

## Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Jewish Community Center's Early Childhood Center! Working together, we are able to meet the needs of every child. We maintain an open door policy at all times. Please do not hesitate to discuss anything that may affect your child's happiness at school.

We offer a stimulating variety of activities in a nurturing environment. Your child will have the opportunity to explore his/her creative abilities through art, music, & role-playing in both quiet and active play situations, and to develop social skills within a Jewish setting.

Our professional staff helps children to develop the skills they need to interact with others and become self-reliant. We provide an environment where each child participates in developmentally appropriate activities. We consider individual needs and developmental levels when planning activities. Please call with any questions you may have.

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## **AGES AND GROUP DIVISION**

We enroll children from 18 months through Pre-K. The children are placed according to their age on September 1st with consideration given to individual developmental needs:

- Tatelas, 18-23 months
- Mamelas, 24-36 months
- Bubbelas, 3 years old by December 31
- Shainelas, 3 & 4 year-olds
- Kindelas, 4 years old by December 31 and 5 year-olds

A Lead Teacher, who is responsible for the planning of activities, coordinates each group. There is also at least one Assistant Teacher with each class.

## **PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM**

We provide four major types of activities for the children. Our staff follows guidelines for developmentally appropriate programming, as recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Our school offers a curriculum that is designed to enhance the social, physical, emotional and cognitive growth of our children. We present a simple, safe, and nurturing world where children are given the opportunities to develop positive self-image, self-reliance, social awareness and interaction, cooperation, concentration, imagination, and resourcefulness.

We also provide a rich Jewish experience that includes Sabbath and Holiday celebrations.

Our curriculum is well-planned and flexible in order to meet the daily needs of the class. It includes both teacher and child directed activities, group-play, arts and crafts, science, story telling, games, music and cooking. Children have many opportunities to choose the types of activities they would like to engage in during free-play time. Field Trips and informative visits by guests from the community are also part of our program.

The classrooms are equipped with materials carefully selected for each child's optimal growth and development. We have an extensive variety of materials to increase sensory and perceptual skills, to improve language and math skills, to promote the formation of concepts essential for later learning, and to develop the child's ability to solve problems.

Through play, children develop large and small motor skills. Each classroom has learning centers including sand and water tables, easels, blocks, and a dramatic play area. There is also daily access to playground equipment and a wide variety of other materials.

To enhance the children's gross motor coordination, each week includes structured gym classes, a creative movement class, plus twice-daily outdoor and/or indoor play on our playgrounds.

The three, four and five-year-olds also participate in swim classes for one 40-minute period each week. On swim days, please dress your child in a bathing suit under his/her clothes. Each child needs to bring a towel and underwear in a waterproof bag. All items must be labeled. Please dress your child in "self-help" clothing (no tights or shirts with buttons) on swim days.

The swim program is an introduction to swimming. Safety, comfort, and the feeling of success are emphasized. We

welcome parents to help us in the pool, as an addition to the aquatic staff and the classroom teachers

## **GOALS...**

### **What are our goals at school?**

- To provide a warm, nurturing, accepting environment
- To encourage a positive self-image for each child
- To provide caring and loving role models for children to follow and from whom they can learn
- To assure parents that we are the best possible place for their children to be
- To enrich the lives of young children
- To give children a sense of security, consistency, and community
- To integrate a positive Jewish experience into our curriculum

We strive to meet the individual needs of every child by developing a cooperative and supportive relationship among parents, teachers and administrators. All parents must meet with the director prior to registration to insure that, through open communication, children's needs are met. Information forms and releases must be completed prior to enrollment. We work together to develop a partnership between home and school in order to be certain that we have all of the tools necessary to meet each child's needs.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Please advise us of your child's special needs. Our program is designed to be inclusive. Modifications to the school environment and use of support services are effective in ensuring that the needs of each child are met. The more information you are comfortable sharing about your child, the better we are able to meet his/her individual needs.

## SCHEDULING & REGISTRATION

Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Upon reaching capacity, we establish a waiting list. Families on the waiting list are given priority as space becomes available. Applications are accepted year round.

A minimum of two half days per week is required for all children attending our Early Childhood Center. To provide consistency in our pre-school program, we strongly recommend that three-year-olds attend a minimum of three times per week, and that four-year-olds attend five times per week. Special schedules can be arranged with the Director. The schedule given to the Director is to be followed unless other arrangements have been made.

Overtime, days added, or days extended from an already scheduled half-day, are possible with prior approval from the Director. Your request for extra hours/days will be approved based on space and availability. Extra time is billed on a per diem basis. No substitutions can be made. **Extra days cannot be exchanged for regularly scheduled days.** Payment for any added time must be paid for at the time of service.

A \$200 deposit and a registration fee are required along with the completed application form in order to reserve your child's place in our Early Childhood Center. The deposit will be applied to your final tuition bill for the year.

**NY State mandates that all Early Childhood forms must be completed and returned to the Director prior to the start date of the program. In addition, your Jewish Community Center membership must be current throughout your child's enrollment in the Early Childhood Center or the community participant registration rate must be paid.**

## **SUMMER IN THE CITY**

We provide early childhood services throughout the year. **"Summer in the City"** provides a continuation of care during July and August. Our enrichment activities (dance, singing, gym and swim) continue during the summer. In addition we have water play outdoors and field trips in and around the city. The Bubbelas, Shainelas, and Kindelas especially enjoy taking the metro bus and subway. The Mamelas get a chance to try out the "big pool" here at the JCC in preparation for entering a three-year-old class in the fall.

Families with children enrolled in the Early Childhood Center have the option of registering for July and/or August, and may change their children's schedules if their childcare needs are different during the summer months. Our days and times of operation remain the same year-round in order to serve the childcare needs of our families. For further information, please contact the Director.

## **BILLING**

You will be charged a 12-month tuition that will be billed on a monthly basis. Your annual tuition is broken down into 12 equal monthly invoices (with the exception of additional days, overtime, and other adjustments).

Childcare fees will be paid through direct debit or credit card. The JCC's Chief Financial Officer must approve any other arrangements.

**If payment in full is not received by the end of the month, services will be suspended until all financial obligations have been met.**

Please keep in mind that this tuition system allows us to have sufficient income, which ultimately guarantees the quality of the program.

Families with special financial circumstances are encouraged to contact the Director. Please let us know any time that you need assistance regarding the payment of your bill.

If you have any questions, speak with the Director to ensure that necessary corrections are made. Any disputed or unsettled balances will be deducted from the deposit on the account.

## **SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

Please listen to local radio stations (WBEN 930, WGR 550) for information on closings during inclement weather. **Closings are made independent of the area school systems.**

## **EARLY MORNINGS**

In order to maintain safety and comfort for children and staff, please...

- A. DROP-OFF** –Bring your child to school by 9:00 a.m. Ring the doorbell and identify yourself using the intercom in order to enter the Early Childhood Center.
- B. SIGN-IN** – Please help your child greet a teacher, making sure he/she is signed in on the attendance sheet in the classroom upon arrival. In the composition notebook, please enter information concerning medication, changes regarding pick-up, or any other special messages (i.e. doctor appointment, beginning toilet training, parent out-of-town, sleepless night, etc.)
- C. BATHROOM** – We request that you toilet your child upon arrival to school.

- D. BREAKFAST** – Only children who arrive prior to 8:15 a.m. may bring breakfast to school. Please send in a simple and nutritious breakfast.
- E. ITEMS FROM HOME** – Please leave all toys/small items at home. These items tend to get lost, damaged, or create hurt feelings among the other children. The preschoolers have a weekly opportunity to bring in a special item from home to “show and tell”. Children **may not** bring in large toys, jewelry, money, weapons, or super hero action-toys.

**Following the above policies will help to create pleasant mornings for everyone!**

## **CLOTHING**

Please dress your child in comfortable clothing for play. Proper footwear (i.e. sturdy sneakers and socks) must be worn. Self-help clothing (clothes that children are able to take off and put on themselves) is especially helpful. Our program provides daily opportunities for playing outside or in the indoor playground or gym. We go outside in the winter, so please be sure to dress your child for the weather. During the winter months, you may want to leave snow pants and boots at school. Snow play can be the highlight of a long winter day!

Please bring a complete change of labeled, size and season appropriate clothing to leave at school. These must be stored in a labeled Ziploc bag. Please include underwear, socks, shirt, slacks and a sweater or sweatshirt. **LABEL ALL OF YOUR CHILD’S BELONGINGS CLEARLY WITH HIS/HER NAME!**

## **BATHROOMING**

Families provide diapers and unscented, hypoallergenic wipes for their child if he/she is not potty-trained. We will inform you when supplies need to be replenished. In addition, all parents are to bathroom their children upon arrival to school.

As a child shows interest and is physically able to begin toilet training, the Lead Teacher will work with you to help your child learn to use the toilet. The teachers will offer encouragement and many opportunities for success. As partners, parents and teachers will decide when it is time to graduate to underwear.

## **LUNCH AND SNACK**

Lunch is served at approximately 12:00 noon. Each child brings his/her own lunch. Please pack a well-balanced meal with foods from each of the four major food groups only. We want to instill good eating habits, therefore, please help us by not packing lunches with candy or foods lacking nutritional value. We are unable to refrigerate or heat lunches. Please use an unbreakable thermos to keep food warm, or an ice pack to keep food cold if necessary. We will provide healthy, Kosher snacks during the morning and afternoon.

**OUR SCHOOL PROVIDES A PEANUT AND NUT FREE ENVIRONMENT. Please do not send any peanut butter, peanuts or peanut products, tree nuts (walnuts, almonds, cashews, etc.) or nut products to school. Peanut/nut allergies can be life threatening. Read all labels on prepared foods! We strive to provide a safe environment for every child.**

We will serve milk on Mondays and Fridays and juice at all other times in observance of Kashruth. Water is always available.

Lunches are not to be shared. Some children have food allergies or particular dietary needs. If your child has any known food allergies, please tell us so that we can provide alternatives at snack time.

## **NAP-TIME**

NYS Office of Children and Family Services mandates that all children attending a full day of childcare have a nap/rest time. It is important for all children to learn how to rest and relax. A labeled, soft beach towel is suggested to cover your child's cot, and your child may want a small blanket and stuffed toy for naptime. (Pillows are prohibited.)

These items are to be taken home weekly for laundering and then returned to school the following week. Cots are disinfected daily.

## **PICK-UP**

You will need to ring the doorbell and identify yourself to enter the Early Childhood Center at pick-up time. Please be sure that afternoon staff notes the time of your child's departure. Check your child's cubby mail daily for notices and artwork. Take a moment to read the wipe-off board and discuss your child's day.

If anyone other than the parent or legal guardian is picking up the child, we must be notified in writing. The alternate will be asked to show identification and sign the child out in a special notebook. No child will be released to an alternate without permission from the parent or guardian on that day.

## LATE PICK-UP POLICY

A phone call should be made to the teacher on duty to inform him/her of the late pick-up whenever possible.

**Parents who pick up their children late will be billed a late fee of \$15.00 for the first 15 minutes or less. The late pickup fee for more than 15 minutes will be \$25.00. Late pick up fees must be paid at the front desk on the same day.** Please make every effort to pick your child up on time.

## WELLNESS POLICY

We need your cooperation in order to provide a healthy environment for all the children. Therefore, we have established a strict wellness policy. Below are guidelines for you to follow when your child is ill.

If your child shows any of the following signs of illness, your child **must** be kept at home:

- 1. FEVER** – a child with a fever may not return to school until he/she has been fever free for a full 24-hour day without fever-reducing medication (i.e. fever on Monday, fever-free on Tuesday, may return to school on Wednesday.)
- 2. NASAL CONGESTION** - Thick, yellow/green discharge, interferes with breathing, not related to allergies
- 3. COUGH** – Persistent, “croupy” or “barking”
- 4. IRRITABILITY**
- 5. LISTLESS**, no energy
- 6. VOMITING** and/or **DIARRHEA** – a child may not return to school until he/she has been free of these symptoms for a full 24-hour day.
- 7. POOR APPETITE** – associated with other signs
- 8. Suspicious SKIN RASHES or LESIONS.**

## 9. Complaining of a **SORE THROAT** or **EARACHE**.

If your child's health is questionable, please keep him/her at home where individual needs can best be met.

When you are called during the day because your child has become ill, arrangements must be made for your child to be picked up within 30 minutes. If a parent is not able to do so, please make alternate arrangements ahead of time to avoid delays in the event that your child becomes ill. Keep in mind that we do not have space to isolate your child, and that it is unfair for other children to be exposed to a child who is sick.

When your child returns to school after an illness, the morning supervisor will do a "wellness" check. If it appears that your child is not ready for a full day of school, you will be asked to take your child home. The same policy applies to a child who appears to be getting ill. Your cooperation will enable us to keep illness at a minimum.

In addition to the above, it is the parents/guardians responsibility to notify the Director if the child has been exposed to any communicable illness, etc. (i.e. chicken pox, strep throat, etc.)

This policy has been instituted to benefit everyone!

## **MEDICATION**

If your child needs to receive medication during the school day, we must have written instructions from a physician indicating the times and amount of medication to be administered, and written instructions from you as the parent or guardian on the designated form which has been provided to you. This applies to both over-the-counter and prescription drugs. All medications must be given to your child's teacher upon arrival at school. Medicine must be

brought to school in its original container, with all the supporting documentation and stored in a sealed/locked container, which is kept away from the children.

**Absolutely no exceptions will be made.**

This policy is part of the NY State Office of Children and Family Services regulations. When your child is taking medication, please write it in the composition notebook located in each classroom on the sign-in table **each day**.

If your child is taking medication that can influence his/her behavior, it is important that you inform the morning supervisor, or Lead Teacher.

## **ALLERGIES**

If your child has any allergies, please provide a complete list to your child's teacher. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

## **PARENT CONFERENCES**

We are happy to discuss your child's progress at any time. Scheduled conferences are held twice during the school year, in December and May. If you wish to schedule a conference at any other time, please make arrangements with your child's Lead Teacher or with the Director.

Throughout the year our teachers will be formally and informally observing and assessing each child's progress. The information they gather is used to plan activities that are interesting and stimulating for the children. We work to make sure every child is engaged in learning and challenged each day. Teachers are pleased to share their observations and assessments with you at conference times or informally at other mutually convenient times, and to hear how the children demonstrate their growth at home.

All information shared with teachers is confidential. Please let us know if you have questions or concerns at any time during the year.

In addition, we will ask you to fill out an evaluation of our early childhood program each spring.

## **PARENT PARTICIPATION/OBSERVATION**

Parents are always welcome to observe and/or participate with your child at school. If you have a special skill or project that you wish to share with the children, please let us know so that we can arrange a time that is mutually convenient.

Our parent/teacher association helps with several annual events. Please tell the director if you wish to become more involved in school events.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

We will celebrate your child's birthday at school by making a crown for your child to wear. We light a candle on our "cake" and sing *Happy Birthday*. This is usually done during the morning snack or at lunchtime with his/her group.

Many parents have given us monetary contributions to buy something for the classroom in honor of birthdays. The child is always told what has been purchased.

We can provide special birthday cake for your child's class to celebrate his/her birthday. The children will make the cake at school as part of the celebration. These cakes are Kosher, peanut & nut free, and non-dairy. Please tell your child's teacher and pay \$5 to cover the cost of the

ingredients. You can provide special napkins or party hats if you wish. We cannot serve any food products made at home. Birthday party invitations may **only** be distributed in school if every child in the class is invited. This will avoid hurt feelings.

### **PLEASE NOTIFY US IF:**

- Your child will be absent for the day.
- Your child is ill.
- Your child has been exposed to communicable disease or infection (i.e. chicken pox, strep, conjunctivitis, lice, etc.)
- Your child will not be in school for a long period of time.
- A different person is picking up your child (Please write in notebook).
- Any information on your application changes – address, telephone numbers (home, cell, or business) emergency numbers, family situations, employment, etc.
- You have any questions or problems concerning your child or the program.
- Any situations that arise at home which can affect your child's behavior.
- Your child is leaving the program (one month in advance of the departure date).

### **JCC CLASSES**

Additional enrichment classes are offered throughout the year, at a nominal fee. Flyers are sent home describing the available classes, as well as their listing in the JCC Center Connections. These classes offer variety and small group interaction. The participants discover more about swimming, sports, music, dance, literature, crafts, cooking and so much more. Registrations are taken on a first-come-first-serve basis until the designated deadline or class capacity is filled. Please tell us if you register your child for class, so we can arrange to take him/her and pick up after class.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Class rules are designed to insure the safety and happiness of all the children. These rules are developmentally appropriate for each class. They are explained and modeled by the teachers. Consistency is the key to helping the children internalize class rules. It takes lots of reinforcement before pre-school children can be expected to remember rules.

Our toddlers are reminded about how we treat each other throughout the day. Conflicts are frequent at this age. Recognizing that a toddler's language skills are only beginning to develop, a teacher will often model the words needed to resolve a disagreement between children. If the conflict is not settled in this way, the children are redirected. A change in activity gives a new opportunity for appropriate behavior.

As language skills develop, children are more able to resolve their own differences. Teachers stay nearby and encourage children to use the words they have been taught. Modeling is still important, and appropriate interactions are reinforced through positive feedback. Children have opportunities to help develop classroom rules. They are posted and reviewed throughout the year.

When the use of words is not enough, children are redirected to other activities. The source of the conflict is removed. At times a child may need to be given an opportunity to play away from other children, or to sit alone and think. These few minutes may be used to allow a child the time to calm down and be ready to rejoin the class.

**Physical punishment is never used!**

## **MANDATED REPORTERS**

All Early Childhood Staff are mandated reporters of child abuse by New York State law. Any suspicion of maltreatment of a child who attends our program will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

## **JEWISH EXPERIENCE/HOLIDAYS**

While the programs offered by the Jewish Community Center are open to families of all races, religions and cultural backgrounds, the Early Childhood Program and other JCC programs focus on Jewish traditions and values. The following provides a brief description of these Jewish holidays, and some background information, which may help in understanding activities we do with the children.

***Please note that we teach about the Jewish and secular holidays only.***

The JCC's Early Childhood Center will be closed each year for 2 days on Rosh Hashanah, and 1 day for each of the major religious holidays: Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Pesach, and Shavuot, if they occur during the school week. Please refer to your annual calendar for the specific dates.

## **ROSH HASHANAH**

The Jewish New Year is called Rosh Hashanah, and occurs in September or October. Regarded as the birthday of creation, Rosh Hashanah is the first day of a 10-day holiday period called the Ten Days of Repentance, which ends with Yom Kippur (see next entry). Jewish people believe that each year on Rosh Hashanah, God examines the Book of

Life, in which every deed, word and thought of each living person is recorded. The Jewish people also believe that if a person repents during the Days of Repentance, his or her fate may be changed for the coming year. On this day, services that are held in the Synagogue begin with the blast of a trumpet made from a ram's horn, called a shofar. We eat apples dipped in honey for "a sweet year".

## **YOM KIPPUR**

Yom Kippur, or the Day of the Atonement, ends the Ten Days of Repentance. This is the most solemn day of the Jewish Year. Held in September or October, Yom Kippur is a very serious day, which includes fasting for adults, praying in the Synagogue, and holding memorial services.

## **SUKKOT**

Sukkot, also celebrated in September or October, begins five days after Yom Kippur, and lasts for seven or eight days. It is a festival of thanksgiving for the harvest. A custom associated with this holiday is the building of a booth called a sukkah. By doing so, we commemorate the building of booths by farmers in the fields of Palestine so they would not have to return to their homes in the village during the harvest. The sukkah's roof is made of green branches and is decorated with flowers and fruit.

Each fall we have a Harvest Dinner for the early childhood families during Sukkot.

## **SIMCHAT TORAH**

Simchat Torah is the day after Sukkot. It is a happy day dedicated to the Five Books of Moses, known as the Torah. On this day, the annual cycle of reading the Torah is both completed and begun. In the Synagogue, there is a

procession during which scrolls are carried around the pews, and children carry flags and are given fruits and sweets.

## **HANUKKAH**

Hanukkah, also called the Festival of Lights, is celebrated for eight days in late November or December. It is a joyous festival commemorating a great victory won by Jewish people more than two thousand years ago. Today, Jewish families celebrate this holiday by lighting a candle for each of the eight days of Hanukkah. A special candelabrum called the menorah or hanukkiah is used. During the modern celebration of Hanukkah, a characteristic food called latkes, or potato pancakes, is served. Houses are decorated with the traditional Star of David. Gifts are usually exchanged among family members on each of the eight days. Many children receive a cubical top called a dreidel as a Hanukkah gift.

Check your school calendar for the date of our annual Family Hanukkah Party.

## **PURIM**

Purim is celebrated in February or March. This feast commemorates Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai, who saved the Jewish people from being destroyed by a man named Haman. During Purim, people gather in the synagogue to listen to the Book of Esther. Whenever Haman's name is mentioned, children stamp their feet and shake noisemakers called groggers. Purim is also the time of giving gifts of food, holding carnivals and masquerades, and serving special cakes and sweets. Hamantaschen, a three cornered pastry, is usually served.

We will have a carnival for the children in celebration of Purim. On that day they can wear a costume to school.

## **PASSOVER**

One of the major Jewish religious festivals is Passover, or Pesach, which commemorates God's deliverance of the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. It is celebrated for eight days in March or April.

The outstanding feature of Passover is the ceremony called Seder, which means "an order of service". During the Seder, the story of the first Passover is retold. The story is read from a book called the Haggadah. The service includes the Seder plate containing the symbols of the holiday: roasted lamb shank, roasted egg, parsley, salt water, charoset, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread called matzo.

We will hold a Model Seder for the whole school before Pesach. You are welcome to attend. Throughout the festival, Jewish people do not eat any foods with leavening.

## **SHAVUOT**

Shavuot is another harvest festival; it occurs in May or June. It is also the holiday that celebrates the anniversary of receiving the Torah on Mt. Sinai.

Additional information will be found in our Early Childhood Newsletter. Please feel free to ask questions.