Valley Beth Shalom
ECC
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

FAMILY HANDBOOK
2022-2023

15739 Ventura Blvd.
Encino, CA 91436
(818) 788-0567
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Dear VBS ECC Families,

Welcome to the 2022-2023 School Year.

At the Valley Beth Shalom Early Childhood Center we know that your children are the leaders of tomorrow. We also know their success in school (and in life) requires a broad range of **social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual** competencies. We are thrilled to partner with you this year to create the foundation your children will need to succeed in every area of life.

We are a community of learners preparing to face the challenges of a new generation collaboratively, creatively, and with strong Jewish values, compassion and Tikkun Olam. We do this by providing curriculum that addresses the needs of the *whole* child. We cultivate intrinsic motivation, a passion for learning, and creative and critical thinking skills by engaging children in authentic and meaningful learning opportunities. We embrace each child’s unique and natural ways of learning. We value social responsibility as highly as personal responsibility. And we provide children with the foundational educational skills to be successful when they leave us.

In our school, children play an active role in constructing the curriculum. Learning is situated in real world problem solving and authentic experiences. Teachers and families work in effective collaboration to provide guidance, helping children discover passion and intrinsic motivation for learning. Children are supported in learning at their own pace. As a result, learning becomes deeply integrated into children’s hearts and minds.

Our school is your family’s first educational setting outside the home. We want this experience to nurture a deep love for learning, a lasting connection to the Jewish community, and the foundational skills for lifelong learning that will launch your children towards their highest potential. We thank you for the opportunity to join you and your family on these first steps of your educational journey.

Warmly,

Abby Andiman Mars
ECC Director
VBS ECC Non-discrimination Statement
Valley Beth Shalom Early Childhood Center (VBS ECC) admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Our school does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, color, sexual orientation or identification, or national or ethnic origin, in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, or other school programs. Our school is licensed by the Department of Social Services; Facility No. 191-2021-52

About our Early Childhood Center
At the VBS ECC, children are taught in small groups. We maintain a high ratio of adults to children to ensure that children receive responsive attention and support. Daily activities include a balanced program of indoor/outdoor, quiet/active, teacher-directed/child-initiated, and planned/emergent experiences. Classrooms are equipped with materials that encourage expression, exploration, creativity, construction, imaginative play, and communication. Our program includes participation from our community of families, synagogue clergy, community helpers and specialists. Our emergent curriculum is grounded in Midot (Jewish values) such as Tzedakah, Chesed (kindness), and Tikkun Olam (healing the world). Class projects and activities are guided by the annual cycle of the Jewish holidays.

The teaching staff is specially trained in child development and Early Jewish Education. Our teachers are dedicated and committed professionals, many of whom have been with us for more than a decade. Our outstanding staff creates an environment that is warm, nurturing and supportive. We encourage open communication between your home and school. Family involvement plays an essential role in the success of our program. Our Parent Association (PA) is welcoming and accommodating to everyone, including working and single parents, guardians and those who are new to our community.

Preschool Hours
Acorns, Seedlings, Sprouts and Sprigs
Half Day 9:00 AM-1:00 PM
Full Day 9:00 AM-3:00 PM

Pre-K and TK Oaks
8:30 AM-2:30 PM

Optional Early Drop-Off Hours:
Acorns, Seedlings, Sprouts & Sprigs - 8:00 AM-9:00 AM
Oaks - 8:00 AM-8:30 AM

Optional Afternoon Kids Club Hours:
Pre-K and TK Oaks - 2:30-3:00 PM Add-On for Siblings
All Ages - 3:00 PM-5:00 PM, M-Th and 3:00 PM-4:30 PM on Fridays
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rabbi Edward M. Feinstein</td>
<td><a href="mailto:efeinstein@vbs.org">efeinstein@vbs.org</a></td>
<td>818-788-6000, ext. 4002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi Avi Taff</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ataff@vbsds.org">ataff@vbsds.org</a></td>
<td>818.788.7932, ext. 4068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby Andiman Mars, ECC Director</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amars@vbs.org">amars@vbs.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee Kalmanson, ECC Assistant Director</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rkalmanson@vbs.org">rkalmanson@vbs.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly Mills, Infant-Toddler &amp; Family Center Director</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmills@vbs.org">mmills@vbs.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kimberlee Provda, Director of Student &amp; Family Support Services</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kprovda@vbs.org">kprovda@vbs.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aimee Sesar, Enrollment &amp; Special Projects Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:asesar@vbs.org">asesar@vbs.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Benyishay, ECC Office Manager</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kbenyishay@vbs.org">kbenyishay@vbs.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Weintraub, Executive Director, VBS</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mweintraub@vbs.org">mweintraub@vbs.org</a></td>
<td>818-788-6000, ext. 4027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karin Mendel, Head of Finance &amp; HR</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kmendel@vbsds.org">kmendel@vbsds.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison Truscheit, Controller</td>
<td><a href="mailto:atruscheit@vbsds.org">atruscheit@vbsds.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orit Rappaport, VBS Schools’ Business Manager</td>
<td><a href="mailto:orappaport@vbsds.org">orappaport@vbsds.org</a></td>
<td>818-530-4042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Co-chairs</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vbseccpa@gmail.com">vbseccpa@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Erica Friedman, Michelle Kashani, Judy Land</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ilene Berman, VBS Board President</td>
<td><a href="mailto:president@vbs.org">president@vbs.org</a></td>
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<td>Rosalyn Grinberg, VBS Board, VP of Education</td>
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Part II: COVID-19 SPECIFIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Nothing is more important than the safety and health of our students, families and staff. The information below provides details and articulates policies and procedures that will help mitigate the risk and spread of Covid-19, and increase our collective well being.

- **Per the VBS Temple’s Vaccine Mandate** effective September 26, 2021, proof of COVID-19 vaccination is required for ALL parents and adult guests participating in official, in-person (indoor or outdoor) events.
- At the VBS Schools’ discretion, select events may be open to unvaccinated families. Please refer to the ‘Vaccination Accommodation’ details [HERE](#).
- Click [HERE](#) to upload your proof of Covid-19 vaccination to the database.
- Children and staff will implement frequent handwashing practices throughout the day.
- If a child becomes sick during the day, they will be evaluated by our school nurse, and if deemed necessary will be isolated and then accompanied by a teacher or an administrator until parent/guardian arrives on campus for immediate pick-up.
- Our school nurse will be on campus during school hours Monday through Friday.
- VBS ECC will act in accordance with the [LA County Department of Public Health’s Decision Pathway](#) and our local licensing agency in order to best plan, prepare and respond to a confirmed case of Covid-19.
- For questions about Covid-19 policies and protocols please contact ECC Assistant Director Renee Kalmanson at [rkalmanson@vbs.org](mailto:rkalmanson@vbs.org)

Part III: ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

**Carline - Morning Arrival**

- Each family will be provided with a carline placard indicating their arrival/departure time. Please adhere to your assigned time as we do not want to overburden our parking lots, children or staff during the process.
- Parent/guardian will use their own mobile device for a touchless student sign-in procedure through the Brightwheel application.
- Please arrive promptly. There is a 15 minute window for each carline arrival or dismissal. If a child arrives after their carline time has concluded, the parent/guardian will need to park their car in the Sinder Parking Lot, walk their child across the street, pass through security, sign-in their child by scanning the QR code through the Brightwheel app, and walk their child to the ECC Office. An ECC administrator will walk your child to class.

**Carline - Afternoon Departure**

- Please have your carline placard visible so we can expedite the carline process.
- Parent/guardian will use the Brightwheel application on their mobile device for touchless sign-out of their child.
- Driver should remain in the car until the child and accompanying teacher approach the car. Driver may exit the car to assist the child into their car seat.
● Weight and age **appropriate car and booster seats are required for all children.** VBS employees will not release children to *any* adult who does not have properly installed safety seating for children. Please refer to the CA Highway Patrol [Child Safety Seat](#) guidelines for specification.

● Children will not be released to anyone who is not on the child’s Approved Pickup list.

● Children who are not picked up after carline has closed will return to the ECC office with an administrator. In this case, upon arrival, the parent/guardian will need to park their car in the Sinder Parking Lot, pass through security, sign their child out by scanning the QR code through the Brightwheel app, and walking to the ECC Office where their child will be waiting.

● A $25 penalty may apply for children who are picked up late.

If you have a sibling in the Day School, your Day School child can be picked up at the ECC carline in Reznik Lot between 3:00-3:15pm. Pre-K/TK Oaks siblings will need to first register for the “2:30-3:00pm Sibling Add-On.” Please call or email Renee Kalmanson to review your individual pick up plan or with any questions.

### Parking

If you need to park on-campus, please use the Sinder Parking Lot and follow the safety procedures at all times. Your families' safety is of the utmost importance to us.

- Hold your child’s hand at all times.
- **Do not use your cell phone in the parking lots.**
- Use the “Yellow Brick Road” at ALL TIMES. Do not walk in the middle of the parking lot. Cars are big, and some are very quiet. Drivers do not always see small children, and you can not always hear them coming!
- Show respect and consideration to parking attendants and staff at all times.
- Ensure that children are buckled in car seats anytime the vehicle is moving.
- If parked behind another car, **please remember to leave your keys in your car or with the parking attendant.**
- We expect all families and staff to conduct themselves with courtesy and consideration at all times.

### Crossing the Street

At all times, children and adults must cross Densmore using the crosswalk. Families must follow directions of crossing guards, security guards, temple staff and other supervising adults on duty. Please discuss safety rules with your child, and show respect to all employees - they are here to help you.

### Security

The safety of our community is a primary concern. As our tradition teaches us, we are all responsible for each other. VBS reviews and upgrades the security system on a regular basis. The security guards at the front gate are a critical component of our security system. *Every* person that enters the synagogue property is required to enter through the guarded gate. A permanent identification badge is issued to each parent and/or caregiver. This badge **must be visible** at all times when on temple grounds. **Parents and visitors are required to comply with all health and security procedures, and to cooperate with requests from security guards.**
Sign-in and Sign-out
Parents/guardians are responsible for signing their child/ren in and out each day through the Brightwheel app. State law mandates this system of accountability and security for preschool children. The full legible signature of the responsible adult (over 18 years old) who is listed as an Authorized Pick-up on Brightwheel or on your child’s Emergency Contact Form. For changes or updates, please contact Renee Kalmanson at rkalmanson@vbs.org

PART IV: HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Medical and Health Forms
All forms must be completed and filed in the ECC main office per California State licensing prior to a school start. Your child cannot attend school without all completed forms.

Sick Policy
Safety and health is our primary concern but accidents do occur, and children sometimes do become ill in school. The staff has been trained in First Aid and CPR and we are well stocked with emergency supplies. Additionally, we have a full-time registered nurse on site.

We thank you in advance for being overly cautious when it comes to illness, particularly now. Please keep sick children at home and be on the watch for more mild symptoms like sniffles, headache and runny noses.

If your child exhibits any symptoms of illness while at school, you will be asked to pick them up immediately. Children experiencing symptoms must remain home for at least 24 hours until symptoms subside, AND provide a doctor’s note clearing them to return to school. Children must also be fever-free, vomit-free, and diarrhea-free for 24 hours without the use of medication before returning to school. In some circumstances we may also require a negative Covid-19 test in order to return to school.

Please review our full Sick Policy for more details.

If your child has contracted a communicable illness, please contact the office so that we can notify our custodial staff, and other classroom families. If a child is not yet well enough to follow the school routine, including indoor or outdoor play, they are not well enough to be in school.

Lice
Head lice are a part of all school environments. Learn to check your child regularly for symptoms of itching scalp or the pearl-shaped egg. The staff will check children in school for head lice when necessary. A child with head lice, (as well as their siblings), will be sent home immediately. Children who are treated for lice will need to show documentation that they have received treatment, are free of any nits, and be checked by our school personnel prior to returning to the classroom.
Other Communicable Illnesses
If your child is diagnosed with a communicable illness including, but not limited to, Hand Foot & Mouth, Strep-Throat, RSV, Flu, Whooping Cough, and Pink Eye, please notify our office right away. We will make the necessary deep cleaning arrangements and notify the families in your classroom using discretion. Guidance from our school Nurse and the CDC will determine the best course of action.

If your child is at school and we suspect he/she has contracted any of the above illnesses/diagnosis (or others) or presents associated symptoms, we will call home and ask that your child be picked up immediately and then seen by his/her physician. Your child may return to school only with an “all-clear” note from his/her pediatrician and symptom free for 24 hours. Please present the note (email or screen shot) to Renee Kalmanson, Assistant Director, the day BEFORE returning to school.

While illness is a natural part of school-life, we operate with an abundance of care and err on the side of caution. We appreciate your sensitivity and cooperation.

Accidents
Any major accident will be reported to parents immediately. (It is essential that your contact information is current at all times!) Minor accidents (such as scrapes or non-incidental falls) will be reported to the person picking up the child. Accidents are recorded on an “Ouch Report” filed in the office and a copy is sent home. If there is blood, major bruising, or a head injury occurs, we will notify families immediately. A child requiring emergency professional medical treatment will have that treatment as quickly as possible and at the facility designated by the parent or guardian on the emergency treatment form, or at the nearest hospital emergency room.

Medication
The ECC will not dispense medication unless mandated for a specific cause by your child’s pediatrician. All medication must be brought to the school nurse’s office and cannot be left with a classroom teacher. Medicine must have an unaltered authorized prescription label showing the doctor’s name and specific directions for storage and dispensing. All medication must have an attached label with the specific child’s name on it (no sibling’s names), and must not be expired. The parent or guardian must fill out the Medication Authorization Form for each medication the child is to take and review protocols with our on-site nurse directly. You can obtain this form by contacting the Health Office, vbsdshealthoffice@vbsds.org. Aspirin will not be administered by the school under any circumstances. We cannot administer over-the-counter medicines.

Emergency Preparedness
Safety is of utmost importance at the ECC. A comprehensive VBS Emergency Plan has been developed with regular fire and disaster drills. In the event of a disaster, the school will follow all emergency protocols, which include supervision and a dismissal policy. In case of a medical emergency, all attempts will be made to contact families as soon as possible.

Every month, VBS and the Schools hold alternating drills for emergency events such as fire, earthquake and lockdown. These drills follow emergency protocol set by the VBS community. An email will be sent to you following each drill.
Every year, we review our process, protocol and drill timing to make adjustments as needed. In the event of an emergency, we can call upon our drills/practice to keep our students, faculty, staff and visitors on campus safe.

In the unlikely event of a true emergency, parents will receive instructions via a text/email about where and when to pick up your child. **You may only pick up students on your emergency contact list, and only adults on your emergency list may pick up your child.** Please make sure all emergency contact information for your family remains current and updated when necessary.

**Supporting Behavior and Development**

The VBS ECC is dedicated to providing an environment which promotes a child’s physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual development. Our low child to teacher ratio allows us to maintain an environment which is both emotionally and physically safe for children and adults. Because we work in partnership with our families, please help us set a positive example through your behavior.

In the event that a child acts out in an aggressive manner (including but not limited to hitting, biting, scratching, yelling of obscenities, spitting) that regularly disrupts the learning or safety of others, the family will be notified and together with classroom teachers, ECC Administration and our on-site Director of Student & Family Support Services, Kim Provda (kprovda@vbs.org) will create an age appropriate Action Plan.

In other instances, at the discretion of the school, a child may be required to undergo a developmental assessment by an outside specialist provider at the family’s expense. Administration and classroom teachers will work together with families and outside providers to determine appropriate support, accommodations, and/or services (including but not limited to one-on-one companionship, occupational therapy, speech therapy). In these circumstances, the following of such recommendations shall be a requirement for the child’s attendance at VBS ECC. Such recommendations must be fulfilled at the family’s expense. Cases of financial hardship will be reviewed by ECC Administration, but such review does not obligate the VBS ECC to provide financial aid for such accommodations.

If circumstances dictate that a child requires more support than can be reasonably provided by the school, or the student’s family is unable or unwilling to provide the accommodations at their own expense, the VBS ECC reserves the right to ask the child to leave the program and tuition will not be refunded. Please refer to the 2021-2022 Enrollment Agreement for detailed information.

**Biting Policy (and other physical behaviors)**

At the ECC we are concerned for the safety and well-being of every child. We understand each child develops at his or her own rate and in his or her own way. It is our goal to provide a nurturing and safe environment for every child enrolled in our program. Because we view each child as a special and unique individual, we try to set policies that reflect our understanding of what is appropriate behavior at each child’s developmental level.

A common concern in early childhood centers is the issue of biting. Biting is developmentally appropriate for toddlers and children in their early preschool years. Before children have developed strong language skills, they often communicate physically.
They may shove, push or bite. It is important to remember that at this age, they do not have a social conscience as we know it. They may recognize that when they bite, the receiver cries. However, they likely may not yet comprehend all social consequences. It is our job as early childhood educators, and yours as parents, to help them to understand the consequences of their actions.

With older toddlers and preschoolers, biting may be a sign of frustration, speech delays, over-stimulation and/or inability to verbally communicate these frustrations or emotional concerns.

If a child bites another child:
- The incident will be documented
- The biter’s parents/guardians will be notified
- Parent/guardians of the bitten child will be notified
- VBS ECC staff will keep confidential the name of the biter

When a child bites, the teacher will immediately tend to the child who has been bitten. After comforting the bitten child, the teacher will turn to the biting child to give appropriate verbal feedback and guidance. The teacher will give the child who bit the opportunity to help the child who has been bitten by bringing him or her ice or a comforting toy. If the skin is broken, the child will be seen by the school nurse who will make further recommendations. The teacher or an administrator will call the parent/guardian of both children involved.

If a child bites regularly, or engages in repeated physically aggressive behavior (more than once a week or once a week on a regular basis) or if s/he bites (shoves, pushes, hits) severely at any time, the teachers will sit together with the ECC’s Administration to create a developmentally appropriate Action Plan.

In some circumstances, the Director may determine that it is in the best interest of the child to leave the program for the remainder of the day.

It may be necessary to ask the parent or guardian to withdraw the child from the preschool for one of the following reasons:
- Biting (or other physically aggressive behavior) occurrences have not diminished
- Incident is the final incident in a succession of aggressive behaviors that are harmful to the child and/or other children/staff at the center
- If in conjunction with the family, teachers and Director it is determined that the ECC is unable to provide the services that the child requires (e.g., Special language or speech support, additional staffing, etc.) If this situation occurs, re-enrollment of the child may be considered with appropriate intervention as determined by the Director.

Parents as Partners
Kindness is our chosen mode of communication here at the ECC. We are committed to teaching children to use effective problem solving skills and peaceful conflict resolution strategies. And we practice what we preach! We guarantee that our staff will communicate with you respectfully at all times, and we expect the same from our families. Parents and guardians are expected to speak to and regard all staff members and children
respectfully at all times.

Please review the following expectations:

- Concerns about a classmate’s behavior should be brought to the attention of teachers first and then administrators. Confronting children and parents in person or through social media is not permitted and will not be tolerated.
- It is imperative that parents show respect and cooperation toward ECC staff, faculty, parents, students, parking attendants, security guards, and custodians at all times.
- All parents must wear a VBS name tag to identify themselves when entering the building or a visitor’s pass that can be obtained at the security booth.
- Family on-campus visitation must be scheduled in advance with a classroom teacher and/or administrator. Families must check in at the security booth and then stop outside the ECC office before being escorted to their child’s classroom.
- Family members and guardians must follow the direction of administrators, staff, and parking attendants during carpool hours and must park or wait only in designated areas.
- Communication is essential for children’s development and positive experiences at school. If families have questions regarding their child they should first contact their teachers, and then follow up with an administrator.
- Inappropriate adult interaction with children (unwanted touching, yelling, foul language) will not be tolerated and may result in a family’s immediate expulsion from the school with no tuition refund.

PART V: GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES

Meals & Snacks
The school will provide water throughout the day and healthy mid-morning snacks and afternoon snacks for children who remain for the full day program. We offer fresh produce and healthy options. Staff will wear disposable gloves when handling food.

Families will provide lunch for children in a labeled lunch box/bag. Please provide a labeled water bottle which will be refilled throughout the day. Please limit the number of individual containers in a lunch. Tops and bottoms are sometimes difficult to open and easily misplaced.

Lunches Brought From Home
We eat lunch in school daily. Lunches brought from home must be dairy or parve - no meat. (See KASHRUT attachments). We recommend small portions. Suggested foods are a protein, fruit, vegetable and carbohydrate. Teachers are often very busy during mealtimes and cannot accommodate requests to microwave children’s lunches. Finger foods and sandwiches are fine. Warm foods may be brought in a thermos container. We teach the children about nutrition and reinforce healthy eating during lunch. Please do not send chocolate spread, chips, cookies, cake, candy, highly processed foods, sugared drinks or desserts as part of everyday lunches. Beverages should say 100% fruit juice. “Fruit” drinks often contain artificial ingredients and added sweeteners and are not consistent with our healthy food policy. We encourage families to choose whole grain bread products and fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as healthy portions of protein, as these foods provide...
the greatest and most effective nutrition to support children’s optimum participation throughout the school day. Sample lunch ideas are included in this handbook. We appreciate your cooperation in encouraging healthy eating. We are a nut “sensitive” school. Please check with your child’s teachers to be sure nuts are permitted in your child’s classroom. Please see your teacher with any particular food or diet concerns.

**Hot Lunch Program**

The school will provide an optional hot lunch service Monday - Friday. All lunches are Kosher, and prepared on-site by LA Kosher Catering with the highest level of health, safety and kashrout oversight. Meals will be pre-plated, served on individual trays and delivered fresh, directly to children at their assigned lunchtime.

We will provide two semesters of hot lunch. Enrollment information will be provided and prorated options are available for newly enrolled students. Please contact Karen at kbenyishay@vbs.org for pricing and other details.

Below is a SAMPLE weekly lunch menu:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheese Pizza</td>
<td>Chicken Tenders</td>
<td>Pasta Marinara</td>
<td>Chicken Taquitos</td>
<td>Chicken Teriyaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Fruit</td>
<td>Tater Tots</td>
<td>Garlic Bread</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>Fresh Fruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Veggies</td>
<td>Fresh Fruit</td>
<td>Fresh Fruit</td>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>Fresh Veggies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh Veggies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Food Allergies**

Children with food allergies or other serious food-related conditions should complete a Food Allergy Action Plan and be in touch with Aimee Sesar (asesar@vbs.org). Our Administrative Team will review protocols with individual families, classroom teachers, our school nurse, and Director of Student & Family Support, Kim Provda (kprovda@vbs.org) to create a comprehensive plan for support. Please note: We are a nut *sensitive* community, not a nut-free school. Classrooms are made nut-free as needed.

**Parent Communication**

We partner with Brightwheel, a teacher-parent communication application specifically designed for preschools and child care centers. Through their easy-to-use mobile app, families will be able to sign children in/out for the day, manage people on their approved pick-up list, communicate with teachers, receive updates and newsletters, view photos of their child, and much more. Please note that anyone picking up a child must have the Brightwheel application on their phone in order to sign the child in/out. Once you have set up your account, please make sure all your information is correct and up to date. Please contact Renee Kalmanson (rkalmanson@vbs.org) with any questions regarding this essential online communication service. Check out this brief video overview of the Brightwheel application.

You will have a chance to speak briefly with teachers at morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up. Conversations that require more time will be scheduled for later in the day by phone. You can ALWAYS reach someone in the ECC Office (Monday-Thursday
What To Pack for School
We strongly urge you to **LABEL ALL ITEMS** and limit belongings from home. Parent/guardian should ensure that belongings are taken home each day to be cleaned. Please provide a plastic cubby container with a lid for all stay-at-school items. **Parents/guardians should provide the following items and a mid-sized labeled backpack.**

For the Backpack (brought home daily)
- 1 water bottle
- 1 “wet bag” to store wet or soiled clothes
- 1 complete change of clothes in a large ziplock bag, including underwear
- 1-2 diapers and wipes, if needed

For the Cubby (to remain at school, and sent home to be cleaned as needed)
- 3 complete changes of clothes, including underwear
- 1 extra pair of shoes
- Sleeping bag and/or crib sheet for nappers
- Transitional object (ie. lovey, pacifier or book) that remains at school, if needed
- A week’s worth of diapers and wipes, if needed

What to Keep at Home
The following items do not belong in school: toy guns (or any toy weapons), toys from home (except on specified share days), costume masks, fragile items, pets, gum, candy.

Medical/Health Supplies (if necessary)
Inhalers, epi-pens and other medically necessary items should be labeled and turned into Amiée Sesar by the first day of school. We will log all items with our School Nurse Hannah Buckland (<vbsdshealthoffice@vbsds.org>) and then return items to classroom teachers to have on-hand.

Lost & Found Items
We do misplace items from time to time. Labeling all belongings will allow us to return those things to their proper home. We will also showcase ‘lost’ items at carline periodically for a happy reunion.

Prolonged Absences
Please notify your classroom teachers and contact the school office at 818-788-0567 if your child will be out for a prolonged absence for any reason.

Emergency Information
Emergency information, including who to contact in case of an emergency as well as an out-of-state contact number, must be updated each year, regardless of enrollment in
previous years. It is essential to keep this contact information current throughout the school year. Please alert our main office with any updates.

**Tuition**
Please refer to your **2022-2023 Signed Enrollment Agreement** for policy directives. Questions and updates regarding payment should be directed to our VBS Schools’ Business Manager, Orit Rappaport, at orappaport@vbsds.org or 818-530-4042.

**Annual Calendar**
A 2022-2023 ECC Calendar will be available on our website: www.vbs.org/ecc. Updates will be provided to you on a weekly basis through the Friday Parent Newsletter.

**School Directory**
Class directories will be distributed at the beginning of the school year. Complete school rosters will be emailed to you in October and will include family name, address, phone numbers and email addresses. This information is for families, school and social use – never for marketing or other commercial purposes. If you are uncomfortable sharing some or all of your personal contact information please email Aimee Sesar, asesar@vbs.org so we can make the necessary edits to the class rosters and school directory.

**Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**
We support a **Waste-Free Lunch Program** at Valley Beth Shalom. Please join us and take steps to reduce the amount of lunchtime waste generated at school. Provide reusable containers instead of throw-away “bags” whenever possible, and water bottles that are not disposable. **All containers must be individually labeled with your child’s name.**

**Clothing**
Parents are requested to send children to school in “play clothes.” Daily activities include painting, gluing, sand and water play and lots of physical activity every day including Friday. Please save special clothes for parties and Shabbat at home. In spite of “washable” paints and markers, clothes will get dirty and may even become stained. **Please dress your child so that he or she can enjoy their school experiences fully without fear of getting dirty or wet.**

Shoes with non-skid soles are safest for climbing and outdoor play though children are also free to go bare footed. Clothing should be washable, comfortable and easy to put on and take off. **Please label all garments!** We cannot be responsible for lost clothing or personal items. All found items will be on display at the end of each month. We will display lost & found items in the carline each month before washing and donating unclaimed belongings.

**Photography/Photo Release**
Photos are posted throughout the year for family members to access. Teachers take pictures and use informal photography regularly as a teaching aid. At no time are outside photographers allowed in our school without the prior consent of the Director. Please refrain from photographing other children and emailing families. Even with the best intentions, photos without context may send the wrong message. **Your digital approval in the on-line registration form indicates you give permission for your child’s work and/or digital image to be published electronically (e.g. Email, Facebook,**
Instagram, Parent Square, VBS ECC Web Page, etc) and/or in print (e.g. publicity materials and in the classroom). Please reach out to Aimee Sesar, asesar@vbs.org if you have questions, concerns, or do not wish your child’s photograph to be published.

**Birthdays**
We love celebrating birthdays! Please reach out to your child’s teachers to make your child’s birthday a special one.

In accordance with temple policy, all prepared food and baked goods brought into the school must be purchased from approved kosher establishments (see Kosher guidelines). When choosing birthday treats please ask your teachers about possible allergies in your classroom. **Party favors, balloons and hats are not allowed.**

Please adhere to CDC recommendations when hosting birthday parties outside of school. Invitations to birthday parties **cannot** be distributed at school. A better idea is to email or mail them. Please do not bring birthday gifts to school.

**Out of respect for families who observe Shabbat, we ask that you do not host parties held on Shabbat, from Friday evening through sundown Saturday, as these events are not inclusive of the whole community.** As you prepare the festivities, we ask that you include all children from your classroom Pod, as feelings can be easily hurt (of children and their adults). We want to create an environment that is kind, sensitive, and inclusive.

**Holidays & Celebrations**
ECC curriculum is based on the Jewish holiday cycle. We celebrate all the Jewish holidays in school. Parents will notice art, music, outdoor activities, cooking, documentation displays, stories, and celebrations relating to the holidays. Notices to families will keep you informed of this year’s planned activities. We also celebrate and learn about the following secular holidays: Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Presidents’ Day.

We do not celebrate Halloween and Valentine’s Day in school, because these holidays have their origins in Christianity. Please do not send children in costumes or deliver Valentines to school for these holidays.

**Shabbat Programming**
Each child will have an opportunity to be the “Shabbat Mensch” and their family will join him/her on-campus on one Friday morning during the year. Teachers will schedule this date with families directly and provide further details.

**ECC Outdoor Classroom**
At the ECC, we share the Outdoor Classroom Project’s goal to increase the quantity, quality, and benefit of outdoor experiences for children. We carefully curate our playgrounds with materials, spaces and experiences that promote growth in all domains of development. Areas of higher risk are supervised closely and children are taught safety rules for materials that require extra care. By allowing these challenges, we raise safety conscious children
who are tuned into their environment, understand their physical limits, and develop an awareness of the risks that they will encounter in the world.

**Weather** - We see weather as an opportunity to connect with and observe the cycles of nature. We ask that on cold days children are dressed warmly and with the expectation that they will play outside. We will remain indoors if weather hazards exist, such as during a thunderstorm, poor air quality, or on extremely windy days when branches might fall from trees. We do often explore rain with children at the teacher’s discretion and ask you to prepare for such days by sending children with a waterproof rain suit or jacket, rubber rain boots, and extra sets of dry clothes and shoes to change into after outside play. We ask the same on days when the outside remains wet and puddles persist.

**Water** - Water is one of the greatest learning mediums we can offer children. It provides opportunities to refine their scientific thinking as they explore volume, comparison, cause and effect, and hypothesis testing. Additionally, water is incredibly soothing to all humans. It can calm a nervous child, prevent an oncoming tantrum, or even help an adult soak or wash away the stress of the day. We offer water play to children as often as possible, so please prepare accordingly by checking daily for wet clothes and bringing dry replacements the next day.

**Sand** - Children also have daily access to our sandboxes where they experience both wet and dry sand. As the former often leads to dirty clothes we ask that you please send children to school in clothes that you expect to get dirty. Please know that when your child gets dirty, it is not because we are not paying attention, it is because we are allowing them to have developmentally appropriate experiences, which they need for proper brain growth. We ask that you help celebrate this work we do with children by greeting children with joy when you see messy clothes. You can say “wow, it looks like you really explored a lot today,” or “What materials were you investigating here?”, but please avoid shameful expressions about mess. They need to get messy as much as they need love, food, and water.

**Gardening** - The work we do with children in the garden is some of the most important for their future and the planet. Gardening teaches children responsibility, patience, scientific skills of observation and analysis, appreciation and a host of other positive attitudes and understandings. Most importantly, we hope to ignite a love and connection to the natural world and its cycles. We believe strongly that the fate of our planet rests in the hands of this next generation, and it is up to us to encourage good stewardship of the earth through meaningful experiences with nature. Planting is done with organic soil and is supervised by an instructor. Gloves are available for all students and mandatory if cuts are present on a child’s hands. Teachers ensure proper hygiene and safety whenever children are working in the garden.

**Family Involvement**
We strongly encourage every family member to become involved in the ECC. Your commitment and participation creates the optimum educational experience for your child and family. These include:

- **VBS ECC Parent Association** To get involved or for more information please contact Parent Association Co-Chairs at vbseccpa@gmail.com
- **Back to School Night** (September 22nd, 2022)
● Open House & Art Walk (May 11th, 2023)
● Parent Teacher Conferences (Fall conferences on November 3rd and 4th, 2022. Spring conferences on March 2nd and 3rd, 2023)
● Age Group Community Shabbat

All scheduled events are tentative. Events and programs will be planned with the most up-to-date health and safety recommendations in mind. Please refer to your School Calendar and weekly Friday Family Newsletter for upcoming events and details.

**Child Custody and Visitation**

Our school adheres strictly to laws regarding custody, visitation, and communication issues that might arise between school and home. For the care and safety of all our students, VBS ECC adheres to the following rules concerning visitation, custody, and communications:

- VBS ECC is required to have official copies of any court orders related to custody, visitation, communication, etc. as they relate to school or any school-related programs in the child’s file.
- Nearly all of our school-wide communication takes place via Constant Contact. Every family member is responsible for ensuring that their email info is current and s/he is receiving emails from the school.
- Any flyers or notes generated by the school will be distributed electronically through Constant Contact and posted on every classroom’s bulletin board. It is the family’s responsibility to share information sent in flyers with one another.
- No person shall visit a student on school grounds without the permission of a parent or guardian with appropriate legal status.
- No person shall remove a student from the school or the custody of the school without written authorization from a parent or family member with appropriate legal status.
- Without limitation, VBS ECC is mandated to deny any person the right to visit or remove any student from school custody if the school reasonably fears for the safety or the proper guardianship of the child.

**Parent Education**

The best way to help your child learn is to model learning yourself. There are several opportunities for you to grow as a Jewish parent and partner in the Valley Beth Shalom community. Joining a havurah and participating in community programs are two ways to enrich your family and Jewish life. Contact Molly Mills, Infant Toddler & Family Center Director (818.530.4031 or mmills@vbs.org) for more information.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation in making the VBS ECC school a safe, kind and wonderful place to learn. Please notify someone in our administrative staff if, and when, a question arises.

We are always here to help!
Kashrut Guidelines for the ECC

Personal / Individual Consumption

Personal Lunches and Snacks:

1. Vegetarian and Dairy. In order to preserve our standard of Kashrut, we ask that any food brought from home contain no meat.
2. Restaurants. If food is brought from a restaurant, we ask that it be dairy-vegetarian and cold.
3. No Sharing Lunches. For reasons of personal levels of Kashrut observance, as well as allergies, no child is permitted to share his or her lunch with another.

Communal Consumption

Communal Shared or Distributed Foods During School Hours:

With regard to:

a. Birthday Celebrations
b. School Snacks
c. Gifts of Food and Candy
d. Faculty Appreciation Events

All shared or distributed food brought to school must be certified as kosher: in its original, sealed package bearing a kosher certification symbol (heksher).

*This excludes fresh fruits and vegetables, which may be cut at home and shared.

Kosher Symbols: We recommend that you look for foods marked by symbols that certify the kashrut of the product. Examples of kosher symbols (hekshers) are:

Home-Cooked Food / Community Potlucks

We ask that parents not bring in home-cooked foods for distribution to the Valley Beth Shalom schools or Youth Department, including birthday cakes.

Potlucks: In the spirit of building community and encouraging participation among our families, VBS, its schools and Youth Department allow for potluck meals to be prepared for special events and school-sponsored events outside of school hours. These are events where parents are present and student participation is not mandatory. At these events, the following Kashrut conditions must be followed:

- No meat or fowl.
- Home-prepared foods must be dairy, fish* (no shellfish), and/or vegetarian.
- Use only kosher ingredients marked by a kosher certification symbol (heksher).
- Prepare and serve food in disposable containers (plastic, glass, or metal).
- Serve with metal or new plastic utensils, preferably disposable pans and utensils.
- Synagogue ovens, refrigerators, and utensils may not be used under any circumstance.

*A Note on Fish: Fish is considered pareve according to Kashrut – it is deemed neither meat nor dairy. Kosher fish are those with fins and scales, such as tuna, salmon, trout, and halibut.
**Kids, Kashrut, and Health**

Here are a few snack suggestions. Please feel free to add to the list and communicate your additions to other parents. They will appreciate your creative culinary energy!

1. **Cheese**
   Yes, kosher certified cheese may be more expensive – akin to organic cheeses.
   - Philadelphia Cream Cheese and crackers (Whipped is easy to spread)
   - Kosher markets carry String Cheese (Ha-Olam Brand) and *Whole Foods* and *Trader Joes* also have kosher cheese slices
   - Shredded Cheddar Cheese on Tostitos, Mission, or Kirkland (*Costco*) tortilla chips can be heated up and made into nachos – or Quesadillas cut up with Mission flour or corn tortillas
   - Most cottage cheeses are kosher certified – try them with fruit.
   - Tillamook Vegetarian Kosher Cheddar at *Whole Foods* can be cut into individual pieces
   - Yogurt is also a good source of dairy – Stonyfield and Horizon Yogurts are kosher certified
   - And, although it’s not super healthy, Jell-O Brand puddings are kosher certified.

2. **Faux Meats**
   Many of the soy/imitation meats are kosher certified – especially Morningstar Farms frozen products, Light Life, and Yves. They’re healthy and filling.
   - Morningstar Farms Chicken Nuggets at room temperature are a common snack for many kids. Pack ketchup, or other dipping sauces.
   - Soy-based deli meats from Light Life, Yves and Tofurkey – (many kids snack on these turkey and bologna slices)

3. **Fruit and Veggies**
   - Apple Sauce
   - Fruit Smoothies
   - Dried Fruits. Sunsweet, Sunmaid, and The Produce Stand brands are fine and kids will eat dried apples and raisins
   - Sun maid Yogurt Raisins
   - Jarred Fruits – Dole mandarin oranges and peaches are great and kosher certified.
   - Raw vegetables (carrots, jicama, red or green bell peppers or cucumbers with cottage cheese or hummus are a hit)
   - Edamame (pre-boiled soy beans)
   - Vegetable Sushi
   - Fruit Salad
   - Canned or dried fruits that are 100% fruit – no added sugars or preservatives – do not require kosher certification

4. **Cookies and Crackers: Kosher and On the Healthier Side**
   - Whole grain cereals such as Life and Oat Squares
   - Nabisco Nilla Wafers, Graham Crackers, Animal Crackers, Ritz Whole Wheat Crackers
   - Stouffer’s *Whales* crackers are kosher (*Target*) and Cheez-Its are kosher alternatives to Goldfish, which are not kosher
   - Chex Mix (cheese flavor is very popular)
   - Earth’s Best Organic Sesame Street Cookies and Crackers (*Whole Foods*)
   - Paul Newman’s cookies (*Whole Foods* and *Ralph’s*)
   - Pirate’s Booty and Veggie Booty (*Whole Foods* and *Ralph’s*)
   - 365 Brand cheese crackers (*Whole Foods* – many crackers there are kosher certified).
   - Dried Vegetable and Potato Chips
   - Hi-fiber low fat muffins – various brands at supermarkets
   - Energy Bars – several (not all) Balance Bars and other popular brands are kosher certified (cut them up for the smaller children)
   - Mission Tortillas and Tortilla Factory tortillas are kosher certified (wraps good with any combo of Veggie Slices, Cheese, Hummus, Cream Cheese, Shredded Carrots, Sprouts)
FAMILY HANDBOOK SIGNATURE FORM

I have read and agreed to the information in the VBS ECC Family Handbook 2022-2023

STUDENT NAME _________________________________________________________________

PARENT OR GUARDIAN SIGNATURE ________________________________________________

DATE _________________________________________________________________________