

PARENT HANDBOOK



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WELCOME

Welcome to Marlboro Jewish Center Preschool. We are thrilled that you have chosen to enroll your child in our school and we look forward to a wonderful year of learning and playing together.

We have put together this Parent Handbook to help you understand our goals, procedures, policies and educational philosophy. This booklet is intended to help new families get acclimated to our school and to serve as a reference for both new and returning families throughout the year.

MISSION AND PHILOSOPY

Our mission is to provide our children with a warm, nurturing and stimulating environment in which each child may develop a positive attitude about themselves and others that encourages a life-long love of learning. We provide each child with experiences that build socialization skills, encourage exploration, and foster creativity.

The philosophy of our early childhood program is based on our belief that children are eager to explore and learn, are competent and resourceful, are ready to collaborate and are full of knowledge and wonder. Our classrooms provide interactive environments that stimulate all areas of a child's development including social, emotional, physical and cognitive. We seek to nurture a child's curiosity and sense of community and cultivate a connection to Jewish values and tradition. Families are partners in the work that we do, joining with children and teachers to celebrate Jewish life and learning.

PROGRAM OFFERINGS

CURRICULUM

Our well-balanced standardized curriculum exposes the children to language arts, math, science, social studies, literature, art, music, drama, cooking, and play through a developmentally appropriate approach. Gross motor activities are enhanced by our renovated playground that includes both soft and grassy areas and a full-size gym. Fine motor skills are developed by hands on activities designed to develop strength, coordination and dexterity. iPads are available to our students in their classrooms to enrich and supplement their learning with current applications and interactive technological experiences. Small class sizes provide the children a full range of learning experiences and instructional models. Individual, small group and whole group instruction is available to the children on daily basis.

INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

Our classes are taught by qualified, knowledgeable and loving educators. Their classroom activities are planned to accommodate the children's social, emotional, physical, and academic growth. There are 2 teachers in each classroom (lead teacher and assistant) and along with small class sizes, each child will have an opportunity for individual attention which is so vital to positive growth and development. Our teachers participate in at least 12 hours of professional development each academic year and are certified in CPR and First Aid.

Our staff will only discuss your child with you, the parent/guardian.

MOMMY & ME

The Mommy & Me program is offered for children and their parent/caregiver to attend together! The class provides a space for you and your child to explore, play and interact without distractions and interruptions. Classes are offered 3 mornings a week for a variety of ages and developmental milestones. Children ages 3 months to 24 months are welcome.

2's, 3's and PRE-K

Children in these classes attend independently and begin the process of life-long learning. These classes begin at 9:30 am with a variety of dismissal times beginning at 12:30 pm through 3:00 pm. Consistency and predictability are best at these tender ages, so we recommend attending at least 3 days per week. In certain circumstances, exceptions will be made.

ART EXPERIENCE

The child is a wonderful, creative person. This quality should be nurtured and protected with great sensitivity. The teachers do this by creating a rich yet relaxed climate within which the child can explore, experiment, practice and discover how to express their feelings. It is important to understand that your child's art is a process not a product. What may look simple to us, may be your child's greatest accomplishment of the day. Your child is offered opportunity to create and to make decisions. They are given a choice of colors, shapes and sizes. They have the freedom to make their project look different, or to participate in a non-craft activity.

Also remember to please praise your child's work and effort and don't ask what it is. Instead say, "tell me about this."

CLASS PLACEMENT POLICY

Over the course of the summer, it is our policy to create class placements for new and returning students for the upcoming school year. The goal of this process is to achieve a balance in each class that promotes both learning and positive social/emotional development. We take into consideration many criteria during this process, some of which include: social/emotional development, friendships/optimal peer relationships, a balance between new and returning children and class size and capacity. Class placements are given very careful consideration by the Preschool Director along with input from teachers and parent requests. We try to accommodate specific requests when possible; requests must be reciprocal and negative requests take priority. The final decision on class placement rests with the Preschool Director.

The Marlboro Township Public School district and surrounding towns operate with a cut-off date of October 1. Marlboro Jewish Center Preschool follows this policy. Children in the 2's program must turn 2 by October 1. Children in the 3's program must turn 3 by October 1. Children in Pre-K must turn 4 by October 1.

EARLY CARE AND AFTER CARE

Any enrolled child is welcome to attend our early care and after-care program. Early care is available every day and is a drop-in program (no registration is necessary). Early care begins at 7:00 am and ends at 9:30 am. The early care teachers will escort your children to their regular class at 9:30 am. After-care is available until 6:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 5:00 pm on

Friday. Your child's teacher will escort them to the after-care classroom at the end of the day. Early care and after-care are billed at an hourly rate of \$10, with a monthly cap of \$400.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

A number of programs are offered to our students in the 3's and Pre-K during the course of the year. Tennis, soccer, *karate and STEAM classes are available. Classes begin at 3:05 pm and end at 4:00 pm (*ends at 3:50 pm).

SUMMER PROGRAM

We are proud to offer an 8-week summer program carefully designed to meet the needs of our young "campers." Campers are provided with opportunities for discovery and exploration in the comfort of our air-conditioned building, our outdoor playground and our designated water play and sprinkler area. Each week showcases a theme with coordinated art, literature, music, sports, cooking, and science activities. Our low camper to counselor ratio allows our experienced staff to provide individual attention to each camper.

We offer many programs and the flexibility to choose any 6, 7 or 8 weeks during our summer program. 3 and 4 day options are also available. All of our campers that attend Fridays will celebrate Shabbat with joyous songs, yummy challah and grape juice.

HEBREW SCHOOL

Marlboro Jewish Center Hebrew School begins with children entering kindergarten and extends through 12th grade (High Hebrew High). The Hebrew School prides itself on a creative approach to Jewish education with a hands-on curriculum that reflects current teaching styles. They are firmly committed to the creation of a warm, respectful and safe environment in which everyone can learn and grow together as a community. The Hebrew School is led by our Education Director and Associate Rabbi, Ron Koas. Hebrew school attendance for children in kindergarten through 2nd grade does not require a synagogue membership. For additional information, please contact Rabbi Koas at (732) 536-2303 x113 or ronkoas@mjcjn.com.

YOUNG FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

Belonging to a synagogue is a great way to be connected to and strengthen the Jewish community in which you live. A Young Family Membership is an affordable incentive to join the Marlboro Jewish Center and is available to families whose oldest child is in 2nd grade or younger. Families whose oldest children are in third grade are also offered a highly reduced membership dues rate. Similar to our preschool, Marlboro Jewish Center's synagogue ensures their doors are open to provide a caring and supportive environment. For additional information, please contact Dara Winston our Executive Director at (732) 536-2300 x101 or dwinston@mjcjn.com.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Our preschool is based on the Jewish values of respect (kavod) and community (kehillah). As such we ask that parents and staff alike treat one another with respect, understanding, and a sense of inclusion.

STARTING SCHOOL

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 teachers. The teachers will take the time to get to know each child personally and the children will begin to form relationships with other members of the group.

We want each child to have the opportunity to feel comfortable and secure in the classroom. 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 trust between them.

Education is a joint venture between the school and the home. You can support this transition 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 can 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 the process.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

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

We work with and support outside professionals working with our children in the classrooms. Parents are responsible for informing teachers and the Preschool Director about specific arrangements that have been made.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

When bringing your children to school there are different arrival procedures depending on your needs. Families may enter the building through the main door by ringing the bell and being buzzed in. Families may also utilize Hug & Go, our curbside program. During dismissal times, please enter the building through the main door by ringing the bell and being buzzed in.

HUG & GO

Hug & Go is designed to offer safe and easy drop off for your children. In order to ensure the safety of all children using Hug & Go, please be aware of the following rules:

- The car line begins by the front door with the awning (closest door to Topanemus Road) only.
- Cars will be unloaded three cars at a time, starting with the first car in line.
- **You must unbuckle and take your child out of the car on the passenger side along the sidewalk.**
- A staff member will greet and escort your child by the hand after you have unloaded them curbside.
- Children must remain safely restrained at all times while moving through the HUG & GO line and no child shall be released from their car seat until it is their turn in line.
- **Do NOT pull ahead of cars still unloading/loading children in front of you.**
- Please do not talk on your cell phone or text during this procedure. We want you to concentrate on your child and all others. Safety is our most important concern.
- Please drop off no more than ten minutes before your child's class begins.
- If you arrive after Hug & Go is over, please park your car in the parking lot and accompany your child to their classroom. **NO CHILD** is allowed to walk into or through the building unaccompanied by a parent or teacher.

POLICY ON THE RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Please call us at 732-536-2303 x100 or email preschooloffice@mjcni.com **as soon as you suspect** you may be late.

Please note that children will only be dismissed to a parent or a known caregiver whose name is listed as a person authorized to pick up. If on a particular day an alternate person needs to pick up your child or if your child is going home with a friend please be sure to submit a notice in writing to the teacher and/or preschool office. If the person taking home your child is not familiar to the staff he/she will be asked to present a form of picture identification.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Parents are free to observe the preschool program at any time. We only request that parents stop in at the preschool office and obtain clearance before proceeding through our hallways and/or to a classroom.

CLOTHING, BACKPACKS AND LUNCH

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes for school. We also suggest that children wear sneakers every day. A variety of experiences will be offered to your child including outdoor play, floor games, painting, and other activities which may soil clothes.

All clothing, backpacks and lunch boxes should be labeled with your child's name. It is very important and helpful in minimizing the quantity of lost articles. Please make sure there is a complete change of clothes in your child's backpack everyday – please remember to include socks!

The synagogue and preschool observe kashrut and Jewish dietary laws. Lunches should be vegetarian/dairy and free of meat, pork products, or shellfish. In addition, all lunches must be nut-free. Lunch boxes will not be kept refrigerated; please make sure to include icepacks to keep cold foods at a healthy temperature. Please make sure all foods are cut into pieces as appropriate for your child and are ready to eat. The teachers encourage the children to act as independently as possible at mealtime, and are there to assist as needed. Some healthy lunch ideas include:

<p>Sandwiches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bagel with cream cheese or butter • Bagel with avocado • Bagel with tuna • Bagel with lox • Tuna with crackers • Soy-butter/sunflower butter sandwich • Quesadilla with cheese/rice • Tuna melt • Egg salad • Grilled cheese 	<p>Thermos items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mac and cheese or other pasta • Vegetarian soup/oyster crackers • Tofu, rice and soy sauce • Pasta salad • Cheese ravioli/noodles in tomato sauce • Cut-up cheese or veggie pizza • Veggie chili • Soy chicken nuggets/soy dogs • Falafel Balls • Fish sticks
<p>Fruits and veggies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut up fruit with yogurt • Veggie sticks with hummus dip • Fruit salad • Celery with cream cheese or soy-butter/sunflower butter • Dried fruit • Chick peas • Cottage cheese and fruit • Edamame • Applesauce 	<p>Other ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • String cheese • Hummus • Dry cereal • Yogurt • Cheese and crackers • Hard boiled eggs • Cottage Cheese • Quiche • Avocado/guacamole

We also offer a lunch program for purchase. Sign-up sheets will be made available during the course of the year.

SHARING TOYS FROM HOME

Sometimes children require a comfort item to ease their transition to school. Toys/security items (for example, a family picture) may be brought to school as a “bridge” to help a child make the adjustment from home to school. These toys should be clearly labeled. After the child has become accustomed to school, please encourage them to leave the item at home. Please keep in mind, we are not responsible for lost or broken toys. Toys resembling any sort of weapon as not allowed.

LOST AND FOUND

Any items brought to school should be clearly labeled. Articles of value should not be brought to school. The Lost and Found is located in the preschool office – please check it regularly for items

that may belong to your child. At the end of the school year, all unclaimed items will be donated to charity. In consideration of others, please return any articles your child takes home by mistake.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We recognize the challenges that all families face in caring for children who are not feeling well and the juggling of work and other schedules. We respectfully request that you do not send your child to school if he or she is not feeling well.

Please contact your child's teacher and/or the office at (732) 536-2303 x100 if your child is sick or absent. The health and safety of students and staff is very important. Please make sure that we have a current medical and immunization form on file for your child. Please do not send your child to school if he or she exhibits any of the following:

- Pain or discomfort
- Diarrhea (2 or more abnormal or loose stools within a 24-hour period)
- Vomiting (one or more episodes)
- Fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
- Lethargy
- Severe coughing
- Yellow eyes or jaundice skin
- Red eyes with discharge
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Untreated or infected skin patches or skin rashes
- Stiff neck
- Evidence of lice/nits, scabies/nits, or other parasitic infestations

Once the child is symptom-free or has a health care provider's note stating that the child no longer poses a serious health risk to himself/herself or others, the child may return to school.

Children must be fever, diarrhea, vomit and rash free for 24 hours without the aid of medication before returning to school. Each child must remain home for 24 hours once an antibiotic has been administered.

If your child becomes ill during the school day, we will contact you to make arrangements to pick up your child. If we are unable to reach you, we will call your emergency contact to pick up your child.

POLICY ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

Our staff will not administer medication (over the counter or prescription) to children unless there is a medical emergency for which we have an action plan, for example, administration of epinephrine for an allergic reaction.

MEDICAL FORMS AND INFLUENZA VACCINE

A current medical and immunization record is required for all children prior to the first day of school. A medical form must be updated annually by your child's physician. In accordance with NJ Immunization Regulations **all children must have documentation that they have received the influenza vaccination between September 1 and December 31 annually.**

ALLERGY AWARENESS

We strive to be a PEANUT AND TREE NUT-FREE environment. Each year we have several children with severe nut allergies and exposure to any nut product could have serious effects on their health. Therefore, we ask that you take extreme caution whenever food is sent into school. We are looking out for the safety of all of our children. Peanut allergy claims more lives each year than any other allergy. As there is no cure, the solution is complete avoidance of the food allergen. We understand that this may be an inconvenience for some families whose children eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for lunch, but we are sure that you will agree and cooperate with this policy once the severity of these allergies is understood.

Food served at the preschool adheres to our nut policy – there are no nut products or “made in a factory that processes nuts.”

TOILET TRAINING

We view 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 when toilet training.

Children are not required to be toilet trained. Diapers are changed as needed throughout the school day. We ask that you send in an ample supply of diapers and wipes 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. Your child's teachers are happy to work with your family and to provide suggestions on the process.

BITING POLICY

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 shove, they push and they 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 have not yet connected all the social consequences. It is our job as early childhood educators 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.

We do our best to provide an environment where minimal biting occurs. Each situation is handled with sensitivity and discretion on a case by case basis. If your child is bitten or bites someone at school, an incident report will be completed and telephone calls will be made to inform the parents of both the child who bit and the child who was bitten. We do not disclose the name of the child who did the biting nor who was bitten to other families. An appropriate plan of action will be created to deal with any on-going biting.

SECURITY

The safety of our children is always our first priority. In an effort to make our school environment as safe as possible, the following procedures are in place - we ask that all parents comply with these protocols:

- All outside doors are locked at all times.
- Drop off takes place between 9:20 am and 9:45 am (unless early care is being utilized). During drop off a staff member is stationed at the Hug & Go door and main door entrance. These are the only points of egress in use at this time.
- At any time other than drop off, individuals must ring the buzzer at the main door entrance and be identified through camera and voice by our administrative staff. Once the individual is identified, they will be permitted entry. Administrative staff in the Chai building have cameras enabling them to see and hear who is waiting/requesting to enter the building.
- We request that parents do NOT hold the door open for anyone when entering the building. The administrative staff must identify each individual before entry to the building is permitted.
- Dismissal takes place between 12:30 pm and 3:00 pm (unless after care is being utilized). Please proceed to the main door to gain access into the building by ringing the buzzer.
- Parents who are dropping off or picking up their child at any time other than the official arrival and dismissal times as stated above must report immediately to the preschool office to check in.

Preschool staff have undergone safety training and all classes engage in drills. During the school year, we practice evacuation and lockdown drills with our students in a non-frightening manner. We are committed to meeting the standards set forth by the Department of Children and Families.

Other ways that we strive to keep our students' safe is through good communication between the teachers, administration and families. We ask that parents call in absences, notify us of early pickups or late drop offs, adhere to parking lot guidelines, keep fire lanes clear and allow for safe passage of cars.

COMMUNICATION

CALENDAR

The preschool closely follows the Marlboro Township Public School vacation and holiday schedule as well as the Jewish calendar. Please refer to the current school calendar for more information.

EMAIL NOTIFICATION

Communication with our parents is always a priority. You will receive monthly class newsletters from your child's teacher highlighting what has been happening in the classroom. You will also receive emails from the Preschool Director with information about upcoming programming and any administrative news that needs to be shared.

Although email is an effective form of communication, if you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to reach out directly to your child's teacher or the Preschool Director.

CLOSING INFORMATION/NOTIFICATION

Should the preschool need to have an unexpected/unscheduled closing, you will be notified via email, calls and texts if necessary, and messages will be posted on the preschool's social media outlets (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). If the Marlboro Township Public Schools close because of inclement weather, our preschool will be closed too.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

We strive to ensure that our children, staff, and school are not compromised in any form of social media. However, we do acknowledge that social media plays an important role in connecting our families and local community to the preschool.

Marlboro Jewish Center may use photographs and videos of children for the purposes of documentation, outreach, publicity and public relations. These images may be displayed in classrooms and hallways. Other publications may include newspapers, Marlboro Jewish Center email newsletters, the Marlboro Jewish Center website, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

If engaged in any form of social media, teachers are expected to observe confidentiality and refrain from discussing any issues relating to work. Teachers should not share information they would not want children, parents or colleagues to view on social media. Any concerns or breaches should be reported to the Preschool Director.

When engaged on social media platforms, parents should use sound judgment when posting videos or photos of children other than their own; they also should not write or post anything that could be seen as malicious, harassing or bullying toward any parent or child in our school. We encourage all parents with concerns or frustrations to seek resolution through speaking with the Preschool Director rather than using social media to air grievances.

CONFERENCES

We will hold individual parent/teacher conference for parents of children in the 2's, 3's and Pre-K semi-annually. The first conference is in January. Conferences are scheduled before school hours and after school hours. A second conference may be requested by the parent or teacher in May. The purpose of these meetings is to create a mutual understanding of your child and his/her needs. Children are not permitted to attend the parent/teacher conferences.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS

Throughout the school year there will be opportunities for parents to participate in programming with their children. Each year the preschool will be leading programs such as Adopt a Family for Hanukkah, toy drives and food drives to donate to needy families and charitable organizations. These programs will be announced via email messages and handouts given to the children.

There will also be class programs for parents and children. Advanced notice will be given as much as possible.

BIRTHDAYS

We are thrilled to celebrate your child's birthday in school. Celebrating birthdays in the classroom is always fun! Please notify your child's teacher a week in advance to arrange a suitable date and time. Parents are welcome to come in and bring a special snack or read a book with the class in honor of their child's birthday. Please remember that birthday snacks should be nut free and follow the Kashrut rules outlined above.

In addition, when having parties during non-school hours please strive to be inclusive of your child's entire class - we cannot distribute party invitations for a party unless the entire class is invited. The hope is that birthday parties will be inclusive to foster a feeling of community among the students.

SHABBAT

Every Friday we celebrate Shabbat. A Shabbat Ima and Abba (Mommy and Daddy) are selected. A note will be sent home to you in advance advising you of when your child will be the Ima or Abba. Your child will be asked to bring in a challah or special Shabbat snack on that day. Baked goods from home are not allowed. As the children adjust to school, your child's teacher will make a determination of when parents will be invited to join their child's class.

JEWISH HOLIDAYS

We observe Jewish, Israeli and American holidays. However, Halloween and Valentine's Day are not celebrated.

SNACKS

When bringing in snacks for birthdays, Shabbat or any other special event in the preschool, please check for kosher symbols and for a designation of "no nuts" in the ingredient list or labels affirming the product was not "made in a factory that processes nuts." Fresh fruits or vegetables are always a healthy choice!

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

SHABBAT CHILD

A Shabbat Child is chosen each week in every class. The child is honored and the family (parents, siblings, grandparents, other caretakers) are invited to come and participate in the Shabbat celebration that week. The children are asked to bring in either a challah or special snack – please refer to our snack policies above. The child will lead the class in three blessings for Shabbat – the

candles, the wine and the challah. Together the class will share in the special snack and join the rest of the school in the gymnasium where the entire school, Rabbi and Cantor will celebrate Shabbat together.

TZEDAKAH

Each Friday classes will collect tzedakah, money that will be sent to help those in need. Teaching our children about the importance of helping those in need is an integral part of our Shabbat tradition. Children may bring in change to add to the tzedakah box. The children will decorate and create their own special tzedakah pouch the first weeks of school to be used through the school year.

PTO

We believe that when parents, teachers and staff unite for the common good of our children, they will all be successful. As a community of parents, you have the opportunity to contribute to the enrichment of your children's experience at the preschool. At the beginning of the school year, you will have an opportunity to sign up to be a part of the PTO and contribute to enhancing the preschool experience for the children through special programming and fundraising events.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Tuition is for a full year. It is divided into ten equal payments for your convenience. Tuition is payable in advance, if you prefer. If you prefer monthly payments, **the fees are due by the first of each month**. Accounts will be considered delinquent if not paid within ten days after the first of each month. Therefore, the school may refuse to accept the child in the class until the outstanding fees are paid.

There will be no adjustments made for absences unless a child is hospitalized for an extended period.

A 10% discount is available to full synagogue members, Incentive Three members (families whose oldest children are in third grade), and to those families with a second child in the program.

No credit is given on tuition for scheduled school holidays, vacation periods, or emergency closings.

PAYMENT METHODS

Please make checks payable to Marlboro Jewish Center. Credit card payments are also accepted. Monthly one-time payments may be arranged by coming to the preschool office or automatic recurring payments can be scheduled for the beginning of each month. A 2% fee will be added to every credit card transaction.