

ECC HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

This handbook serves as an introduction to the Hebrew Academy Early Childhood Center – its function, activities, and routines. It is intended to highlight those areas specific to the Early Childhood Center. However, the Early Childhood experience is the foundation for your education here at the Hebrew Academy, and it is therefore necessary that you understand the workings of the Hebrew Academy in general. We, therefore, refer you to the HAMC handbook found in the directory that you will receive at the beginning of the school year. In addition, we urge you to read the weekly Broadcast emails – which contain vital information on current activities, schedule changes, and upcoming events – and the Bekesher monthly newsletter – which contains news about what’s going on at the school.

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PHILOSOPHY

The Early Childhood experience is your child's first formal experience away from you in a new and strange environment and may be frightening to some children. Your child needs positive support and help from you. Being as casual as possible about the whole "going to school" experience will help to achieve a calm, relaxed atmosphere. Don't forget--anxieties transmit easily.

The Early Childhood Center is a world planned just for your child with furniture built to size and materials of all kinds for experimentation. Youngsters will try out their own ideas and learn to solve their own problems with the assurance that their feelings (both happy and unhappy) and efforts will be understood and appreciated. They will recognize and accept definite limits within an atmosphere of flexibility and freedom.

It is the philosophy of the entire staff that these growing years should be ones of caring, warmth, and motivation. We strive to enhance your child's self image and feeling of self worth, enabling your child to approach new endeavors with "I can" rather than "I can't." A child who feels good about him/herself can take the risks necessary to learn. Through our developmentally based curriculum we provide "built-in success". Your little learners are given a multitude of "hands-on" opportunities to explore the world. The children are encouraged to use the play environment to learn more about themselves, their place with peers, and their impact on their world.

Your child's social and emotional development is first and foremost on our ladder of priorities. Our teachers will help foster a strong self-concept and help your child in the development of inner controls so that feelings of excitement, frustration, anger, and happiness may be expressed and controlled constructively.

Our program also fosters pride in our Jewish heritage and traditions and, therefore, pride in the child him/herself as a good, social, sensitive human being. How strong and viable a preschooler feels when all of his/her classmates are celebrating at Chanukah or when he/she can begin to recite the Four Questions at your Seder.

A HAPPY BEGINNING

As parents you may help prepare your child for his/her first school experience in a variety of ways.

1. Talk about school in a casual, pleasant manner as school approaches. Answer questions and soothe apprehensive children calmly. There are a number of very good books which may be able to help you along. We suggest:
Will I Have Friend? by Miriam Cohen
Froggy Goes To School by Jonathan London
The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn
What To Expect At Preschool by Heidi Murkoff (for parents and kids)
2. If possible, familiarize your child with the children with whom you will be car pooling or with friends your child may meet in his/her class.

3. Set up a special place to display future "art work." Perhaps a trip to the store for new refrigerator magnets will be fun!
4. Be positive and enthusiastic yet casual in your attitude toward school, and your child's entrance into school will be a natural beginning.
5. Talk about the visitation day in June and recall together the room, toys, and set up and friends your child may have met.

The first day of school is set up so that the children will visit for one hour. We have found that even for our returning students, this beginning session makes the initial adjustment to school more secure, less overwhelming, and more personal. While the children are in session, parents will meet with the director for a short orientation. If possible, please plan to make other arrangements for younger siblings.

Do not be discouraged if your child is tearful upon leaving you. Many children go through this, some for a few days and some for a few weeks, and some children may begin this in January after months of smiling "good-byes." In most cases, tears do not indicate trouble at school but rather your child trying to tell you "I don't want to say good-bye to you" for many other reasons. In any case, your child's teacher will let you know how long those "heart-rendering" sobs last and whether your child's initial tears are lasting any longer than just a few minutes. The teacher will always be in touch with you to discuss any problems that may arise at any time during the school year.

As your child begins school, he/she may exhibit excessive tiredness, crankiness and fussing with siblings, or not wanting to share school experiences with you or sharing only complaints (such as the teacher never helping or listening to him/her or another child hitting or taking toys from him/her).

Your Role - When your child approaches you with a complaint, you should be comforting and reassuring. Let your child know that school is a warm and safe place to be and that any concerns that he/she has are important. Give your child reassurance by sitting down together and discussing the situation. It would then be advisable to go with your child to the teacher to let the child know that everyone involved is there to help and support him/her. Recognize that many of these "complaints" and changes are temporary, and as you maintain a relaxed and accepting attitude toward nursery school and your child's place there, this good feeling will nourish your child's own good feelings about being at school.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

It is important for each child to feel that his parents are interested in him/her and the school and its activities. We urge parents to feel free to visit when school is in session, asking only that you call the office in advance to make arrangements with the teacher. There are a number of ongoing activities in which parents are invited to participate. Among them are our *Ima Ba Kitah* program where parents may come to tell a special story, work in the housekeeping corner or blocks, share science with a small group, reinforce a computer skill, etc. You may also offer your services by



helping to prepare for our many holiday parties. And, of course our field trips would not be possible without our parent chaperones. Participating in your child's early childhood experience helps children view school as a priority and a safe and nurturing place to be. Contact your child's teacher to volunteer your services.

At some time during the year you will be notified of a parent/child theme workshop, run specifically for you and your child's class. Together you will explore a theme through storytelling, art activities, cooking, etc.

All parents of the Early Childhood Center are urged to become active in the Home School Association by attending meetings and participating in the activities. The HSA plans for and helps with all the special treats around holiday time and prepares the dairy lunches for the children as well as running many fundraising activities to benefit the school. It is through your participation in the organization that we are included in these activities.

Lastly, if you are available to be a substitute teacher or assistant in the school, please notify the office of your schedule.

STAFF

Our staff members are selected for their qualities of warmth, understanding, and knowledge of the specific needs of preschool children. They will be formally introduced at our Back to School Night, and in an introductory letter your child's teacher will send home on the first day of school.

CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences will be held twice yearly, once in the fall and again in the spring. You will be scheduled automatically for your conference. We hope that you will make every effort to attend. We believe that parents and teachers must work together as a team for optimum success in the preschool. A formal conference provides both parents and teachers with the opportunity to exchange observations on the child and allows the team to plan continued goals as the child develops during the school year. If additional conferences are necessary, they will be arranged accordingly. If at any time you would like to contact your child's teacher please do not hesitate to leave a message on your teacher's voice mail and she will return your call as soon as possible.

CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is as varied as the interests and capabilities of the children. We formulate our activities by examining the developmental needs of the children in the classroom, and custom gear our program to those needs. Our multifaceted literacy program provides the avenues through which we encourage the development of language skills and later expose the children to the concept that letters make sounds.



We teach math readiness skills through hands-on manipulative activities, sorting, graphing, comparing, and finally counting. Science activities encourage children to make observations and communicate those observations. Whether the children are experimenting with their environment or observing and comparing small creatures, science lets them explore and discover. Art experiences are process oriented and multi media.



The block corner is ideal for providing young, exciting minds the tools with which they may create. They learn math concepts as they build. Play is always the children's work. Children will also be able to identify with adult roles through dramatic play and fantasy in the housekeeping corner. Play corners provide situations through which children hone their social skills, negotiating, sharing and becoming a part of a group. Large muscles are exercised in both our Gross Motor Room and beautiful outdoor playground. Small muscles work hard each day with puzzles, manipulative toys, scissors, glue, and play dough. Music provides the means for fostering your child's creativity and expression. Rhythm, singing, and dancing and various art media are integrated each day into each of our themes.

Shabbat and the holidays are presented at the child's level and are often celebrated through cooking, art, music, and special programs. These activities foster understanding and a pride and warmth in being Jewish. Holidays are presented as a theme through which readiness skills and concepts are introduced. The children "live" their Judaism each day. It clearly becomes a part of who they are. Throughout the year, your child will learn many beginning prayers, both in Hebrew and in English, as well as many blessings through daily use in the classroom.

All religious and secular holidays are observed and celebrated with songs and stories from our rich religious and cultural heritage. Through the teaching of songs, the preparation of traditional foods, and the explanation of history and tradition, we hope to give each child an understanding and warm appreciation for every aspect of our heritage. Shabbat becomes an integral part of your child's week. Each Friday parents take turns to accompany their child as the Shabbat helper. We join together in the sanctuary for a developmentally appropriate Shabbat service including challah, juice, songs, stories and blessings. Shabbat is surely a special day here at the Early Childhood Center.

Although we celebrate Thanksgiving, we do not celebrate Halloween or Valentine's Day. We will have a Purim celebration in which the children may dress in costume.



SCHOOL SESSIONS - ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

Daily sessions are as follows:

AM 8:45-11:30 PM 12:30-3:15

Short Friday sessions (consult your school calendar for exact dates) are as follows:

AM 8:45-10:45 PM 11:30-1:20

Please note the following arrival/dismissal procedures to ensure the safety of each and every

HAMC child.

1. At every arrival time (8:45, 11:30, 12:30) we ask that you park your car in the upper lot and walk your child in to school through the front door. A staff member will be opening the nursery door for you between the hours of 8:40 and 9 am so that you may pull up at the curb and have your child walk to class independently. This arrival procedure may only be used if the child is comfortable. In nice weather at lunch time you may leave your child with the staff in the playground and bring your child's belongings in to the classroom.
2. All dismissals (11:30, 12:30, 3:15) will be through the Early Childhood Center exit (the exit closer to the playground). Form a line of cars at the exit no later than 5 minutes before the dismissal time, remain in your car, and we will put your child into the car for you. You may then pull up a few feet and belt your child in so that we may keep our carpool line moving at a steady pace.

NOTE: At the 3:15 dismissal time be sure to be on line by 3:10. If you are not in line by that time you may be caught in the elementary carpool line which dismisses at 3:25.

3. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a room unsupervised. If your child arrives with an elementary school age child, please impress upon that older child that he/she must deliver the nursery child to a teacher or assistant before proceeding to his or her class.

NOTE: No child will be sent home with anyone other than his or her regular carpool unless we have written confirmation. Your cooperation in adhering to this rule is vital for the safety of our children. If you forget to send a note you must call the office early in the day to give specific dismissal instructions.

SNOW DAYS

In the event of inclement weather, listen to the following radio stations:

WMTR 1250 AM WDHA 105.5 FM

These stations will announce school closings. Do not call the school. You will be contacted via phone chain which we will distribute after we open school in September. Please keep your telephone line open in the early morning for the phone chain call and fulfill your responsibility to continue the chain. If you cannot reach the next person on the list, skip to the next person on the list and keep trying the missed party. In the event that the school must close during the day, we will attempt to reach all parents, so if the weather seems ominous, stay near your telephone, **keep your cell phone on**, or let the office know where you can be reached.

In the event of a delayed opening, the Early Childhood Center schedule will be as follows:

10:30 - 12:30	AM Session
12:30 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 3:15	PM Session

On delayed opening days, there will be no extended lunch.

LUNCH

All morning children, for a nominal fee, are invited to bring and eat their dairy lunch in school, ending their day at 12:30 instead of 11:30. All afternoon children are invited to do the same, beginning their day at 11:30 instead of 12:30. The limited spaces for extended lunch are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Our staff is in charge of supervising the lunch program, helping the children with their lunches, reading stories, and providing a warm, congenial atmosphere during this lunch period. Full day children will have their lunch time as well as a rest period.

The Home School Association prepares pizza and dairy lunches regularly throughout the school year for our students at a nominal charge. Sign up for the sessions as soon as you get your forms. We are a “meat free” school. Absolutely no meat may be brought in to our school at any time.

BIRTHDAYS



Birthdays are a most important occasion to a nursery school youngster. This is a special day which he/she likes to share with friends. Your child is welcome to celebrate his/her birthday in school. However, the teacher must be notified in advance to plan for this day.

All refreshments brought into school should be simple, such as cupcakes, ice cream, mini bagels, etc. **PLEASE REFER TO KOSHER (KASHRUT) GUIDELINES.**

If you are celebrating with a party at home, please do not send invitations to be distributed at school.

We highly recommend that either all the children, all the boys or all the girls be invited to your birthday party so that we may avoid hurting the feelings of some of our children. In addition, please be sure that all of the food served at these parties follows the Kashrut guidelines so that all the children may be included in the celebration. **Birthday parties should not be held on Shabbat or Yom Tov.**

KASHRUT

1. All food brought into the school building by parents or children must be dairy or parve and kosher. In order to avoid questions of interpretation, we must insist that the foods be labeled with the designations found in the school directory. Please note that a K designation alone is not acceptable. Please check with the office if there are any questions.
2. Only kosher dairy lunches may be sent with your child to school. If you would like to participate in our dairy or pizza lunch you may do so by filling out the form on our website.
3. No homemade food, cakes, cupcakes, etc. will be accepted for parties, even if you keep a kosher home. This includes cut fruit and vegetables. You are welcome to come in to school to prepare

these items.

4. Children are provided with a kosher snack, along with milk or juice, during the morning and afternoon sessions.

MEDICAL FORMS

State licensing standards require that we have on file an accurate history and an up-to-date record of immunizations for each child. These requirements exist for the protection of all students. Please make sure your child's is on file before school begins.

EMERGENCIES

We will make every effort to contact you in case of an emergency. If we cannot reach you, the school will contact your emergency numbers, the school pediatrician, and, if necessary, take your child to Dover General Hospital. It is extremely important that we have an up-to-date emergency card for your child on file. **Please be sure to keep your cell phones on while your child is at school, and be sure to update any phone number changes when they occur.**

If your child uses an Epi Pen for any allergic reactions, a parent must accompany that child on each school trip.

ILLNESS

Please keep your child at home when he/she is not feeling well or has an active runny nose and/or cough. If your child develops a contagious disease, please report it to the school. We reserve the right to ask you to pick up your child if his/her health is in question. If your child must take medication during school hours, it must be sent to the office, in the original prescription bottle and accompanied by a note from the doctor. Under no circumstances is medication to be placed in the child's lunch box for the child to take on his/her own.

SPECIAL INFORMATION

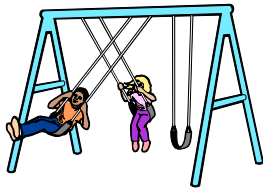
Anything having an effect on your child, whether physically or emotionally, should be mentioned to the nursery school teachers or director. Such things would be any medication the child may be taking, a new baby at home, a single parent family situation, a recent death in the family, etc. All disclosures will be held in strictest confidence. We need this information in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of your child so that we can be consistently aware of his/her physical and emotional well being.

CLOTHING

Children should come to school in comfortable play clothes. You can help your child by assuring him/her that it is all right for these clothes to go home dirty or paint-spotted. Please mark all clothing, including mittens, hats, sweaters, rubbers, boots, etc. Make sure that boots and rubbers are two sizes larger than shoes, and provide small plastic bags so that shoes will slip in easily. In the spring and fall, sneakers are suggested for outdoor play.

The school will provide painting smocks and change of clothes for emergencies. Any donations of clothing would be appreciated. Every boy must wear a kippah each day. The school will provide one for each boy which will be individualized and kept in the classroom. If your son prefers to wear one from home, please mark it with his name and see that it is secured with clips or bobby pins. **PLEASE NOTE!** All male visitors, during school hours and special programs, must wear a kippah at all times in the school building.

PLAYGROUND



Our school is equipped with a beautiful outdoor playground and acres of ground to explore and romp across. During the winter, you can even find us building "snow people." In addition, our Gross Motor Room helps to reinforce gross motor skills on rainy and "too cold" days. Children should wear rubber-soled shoes for safety in the play areas and on gym days.

SHOW AND TELL

In order to encourage them to make an oral contribution to the class, children are welcome to bring in a special toy from home on Show and Tell days. Please do not send action figure or toy knives, guns, or other toys that encourage aggressive, nonconstructive play.

TZEDAKAH AND MITZVOT

Our school prides itself in providing an environment through which the young child may learn the beauty of helping those in need and performing mitzvot. The giving of charity is one of the basic elements of Judaism. Tzedakah will be collected each week, and it is appropriate for the child to give of his own money, whether a penny, a nickel, or a dime. Your child's teacher will send home more information on where the class has chosen to share their tzedakah. We encourage you to join our *Tikkun Olam* which helps our children reach out to the community at large to perform mitzvot and distribute much needed help to those in need. More information will be sent home from time to time to share the *Tikkun Olam* project with you.



TOILET TRAINING

The children in our Early Childhood Center need not be toilet trained. Please be sure to send diapers, wipes, and a change of clothes. If your child is learning to be toilet trained we will be happy to work with you so that training procedures will be the same at school as they are at home.

RE-ENROLLMENT

Parents of Ima ve Ani, toddlers, and three-year-olds who are registered in the Early Childhood Center will be given first choice of registering their children for the junior kindergarten class for two weeks after registration opens, after which time registration will be open to others. Enrollment forms are sent out on or about February 1.

It is understood that each child is enrolled in a program on a trial basis. The school reserves the right to request withdrawal of a child if it is felt to be in the best interest of the child and/or the school. Should this be necessary, refunds will be prorated.

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