Dear Parents:

We are once again providing a letter on Beth Chaim stationery requesting that if our students miss classes, athletic practices and other extracurricular activities during the High Holy Days that it be considered an excused absence. This means that cannot be penalized in any way (an excused absence does not even compromise a perfect attendance record). We have had a long relationship with the San Ramon Valley Unified School District (SRVUSD), and they sent out a listing of the High Holy Days this year to every school principal in the SRVUSD. In this letter, we have cited District policy and directed questions to Elizabeth Graswich, Director of Communications and Community Relations, with whom we have been working.

We invite you to use this letter and add a personal note to your teacher. It is important to ask what your children might do to remain current with the class study schedule when they are absent. If there are tests or quizzes being given on those days, please ask for a makeup date.

We also have students in at least three other School Districts in the area and we have many students that attend private schools around the area. We are not able to track all of the policies of all of these schools and School Districts but are hopeful that reasonable and religiously sensitive policies are in place in all of the schools our students attend.

We have created a different letter for students outside the SRVUSD, which we encourage you to use as applicable. If there are problems at any school please let us know. We have access to other professional Jewish resources in the Bay Area including the Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC). We have attached a note from the JCRC as an example of the kind of support that is available. Again, if there is any problem with any school or any teacher, please let us know.

One last point. Many of our students do not want to miss school so early in the school year and are sensitive to drawing attention to their religion. One of the central goals of our Religious School is to develop a sense of pride in being Jewish in our young people. As a parent, we hope you will discuss this with your children and help them to see the importance of this issue even if they experience discomfort around it. We trust that you will discern what is in the best interest of your child in the short and long term. If you have questions or concerns, feel free to call Rabbi Dan or Rabbi Elisheva at the Beth Chaim office.

Shanah Tovah,

Rabbi Dan and Rabbi Elisheva