



PARENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024

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PACIFIC PALISADES, CA 90272
424-214-7482



Dear ECC Families:

Welcome to the 2023-24 School Year!

This packet serves as a brief overview of our policies and procedures. Please use it for your reference throughout the school year. Through weekly Reflection Pages, emails, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and more, we will continue to communicate with you about our program and your child's development. We encourage you to openly communicate with us in return, so that we can partner in your child's earliest learning experiences.

We look forward to a wonderful year together.

B'Shalom,

Alana Levitt

Director of Early Childhood

CONTACT INFORMATION

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@KI_ECC



Kehillat Israel Early Childhood Center

KI ECC CALENDAR 2023-24

The first day of school is Wednesday, August 23rd 2023

The last day of school is Wednesday, June 5th 2024

September 4th - Labor Day

September 15th - Erev Rosh Hahanah; noon dismissal

September 25th - Yom Kippur

October 6th - Simchat Torah/Shmini Atzeret

October 27th - Parent-Teacher Conferences

November 10th - Veteran's Day

November 22-24th - Thanksgiving

December 22-January 5th - Winter Break

January 15th - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 19th - Presidents Day

March 4th - Teacher Professional Development

March 15th - Parent-Teacher Conferences

March 25-29th - Spring Break

April 22-23rd - Passover

April 29th - 7th Day of Passover

May 27th - Memorial Day

Mark Your Calendars...

September 7th (5:30pm) Back to School Night

June 6th (9:30am): TK Graduation

June 7th: Class Parties

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Molly Steinsapir Early Childhood Center is a child-centered, play-based preschool. We utilize high quality, innovative teaching methods to stimulate learning in all developmental areas: social, emotional, intellectual, musical, spiritual and physical. Our aim is to foster a lifelong love of learning as well as a connection to Judaism and the Jewish people. We create a warm, loving environment for children to explore new concepts, develop a love of learning and build their confidence within a community steeped in Jewish values.

OUR MISSION

- Foster a love of learning, creativity and wonder.
- Provide a variety of opportunities for each child to grow at his or her own pace in the physical, cognitive, social, spiritual and emotional domains.
- Nurture positive moral and spiritual character development.
- Provide consistent opportunities for children to feel valued as competent, successful learners and loved for being who they are.
- Instill a love of Israel and positive sense of belonging to the Jewish people.
- Encourage families to develop a meaningful and lasting connection with Kehillat Israel that promotes participation in synagogue life beyond the ECC.
- Ensure that the faculty and staff are knowledgeable and skilled in child development and Jewish education, and encourage participation in ongoing education and self-evaluation.

PACKING LIST

Please do not send your child to school in anything that you wouldn't mind getting messy. Our school embraces the Outdoor Classroom, Messy Art, and Whole-Body Sensory exploration while fostering independence. Children change their clothes often, and will learn to dress themselves, take on and off their shoes, feed themselves, and much more.

A well stocked cubby is a very important part of helping children feel prepared for their day. Please provide:

- Water bottle, which will be sent home each day
- Two full sets of clothing that are seasonally appropriate, including socks and underwear. Replenish daily.
- Sunscreen and diaper cream as needed – please provide a note with instructions that gives the school permission to apply them
- Spare pair of shoes
- If your child wears diapers, please make sure to check that they have plenty, at least 5-10 diapers, at all times

Medications: If your child takes regular medication or needs an EpiPen/other medicine for an allergy, we ask that they not be kept in their cubby.

Medications must be labeled and in their original packaging with clear instructions. On the first day of school, you may give to the ECC Office to be kept at the front of the school.

Organic Snack and Hot Lunch are provided for every child daily.

We are proud to share that both our Hot Lunch and Snack menus are Kosher AND Organic! Snack and Lunch Menus are posted inside each of the classrooms and will be sent via email by the Room Parents each week.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Drop-off: 8:50-9:00am

Half-Day Pick-up: 12:00pm

Full-Day Pick-up: 2:00pm

Early and Late Care: 8:00am to 5:00pm

All parents/guardians must drive down to the lower parking level to park for drop off and pickup, unless in possession of a current handicapped placard. If parked in tandem spots, pull all the way forward. All children must be signed in and out with a full signature and time.

We ask that pick up and drop off are limited to 5 minutes or less in order to best serve our school community. Teachers are available to schedule 1:1 conferences after school if a longer conversation is warranted.

Late Pick Up: There is a five-minute grace period for late pick up. After that, there is a \$5 charge per each five-minute additional period that will be added to your account.

Special Guests / Playdates: If someone who is not on your emergency form is coming as a guest to the school or to pick your child up, please let us know via email (ecc@ourki.org) as soon as possible or in person, and we will notify security and inform teachers. When a guest arrives, they will need to provide a valid photo ID. Before large-scale programs there will be sign-up sheets to add names of guests in each classroom.

MASKING AND HAND WASHING

Our first priority is the health and safety of our children, staff, and greater community. You can help at home by encouraging proper hand washing, following all CDC and LA Department of Public Health Guidelines, and by getting vaccinated. Evolving COVID Protocols will be communicated throughout the year, we thank you for your continued understanding. If there is a Mask Mandate in place (either by the LADPH or a class exposure), we have a contingency plan for all classes to be outdoors. This will allow the option for children to be unmasked while at outdoors at school.

TRANSITIONING TO SCHOOL

The Kehillat Israel Early Childhood Center's "Separation Policy" is undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of our program for new families. Starting school is a significant milestone in your family's life and can be a source of positive growth for everyone involved—children, parents, and staff. Each child's transition will be catered to their needs and temperament, as well as the needs of the family.

We view separation as an important part of our curriculum, rather than a single event. Separation is never viewed as a problem, but as a process. Our belief is that separation reactions in children are valid and expected. Parents can make the transition from home a little easier if they talk to their child about what to expect, and be patiently reassuring.

In The Summer

1. Know that it's a process—it takes time. Talk to your child and acknowledge their feelings. Reassure them that school will be a wonderful, growing, learning experience. Be excited and positive about them attending school for the first time (even if you are still nervous).
2. Your feelings, actions, words, and facial expressions will affect your child's mood. If you are feeling secure, it will be easier for your child. If you express anxiety about leaving, then they will too.
3. Talk to your child about what to expect and reinforce that you will always come back.

When School Starts

1. Some children may need a week or so to transition into school. Your child's teachers will work with you on a Transition Plan that works best for your child.
2. Remind your child how much you love them, and how proud you are of them. On the first day, remind them that they are safe in school. Never leave without saying goodbye!
3. Children work best with routines. Create a brief goodbye ritual at drop off, like a special goodbye hug or handshake. Don't have long worrisome goodbyes, but do always say goodbye. Be positive and say you will see them again soon.

ADULT PARTICIPATION

Parent Association (PA)

Our Parent Association is made up of a room parent from each class, the PA President, the ECC Trustee, and the VP of Education. PA Meetings are an excellent way to learn more about the programs taking place in our school. Volunteers help coordinate Teacher Appreciation, Tot Shabbat, Swag, Mitzvah Meals, and more.

Shabbat Party - Weekly

Beginning in September, parents will be invited to join the weekly outdoor Shabbat Party on the Big Yard from 9-9:30am.

Shabbat Child - 1-2x per year

At Back to School Night, a sign-up sheet for Shabbat Child will be posted in each classroom. On the Friday of your child's turn, you will stay for the Shabbat Party in the morning, from 9-9:30am. Teachers will ask that you bring flowers and your child's favorite book to share.

Parent Teacher Conferences - Fall and Spring

Parents are invited twice a year for a short meeting with their child's teachers. Teachers will provide an update about your child's development and answer any questions you have. There is no school on conference days, and both parents are encouraged to participate. A sign-up sheet will be provided a month beforehand in order to schedule your family's conference time.

Hanukkah Pajamica - December

The Beat Buds perform an annual concert for our preschoolers to celebrate Hanukkah and parents are invited to join us for this outdoor concert. Children come in pajamas and celebrate Hanukkah together, and we ask that families bring a new set of pajamas for a child in need.

Graduation (Yellow Room) and Class Parties - June 6-7th

We will celebrate the growth and community building with Yellow Room Graduation and Class Parties.

ILLNESS POLICY

Children will not be permitted to stay at school if a staff member determines that the child shows signs of illness or infection. If you are aware that your child is sick, you must keep your child home. A doctor's note stating that your child is no longer contagious may be required before they return to school. In cases of emergency, 911 will be called first, followed by a call to the parent. Following an illness, children may return to school when:

- Fever has been absent for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication
- Diarrhea/Vomiting has stopped for 24 hours
- Nasal discharge is sporadic, not requiring continuous wiping
- 24 hours after beginning medication for strep, conjunctivitis, or impetigo
- One week after the onset (or all lesions are crusted) of chickenpox and Hand, Foot, & Mouth Disease.
- A negative Antigen Test is required to return to school after any sign of illness.

If your child has allergies, a doctor's note on file is needed documenting the symptoms and treatment so we can best meet your child's needs. We recognize that certain allergy symptoms are unavoidable; however they must not affect their behavior or ability to fully engage at school. If they do, we will ask that you pick them up.

Because our school is not equipped to care for ill children, parents and the staff will use the following criteria to exclude children with short-term illnesses from attending our school:

- Does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in usual activities (regardless of temperature)
- Constant Nasal Discharge: 3 wipes in 15 minutes is the general rule
- Obvious signs of illness such as a new cough, fever, diarrhea, vomiting
- Symptoms of a contagious disease or immediate need for medical evaluation

Due to state licensing requirements and CDC and LA County Department of Public Health guidelines, additional policies may be put into effect at any time.

- Be on alert for early signs of illness in your child, and keep them home if they are sick.
- By arriving at school and signing in your child, you are confirming that your child is free from any symptoms. This includes any symptoms of illness, COVID-Related or otherwise.

Any parent who knowingly sends a child to school with symptoms of illness may forfeit their enrollment; Failure to report any known case, contact, or symptom associated with COVID-19 to ECC Administration will result in discontinued enrollment.

If we determine that your child shows signs of being sick, the school office will call you to pick up your child within one hour. If your child is out sick or contracts a communicable disease, please notify the school immediately. State regulations require that families be notified of communicable diseases.

NUT FREE ALLERGY POLICY

There are often children with an allergy to peanuts, tree nuts, and/or nut products and oils in our schools. In some cases, students may have a severe and potentially fatal allergy to these products. Often, when products with nuts are consumed, traces of nut oil are left on the surfaces and/or on hands. As a result, we do not allow peanuts, tree nuts, or nut products and oils at KI. Foods that contain peanuts, tree nuts, or nut products may be labeled with the following words: peanut or nut butter, peanut extracts, peanut or almond flour, peanut, chestnut, hazelnut, walnut, almond, Brazil nut, cashew, macadamia, pistachio, pine nut, cold pressed, expressed or expelled peanut oil, ground nuts and mixed nuts, hydrolyzed plant and vegetable protein (in imported foods), natural flavoring.

What we will do:

KI will make reasonable efforts to minimize contact with peanuts and/or foods containing peanuts, peanut oil, and other nut products by students whose parents have identified them as having a nut allergy. These efforts are as follows:

- Staff is advised not to consume these products while on-site.
- Staff are advised not to provide food which, to our knowledge, contain these products.
- Nut products are not permitted to be brought in for classroom celebrations.
- All caterers and families planning events at KI are informed of this policy.

What we need from you:

- It is the responsibility of the parent(s) of a child who has a serious food allergy to notify the school Director and work with families to attain the goals of any emergency health plan.
- It is the responsibility of all congregants, staff, and contracted caterers that are provided with this policy to familiarize themselves with it and assist in maintaining its integrity.
- We ask that all parents of children in the preschool assist in washing their child's hands upon arrival to school to ensure the safety of our students and eliminate potential risk.

We appreciate the efforts that many of you have already made and continue to make on behalf of these families. With the help and understanding of all of you, we can know that we endeavor to provide a healthy learning environment for all of our children. If we all work together, to ensure that this policy is upheld, we will be involved in the highest level of Mitzvah (*Pikuach Nefesh*) preservation of human life.

BIRTHDAY PARTY POLICY

Kehillat Israel's Early Childhood Center and Reconstructionist Congregation is a warm, inclusive community. As such, we ask that families model the Jewish value of welcoming guests (*hachnasat orchim*) when planning a birthday party.

If you are inviting more than three children to your child's party, we ask that you invite the whole class or all children of the same gender identification. Invitations may not be handed out at school, please do so via Email/Evite/Paperless Post. We also ask that parents plan to have their child attend all birthday parties that they are invited to, as long as their child is healthy and the family is in town. Let's all celebrate one another and create the feeling of care and community that we hope to see more of in our world!

In class, we are happy to celebrate your child's birthday. You may provide an individual treat for every child (cupcake, popsicle, fruit snack, etc) to celebrate as a class. Please do not bring any additional items such as decorations or goodie bags. If your child has a summer birthday, please let your teachers know if you would like us to celebrate during the last week of the school year, or during Summer Camp.

EMERGENCY DRILL PROCEDURES

While it may be scary for adults to consider, it's important that we practice these drills in order to be prepared should the need arise. For more information.

Lockdown

Procedure: We will announce that we are having a lockdown drill on the loudspeaker. Teachers will move children away from doors and windows, close blinds and insert their Nightlocks (specialized safety lock that secures rooms). Lights will be turned off. Everyone will sit quietly and wait for our Security & Facilities Manager to give the all clear.

How we explain it to children: We tell the children that we are practicing for an emergency and going to hide quietly and be first time listeners. Our Security & Facilities Manager and ECC Director will come around to find us and tell us who had the best hiding spot.

Ways to talk to your children about it: When children talk about their lockdown drill at home it is great to discuss how vital it is to be a first time listener with adults that we trust. You can also name some adults that are important to listen to at home.

Earthquake

Procedure: Our Security & Facilities Manager will announce that we are having an earthquake drill on the loudspeaker. Children will all gather and cover under the classroom tables until it is announced that the shaking has stopped. At that point, we will evacuate to a designated evacuation location outside of the building.

How we explain it to children: We tell the children we are practicing for an emergency. Teachers will talk to the children about what to do if the room feels like it is shaking. Sometimes the teachers sing songs under the tables with the children as a way of practicing staying calm.

Ways to talk to your children about it: If your child comes home talking about a school earthquake drill, that is a good time to discuss your family's plan in case of this kind of emergency. Where should people seek shelter in each room? When your family evacuates, where is your place of meeting?

EMERGENCY DRILL PROCEDURES CONT'D.

Fire

Procedure: The fire alarm will sound and all children will line up by class. The children and teachers will evacuate to the designated evacuation location outside of the building. Teachers will let ECC administrators know that all of their children are accounted for.

How we explain it to children: We tell the children that when the alarm goes off it is time to line up and go to the parking lot next door. It is very important to listen to their teachers when we practice for emergencies.

Ways to talk to your children about it: When children talk about fire drills at home it is great to discuss the importance of being a first time listener with adults that we trust. You can also name some adults together that are very important to listen to at home.

Shelter in Place

Procedure: We will announce that we are having a shelter in place drill on the loudspeaker. Everyone will line up with their class and go indoors if they are outside. Teachers will let ECC administrators know that all of their children are accounted for and when drill is over, we will resume our schedules.

How we explain it to children: We tell the children we are practicing for an emergency. This is meant to give them experience doing something in order for it to feel more routine if ever there was a need for this type of drill.

Ways to talk to your children about it: When children talk about shelter in place drills at home it is great to discuss the importance of being a first time listener with adults that we trust. You can also name some adults together that are very important to listen to at home.

DISCIPLINE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Our child-centered approach and constructivist, emergent curriculum sets our school apart from others. Teachers work with each child on their social/emotional development and, when challenges occur, will help to make the experience one of learning and growth.

During toddlerhood and the preschool years, children are learning language, cognitive skills, physical skills, and social skills. Social skills are part of what we call “social/emotional-learning” and, along with processing emotions, are an integral part of our curriculum.

Children learn through their play, and experienced educators view preschoolers' play as their “work.” Often preschooler’s “work” leads to joy, glee, and excitement. However, “work” can occasionally also be difficult and frustrating. We expect that children may experience feelings like sadness, anger, and aggravation. While these feelings can be difficult to cope with, we are here to facilitate interactions and help children process their emotions in a positive, productive manner.

Our teaching goals reflect healthy development in the social/emotional domain by helping children learn to cope with and express their feelings verbally (and not physically). Our staff is trained to help anticipate the needs of a child/children who are experiencing difficulties in a social situation. Safety and prevention of harm are always our primary goal.

Preventative actions:

Teachers and staff use reflective communication skills to identify feelings and situations, and help child(ren) process feelings. They will incorporate social stories, class discussion, story telling, felt board activities, and other age appropriate methods in the classroom to demonstrate:

- a. Coping mechanisms
- b. Conflict resolution skills
- c. Respectful social interactions

DISCIPLINE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION CONT'D.

If a child hurts someone:

Using proven reflective communication skills and techniques, teachers will acknowledge non-verbal messages, such as facial and body expressions, to help the child who hurt another child separate angry feelings from empathic feelings.

The teacher and child will work together to develop a plan for next time the child is having “big feelings” that does not hurt anyone else’s body. The child will also be asked if there is anything that they might be able to do to help the injured child feel better.

When a child is hurt (minor injury):

Teachers will comfort the child and ask them to tell the child that injured them how they are feeling. The child will be encouraged to practice using their words to say that they did not like what the other child was doing. The injured child will also be asked if there is anything that they need to help them feel better to promote self-care and confidence building.

What's the deal with “sorry?”

Telling a child to say “I’m sorry” is not the same thing as teaching empathy. For young children, an apology often becomes a way out of taking responsibility for one’s actions (especially when it comes after an adult saying, “now say you’re sorry”). A true apology, based in empathy and care for another person, may take time for preschoolers and doesn’t mean they don’t feel remorse.

It is our goal to foster empathy and help build a community of learners who care for one another. In that spirit, we ask that children process their feelings about incidents together and work with their classmates to help create a plan for a better outcome in the future. And a genuine apology, in action or in words, not one instigated by an adult, is the desired product.



OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT KI ECC

Amazon Smile



When you shop at AmazonSmile, you'll find the exact same shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of eligible purchases to Kehillat Israel.

To enroll:

- From your browser, visit AmazonSmile.com to register.
- From the mobile app, Settings > See All Programs > AmazonSmile.

The program links to the device, not account, so activate wherever you shop with Amazon.

TerraCycle Recycling

Go Go Squeeze Pouch Program accepted waste:
snack pouches and caps. **Any brand.**



Oral Health Program accepted waste:

Toothpaste tubes and caps, toothbrushes, toothpaste cartons, toothbrush outer packaging, and floss containers. **Any brand.**

Please note: Electric toothbrushes, battery toothbrushes, and/or their parts are not recyclable through the program.



Bic Stationary Program accepted waste (Pens, pencils and markers):
All brands of empty writing instruments, glue sticks, watercolor dispensers, paint sets, and flexible packaging. **Any brand.**





RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF 2023-24 PARENT HANDBOOK

I certify that I have read, understand and agree to comply with the provisions listed herein.

Parent Signature: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____