

August, 2011

Dear Parents of School Aged Children,

Attached are the updated letters and calendar for the High Holydays. Please print or email this information to the principal and teachers at your student's school.

Members of the *School Committee of the Jewish Community Relations Council* and Rabbis have met with the Supt.s of the Asheville City and Buncombe County Schools. We reiterated the challenges of the holidays for Jewish students and requested that teachers be reminded to not take field trips, give tests, assign large projects, host open houses, schedule "school picture day", etc during this times. Parents are the next part of the successful implementation of that request. With over 150 families in the local schools, you are the best opportunity there is for education and compliance. Informing teachers well ahead of the holiday and requesting homework assignments before, rather than as make up, is a recommended strategy.

We also discussed with the Supt.'s other sensitive issues such as:

Saturday School - This is a challenge as more and more days are added to the calendar; this year 182 and the next few years the move will be to 190. There are also limits on the beginning and ending of school due to legislation for "save our summers". The Supt.'s reiterated their flexibility on missed days due to religious observance while we shared that our students don't want to "miss school" when it is in session. It was suggested that part of the solution lies in Raleigh with the legislators where the calendar is decided.

Bullying - In the case of Asheville City Schools, Allen Johnson shared that when disciplinary actions are taken against a student for bullying, the staff of ACS's are not allowed to inform the offended party (or parents) on what the punishment was but assured the committee members that disciplinary actions are taken. Tony Baldwin with BCS shared the anonymous hot line and reporting form - 225-5292 or www.buncombe.k12.nc.us/cms/module/selectsurvey/TakeSurvey.aspx?PageNumber=1&SurveyID=383 . In both cases they encouraged families and students to speak to the teachers and principals in the schools and if deemed appropriate the Supts. Where community members feel that they can do so, please share these incidences with the JCRC committee as well so that we can address it at the meetings that take place every two years.

Teacher Training - In the Spring semester, JCRC will be hosting a Staff Development work shop on Religion in the Schools that will look at ways to teach about religion rather than advocating for a particular religion. Your assistance as parents to get the word out will be much appreciated.

We wish everyone a good and sweet year.

Lee Aviashai, Geri Garfinkle, Karen Hyman, Laura Livingstain, Deborah Miles
JCRC School Committee Members (we welcome anyone else!)