



Handbook

The Jewish Community Center
2310 Oneida St.
Utica, NY 13501
315-733-2345

JUST PLAYING

When I am building in the block room,
Please don't say, "I'm just playing."
For, you see, I'm learning as I play
About balance and shapes.
When I'm getting all dressed up,
Setting the table, caring for the babies,
Don't get the idea I'm "just playing".
I may be a mother or a father someday.
When you see me up to my elbows in paint,
Or standing at an easel, or molding and shaping clay,
Please don't let me hear you say, "He's just playing"
For you see, I'm Learning as I play.
I'm expressing myself and being creative,
I may be an artist or an inventor someday.
When you see me sitting in a chair
"Reading to an imaginary audience,
Please don't laugh and think I'm, "just playing"
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I may be a teacher someday.
When you see me combing the bushes for bugs,
Or packing my pockets with choice things I find,
Don't pass it off as "just playing".
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I may be a scientist someday.
When you see me engrossed in a puzzle,
Or "plaything" at my school,
Please don't feel the time is wasted in "play"
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I'm learning to solve problems and concentrate.
I may be in business someday.
When you see me cooking or tasting foods,
Please don't think that because I enjoy it, it is just "play"
For, you see, I'm learning as I play
I'm learning how my body works.
I may be a doctor, nurse, or athlete someday.
When you ask me what I've done at school today,
And I say "I played",
Please don't misunderstand me
For, you see, I'm learning as I play.
I'm learning to be successful in work.
I'm preparing for tomorrow.
Today, I'm a child and my work is play.

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Jewish Community Center Preschool Program. We are happy that you have chosen our program for your child's preschool enrichment. We look forward to providing a year filled with exciting and rewarding experiences to all our preschool friends.

We hope the information provided in this handbook will help you to gain an understanding and appreciation for your child's preschool experience. The aim of preschool is to provide a basic foundation for your child's education and to make each child's first experience with school a successful and happy one.

As teachers and parents we must remember, and keep in mind, that a positive self-image is the main ingredient to a child's success. It is our job as parents and teachers to make this a priority.

As I look forward to the next 10 months, I am reminded of something I heard a long time ago. Knowledge enters the mind gradually, almost unconsciously. It is the teacher's job to plant it like a seed, tend to it with encouragement and love, and nurture it while it grows and blooms. I believe the teachers in our program provide such an atmosphere for all our students to grow and bloom.

Enjoy your year with us! We know we will enjoy the year getting to know all of our friends and families at the JCC.

Sincerely,

Lynne Dembrow
Preschool Director

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER PRESCHOOL IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CENTER. WE RECOGNIZE A CHILD'S PERSONALITY IS DEVELOPED IN THE EARLY YEARS. A MAJOR DEVELOPEMENTAL TASK IS MASTERING HOW TO GET ALONG WITH HER/HIMSELF, AS WELL AS WITH PEERS. THE TOTAL RELATIONSHIP OF GROUP ACTIVITY PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW IN EVERYWAY.

THE JCC PRESCHOOL STAFF FEEL AN OBLIGATION TO EACH CHILD TO GIVE LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING, TO PROVIDE EXPERIENCES FOR GROWTH — SOCIALLY, PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY AND MENTALLY. THE PRESCHOOL FOSTERS A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT, SELF-RELIANCE, SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-DISCIPLINE. ALL CHILDREN NEED TO LEARN TO EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS CREATIVELY THROUGH LANGUAGE, MOVEMENT, ART AND MUSIC. THE PRESCHOOL WILL HELP A CHILD TO OBSERVE, EXPERIMENT AND DISCOVER THROUGH SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES; EACH CHILD CAN DEVELOP SKILLS IN GIVING AND TAKING, SHARING AND PARTICIPATING IN A GROUP.

THE PRESCHOOL IS AN EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE HOME. IT ENCOURAGES AND STIMULATES INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY, PROMOTES INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP, DEVELOPS INDEPENDENCE AND CULTIVATES MOTOR SKILLS THROUGH LARGE AND SMALL MUSCLE ACTIVITIES.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE PROGRAM IS EVIDENCED IN A SECURE AND LOVING ATMOSPHERE WITH A BALANCE OF INFORMAL AND PLANNED EXPERIENCES IN WHICH TO LEARN TO GROW. WE PROVIDE A STAFF OF EXTREMELY DEDICATED, HIGHLY QUALIFIED, LOVING AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS.

Preschool Programs

Two Year Old Classes

Challenging the older toddler with materials and experiences that meet her/his developmental needs. The planned balanced curriculum includes: large and small motor activities, dramatic play, creative art, music, manipulative and water play. This positive first school experience prepares the growing toddler for additional group experiences by starting the process of teaching children to solve dynamics with songs, finger plays and stories. Age requirements for this class is 2 by December 1st. Currently, our class is limited to 12 spaces. Children may attend one to five days per week. If we reach full capacity, a waiting list will be initiated.

Three & Four Year Old Classes

The work of young children is to learn by playing, by doing, by experiencing and by discovering. Through a fully developed hands-on curriculum of creative arts, music and movement, sign language, science and nature, language communication skills, cooking, dramatic play, large and small motor coordination activities, and number and letter recognition, young children are encouraged to express themselves. In the context of a trusting and safe environment, the young preschoolers self-concept is enhanced as s/he learns how to get along well with others, learns to express emotions and feelings, develops a sense of responsibility and self-direction, learns helpful ways to aid in assuming some responsibility for her/his personal safety and experiences the discovery of success. The preschool supports the young child's growth experience by providing a structure of simple routines and defined limits within which the child can choose and, therefore, succeed at what s/he does. Our aim is to provide an atmosphere that stimulates curiosity, a questioning attitude and problem solving abilities, as well as eagerness for learning. Age requirement for the three year-old class is to turn 3 by December 1st and in the four year-old class, 4 by December 1st. Children may attend two to five days per week.

Games and More

Your child can take part in wonderful adventures through this extended program offered in the afternoon. From 12:00 noon - 2:00 p.m. children eat their lunch and join in some games and activities with all the other children in our preschool. Children must be potty trained to stay for this program.

Before and After Care

We offer a before and after care for the school year. This program is available for 3 and 4 year olds based on the school schedule . Registration is for the whole year and not on a daily basis. The before care is 8:00 - 9:00 a.m. and after care is 2 - 3 p.m. and 3-4 p.m. We reserve the right to cancel this program due to lack of participants

Enrichment Programs

Music

Children learn the language of music through activities they enjoy!

Joanne Yacovella is our Music Director for Musaerobics. These music classes are comprised of movement, dance, puppets, guitar and a whole lot of fun! Miss Joanne is an experienced preschool teacher, director and owner as well as an accomplished musician. Twice a month she brings her energy, enthusiasm, expertise and love of children to the preschool. Along with the preschool teachers Joanne helps to orchestrate special programs such as: Parent Appreciation Day, Moving Up Day and Graduation.

Yoga for Children

Children's yoga is taught to preschool children ages 3 through 5 years old. This class is an extra-curricular activity during the children's regular school day. Once a week children will learn yoga through adventure, story, games and songs. Yoga is not only fun and active, but it is said to build social and motor skills, increase concentration, and develop body awareness and self-esteem. It also helps children practice kindness, compassion, and gratefulness. All this while nurturing body, mind and spirit. Abby Stahl is our yoga instructor.

Get Set For School

Get Set For School is our writing program in the 4 year old class. This nationally acclaimed program incorporates child-friendly teaching strategies, such as using music and movement to bring lessons to life, and multisensory manipulatives to build fine and gross motor skills. Our readiness and writing lessons teach body awareness, cooperation, taking turns, listening, crayon grip, drawing, building, letter and number recognition, capital letter and number formation.

Physical development and social/behavioral skills are particularly important in Pre-K. In fact, children need to develop both fine and gross motor skills to be able to write. All these skills are critical to good emotional and social development and future academic performance.

Brain Gym Program

The Brain Gym concepts will be introduced to the Preschool children each day. This program is an educational program which uses hydration and simple movements to enhance learning abilities in children. Brain Gym exercises have shown that these simple movements prepare children with the physical skills they need to learn to read, write and function effectively in the classroom. The teachers will be using concepts designed in the Brain Gym Program, including proper hydration, an integral part of this program.

The Curriculum

Based on the belief that children learn through play, active manipulation of their environment, life experience and communicating with peers and adults, the curriculum is designed to facilitate children's involvement in their own learning. The program balances active and quiet play. Children work both alone and in small groups where teachers facilitate the children's interactions with each other and their environment. Teachers observe each child's activities in order to tailor and expand curriculum to meet individual needs and interests. Teachers encourage parents to maintain close communication with staff, and work closely with parents to develop strategies for dealing with specific issues.

Typical Daily Schedule

Daily activities include a variety of active and quiet individual and group projects. A typical day may consist of the following: morning circle, free play, art projects, cooking, creative expression, sand and water play, blocks, books, games, puzzles, science exploration. The teachers work seamlessly in each class providing enriching activities while encouraging skill development in all areas of Early Childhood Education: cognition, fine/gross motor, social/emotional, play, language, and self help.

Sign your child in and out each day. Attendance and Health Checks will be taken daily.

Free Play

Free Play is a time for children to explore and learn through numerous activities. Play practices and enhances concentration, imagination, cooperation, and creation. It allows a child to practice grown-up behavior and develop a sense of control over one's own world. Choices during this time of day will include some combination of the following: block area, dramatic play, math manipulatives, writing center, reading area, listening center, puzzles, puppets, sand and water, table, science exploration table, painting/drawing, computer, legos, etc. Each area allows for children to work on a variety of skills and concepts. For instance, the block area is a place where children develop and use math skills such as measuring, estimating, classifying, predicting, counting, etc. Free Play activities may also tie into a various theme or skill that is being covered.

Circle Time

Circle time helps reinforce a sense of classroom community, respect for others, listening and language skills, turn taking, and self-esteem. Children learn to participate in a group and how to communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings. Children also learn to respect one another's ideas and feelings. The ability to communicate is one of the most important and essential life skills that a child can acquire. It takes time, patience, and experience to strengthen a child's ability to communicate.

Snacks

Snack time is an opportunity for children to sit and relax and enjoy a healthy snack. Children engage in small group discussions during these times. Children often discuss various activities that occur both in and outside of school. This is an opportunity for children to build language skills through the communication of thoughts and feelings, practice social skills and reinforce table manners.

On Fridays the children have Challah and juice as part of our Shabbat celebration. Snack donations are always welcomed and the children really enjoy bringing them in to their class.

Outside/Gym Activity

Outside activity is an essential part of a child's development and learning experience. Physical activities that include running climbing, skipping, and balancing enhances a child's large motor development. Expressing newly acquired physical ability and control heightens self-esteem. Outside activity is also beneficial in building a child's social skills, not to mention that this age group requires so called "down time" or should we say "some time to run"! During inclement weather the children go to the full sized gym at the Center.

General Information

Communication with Staff

While staff welcome and value the opportunity to meet and talk with parents, it is difficult for the staff to speak with parents when class is beginning or ending or while it is in session. Therefore, parents are encouraged to communicate through e-mail or call 733-2345 to contact Lynne Dembrow, the Director and she will give the message to the appropriate teacher.

Communication about your child's progress can be discussed during a planned meeting with the teachers.

Teachers communicate classroom activities and events through weekly newsletters, calendars and schedules;(website, face book, or hard copy). Please check your child's cubby and/or the JCC website to ensure you are updated. The school is trying to be as green as possible, therefore, many notices will be provided on the JCC website. At this site you can access the preschool and information concerning each classroom. The class email address is on each classroom page.

Conferences and Meetings

Parent conferences and progress reports are offered twice a year. Conferences may be

initiated by the parents or the teacher at any time during the year.
Progress notes will be sent home twice a year, mid-year/January and in May.
Listening conferences occur when requested for you to speak with your child's teacher regarding specific concerns you have for your child.
It is best to talk openly when children are not present. Please arrange for a babysitter for conferences and meetings.

Calendar and School Closing

The JCC program follows the New Hartford Public Schools academic calendar.
Copies of the current calendar are provided to all parents at the beginning of each school year. In case of inclement weather, snow or icy streets, please turn to WKTV television station for JCC preschool closings. If New Hartford School closes we will close, but if they are delayed we will have a regular day.

Crisis and Emergency Plans

Please note that during inclement weather, if you want to pick up your child early, you are encouraged to do so.
Any student information forms sent home should be filled out carefully by all parents and caregivers. It is very important for parents to keep the school informed of any changes to phone numbers (work, home, cell phones, beepers, emergency contacts), address, day care schedules, etc. During an emergency situation, time is crucial so current data is essential to make sure your child arrives home safely.

Clothing

School is fun and when children play they should be dressed in comfortable, washable clothes that can take paints, spills, dirt and lots of activity. Sneakers are necessary for safe climbing. Your child will be playing outside if weather permits. Please dress your child according to weather conditions. Another suggestion is to keep a complete change of clothing in your child's cubby for unexpected emergencies. LABEL ALL CLOTHING!!!

Toilet Training

If your child is having difficulty in this area the teachers will help to encourage use of the toilets at school, please bring it to our attention upon registration. You are asked to leave diapers, wipes, extra clothes, etc. in your child's cubby. We will guide them through the steps to clean and dress themselves. There is diaper changing in the 2 year old room.

Birthdays

Birthdays are a fun time. Each class has its own special birthday celebration. If you wish to do something special for your child's birthday, please coordinate this with his/her teacher a week or more before the event. We ask that healthy snacks be brought in.

ILLNESS GUIDELINES

Here are some guidelines that might be helpful in keeping your child as healthy as possible. As you know, preschoolers do not have the same kinds of self-care skills for a cold or infection as school-age children. Also, young children can be in very close contact with each other while they play. This information will assist you in making decisions about when to send your child to school if they are not feeling well.:

- ♦ A Fresh Cold - Continuous nasal discharge, cough, watery eyes which has developed within the past 24-48 hours is considered contagious
- ♦ Fever - Must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school
- ♦ Vomiting/Diarrhea - Keep at home for 24 hours after symptoms have resolved and the child can keep food and fluids down
- ♦ Strep Throat - Must wait 24 hours after antibiotics have begun
- ♦ Conjunctivitis - If conjunctivitis is diagnosed, your child will be prescribed eye ointment and should not return to school for 24 hours
- ♦ Head Lice - Until treated and has been checked by a physician

In addition, if your child is only mildly ill but is irritable and cannot fully participate in the day's program, they should remain at home. If a child appears ill at school, the staff will call you to come pick up your child as soon as possible. We can't prevent all illness, but if we work together we can minimize the spread of germs. It is very important to keep the classroom teacher aware and up to date on any medical conditions, and/or medications your child is taking. Please contact Lynne Dembrow with any questions or concerns regarding your child's health at school.

***** PLEASE NOTIFY THE SCHOOL AT ONCE IF YOUR CHILD HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO, OR HAS CONTRACTED, A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE.***

Medication:

We are licensed to administer emergency medication such as an epi pen or inhaler. If your child requires cough syrup, cough drops, etc. it will be requested that you keep her/him home.

Discipline Policy

Good discipline policy is based on respect, honesty, trust, caring and love, Discipline is what we do for and say to children to help them develop and internalize self-control, self-respect, self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-determination. The result of a "good discipline approach" is a child who learns to conduct him/her self in a socially acceptable way.

When your child experiences difficulty in the classroom, the staff will work with your child and *encourage the use of words and listening to the words of others*. Therefore, our first course of action is always **NEGOTIATION**.

The Preschool staff works at positively reinforcing acceptable behavior. If possible and appropriate to the situation, our teachers will *redirect inappropriate behavior and /or activity*. Therefore, our second course of action will be **REDIRECTION**.

In an extreme circumstance of unacceptable behavior, the child will have to take a time out from the situation to have a "Think Out," which is movement exercises and hydration. The Think Out space is in the room and away from the group activity. The Think Out is supervised by a teacher that will work through the behavior. The teachers will work with your child to show them other means of acceptable behavior. Your child is reminded why he/she is in Think Out prior to rejoining the group. If there is a continuing problem, your child will be brought to the Director's office and you may be contacted.

If 2 or more children are involved in an incident, the staff will try through conversation to create a *win/win solution for the conflict*. In this matter, we are encouraging language development, problem solving skills, and means for future negotiations.

We encourage parents to discuss with the Director any questions or problems that are not clearly understood. *Communication and consistency* between home and school are essential to managing children's behavior, and moreover, they are essential to the healthy development of your child.

*Although teachers expect to deal with the impulsive behavior of the young child, frequent or dangerous aggression, disruptive, and/or inappropriate behavior cannot be permitted. We will notify families immediately if their child's behavior is unduly disruptive or if the child does not respond to the teacher's efforts at discipline. We rely on the family's cooperation in handling such behavior. When family and JCC staff, working together, cannot control a child's disruptive behavior, the JCC retains the right to terminate care for the child.

PRESCHOOL ADJUSTMENT

IF YOUR CHILD HAS NEVER ATTENDED PRESCHOOL BEFORE.....

In order to make your child's adjustment to the new setting an easier and more lasting one, we urge you to be available for the first few days that your child comes to Pre-school. We may call you at home or at work if you are needed. Your child may not be ready to stay for the entire morning period. Your availability can be most helpful in making your child's experience an enjoyable one.

When your child goes to Preschool, s/he is taking the first "big step" away from complete dependence on her/his parents. S/he may need your help in adjusting. Your child may feel uneasy in a new place with new people, worried about threatened separation from parents and confused by meeting many new children. You can help by not being frustrated during the first few days if your child:

- ⇒ Cries easily
- ⇒ Is wetting
- ⇒ Is shy and clings to you
- ⇒ Is aggressive and will not share

These are major symptoms of tension in a new situation and will disappear as s/he becomes acquainted with the children, teachers and school. Be sympathetic and understanding.

Act out the experience of going to school with her/him at home. Discuss what s/he may expect. When you get to school (if you feel your child needs to) let him/her stand and watch — watching is taking part.

Because children are easily effected by their environment, they often reflect the tensions and concerns of the people with whom they are closest. Working together, we will try to provide an understanding atmosphere. Please notify the child's teacher of any changes in your household that would affect your child. For example: a parent away for several days, the birth of a new baby, divorce or death of a significant loved one, or death of a pet. This information will be kept confidential, if requested, and will allow us to help your child if s/he needs it.

Please help your child establish the habit of getting to and from school on time so s/he can fully participate in all activities of the program.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Parents have a vital role to play in our school. School and home coordination is necessary to maximize the child's learning experience. Everyone has something to contribute. Following are specific areas of need for volunteers:

1. Classroom Assistance:

- a. Resource specialist (share a special skill or talent).
- b. Participation on field trips is needed.

2. School Improvements:

- a. Developing classroom materials (at home or at school)
- b. Participation in maintaining the upkeep of school equipment.

3. Fund-raising:

Active participation is needed at bake sales and other endeavors. All of these can be accomplished through active participation in the Preschool Parent Group!!!

Preschool Parent Group

Members of the group work with the Preschool Director in reviewing programs: discussing ideas, improvements and solving problems. The group meets on a regular basis during the year and is composed of all interested parents and other interested members of the JCC. The Parent Group is chaired by one or two individuals who organize a variety of activities to enhance the Preschool experience for our children.

Trip Information

Field trips enable our children to enjoy varied experiences, and become more aware of the community in which they live. A bus may be provided through the Preschool Parent Group.

Parent Input

The preschool staff recognizes the important role of parents in the learning process. We welcome and encourage you to take an active role in your child's program. We also hope that you will enjoy new friendships with other families as a result of your child's experience.

