

Updated: October 2023

Halloween is Tuesday night, October 31, 2023.

For most, Halloween is a secular American holiday, with traditions emphasizing local community and neighborhood connections. For others, its pagan origins (dating to ancient times), Christian associations (dating to the Middle Ages), and history of anti-Semitic activity make it a religious celebration and therefore off-limits for Jews. The full range of participation in Halloween is visible in the Jewish community: some families embrace it fully, some reject it completely, and some find a spot for themselves somewhere in-between. All those responses are represented at Heilicher.

Because it is a Jewish community day school, Heilicher does **not** include Halloween in its program of holiday celebrations or in its classroom curriculum. The school does **not** post decorations, wear costumes, or distribute candy/treats. Those rituals are reserved for Purim, an explicitly Jewish holiday.

At the same time, Heilicher does not presume to tell families how to engage with Halloween. This means some students in every classroom will talk about their plans with great enthusiasm, while others will be silent. Our job (teachers and parents alike) is to be alert to these conversations as they occur between now and Halloween and to recognize their potential to make a Heilicher student feel like an outsider within their Jewish classroom and Jewish school. We all are responsible for providing a safe and supportive forum for examination and reflection, if necessary. In that regard, Halloween also serves as an interesting case study of what it means to be Jewish in America in the 21st century.

If you have any questions, please speak with Doc, Director of Jewish Living and Learning.