

Early Childhood Learning Center

Parent Handbook

2010-2011

**EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER - TEMPLE ISRAEL
PARENT HANDBOOK
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EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER

The Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC) is an important part of Temple Israel. One of the school's goals is to introduce our children to the religious, cultural, social and ethical beliefs that define the Temple and reflect its mission.

Shabbat is celebrated each Friday in every classroom, with the exception of Groups I and IIIW PM, which celebrate Shabbat on Thursdays since they do not meet on Fridays. In addition, children are always welcome at the Temple's Shabbat and holiday Services as well as the regularly scheduled Tot Shabbats and family services.

Religious holidays at the ECLC are celebrated and enhanced through music, art, drama, and cooking projects. These programs strengthen the ties between our ECLC families and the Temple. Please note on your school calendar the three School evenings and Shabbat Lives. We will notify you of additional events and provide a complete Tot Shabbat schedule. We encourage all school families to attend these events and become more involved in Temple life.

PARENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS

Parent-Teacher Relationships

You are encouraged to become active in the life of your child's school. The relationship that will develop with your child's teacher is an essential one. Generally, there is a great deal of informal communication between parents and teachers in our school. The following guidelines have proven to be helpful in assuring a positive parent-teacher relationship:

1. **Parents may wish to see a teacher on an informal basis outside of school.** As this can be very awkward for teachers, **we ask that these requests not be made by parents.** The ECLC expects teachers to assume and maintain a professional relationship at all times. Teachers should not be offered and may not accept caregiving and/or babysitting jobs for children currently enrolled in the school or their younger/older siblings. ECLC teachers are not permitted to have any other financial arrangements with parents of current or future students.
2. **Teachers should never be approached to tutor or coach children for the ERB's.**
3. Teachers must respect confidentiality at all times. They may not share information about parents, children or colleagues from the Early Childhood Learning Center community with any parents.
4. **Teachers may not leave their classrooms during school hours to talk with parents on the telephone. The school office will take and relay any parental messages.** The end-of-the-hall telephone is for emergencies only. Messages will either be placed in the teacher's mailbox or, in case of an emergency, delivered directly to the teacher.
5. Divorced Parents: The school must be a neutral environment for your child. The school will not serve as a means of communication between parents since the nature of such communication is a family matter. The school will endeavor to send mailings, which include contracts, bills, and invitations to school functions to both parents. Teachers will have parent conferences with both parents, either separately or jointly as requested by the parents.

Parent Conferences

Teachers will communicate with parents on an informal basis throughout the school year, sharing their insights and observations. Parents should not make inquiries regarding their child in the presence of their child. Parents may request the teacher to contact them at home at a time when their child would not likely be privy to the conversation. There will, however, be two formal parent teacher conferences during the course of the year.

The first conference will take place in November | December and the second in April. Both parents and/or custodial parents are required to attend the conference in November | December. In April, one or both parents attend. The conference should be about 45 minutes in length and during this time your child's teachers will present a clear picture of your child covering all aspects of his/her life at school. For parents applying out, the information shared at the November conference is information that is likely to be on your child's ongoing school report. Teachers will also anticipate hearing about your child's life at home as observations between home and school can be surprisingly different at times. The first Parent

Conference Day will be on November 30th for all Group I families and Groups II, IIIM, IIIS, IIIW PM, IV and V on December 1st. Check your calendar. For the April conference, school will be closed Wednesday April 13th for Group II and Thursday April 14th for Groups I, IIIM, IIIS, IIIW PM, IV and V. Teachers will have a sign-up sheet available for the November | December conference at either your initial school visit or Curriculum Night.

Social Worker

Our licensed clinical social worker from the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services is Annette Zygmunt, PHD. She is in all the classrooms on a regular basis and serves as a resource for both the parents and the teaching teams. She may be contacted through the ECLC office for individual consultations with parents.

BEGINNING SCHOOL

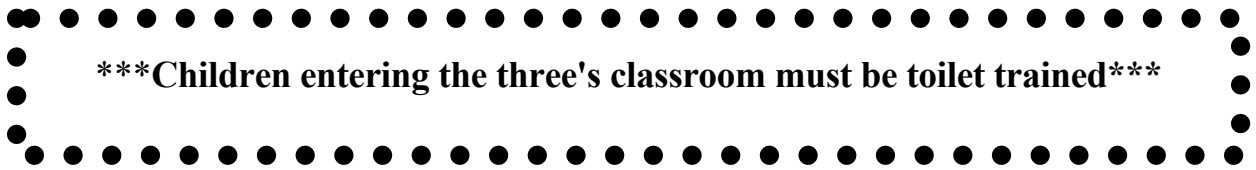
Separation

A workshop on beginning school and the process and expectations of separation is offered before school begins. This year it will be on Thursday, September 16th at 6PM in the Chapel. There is an RSVP form in this packet. The workshop is led by the Director and focuses on what you as parents and the school can do to help your child feel good about being in school without you. Separation is an important aspect of your child's development. Each child will deal with this process according to his/her own individual needs and feelings. Not wanting to say good-bye to the people who love you the most is a normal, healthy human trait and it will not be considered a problem if your child experiences difficulty. Time, patience, understanding and working closely with your child's teachers are the important ingredients for a successful beginning of school.

School Visits

You will be receiving a call from your child's teachers in late August or early September to schedule your child's school visit prior to the beginning of school. **If you will not be at your home phone number, please call the school office to leave a number where you may be reached. These individual family visits with both parents and child take place before school begins and tend to be most beneficial for your child. It is not appropriate for either older or younger siblings to take part in the school visits. Please schedule your visits at a time when you have arranged coverage for older or younger children.** It is important for your child to be able to meet with his/her teachers, begin to explore the room and its contents and be shown his/her cubby. This will greatly enhance the child's comfort level and sense of ease during the initial days of school.

Toilet Training



*****Children entering the three's classroom must be toilet trained*****

If this developmental milestone has not yet been achieved, summertime is an excellent time to begin the process. Please know that there will always be the inevitable accident, particularly in the beginning of the school year and those accidents will always be handled in a very low-keyed manner. It is imperative, therefore, that your child's extra clothing be in his/her cubby on the 1st day of school. Children in Groups I and II may be, but are not expected to be toilet trained. You can expect the teachers to help you in this process as the year progresses. **If your Group I or II child is not yet toilet trained, you must bring in extra diapers and wipes.** Group I and II parents should let the teachers know where they are in this process during their school visit.

Parental Concerns

If you have any concerns about your child, your child's teacher, or an aspect of the running of the school, **please address those concerns to the Director.** At times parents may bring their concerns to their child's teachers and most general classroom concerns can be managed by the teachers themselves. Concerns dealing with the integrity and functioning of the school, however, must be brought to the attention of the Director.

PROCEDURES: ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Arrival

We suggest that parents of two-year-olds bring their children to school around 9:00 am or a bit later as II's might be overwhelmed by the crush of parents and children riding the elevator from 8:50-9:00 a.m. This is especially true during the first two weeks of school.

Please note that all parents are expected to be out of their child's classroom by 9:10 at the latest in order for teachers to begin the school day. It would be appreciated if parents would congregate in the lobby downstairs, if waiting for a friend.

If you arrive before 8:50 a.m., you must wait in the downstairs main lobby until 8:50 a.m. **Your child must never be left unattended in the lobby or placed on the elevator without a family member or his/her caregiver.** Please make every effort to bring your child to school on time. It can be difficult for a child to be the last one to enter the classroom when the group activities have already begun. An Early Drop-off Program is available starting at 8:15 a.m. for children in Groups III, IV and V. A sign-up form is enclosed.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT WILL NOT ALLOW STROLLERS ON THE ELEVATOR. If you live within a few blocks of school, walking is highly recommended for your child's physical and emotional development. Strollers, if brought to school, must be parked outside the Temple between the gate and the front door. Bicycles, tricycles and/or scooters must also be parked in this location.

Dismissal

Dismissal Times

Group I	Young Two's (T, TH)	11:30 A.M.
Group II	Older Two's (M, W, F)	11:30 A.M.
Group IIIM & IIIS	Threes	11:45 A.M.
Group IIIM & IIIS	Optional Extended Day (T, TH)	2:00 P.M.
Group IIIW (P.M.)	Threes, Afternoon	3:15 P.M.
Group IV	Fours	2:15 P.M.
Group V	Older Fours/Fives	2:45 P.M.

**Please note that Friday is a half-day for Groups IV and V. Dismissal will be at noon on Fridays.

All I's and II's will be dismissed on the 4th floor from September-March. After Spring Break I's and II's will be dismissed from the 1st floor. All III's (both A.M. and P.M.), IV's and V's children will be dismissed from the 1st floor **from the first day of school.** Parents and/or caregivers are expected to arrive promptly through the Lexington Avenue doors (usual entry) and proceed through the inside lobby to wait by the sanctuary doors for your child. Children will be individually released to parents and/or caregivers. **Please do not take your child until a teacher delivers your child to you.**

We have a staggered dismissal; in order to make this work successfully, **please leave promptly once you or your caregiver has picked up your child.** You may regroup in the outside courtyard. Teachers will need written playdate consent in order to release a child to another parent or caregiver. If you or your caregiver are late, your child will be brought back to the school office, and a call will be placed to your home or work. Teachers will notify the Director when a parent or caregiver is repeatedly late.

If you expect to be delayed, please notify the school office. Please make every attempt to be prompt. A late pick-up is disconcerting to your child.

NEVER TAKE YOUR CHILD WITHOUT NOTIFYING HIS/HER TEACHER.

Siblings

The ECLC welcomes both older and younger siblings. While a sibling may accompany his/her brother/sister to school in the a.m. it is not appropriate for the sibling to spend time playing or visiting in the classroom as teachers are expected to begin the day no later than 9:10 a.m. **All parents are expected to be out of their child's classroom by 9:10 a.m.**

The events of the school year are focused around the children currently enrolled in the program. When it is your child's turn to be Shabbat boy or girl, parents and siblings are invited to join in. However, other celebrations such as Hanukkah, Seders, and End-of-the-Year Classroom parties **do not include siblings.** **In Groups IV and V, however, older siblings are welcome to the graduation programs.**

Classroom Visitations

At times throughout the year parents may ask if an older sibling may visit the classroom. This is up to the individual teacher. If a guest is coming we welcome them to stay for only the first 15 minutes of the morning.

A parent or caregiver must stay with a visiting sibling. Occasionally when ongoing schools have vacations there may be a large number of returning older siblings requesting a visit. In order for the classroom programs to be most effective, these visits would need to be spaced throughout the week. **REQUESTS FOR VISITORS MUST BE MADE AT LEAST ONE DAY IN ADVANCE.**

HEALTH & MEDICAL POLICIES

The medical form from the Department of Health must be filled out by your child's pediatrician and returned to school **BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS**. Your child must have a medical exam within 90 days before school starts. **No child will be admitted the first day unless we have his/her medical form.** This is a New York City Health Department law.

Parents of children in Group I (Young 2's) will need to submit an additional medical form when your child turns 2.6 yrs old. This means you may need to schedule your child's appointment before you actually receive the Health Department medical forms. It is the parent's responsibility to keep up-to-date with your child's re-examination schedule. Please mark your calendars now.

Please notify the school office if your child will be absent for any reason. The school must be immediately notified if the illness is contagious. If any student in your child's group develops a contagious disease, you will be notified. Should your child develop conjunctivitis (pink eye), strep throat, etc. he/she must be kept at home for a full 24 hrs after medication has begun.

If your child has a cold or is under the weather, please keep him/her home for the day. A child with diarrhea must be kept home for 24 hours. **It is Board of Health mandate that a child must remain at home for a full 24 hour period after having diarrhea.** This will protect your child's classmates and the staff. Even without a fever, if your child is not functioning at his/her usual pace, please keep him/her at home. We realize how difficult it may be to arrange home care for a sick child, but this is a policy designed to protect your child as well as others.

If your child has had a fever, he/she must have one temperature-free day before returning to school. **It is Board of Health mandate that a child must remain at home for a full 24 hour period after having a fever. DO NOT** send your child to school if you feel he/she is not recovered enough to go outdoors. Children too sick for outdoor play should not be sent to school. Terrace/roof time is an essential part of our curriculum. Children play on the terraces everyday unless it is raining.

*****Please note - When it has snowed, and for several days following - children should wear or bring snowpants and boots for their outdoor time. Snow remains on terraces long after it has disappeared from the sidewalks. Reminder- Please label snowpants as well as boots, hats, mittens, etc. *****

The school office will call you if your child becomes ill while at school. It is imperative, therefore, that the school office always has your up-to-date home, work and cell numbers on file.

FOR LEGAL REASONS, TEACHERS ARE NOT TO ADMINISTER ANY MEDICATIONS TO CHILDREN.

It is imperative that you notify the school if your child has, or develops, an allergic condition. We must know how symptoms might manifest themselves.

SHABBAT, LUNCH, SNACKS AND BIRTHDAY PARTIES

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• *****The ECLC is a peanut-aware school. This includes not only peanuts, but**
• **peanut oil as well. Please see enclosed sheet for additional names of**
• **peanut derivatives. *****
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Shabbat

Shabbat will be celebrated in each classroom every Friday and in Group I and Group IIIW PM on Thursday. Depending on the size of your child's group, he/she will be the Shabbat child at least once, possibly twice, a year.

On your child's Shabbat Day he/she will be asked to bring in challah and fresh flowers. We encourage parents to come for snack when their child is the Shabbat Boy/Girl. This is also an appropriate time for an older or younger sibling to visit.

Lunch

If your child stays for an extended day, please send in a healthy lunch for your child. The school tries to emphasize good nutrition and teachers will encourage children to eat their lunches. Uneaten food will be left in the lunch boxes and sent home so you can see what your child has or has not eaten. This will help you in choosing food that your child likes to eat. During warm weather you may want to place a mini ice pack in your child's lunch box.

Gogurts have been banned for both lunch and healthy snacks. They have proven to be exceedingly messy for group situations. To avoid possible choking situations we request that you not send in STRING CHEESE, CARROTS, and/or CARROT STICKS, REGULAR POPCORN OR HARD CANDIES.

Fresh Fruit Healthy Snacks

In addition, teachers will have each family bring a fresh fruit snack from time to time. Bananas, apples, oranges, clementines, sliced strawberries, etc. are some suggestions. Should you choose to send in grapes or strawberries they must be cut into quarters to prevent choking. We would like the children to periodically have a fresh fruit snack that would otherwise pose a storage problem for the school. Your child's teacher will notify you of the snack schedule.

Birthdays/Celebrations

Celebrating your child's birthday at school is completely optional. Some parents may celebrate with a family party and/or children's party and may, therefore, feel a birthday snack is too redundant. If parents choose to have a special birthday snack in their child's classroom, this will be during the class's regular snack time. Your child's teacher will be helpful in suggesting a festive, yet healthy, birthday snack. Please keep in mind that **it is merely a special snack** and not intended to be a full-fledged party. The birthday child's parents are welcome to come.

If you choose to have a birthday party outside the school we suggest you invite the entire class. Children will talk about the party in school and no one should be excluded from the birthday party fun. If the entire class would be too large, we suggest you invite all the children the same sex as your child. **School and school functions are meant to be inclusive, not exclusive.** This is a sensitive issue and we appreciate your help in this matter.

We also suggest that parents research birthday party entertainers before hiring them. Despite their promotional literature some entertainers are inappropriate and/or questionable in their attitudes toward young children.

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New Birthday Book Program

The Parents Association will be starting a Birthday Book Program in each classroom. On your child's birthday it is requested that he/she bring in a book to donate to the classroom. A list of suggested books will be provided by the classroom teacher and the child and parents can decide which book to give. Our hope is this gift will help children understand the important role of giving (as well as receiving) and will enrich their sense of contributing to the life of their classroom and the school.

In this spirit, the teachers have all prepared wish lists that will be given to the class representatives for distribution, as well as posted by teachers in their classrooms.

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EXMISSIONS

It is the Director's job to guide parents in the application process to ongoing schools whether a family is choosing a public or private school. Guidance for ongoing private schools will begin with an Exmissions Meeting in late spring the year before you apply out. If you are applying to a private school, the Director will review ERB results with you, help you develop an appropriate list of schools and review expectations for ongoing school interviews.

A list of public elementary schools requiring an application will be distributed in September providing parents with the name of the program and the contact phone number. The application process for all public schools follows specific guidelines set by the Board of Education including zoned schools, date-of birth and test results for special programs.

All parents should keep a watchful eye on the Parent Bulletin Board in the school foyer. All notices as to school tours and School Forums sponsored by the Parents League and open to the public will be posted there. These forums often focus on both public and private schools and are informational and informative.

There will be an Exmissions Forum early in the school year to address any concerns and/or questions that may have arisen since the spring meeting. This year's forum will be held on Friday,

September 24th at 9:15 a.m. in the Chapel. The goal of the ECLC is to assess your child's learning style and make the best possible match to an ongoing school. Whether you will be applying to a public or private school, our commitment is to help ECLC parents be as knowledgeable as possible. This can be a stressful time for both parents and children. My door will be open. Come in for a chat.

LIBRARY

Throughout the school year parents will be asked to read to their child's class during a specific library time. Reading to your child's class in our library is a wonderful way for parents to enrich the life of our school. Jessica Dreyfuss, assistant teacher in Group I & II, will oversee the library.

PARENTS ASSOCIATION

The Early Childhood Learning Center Parents Association is the organization within the school that sponsors all important school events, as well as directly representing a "parent voice" to the Early Childhood Committee. **The Parents Association President is chosen by the Director of the school.** The President will then select his/her officers. Parents interested in being considered for these roles should notify the current President by April. For continuity a board of officers will serve a two-year term.

Parents are asked to contribute Parent Association dues of \$85 each year. If you have not submitted your Parents' Association dues, please do so now. These dues cover the cost of the Class Welcome Parties, Curriculum Night in October, the End-of-the-Year cocktail party and any incidentals relating to the Parents Association throughout the year.

President

The ECLC President is the link between the parents, the school Director and the Early Childhood Committee. Sarah Stafford is the ECLC President and will serve until June 2011. The President is informed about up-to-date information involving parents and children at the school. He/she is responsible for organizing the following:

1. Enlisting all parents who will have responsibilities in the school each year. This includes the other officers of the Parents Association, class parents, the chairs or co-chairs for the Benefit Auction, the Book Fair, Parent Librarian and the Parent Discussion Group. He/she will assist and support these chairs as needed and aid them in recruiting other parent volunteers.
2. Speaking to all new incoming families to welcome them to ECLC and answering any questions they might have about the school.
3. Attending the Separation Workshop that new, incoming parents attend before the school year begins.
4. Arranging refreshments for Phase-In in September, greeting all parents at the coffee hour during the first week of school.
5. Attending all Class Welcome Parties, welcoming all parents to the school and informing them about the Parents Association activities for the upcoming year.
6. Hosting Curriculum Night in October and organizing class parents to supply refreshments.

7. Attending admissions tours for prospective parents, greeting them as they arrive and making brief opening remarks.
8. Organizing the supplying of refreshments for the parent discussion groups.
9. Hosting the End-of-the-Year Cocktail Party. Requesting help of class parents to supply refreshments.
10. Becoming a member of the Temple Board and attending regular meetings.

Vice-President

The Early Childhood Learning Center Vice-President assists the President in anything he/she requests during the school year. He/she is also the ECLC representative to the Parents League. Betty Wiggins is serving as Vice-President.

Treasurer

The Early Childhood Learning Center School Treasurer is responsible for keeping all books regarding the Parents Association, the Benefit Auction, and the Parent Association dues. He/she will make periodic reports to the Director regarding these funds throughout the school year and make an End-of-the-Year report to the parent body at the Cocktail Party, scheduled for May 19th. Sarah Ostrie is serving a two-year term as Parents Association Treasurer.

Class Parent Reimbursements. All receipts should be submitted to the treasurer through the school office for reimbursement. There will be a ceiling on how much can be spent at each event. Please consult with the Treasurer before hosting or coordinating an event to ascertain the budget.

Benefit Auction - The Treasurer records all monies spent and contributed before and during the Benefit Auction and provides money or reimbursements for all pre-Benefit Auction purchases to the Benefit Auction Chair/Co-chairs. This year's Auction Co-chairs are Loren Lieberman and Michaela Roth.

Secretary

The ECLC secretary will be responsible for recording the minutes of the P.A. meetings. In addition he/she will handle all necessary correspondence for the Parents' Association. Geneane Bloomfield-Baker is serving a two year term as the P.A. secretary.

The ECC (Early Childhood Committee)

The ECC is the ECLC's immediate governing Board. Hartley Bernstein chairs the committee which is comprised of both general synagogue members and nursery school parents.

Closing Comments

This Handbook contains a great deal of information. Please take the time to reread it. It is information that will ensure all of us - children, parents and faculty - a successful school year. **It would also be helpful to have your caregiver read through the Handbook.** We are looking forward to another wonderful year at Temple Israel ECLC.