebrew Bible 11: The Prophets

Modern Jewish History 2: The Fall of the Ghetto Walls and Its Aftermath

Hebrew Alphabet

Session Three:

Hebrew Bible 12: Wisdom Literature- Ecclesiastes and Proverbs

Modern Jewish History 3: Revolution!

Hebrew Vowels

Session Four:

Jewish Literature 1: The Birth of Classical Yiddish Literature
Modern Jewish History 4: Zionism
Hebrew Reading

Session Five:

Jewish Literature 2: Sholem Aleichem
Modern Jewish History 5: The Holocaust
Hebrew Reading

Session Six:

Jewish Literature 3: Jews In English
Modern Jewish History 6: The State of Israel
Hebrew Reading

Session Seven:

Jews In Art 1: Famous Artists and Dancers
Modern Jewish History 7: Jews in Canada
Intro to Yiddish

Session Eight:

Jews in Art 2: Famous Musicians
Modern Jewish History Eight: Jews Today
Intro to Yiddish

Session Nine

Jewish Thinkers 1: Spinoza

Language: Hebrew Reading and Vocabulary 1

Session 10:

Jewish Thinkers 2: Marx

Language: Hebrew Reading and Vocabulary 2

Session 11:

Jewish Thinkers 3: Emma Goldman; Einstein

Jews In The Present: Topical Issues

Session 12:

Jewish Thinkers 4: Jewish Feminists

Jews In The Present: Topical Issues

Session 13:

Jewish Thinkers 5: Ethicists: Peter Singer, Naomi Klein

Jews In The Present: Topical Issues

Major Assignments:

Year One:

Write your own midrash (rewrite a Biblical story to explore things the text didn't).

Year Two:

Pnei Mitzvah Project.