



**Westchester Jewish Center**

Palmer & Rockland Avenues • Mamaroneck, NY 10543 • 914/698-2960 (T) • 914/698-3610 (F) • [www.wjcenter.org](http://www.wjcenter.org)

# EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER HANDBOOK 2017-2018



# Welcome

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Westchester Jewish Center Early Childhood Center!

We hope you are having a relaxing and pleasant summer. Here at school, we are busy planning for the upcoming year and we are certain that your children will have a meaningful, joyful and productive school experience.

We know that children learn through their experiences. Children at this very young age are discovering who they are, how others respond to them and how to respond to others. We are committed to providing your child with positive experiences, plenty of learning opportunities and above all, loving care while your child is here at WJC.

To ensure that your child will realize the maximum benefits of our program, we want you to understand our goals, procedures, policies and educational philosophy. Please read this parent guide carefully and keep it handy for reference during the school year. This handbook is revised annually and contains important information for both new and returning families.

We are pleased to let you know that our Project Seed mental health consultant, Ellen Ferber, will be in school with us again this year for a few hours each week. She will be observing classes, supporting teachers and available to meet with parents one-on-one by appointment.

I look forward to working with you to ensure your child's happiness, well-being and success.

If there is any way that I can be of assistance to you, please let me know.

We welcome your thoughts, your ideas, your suggestions and your presence in the classroom at any time.

Sincerely,

*Sabrina Landau*

Early Childhood Director

## **Early Childhood Center**

### Contact Information

WJC Main Office: 914.698.2960  
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### People to Know at WJC ECC

**Sabrina Landau** *Early Childhood Director*  
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**Sandy Fenton** *Early Childhood Secretary*  
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### Early Childhood Committee

**Ali Abrahms**  
**Marisa de Sa** *(ECC Auxiliary Chair)* wjcparents@gmail.com  
**Alynn Perl**  
**Craig Rubin**  
**Amissa Ryback** *(ECC Auxiliary Chair)* wjcparents@gmail.com  
**Andrea Stoltz**  
**Casey Weisfeld**

### People to Know at Westchester Jewish Center

**Jeffrey T. Segelman** *Rabbi*  
**Adir Yolkut** *Assistant Rabbi*  
**Ethan Goldberg** *Cantor*  
**Aleza Kulp** *Education Director & Synagogue  
Program Coordinator*  
**Eileen Fortuna** *Summer Camp Director*  
**David Goldstein** *Executive Director*  
**Jeffrey Lavine** *Congregation President*

# Purpose & Philosophy

The Westchester Jewish Center Early Childhood Center (ECC) offers a range of programs for young children. We provide a developmentally appropriate program that supports children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth through varied experiences and activities.

In our Reggio Emilia inspired program, we view children as capable and respect them and their individual needs. The program is implemented for each class depending on the age of the children and their interests. The curriculum stimulates their natural curiosity as they explore new ideas. Children receive a solid Jewish foundation including holiday celebrations, community Shabbat and classroom Shabbat experiences.

The days are structured to provide ample opportunities for busy time and quiet time, indoor time and outdoor time. A small teacher to student ratio assures that every child gets the individual attention he or she deserves and is given a safe and secure environment.

## Program Description

The following is a list of class days & times offered for each ECC age group.

### Baby Group

The Baby Group offers a social discussion group to infants ages 0-12 months and a parent.

### Mommy & Me

The Mommy & Me program is offered for children and their parent/caregiver to attend together.

	Friday	9:15am – 10:30am
<u>2 Year Olds</u>		
2 day 2s	Wednesday & Friday	9:15am – 11:30am
3 day 2s	Monday, Tuesday & Thursday	9:15am – 11:30am
5 day 2s	Monday through Friday	9:15am – 11:30am
<u>3 Year Olds</u>	Monday through Friday	9:00am – 12:00pm
Extended Day	Monday through Thursday	12:00pm – 1:15pm
<u>4 Year Olds</u>	Monday through Friday	9:00am – 12:00pm
Extended Day	Monday through Thursday	12:00pm – 2:30pm

In addition to experiencing a variety of learning opportunities in the classroom, each 2s, 3s, & 4s class participates in a Music program once a week.

Extended Day programming is offered to students in the 3s & 4s on Mondays - Thursdays. Children eat lunch in their classroom and have an enrichment activity. The programs offered are Dance & Drum, Tae Kwon Do, Art, Fenom Fitness, and Mad Science. Happy Feet and Yoga are offered on Fridays.

Children in our 2s may participate in an Extended Play program. This begins in late October once the children are comfortable in their classes and takes place on Monday, Tuesday & Thursdays.

# Curricular Benchmarks

The WJC ECC curriculum recognizes that each child develops at his/her own pace within a set of norms. As a guiding measure, we have developed a set of expectations for child development within each age group. The following benchmarks will help parents and caregivers understand the learning goals and aspirations for each year at the ECC.

## **Twos**

- Enjoys coming to school
- Separates from parent or caregiver at child's own pace with gradually increasing comfort
- Develops trusting relationships with teachers
- Develops language and communications skills that allow child to express thoughts, feelings, and needs
- Progresses in the ability to self-regulate and assert independence
- Explores the environment by using a range of materials and toys in a curious and comfortable manner
- Develops self-help skills, which may include toilet training, hand-washing, and dressing independently
- Listens and participates at the appropriate times during stories, songs, and other "circle-time" activities
- Develops social skills including: taking turns, participating in group activities, attending to others' feelings, and sharing
- Plays solitarily while progressing toward parallel and cooperative play
- Begins to initiate and accept social overtures with peers
- Engages in pretend play
- Begins to identify colors and shapes in the context of symbolic representation

## **Threes**

- Enjoys coming to school
- Feels increasingly comfortable separating from parents and caregivers
- Develops trusting relationships with teachers
- Increases mastery of meaningful language/communication with both adults and peers
- Increases ability to self-regulate and assert independence
- Improves in understanding and implementation of self-help skills
- Engages increasingly in parallel and cooperative play
- Develops special friendships with children in the peer group - initiating and accepting social overtures
- Feels comfortable playing alone or in groups
- Develops increased facility with writing implements, scissors, art, and building materials
- Begins to draw shapes and images

- Develops play “narrative” that goes beyond exploration of materials and toys and has meaning assigned to use of materials and toys - gradually incorporating peers into pretend play
- Listens and participates at the appropriate times during stories, songs, and other “circle-time” activities
- Engages in discussions about stories and is able to assign meaning to drawings and writings
- Begins to understand numbers and 1:1 correspondence
- Increases awareness of symbolic representation
- Develops increasing confidence and ability with gross motor activities
- Identifies colors and primary shapes
- Recognizes initial letter of his/her name
- Begins to understand the differences between yesterday, today & tomorrow

### **Fours**

- Enjoys and is comfortable in school
- Separates from parents and caregivers easily
- Develops trusting relationships with teachers
- Plays cooperatively with peers in self-directed play as well as in group activities
- Understands and follows classroom routines and behavioral expectations
- Independently handles most self-help matters
- Solves problems independently and with peers
- Regulates behavior the majority of the time by utilizing verbal and social skills
- Develops interest in speaking, reading and writing
- Increases interest in listening to stories and poems, and producing own stories and writings
- Demonstrates increased facility with writing and drawing implements as well as scissors and tools, usually showing hand preference
- Begins to write and draw shapes and symbols
- Recognizes own written name
- Learns the days of the week and months of the year
- Participates easily in discussions, adding own thoughts comfortably
- Increases understanding of numbers and counting, while 1:1 correspondence becomes more consistent
- Creates symbolic drawings and representations on a more frequent basis
- Takes on various roles in dramatic play and invents varied scenarios
- Begins to make hypotheses regarding observations
- Becomes agile on playground equipment and increases gross motor development

# Starting



Starting school is an important time for young children, their families and their educators. The transition to school sets the tone and direction of a child's school career. It is essential that the transition to school occurs in such a way that children have a positive view of the school and a feeling of competence as learners. Starting school means becoming part of a group including the other students and the teachers. The teachers will take the time to get to know each child personally. The children will begin to form relationships with the other members of the group.

We want each child to have the opportunity to feel comfortable and secure in the room.

We want the teachers to have the opportunity to get to know the unique qualities of each child, their needs and their special personalities. This will help children and teachers form an attachment and create a trust between them.

Research has proven that the best way to do this is to start children in a program for short periods and gradually move them into the regular schedule. To that end, we have designed a transition program for each grade level. Naturally, we look at each child as an individual and if anyone needs more time we gladly work with you.

Education is a joint venture between the school and the home. You can support our transition program by properly preparing your child for school.

- ❖ Young children always feel more comfortable if they know what to expect. Before the new school year begins, please explain to your child how their daily routines will change.
- ❖ Try getting up earlier a couple of days before the new school year begins and explain why you are doing it. This may prevent your child from being confused, groggy or cranky on the first day of school.
- ❖ Reading books with children is a great way to introduce any experience. They can see how other children beginning school have the same feelings of uncertainty and how they overcome them. The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn and Will I Have a Friend? By Miriam Cohen are two favorites.

Please let us know if there is any way we can be of help to you in this process.



## What to Bring the First Day of School

When your child comes to school the first day please have him/her bring the following:



- A complete change of clothes – including season appropriate pants, shirt, socks and underwear. Please remember to update as the seasons change and please LABEL all items.
- One photograph of child and one photograph of child with family.
- Diapers & wipes (if applicable for your child).
- One clear plastic box (shoebox size) labeled with your child's name, to store the above items in their cubby.

### Toys

Our program provides appropriate toys and games, therefore, we discourage children from bringing toys and games from home. The staff respects that your child may feel more comfortable, especially at the start of the school year, by bringing a "special item" from home; however, we ask that toy guns, mouth toys or oversized items be left at home. If toys are brought to school, the staff cannot be responsible for loss or damage, and we do not want your child unnecessarily upset.

We encourage children to bring a book, CD or photos to school to share with their friends when the items from home relate to topics or units that the class is studying. It is acceptable for children to share with their classmates in this manner; however, we are not responsible for valuable or fragile items.

### Clothing

Dress for success - your child should always come dressed in practical, comfortable and washable clothing. It is important that the children be able to manage their own clothing as this encourages independence, especially when your child is in the process of mastering toileting skills. Please remember to label all clothing, lunch boxes and back packs. There are many children attending school, so it is important that all belongings are clearly labeled.

We try to go outdoors to play each day. Outdoor play encourages climbing, running and jumping. These activities are important for large muscle development. It is important, as the weather gets colder to dress your child appropriately: hats, mittens, boots and snow pants. Fresh air and movement are important daily needs for children. Please leave at school or send appropriate outdoor clothing, as we venture outside daily. Be aware that weather conditions vary and may change over the course of the day.

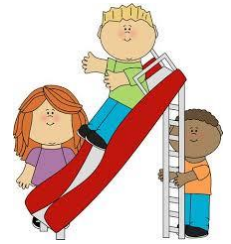
### Footwear



Rubber sole shoes or sneakers are preferable for safety in indoor and outdoor play. We suggest your child wears comfortable, supportive shoes so that he or she can walk, run, jump and climb with ease. Due to safety concerns, please **DO NOT** send your child to school in open toe or open back shoes such as sandals, flip flops or crocs. If your child wears rain or snow boots to school please bring a change of footwear to wear while in school.



# Outdoor Play



Playing outside is not only fun for your children. It is also a crucial part of healthy growth and development. The safety of your children is the first priority of the leadership of the ECC. As such, the children do not go out in weather conditions that are not safe. On days when weather conditions do allow for outdoor play, spending time outdoors is a benefit to the children's health.

## Rain Policy

The children will play outdoors in light rain when the temperature is comfortable, as opposed to when the temperature or wind conditions makes the outdoors feel "biting" or uncomfortable for the children. Moreover, rain play is of a different nature than usual outdoor play. The children will explore nature, splash in puddles and investigate what happens when their surroundings become wet. Climbing playground equipment or other outdoor structures will NOT be permitted during rain play because such equipment is dangerous when wet.



The ECC will provide rain pants for all children to wear during outdoor rain play. Please send your children to school prepared with rain boots and a waterproof jacket to wear during outdoor rain play. Please consider storing an extra set of outdoor rain gear in your child's classroom so that the child is prepared at all times in the case of unexpected rain.



## Cold Weather & Snow Policy

The children will play outside in temperatures above 27 degrees. The leadership of the ECC takes the wind chill factor into account when determining whether it is safe for the children to play outdoors.

Because the temperature at morning drop-off may vary significantly from the temperature when the first class of children go outside, the ECC Director checks the temperature a few minutes before the first group of children are scheduled to go outside to determine whether it is safe for the children to play outdoors, again taking the wind chill into account. On days when the temperature is below 30 degrees, or when the wind chill is making the outdoors feel particularly frigid, the children may spend less time outdoors than usual. For example, their teachers may take them for a short walk around the property or may shorten their time on the playground, thus allowing them to get fresh air, while limiting their exposure to colder temperatures.

Please send your children to school with warm jackets, hats, gloves and snow pants. On days when it is snowing and school is open, please send your children to school with snow pants and snow boots. (Please remember that snow pants may be used for warmth, and not only on days when it is snowing.) Please consider storing an extra set of snow pants and snow boots at school to ensure that your child is prepared to play in the snow or cold weather at all times.

With respect to all inclement weather policies, the individuals leading the ECC will exercise their best judgment to ensure that your children's health and well-being are protected at all times.

# General Information

## Calendar

Whenever possible, the WJC ECC follows the Mamaroneck Public School's vacation and holiday schedule. Because we are a Jewish Preschool in a Conservative synagogue, we also follow the Jewish calendar. School calendars will be mailed home before the start of the school year and will be updated as necessary. **No matter the holiday schedule or time off from school, each year we strive to have approximately the same number of school days.**

## Arrival and Departure Procedures

All students must be accompanied to WJC ECC and escorted to their classroom by a parent or caregiver. It is important that all children arrive safely and promptly.

Parents must notify the school if their child will be absent or late. It saves considerable time and worry if we are aware of any changes to the normal schedule. This can be done via a handwritten note or by calling the school office.

Only an authorized adult may pick up a child. An authorized adult is one whose name is written on the child's release form. Children will not be released to any other person. Parents and caregivers are to remain outside the classroom until the teacher opens the door for dismissal. If someone other than a parent or authorized adult will be picking up a child, a handwritten note or email from the child's legal guardian will be the only acceptable form of release.

We would like to stress the importance of PROMPT departures. Children may become anxious when parents/caregivers are not there at dismissal. Late departures make it difficult for teachers to complete their necessary work before they leave for the day.

Please refer to the "Parking" section on page 9 for more information on parking during arrivals and departures.

## Required Forms

In addition to the registration materials all children must have the following required forms:

1. Current Medical Exam - a copy of the school health record will satisfy this requirement
2. Signed form stating that you will abide by the rules in the handbook
3. Emergency Information Card (Day Care Registration)
4. Signed Dismissal Form
5. Allergy Form (if applicable)

## Tuition

Registration requires payment and a completed payment plan form. Once payment and a completed payment plan form are received, a space is reserved for your child for the coming school year. There will be no refunds for vacation or illness. Deposits and Extended Day Tuition are non-refundable.

## Photography

From time to time, we would like to display photographs of the children doing various activities on WJC's website, our bulletin boards and include them in email notices to you as well. This will give you the opportunity to get an up close look at your children in their classrooms busy at work and play. No personal or identifying information will be included with any pictures posted on the website. If you do not wish photos of your children to be displayed or emailed, or if you have any questions or concerns about this, please let the Director know.

# Health & Illness

The health and safety of our ECC students is as important to us as it is to the families. And as parents, we understand the difficulty of making arrangements for care of a sick child; however, for the health and safety of all children and staff, sick children may not attend the ECC.

## Communicable Disease Policy

Based on state licensure requirements, we are unable to provide care for children with the following conditions:

1. Diarrhea (2 or more abnormal loose stools within a 24 hour period).
2. Severe coughing/unusual coughing sounds
3. Difficult or rapid breathing
4. Yellowish skin or eyes
5. Redness of the eyes, obvious discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching
6. Temperature of at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit
7. Infected skin patch(es), unusual spots or rashes
8. Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stools
9. Evidence of lice/nits, scabies/nits, or other parasitic infestations
10. Stiff neck with an elevated temperature
11. Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
12. Vomiting
13. Cold accompanied by yellow or green mucus or excessive discharge



Should your child become ill while at school, you will be contacted immediately and arrangements must be made to pick up your child from WJC as soon as possible. It is advisable to have a back-up plan in mind for those unexpected illnesses. Ill children may be isolated from the other children and may rest in a quiet area, supervised by a staff person until someone arrives to pick them up. At no time will a child be left unattended.

The comfort of every child is of primary importance to us. If, in the opinion of our teachers, your child is too sick to remain in school (showing signs of any of the above conditions or symptoms), we will call you, your caregiver, or the emergency contact person to come pick up your child immediately.

Additionally, if your child is not permitted to go outdoors, we must ask you to kindly come early and pick him/her up from school, as we are unable to have one teacher stay indoors with one child.

## Children may be readmitted:

1. With a physician's statement indicating that the child is free from communicable disease.
2. If vomiting, and/or diarrhea has not occurred with the last 24 hours while on a normal diet.
3. If temperature has been normal for 24 hours, without medication.
4. When rash or other condition has been medically treated or diagnosed.
5. After a specific contagious disease has been confirmed by a physician, the child has no symptoms and is under the appropriate treatment.

## **Medical Forms**

A current medical and immunization record is required for all children prior to the first day of enrollment at WJC ECC. A medical form must be updated annually by your child's physician.

## **Medication**

WJC ECC will not administer any medications, prescription or over-the-counter, to the children. Only in cases of severe allergies, our staff has been trained to administer EPI PEN. A doctor's written permission must be given if the child has such allergies.

Due to the fact that sunscreen is considered a medication, we ask that you apply it prior to your child's arrival at school.

Please provide a written note to your child's teacher if your child was given medication prior to the beginning of the school day. It is important for the teachers to be aware of any possible side-effects or symptoms.

## **Allergies**

It is the parent's responsibility to inform the school of any allergies the child may have to foods and/or insect-bites or if your child has asthma. WJC ECC is nut-aware and does not serve or allow any food containing nut products in the classrooms. It is important to note that Westchester Jewish Center is not a nut-free building. Please help us by not sending food items that may contain nut products to school.

## **Toilet Training**

WJC views toilet training in much the same way as we do other learning tasks: children should not feel pressured or be rushed before they are ready. We believe there are individualized rates of development and accomplishment among children, especially with toilet training.

Children are not required to be toilet trained. Diapers are changed as needed throughout the school day. We ask that you keep ample supply of diapers and wipes in your child's box and refill as necessary.

We also encourage you to inform the teachers when you begin toilet training your child at home. This way we can work together and be sure that your child visits the bathroom often enough.

## **Child Abuse**

In accordance with provisions of Section 432 of the New York State Social Services Law, the staff and director of childcare centers are mandated reporters to the New York State Child Abuse and Maltreatment Register. Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected, a report will be made. The director of WJC ECC will handle the report of the abuse.

# Safety

## Building Security

WJC is secured and staffed with a guard from an independent security company. For arrival at school the security guard is posted at the main doors of the synagogue on the lower level from 8:45am to 9:45am Monday – Friday. At dismissal, and all other times, the security guard remains at the upper level entrance.



During arrival time, please use the main, lower level entrance. At dismissal, we suggest that people park down on the lower level in the main parking lot and walk up and around the building to pick up children. The exit is always available on the lower level, however we ask that you do not hold any locked door open for others entering the building and that the doors are securely closed as you leave.

## Emergency Procedures

Parents will be called immediately, not only if their child is ill, but also in case of an emergency. Please see that all records are kept up to date, so that we are able to contact you. If the staff is unable to reach you, they will proceed with obtaining medical attention as they deem appropriate.

## Fire Safety & Emergency Procedures

Fire drills are held on a monthly basis and lock down drills are conducted a few times a year.

## Snow Closing Policy

The ECC will close when weather conditions make driving dangerous. Our closures coincide with the Mamaroneck Public School system except in the case of a two-hour delay. If the Mamaroneck Schools are delayed by two (2) hours, our ECC will be on a 1 hour and 15 minutes delay. All children will begin at 10:15am.



School closings and delays are announced via email from the Director. In cases of inclement weather, please check your email by 7am.

On days when the weather deteriorates after school has begun, the decision may be made to close school early. In that case, every parent or caregiver will be called, and staff will remain at school until all children are picked up.

# Parking

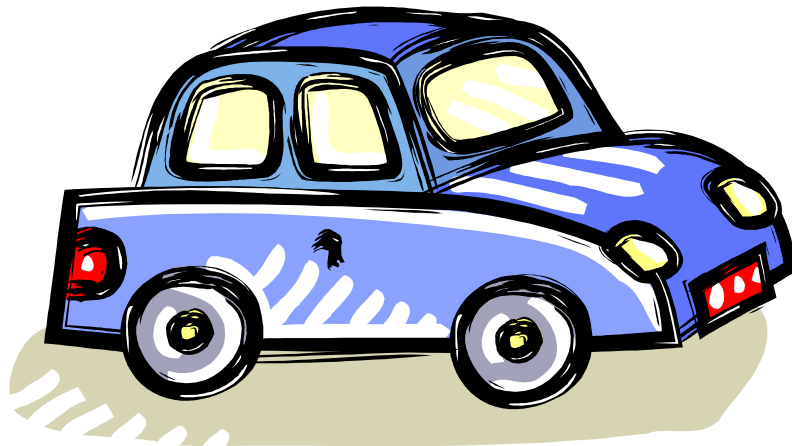
Parking safety is important to all of us here at WJC. Any parking lot is a source of danger to young children, so please enter and leave our parking lots with extreme caution, and always obey the 5 mph speed limit signs.

Please make sure you, or the person dropping off or picking up your child(ren) at WJC, park only in **designated spaces** in the school parking lot. **Parking in fire lanes or other reserved areas such as handicapped spaces is prohibited.** Illegally parked cars make it dangerous for children to cross the street with their parent or caregiver. Illegally parked cars obscure visibility and block access to the crossing area. In addition, illegally parked cars prevent the access of emergency vehicles to the building. In the event of an accident or injury, cars parked illegally, i.e. in fire lanes, could prevent a police car, ambulance or fire truck from reaching the building.

Always hold your child's hand when going to and coming from an automobile. Do not let your child run ahead of you. He/she might inadvertently run in back of a car that is in reverse.



We recognize the social nature of drop-off and pick-up but ask that you please do not stand in the parking lot conversing with other adults unless your child is seated safely in the car or you are holding his/her hand.



# Snacks, Lunches and Kashrut

At WJC, Kashrut is strictly observed. All food served or brought into school, must be Kosher. All food products must be clearly marked with one of the following kosher symbols:

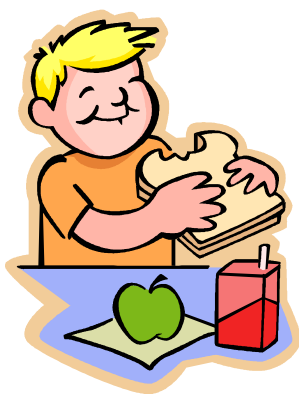


Each child is assigned, on a rotational basis, to bring snack to share with his/her classmates. We encourage you to provide a healthy snack and to avoid snacks that are high in sugar, salt or artificial flavorings. Please do not peel, cut, cook, or bake any snack or lunch foods at home. We will prepare our snacks in school. Additionally, there is no need to shop in the "Kosher" section of the grocery store, there are many kosher items located throughout the store such as pretzels, crackers, fruits and veggies, which are all favorites in the classrooms.

The following items may cause choking, so we ask that you not bring them to school: popcorn, peanuts, carrots, and grapes.

For those children staying for lunch, we request that you send a dairy or pareve lunch (no meat) in a clearly labeled lunch box. Please prepare and wrap each lunch so your child can manage it by him/herself. Uneaten foods will be sent home.

If your child has any special dietary requirements or food allergies please inform your child's teacher. Additionally, you are welcome to provide snack alternatives for your child as long as it meets the standards of Kashrut.



# Conferences & Communication

Parent-Teacher Conferences will be scheduled two times during the school year, once in the fall and once in the spring. The purpose of these meetings is to create a mutual understanding of your child and his/her needs. Children are not permitted to attend these Parent-Teacher conferences.



Additionally, teachers may schedule conferences as they feel it is necessary and parents are encouraged to bring concerns about their children directly to the teacher and to the Director. Should you wish to speak with your child's teacher, please send a note with your child or call the ECC office and the teacher will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time to talk. We appreciate you not approaching the teacher while they are supervising the children in their activities or during drop-off and pick-up times.

It is very important that parents inform the teacher and/or Director of any significant changes that may occur in the normal routine at home. We want to be as sensitive as possible to each child and his/her family. The more we know about your children, the more effectively we will be able to care for them.

Teachers will send emails three to four times per week with information about classroom activities. These "Daily Reflections" offer parents specific information about the current curriculum while highlighting something special that happened in class that day. This documentation of children's learning may contain pictures and quotes and is part of our Reggio inspired curriculum.

## **Individual Needs**

All children develop, grow, and learn in a variety of ways. Our ECC staff is committed to identifying and working with these individual differences as children move along their developmental path.

WJC ECC welcomes and supports outside professionals working with our children in the classrooms. Parents are responsible for informing teachers and the Director about specific arrangements that have been made. Teachers make every effort to attend Early Intervention and CPSE (Committee on Pre-School Special Education) meetings in the school district for the children in their classroom.

Strict confidentiality will be assured in all of these areas. Most importantly, please inform the teachers at the beginning of the school year if your child is already being evaluated or receiving services.



# Special Celebrations

## Birthdays

We are thrilled to celebrate your child's birthday in school and encourage the child's family to attend as well. Please notify your child's teacher a week in advance to arrange a suitable date and time. We are happy for you to bring in a kosher, nut-free packaged treat such as cookies or cupcakes for your child's class to enjoy during snack time that day (see page 12 for more information about the Kashrut policy).



However, we ask that you not send in party decorations or party favors as we like the birthday celebrations to be about the child, not the goodies.

A birthday party outside of school is a happy occasion. Since our ECC is housed in and supported by a Conservative Synagogue, many of our families observe Jewish dietary laws and do not travel on Shabbat or other religious holidays (Sukkot, Passover, and Shavout). Parents are asked to schedule birthday parties at times, and with appropriate menus, to accommodate children from families with all levels of observance.

We also suggest that kindness and consideration for others be shown when birthday lists are planned. It is natural that children and their parents feel a sense of rejection and sadness when they are excluded from a class birthday celebration. We thank you for your sensitivity in these areas.

## Shabbat



Our classes celebrate Shabbat each Friday (our 2s celebrate on Thursday). Welcoming the Sabbath is an important ritual for the children in each classroom, and your participation is especially significant as the children learn the values of family and Judaism.

Each family in the 3s and 4s (including siblings, grandparents and caregivers), on a rotational basis, will be invited to join their child's classroom for a special weekly celebration of Shabbat. On your child's assigned Shabbat, it is encouraged that the Shabbat child and his/her family lead the blessings for the candles, wine and challah. We also ask that you bring a favorite book to read to the class. WJC will provide challah and grape juice. Please speak to your child's teacher regarding the time that the Shabbat celebration will begin.

As the "Shabbat family" you will also receive the "Shabbat Box" which consists of candlesticks, Kiddush cup, yarmulke, two challah rolls, and grape juice. We hope this box will help to expand your child's Shabbat experience. Please return the box on Monday, including the candlesticks.

Additionally, one time per month the school celebrates Shabbat with a "Community Shabbat" in which the 3s and 4s come together to enjoy this special time together. It is always a nice experience for the children to see their friends from other classrooms and celebrate together as a community. The ECC Director, the Rabbis and Cantor all come to participate when available. The 2s celebrate on a class level only because of their schedules and age appropriateness.



## Tzedakah

The giving of Tzedakah is considered to be equal to all of the commandments in the Talmud. In Hebrew the word tzedek means justice or fair treatment. It is believed that Tzedakah is something we do as a responsibility toward God and our fellow human beings, not just out of the goodness of one's heart.



As part of our Shabbat celebration each Friday morning, children bring in Tzedakah. Tzedakah teaches the value of sharing with others who are less fortunate. We suggest putting loose change in an envelope so your child can "donate" it to their class Tzedakah box each week. We periodically donate the Tzedakah to charities and organizations locally and in Israel.

## Havdalah



Although students are not in school when Shabbat ends, we do teach them the tradition of saying "good-bye" to Shabbat with a communal Havdalah ceremony. We will have a school-wide Havdalah ceremony on a Saturday night in December and we encourage all families to attend this special evening ceremony & dinner.

## Hanukkah

Hanukkah is a time for celebration. The 3s and 4s of WJC ECC come together with their parents and/or caregivers for a sing-along Hanukkah party. The 2s have a similar party on a grade level.



## Passover Model Seder



The 3s and 4s celebrate Passover together before the holiday. The Passover Model Seder is a special time for parents and/or caregivers to join the students for a brief mock-seder including some of the special foods we eat during the holiday. The seder includes a group sing-a-long. The 2s have a similar party on a grade level.

## End of Year Class Picnic

In June, parents and/or caregivers are invited to join their child in celebrating the last day of classes at a class picnic. Parents bring lunch and a blanket and the Parent Auxiliary supplies a special dessert treat. What a wonderful way to end the school year for your child.



# Parent Participation

## **WJC ECC Parent Auxiliary**

WJC ECC is a place where your children spend a lot of time and we encourage the parents to get involved. There are many opportunities for parents to participate in the classroom as well as in the community by supporting the WJC ECC Parent Auxiliary.

The ECC Auxiliary organizes fundraising activities and special events throughout the school year that not only financially support ECC interests, but also exist as social functions for parents. Included among the great events are:

Meet & Greet ❖ New Parent Cocktail Party ❖ Challah  
Family Shabbat Services and Dinners ❖ Individual Class Parents' Nights Out

Being a part of the WJC ECC Parent Auxiliary is a great way to get involved in the ECC and make an impact on your child's ECC experience. It's also a good way to meet other ECC parents and have a great time for a good cause – our children's first educational experience.

## **School Calendar Highlights**

Understandably it is difficult for one or both parents to be at school for functions given the busy schedules families have these days. To help families anticipate the school activities that are especially important, we have listed below the times during the school year where parent attendance is needed. Please refer to the school calendar or your child's teacher for specific date and time.

- ❖ **Parent Orientation / Curriculum Night**
- ❖ **Parent Teacher Conferences**
- ❖ **Classroom Shabbat Family**
- ❖ **Your Child's Birthday Celebration**
- ❖ **Family Shabbat Service & Friday Night Dinners**
- ❖ **Havdalah Program**
- ❖ **Hanukkah Party**
- ❖ **Special Person's Day**
- ❖ **Passover Model Seder**
- ❖ **End of Year Class Picnic**
- ❖ **4s End of Year Celebration**

