

Questions & Answers about the Jewish Education Scholarship Fund (JESF)

These Frequently As ked Questions (FAQ) and the answers to them, may be of help to you.

How does the JESF work?

Need-based scholarships from JESF help many Beth Sholom parents afford a Jewish education for their kids in K-12 in Jewish day school, afternoon Hebrew school, formal Israel programs, or Jewish camps. A separate, confidential committee reviews applications and allocates funds discreetly (and directly to the educational institution) based on financial need. Names are removed from the applications, so only the rabbi and the executive director know who has applied.

Applicants must submit information on income and the reason(s) for the need, and they must prove that they have first applied for financial aid from the relevant educational institution. In addition, all educational institutions or programs must be approved by a Beth Sholom subcommittee of Jewish educators.

Isn't the economy all better now?

Yes, but Many of our fellow members remain unemployed, underemployed, or have businesses that continue to struggle. For these fellow congregants, paying for a child's Jewish education is incredibly difficult.

After someone is unemployed for 6, 12, or 18 months, it can take years to recover financially, even after finding a new job. Consider the accumulated pile of unpaid bills, the skipped car maintenance that led to more costly repairs, the health problems that got worse after a year without health insurance, and so on.

As a result — and contrary to what many of us have assumed — even when the visible “emergency” of unemployment ends for a family, the actual need for help in paying for a child's Jewish education can last for several more years. This is where JESF — **you** — can help!

Isn't this problem too overwhelming for JESF to make a difference?

Actually, JESF can make an enormous difference, because it comes on top of all other forms of financial assistance (e.g., from the school or camp, from extended family). As a result, a JESF scholarship can be that final push that makes it possible for a child to attend a Jewish educational institution or program.

Should I increase my donation to JESF?

Yes, please, if at all possible. This year, our preliminary estimate is that we will need to raise more than last year in donations, so that we can more fully meet the needs of all the synagogue children expected to apply in 2016. You should know that the synagogue's budget allocation has not increased for the past five years.

Has anyone looked to see if JESF should be changed or improved?

Yes! In January 2014 the Board of Trustees approved the recommendations of the synagogue's Strategic Planning Committee, which performed an intensive review of the structure and format of JESF. A copy of that report, as amended by the board, is available at www.cbsteaneck.org/jesf_policies.

I sent my children to “X” for their Jewish education, so shouldn't everyone else do the same?

Not every child (or family) is the same. For example, not every child can handle being away from home for a month or two of Jewish camp. JESF is therefore designed to cover *all* forms of formal and informal Jewish education, because not every Jewish child learns in the same way — and because we as a community believe that no child in our synagogue should be denied the opportunity to get a good Jewish education due to financial hardship.

What is an appropriate amount to donate?

Obviously, everyone's situation is different. For some donors, \$36 is a real stretch, and we are grateful for their gift. For many others, several thousand dollars has been the norm. The AVERAGE donation last year was \$583. Whatever the amount, though, it is definitely appreciated, both for the dollars and for the statement of support!

How do we donate?

Send a check — preferably BEFORE *Pesah*, but no later than Monday, May 2, 2016 — to the synagogue office made out to Congregation Beth Sholom with “JESF” on the memo line.