



PARENT HANDBOOK



Welcome!

Thank you for choosing the Pennie Z. Davis Early Learning Center. You have chosen a school with a proven track record of excellence.

In order to ensure a smooth transition for your child, please take time to read the information in this Parent Handbook regarding our philosophy, goals, programs, policies and procedures. Please call us if you have any questions or concerns. Your thoughts are important to us!

Mission Statement

The Pennie Z. Davis Early Learning Center (ELC) is a place where children can develop healthy independence, positive social interactions and strong thinking skills in a developmentally and educationally appropriate Judaic environment...a place where they can explore and play, and make independent choices while feeling secure and warmly nurtured.

Philosophy

We value education. It is our philosophy that young children represent a unique segment of society with special needs and behaviors. Children's relationships and experiences during their early years of life have a significant and crucial impact on their later growth and development. We believe that the importance of these formative years must not be underestimated. The daily environment will provide children with all of the components necessary for their emotional, social, physical, and cognitive well-being.

NAEYC Accreditation

The ELC has earned accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) - the world's largest organization working on behalf of young children. NAEYC accreditation is a quality-improvement system that uses a set of 10 research-based standards to recognize and drive quality-improvement in high-quality early learning environments. NAEYC-accredited programs are always prepared for unannounced quality-assurance visits during their accreditation term, which lasts for five years.

Goals

1. To continuously attend to the needs of each individual child by helping them feel safe, happy, and comfortable throughout the day.
2. To help each child develop independence, confidence, and a feeling of self-worth as an individual and as a member of a group.
3. To stimulate each child's curiosity, sense of wonder, and motivation to learn about the world around them by establishing an age-appropriate, hands-on, and enriching environment.
4. To help each child develop social responsibility by teaching goodwill towards others and respect for the environment.
5. To give young children and their families a sense of Jewish identity and culture.
6. To help each child develop age-appropriate, cognitive and physical skills in the following areas: language, listening, visual discrimination, large and small motor skills, writing, math and science.
7. To work in partnership with families and our community.

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ELC Phone Numbers

Front Reception Desk.....402-334-6413
Director..... 402-334-6414
Assistant Director..... 402-334-6415
If you need to reach a staff member, please call 402-334-6413. Please feel free to contact your child's classroom at any time. If you want to stop by, please feel free to do so. It is important to remember that you are the best judge as to how your child will react if visited during the day.



General Information

Hours of Operation and Holiday Closings

The ELC is open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. year round with the exception of the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Friday following Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and for the Jewish holidays of Passover, Rosh Hashanah (1 day) and Yom Kippur. We are also closed three days each year for all-day staff professional development: Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January and the first or second Monday of August, which all staff are required to attend. Provided in your parent packet is a list of all scheduled events and school closings.

Enrollment Forms

The ELC enrolls children aged 6 weeks to 6 years of age. Your registration packet contains Health forms and Emergency Release forms. All of these forms must remain current in your child's file. Please note that all of the children's files are confidential and are not available to unauthorized individuals. Please make sure that you update your forms throughout the year as needed. Please date the form and submit it to the ELC front desk. Confidential financial scholarships may be available for our Jewish families through the Jewish Federation of Omaha; contact the ELC director for more information.

Monthly Billing

All families are expected to pay in a timely manner; accounts are not allowed to become delinquent. For your convenience two methods of payments are accepted. You may either pay by Master Card / Visa / Discover or by automatic bank withdrawal. These withdrawals are made on the 1st of each month. You will be billed for your regular schedule each month. We are not able to accommodate requests to switch days, but you may pick up additional days and/or hours if space is available. You must have a family membership to the JCC in order to enroll your child at the ELC. If you at any time have any questions regarding your charges, please contact the JCC Member Services department at 402-334-6426.

Late Fees

If you are late to pick up your child from our part time preschool program, you will be charged \$5.00 per minute after a five minute grace period. This also applies for pick up after any extracurricular activities your child may be taking. Full time hours are from 7:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. All full time children will need to be picked up by 6:00 each night. There is no grace period for this time. For every minute late you will be charged \$5.00 per minute, per child.

Drop-off & Pick-up Procedures

1. Arrival for our part time program is at 9:00 a.m. and the children are brought directly into the classroom. The full time children are brought to one of the opening classrooms if they arrive before 8:30. Please sign in your child each day.
2. All part time children should arrive no earlier than 8:55 a.m.
3. Please call the front desk to let us know if your child will not be attending, or if he/she will be coming in late.
4. If your child is to go home with any adult other than yourself, written permission is needed. Please instruct the person picking up your child that they will need to display a photo ID and sign your child out.
5. Any time you pick up your child please be sure that you verbally notify your child's teacher or a staff person that your child is leaving and sign them out on the sign in/out sheet in the classroom.

Meet & Greet

We recommend that all children have the opportunity to become acquainted with their environment before they are brought to school for the first time. If you have not visited, you should schedule a visit several days prior to your child's first day at the ELC. This is especially true if you are new to the program. If possible, we suggest more than one visit.

This is an excellent opportunity for your child to meet his/her lead teacher in an informal setting before their first day of school. This is also a great time to bring in items needed for the school year such as a change of clothes and diapers (if needed). You may want to touch base with your child's teacher to see if there are any additional items.

Daily/Yearly Transitions

For children who arrive before 8:55 a.m. and stay past 3:00 p.m., there may be some staff and room transitions that occur. Please call the ELC if you would like more details about your child's individual transitions. It is also helpful to write notes regarding specific instructions about your child's day, which can then be passed on to other staff members caring for your child. In June of each year children transition to the next age level classroom. (Infants transition on an independent, rolling basis.) The ELC ensures smooth transitions by giving the children many opportunities to meet and spend time in their new room in the weeks prior to the move.

Communication

We maintain a strong belief in the value of good and open communication. The ELC uses a family engagement and classroom documentation app for early education programs. Parents of Infants, Toddlers, and Twos will receive daily updates, frequently with pictures, upon departure each night. Threes and PreK Families can expect weekly updates and frequent messages and photos personalized to their child. Weekly lesson plans, daily schedules, and menus are posted outside each classroom.

Communication is very important, and we encourage parents to call at any time to discuss their children with our staff (402-334-6413). If you have specific instructions about their day, please write a note on the sign in/out sheet or give it to the front desk staff. Your note will be given to the appropriate staff member, and your instructions clearly communicated.

Please notify us about changes relating to any of the following items: your child's home routine (i.e. parents traveling, grandparent moving in, etc.), address or phone numbers, emergency contacts, babysitters or nannies, and medical conditions.

Remember that a teacher can be very busy at drop off and pick up and this is not an ideal time to try to conference with your child's teacher. There will be two scheduled conference times during the year. If you visit your child's classroom (which you are always welcome to do), we ask that you not engage in conversation with the teacher when she is working with the children. His/her job at that point is to be with the children. Little ears can pick up so much! You can always call and we will have your child's teacher return your call after school hours or during nap time.

Parent Information

There is an electronic communication board and table at the front of the lobby area that contains important information about enrichment classes offered for your child as well as other educational activities and cultural events, both in the community and at the JCC.

Social Media

The ELC has its own private Facebook group, where we will post ELC pictures, updates and news. A release for approval is included with the annual Health Form releases.

Safety and Security

The safety of the children is always the priority of our facility. Regular tornado, fire, evacuation and emergency drills are practiced at the ELC. The basement of the ELC is a designated safe zone for tornadoes. In addition, you are required to carry your JCC membership ID card to gain access to our secure building. Your card can be used to gain access through our front door. Your badge will not work on our back door, from the fitness center. If you are coming from the fitness center, please ring the doorbell on the access panel, so that we can let you in. In order to help keep our facility safe, we ask for you to keep a watchful eye. Please report any strange behavior to the ELC.

Confidentiality Statement

All records pertaining to your child are confidential and are only seen by designated personnel or regulatory agencies. Records are not released without parental written consent. Assessments are reviewed by your child's new teacher each year.

Community Resources

We maintain a current list of child and family support services available in the community. If at any time you need information on health or mental health services, nutrition, special education screening, scholarships, etc., please see the ELC Director.

Nap Guidelines

The ELC follows safe sleep practices. Infants are placed in cribs on their back, without soft items, including loveys and blankets. Infants nap on an individualized schedule. You may provide a sleep sack for your infant.

Nap time for children 18 months and older is from 1:00pm to 3:00p.m. This is an important time for all children to lie down and relax. Please remember to send any items that will help your child feel more comfortable during this time. Nap items are laundered by JCC staff in commercial machines each week. If preferred, items may be sent home at the end of the week for parents to launder and return at the beginning of the next week. Older children nap on cots or mats. Sheets are provided for both cots and mats and laundered weekly. We understand that as a child gets older the amount of nap time needed may vary, and we work together with families to best meet the needs of children in this regard.

Meals & Snacks

Parents are required to send a **non-meat** lunch with each child every day. Children are provided breakfast between 7:30 am and 8:15 am, as well as a morning and afternoon snack. Out of respect for our families who keep kosher, the ELC is a meat-free and shellfish-free facility. No meat (beef, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb) or shellfish is allowed in the building, in any age classroom. See additional food guidelines on page 12. Nuts may be limited or not permitted in some classrooms, due to children with allergies. Parents will be notified if that is the case in your child's classroom. Milk and water are offered at each meal. Fresh water for children to drink is available on the playground.

Legal Custody Notification

In compliance with Nebraska law, we require documentation regarding which parent has legal custody in the case of separation or divorce. If there is no legal documentation, then both parents have the right of access to ELC records and pick-up of their children. It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to provide legal documentation verifying custody arrangements. Custodial parents are responsible for notifying the ELC, in writing, of any special circumstances with regard to the rights and obligations of the non-custodial parent. This includes providing written permission for the non-custodial parent to pick-up a child on a regular basis or for a special occasion.

Winter Storm Information

Decisions to close the ELC are made by the JCC Executive Director, and are independent of the metro school systems. The ELC will close ONLY if the Jewish Community Center building is closed. On snowy mornings, please call 402-334-6413 before heading to the facility to make sure that enough staff have arrived to handle the amount of children who are expected. In addition, please look for an email, text or Facebook post from the ELC related to the weather.

Teaching Staff

The quality of a facility is dependent upon the caliber of its staff. Our teachers are among the most qualified, enthusiastic and caring in the region. All of our full time and many of our part time staff have their Pediatric CPR and First Aid certifications. Our teachers are provided with many training opportunities, and we have monthly staff meetings. Three times a year, we hold a staff professional development day. They fall each year on Martin Luther King Day and the first or second Monday in August. On these days we close the ELC for programming, as all staff are required to attend.

Guidance

The goal of the ELC is to provide children with a wonderful learning environment filled with opportunities for the children to express and explore their feelings. We understand that a child may act out occasionally, depending on the situation. Please know that it is our goal to keep working with the child in order to teach them more effective ways of expressing themselves and how to handle difficult situations responsibly. The following are the procedures that our teachers will go through in case a child needs some help getting back on track. First, the child is redirected. By redirecting the child we are giving him/her an opportunity to find other things to do in the classroom. If that is not effective, the teachers may have the child sit out for a couple of minutes and talk to the child about alternatives the child had, to whatever action he/she may have taken. Often times this is a very effective way of dealing with the child. Sometimes they just need help in finding alternative options to their actions. To us, unacceptable behavior is defined as that which is disruptive to the group as a whole during structured activity time, or behavior which may be harmful to students or adults. Physically or verbally hurting other children and/or staff members is unacceptable. In the event that a child continues to be disruptive or harm others during the day, you may be called to pick up your child for a designated time frame. This would be a last resort and only after the ELC has exhausted all of our options with your child. We may call on outside professionals as well to observe and provide additional support, with prior parent permission.

Biting

Unfortunately biting is a common, developmental behavior. Until a child has gained sufficient verbal skills, biting can occur. When biting occurs it can be scary, frustrating, and very stressful for both the children involved and the adults. We do our best to provide an environment where minimal biting occurs. Each situation is handled with sensitivity on a case by case basis. If your child is bitten or bites at school, an Incident Report will be filled out and sent home with each child involved. The parents of both the biter and the child who was bitten will be contacted. However, we will not disclose the name of the other child involved with the incident due to confidentiality, so please do not ask. If excessive biting is occurring in a classroom we will work hard at resolving the issue in a timely manner. If the biting does continue and the ELC has worked with the parent to try to stop the biting we may need to ask that the child takes a break from our school until we know that the situation has been corrected. Often, this means that we will slowly re-introduce the child to the group setting. Please keep in mind that the ELC will try many steps to help remedy the issue.

Diapers & Potty Training

Our program uses disposable diapers only. We will provide diaper wipes but parents are required to bring in diapers and/or pull-ups. We will work with you as your child begins to master the toilet training process. We are happy to help with toilet training and there are many books and resources on this topic available in our library.

Sunscreen

Children will go outside and play every day, weather permitting. Even though we have many trees and lots of shade on our playground, parents are asked to provide sun-protective clothing and/or apply skin protection. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends all children wear sunscreen with UVA and UVB protection of SPF30 or higher. We require written parental permission to apply it. The sunscreen must be in its original container with your child's name written on it. Fresh water for the children to drink is available on the playground.

Insect Repellent

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellent due to high risk of insect-borne disease, only repellents containing DEET are used, and these are applied only on children over 2 months of age. Staff will apply insect repellent no more than once a day and only with written parental permission. The repellent must be in its original container with your child's name written on it.

Swimming

The ELC introduces the children to swimming in the JCC pool beginning in our 3 year old program. Certified lifeguards and swim instructors guide the children throughout the lesson. Please check with your child's teachers for specific times and dates. Note: If your child is not completely toilet trained, you must provide swim diapers or your child will not be allowed in the pool. Also, if your child is under doctor's care for constipation or on a laxative, please let us know as your child will not be allowed in the pool.

Birthdays

Birthdays can be a very exciting time for children, and we love celebrating with your child. In an effort to be inclusive, the ELC does not allow snacks to be brought in for children's birthdays.

On their birthday, all children will receive a special birthday sticker to wear throughout the day, and classrooms will establish their own birthday rituals. We will recognize weekend birthdays during the prior or following week. As always, we will continue to recognize birthdays each week at Shabbat. Look for more information from your child's teacher regarding individual classroom practices.

Invitations to birthday parties are only distributed when the ENTIRE class is invited. Please make other arrangements when this is not possible. A school directory with student names, telephone numbers and addresses is published and distributed in the Fall.

Clothing

Your child should wear comfortable play clothes, socks and closed-toe shoes at all times. We ask that the children wear clothes in which they can play freely. Please make sure your children are dressed in clothes that can get dirty! Parents are required to send a labeled bag containing a complete seasonal change of labeled clothing, including socks and underwear if applicable. Accidents do happen! We also feel it is important to go outside whenever possible. When children go outside in cold weather, they wear clothing that is dry and layered for warmth. Please make sure during those winter months to pack heavy coats, mittens/gloves, hats, boots and snow pants for outside play! Please remember, if your child is healthy enough to be here, he/she is healthy enough to go outside.

Health Records

Any child enrolled at the ELC is required to be up to date on all immunizations, following the guidelines and according to the schedule, published in print, and posted by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The only exceptions are medical exemptions signed by your child's pediatrician and accepted by the ELC Director.

The ELC maintains current health records for each child, within 30 days after a child begins the program, and as age-appropriate thereafter, health records which document the dates of service to show that the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations are required.

Child health records include:

1. Current information about any health insurance coverage required for treatment in an emergency;
2. Up-to-date immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow-up for abnormal results;
3. Current emergency contact information for each child, which is kept up to date during the year;
4. Authorization for the ELC Director and staff to have access to health information about the child, if needed;
5. Instructions for any of the child's special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness;
6. If a child is under-immunized, his or her health records document this and explain why (documented by a licensed health professional as stated above); under-immunized children may be excluded from care if a vaccine-preventable disease occurs to which children are susceptible.

Holidays

While we celebrate cultural diversity and various national and Jewish holidays, we do not celebrate Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, or Easter. Please refrain from sending in cards or candy related to these holidays for distribution to the children while in our school, and from dressing your children in costumes related to these holidays.

Pets

The ELC does not allow pets into the building. The only exception to this is a service animal. However, prior permission is needed. Please make sure that you do not tie up your pet outside of the building. Many of the children do have fears of or allergies to animals - and we are always looking out for the safety of the children. Sometimes even the best of pets can get overexcited with many children.

Cell Phones

For your child's safety and well-being, please do not use your cell phone while picking up or dropping off your child. All children enjoy an undistracted and loving "good-bye" at drop off and a warm greeting at pickup.

Teachers are not permitted use of their cell phones while in the building. Please do not call or text them. Please call the ELC reception desk at 402-334-6413 for immediate assistance, or email ELC@jccomaha.org.

No Smoking Policy

The Jewish Community Center Campus, outdoor playground, parking lot, and courtyard areas are entirely smoke free.

Weapons

No weapons of any kind are allowed on the JCC campus. In accordance with this policy, we appreciate your insuring that all toys of this nature remain at home.



Advantage JCC

The ELC is part of the Jewish Community Center, which allows us to offer enhanced experiences for all enrolled children, such as regular swim times with certified lifeguards, planned large motor activities in the gym and regular visits to the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home for intergenerational programming. In addition, you can sign your child up for dance, art, sports classes, and private swim instruction. We also encourage all of our families to take advantage of all of the activities that the JCC has to offer the entire family! For more information about JCC programming, please contact Member Services at 402-334-6426.



Jewish Holiday Descriptions

The Jewish Community Center's Pennie Z. Davis Early Learning Center will celebrate the Jewish festivals and holidays as they occur during the school year. An elementary introduction to the history of the holidays and their traditional rituals will be explored.

Shabbat — *The Sabbath* — Shabbat commemorates God's day of rest on the seventh day of Creation. Although the Sabbath lasts from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, we celebrate Shabbat on Friday day. It is the last activity of the week. The classes get together, and we light the Shabbat candles and recite the blessings for the candles, wine, and bread. We drink juice and eat challah, the traditional Shabbat bread. Then we sing Shabbat songs.

Havdallah — *The start of a new week* — Havdalah means "division." The Havdalah ceremony divides Shabbat from the week. It is a way of saying "good-bye" to Shabbat and the week has passed. It is also a way of saying "hello" to the new week. On Friday evening we begin Shabbat by lighting candles and saying Kiddush. On Saturday night we end it in almost the same way. When we bless the wine for Havdalah, we fill the Kiddush cup up to the very top. We even let some spill over. This reminds us that our hope is that the new week will be overflowing with happiness.

Rosh Hashanah — *The Jewish New Year* — The Jewish New Year begins with Rosh Hashanah, which usually falls in September on the first day of Tishrei in the Jewish calendar. It begins a 10-day period of repentance and prayer which ends on Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah marks the anniversary of the birthday of the world. It is the day people are judged for their actions during the past year. At preschool, the children enjoy apples and honey, which are symbolic of hope for a sweet year.

Yom Kippur — *The Day of Atonement* — Yom Kippur is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. It is spent in prayer, meditation and fasting in order to start the new year with a clear conscience. At this time, we talk about forgiveness and discuss the nice things we can do for others during the year.

Sukkot — *The Feast of Tabernacles* — Sukkot recalls the journey of the Jews from Egypt to the Promised Land when they lived in a tent or booth called a Sukkah. The harvest season is symbolized by the lulav (palm branch), etrog (citron), the myrtle, and willow. During this week, we decorate our Sukkah with fruit and greenery, and enjoy snacks outdoors.

Shemini Atzeret — *8th Day of Assembly* — This holiday occurs on the eighth day of Sukkot and is considered a holiday in itself. It is a solemn day with special prayers for rain (geshem). This is the beginning of the season which determines the fertility of land in the year to come.

Simchat Torah — *Rejoicing in the Torah* — Simchat Torah is the second day of Shemini Atzeret and emphasizes the continuity of Jewish learning. Throughout the year, passages of the Torah are read aloud in the synagogue. On Simchat Torah, the reading is completed (with the last two chapters of Deuteronomy), then immediately begun again (with Genesis). This symbolizes the fact that study of the Torah has no beginning and no end. The children create their own specially decorated flags and parade around the building.

Hanukkah — *The Festival of Lights* — Hanukkah celebrates the Maccabean victory, when brave Judah Maccabee and his small band of followers saved the Jewish nation from the Syrians. For eight days each year, the Menorah, or eight-branched candelabra, is lit to recall their rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem and to give thanks for the great miracles of the survival of the Jewish people. We eat potato latkes (pancakes), play with dreidles (tops), make menorahs (candelabras), and light the Hanukkah candles.

Tu B'Shevat — *Arbor Day* — On Tu B'Shevat we celebrate the New Year of the trees and our own belief in the future of the world. The Jewish calendar, with all its holidays, is tied to the cycle of growing things. Trees are a symbol of life and a symbol of importance to the Jewish people. The children will plant seeds and snack on fruits and nuts. We will emphasize the importance of trees.

Purim — *The Feast of Lots* — Purim is the jolliest of all holidays, commemorating how Queen Esther and her uncle, Mordecai, saved the Jews of Persia from a plot by the king's minister, Haman, to destroy them. On this day we eat Hamantashen (three-cornered cookies), which the children enjoy making. The children are encouraged to come to school in costume for this happy holiday.

Pesach — *Passover* — This holiday commemorates the experiences and ordeals of slavery in Egypt, the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, and the beginning of Jewish independence. The children will celebrate Pesach with a model seder, for which they will prepare some traditional Pesach foods.

Yom Ha'Atzmaut — *Israeli Independence Day* — This holiday marks the creation of the modern State of Israel, May 14, 1948. The children will learn about the land of Israel, make Israeli flags, and eat Israeli food.

Lag B'Omer — *Thirty-third day of the Omer Counting or Holiday of Scholars* — Lag B'Omer is a day of rejoicing, which marks the interruption of a period of mourning associated with the counting of the Omer, a traditional measure of grain brought to the Temple as an offering in ancient times. This holiday also recalls the struggle of the Jews to regain their independence as a Jewish nation during the second century C.E. The Romans, ruling Palestine, banned the study of the Torah and Jewish literature. Jews continued learning in secret. They studied in caves and forests under the pretense of hunting and hiking. Eventually, they organized a heroic revolt which ended in a massacre of the Jews. Today, however, the holiday celebrates Jewish survival. We go on a "hike" and have our snack "picnic style".

Shavuot — *Feast of Harvest* — Shavuot, a thanksgiving and early wheat harvest feast, also commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Also known as the Feast of Weeks, Shavuot is celebrated seven weeks after Passover. It is a custom to decorate with plants and flowers. The greenery recall the green mountain of Sinai where Moses received the Commandments, as well as the fruits of the ancient harvest festival. The children will learn about the Ten Commandments and snack on traditional dairy foods.

Tisha B'Av — This holiday recalls the tragic things that have happened to the Jews in the past. Jews are especially sad over the two times their Temple was destroyed: once by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and once by the Romans in 70 CE. Both times, it is believed the Temple was destroyed on the ninth day of the Jewish month Av.





Curriculum

The Pennie Z. Davis Early Learning Center implements an emergent curriculum practice based on teachers' careful observations of children. Emergent curriculum is a process where teachers plan activities and projects based on their specific group of children. Teachers take into account children's needs, interests, and developmental skills to create situations where children can be successful and guide their own growth and learning. Projects and long term activities stem directly from children's own questions and curiosities. This practice is developmentally appropriate and based on the theories of noted child development experts Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky.

The Early Learning Guidelines: Nebraska's Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards is a resource to provide information about young children's learning and development. The Guidelines are intended to assist adults in planning and providing meaningful learning experiences and environments for children in their care. ELC Teachers work together with our Curriculum Coordinator to ensure that activities are developmentally appropriate and meet the Early Learning Guidelines.

Parent Conferences

Conferences with your child's teacher are held in the Fall and Spring for our Toddler to Pre-K classrooms. Each teacher sets their own conference schedule. Please watch for the date to start signing up for specific times. At your conference, you will be shown some of your child's work, receive a written assessment, and have a discussion about your child's progress. Between conferences, please feel free to contact the teacher whenever you have a special concern. We are always available to you and we want you and your child to have the best possible school experience. You are welcome to visit the school at any time, an appointment is never necessary.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Developmentally appropriate practice represents the cornerstone of philosophy and practice at the Early Learning Center. It is a set of principles that honor the general sequence of child development and also each child's individual differences. Lessons planned, activities organized, and experiences that evolve are measured as to the appropriateness for the group and also for the individual child's physical, social, intellectual, and Judaic development at any given point in time.

Developmentally appropriate practice enhances children's development and facilitates learning while avoiding the stressors created in a highly academic, teaching environment. The teacher's role becomes that of facilitator and enabler...one who sets up the environment to encourage development of skills, to spark interest, and to allow for independence.

In the course of their days at the Early Learning Center, children are given blocks of time to move freely about the classroom, self-selecting activities set up by the teacher. Resources available to children contain the "seeds" of learning through: dramatic play, puppets, books, puzzles, manipulatives, blocks, water and/or sand, and large muscle activities in both indoor and outdoor environments

Incorporating developmentally appropriate practice by definition allows children to do the "work" they are best capable of, which we often call "play." "Play involves a free choice activity that is self-motivated, enjoyable and process oriented" (Johnson, Christie & Yawkey). Time to play allows children to lay the many and varied experiences foundational to later success physically, socially and academically.



Sheva Center's Early Learning Framework

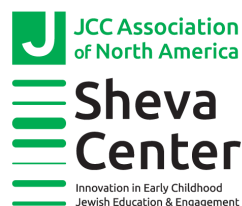
The Pennie Z. Davis Early Learning Center is a member of the Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA) of North America. The Sheva Center for Innovation in Early Childhood Jewish Education and Engagement is a department of the JCCA of North America. The Sheva Center has created an Early Learning Framework which outlines a vision of excellence in early childhood Jewish education. It is meant to be a learning platform, not a curriculum.

The Sheva Center has defined seven Jewish lenses which provide an ethical model for living, a set of resources designed to help us experience increased sanctity in an increasingly confusing, commercial and difficult world. They inspire as much as they inform. The lenses influence all aspects of our practice- the ways in which we structure our time, our curricula, and our classrooms; the quality of our relationships with students; and the partnerships we forge with the families in our communities.

Judaism is not exclusively a matter of the “what” or “when” in the world of ritual and faith, but includes the deeper matters of the “how” and “why” of the totality of our lives and our relationships to the world as a whole. It welcomes diversity, inclusion, reflection, and innovation. We do not view our Judaic practice as separate, but as an integral part of our emergent curriculum.

- MASA (JOURNEY) - Reflection, Return, and Renewal
- TZELEM ELOHIM (DIVINE IMAGE) - Dignity and Potential
- BRIT (COVENANT) - Belonging and Commitment
- DRASH (INTERPRETATION) - Inquiry, Dialogue and Transmission
- HITORERUT (AWAKENING) - Amazement and Gratitude
- TIKKUN OLAM (REPAIR OF THE WORLD) - Responsibility
- KEDUSHA (HOLINESS) - Intentionality and Presence

We as teachers are learning right along with our students. As the Early Learning Center staff integrate these Jewish lenses into our practice, these terms will become common language within our community. We look forward to sharing our learning with you throughout the year.



Enrichment Classes

The ELC and other areas of the JCC offer a wide array of enrichment classes during the year. Classes typically include dance, gym, art, swimming, cooking, and much more. These classes take place during and after the regular morning classes and require an additional fee. Enrichment classes typically fill quickly so please register early. Registration begins as soon as the information is posted online. Typically, the instructor for the enrichment class will come to your child's class, pick them up, and bring them to enrichment classes and then bring them back to their classroom. If you prefer to bring your child yourself, you must notify the child's teacher as well as the enrichment instructor. To register for classes, please contact the JCC Member Services department at 402-334-6426.





Special Needs & ADA Compliance Policy

At the ELC we will do our best to make reasonable accommodations to our program so that all children can participate. We welcome all children who apply for admission if space is available. If your child has special needs or you have any questions about whether your child will fit into our environment with reasonable accommodations made, please meet with the director or assistant director prior to the beginning of school. Our special needs guidelines are as follows:

Definition

A child with special needs is defined as one whose developmental progress does not fall within the range expected for the child's chronological age or when development in any of the following areas appears to be atypical: cognitive, speech/language, gross and fine motor, social/emotional, self-help, or behavioral.

Procedures

The ELC will attempt to meet the needs of children identified as having special needs in the regular classroom, whenever possible or deemed appropriate. All actions will be at the discretion of the ELC Director in consultation with other special needs professionals including:

1. A parent interview.
2. An observational screening of the child.
3. Contact with other professionals involved with the child. (i.e., early intervention program, preschool special needs teachers, and therapists)
4. Demonstration that the child has the ability to participate and co-operate as a part of the program for the great majority of the program time with appropriate program modification and support.
5. The goal of the ELC policy is to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary measures.

The director will closely monitor a child accepted into the program, assessing whether or not the guidelines listed above can be achieved. The ELC staff will assume a proactive role to ensure that a child's placement within the program is successful and benefits the child.

If, after meeting with the parent(s), observing the child and conferring with the appropriate professionals, it is deemed that the best interests of the child would be served elsewhere, the child may be denied admission or dis-enrolled from the ELC. The ELC administration will offer assistance to the family in accessing services and an alternative placement.

The ELC recognizes that, due to the nature of young children and early childhood development, a child's special needs may not be identified before the child is enrolled in our program. As a result, the ELC may be the first to inform a parent that a child requires evaluation by a special needs team or physician for further information regarding development. In such instances, efforts will be made to maintain the child at the ELC and to continue to provide service within the program unless it jeopardizes the health and safety of others in the program.

The ELC reserves the right, after meeting with the parent(s) and conferring with the evaluating professionals, to refer a child for more intensive or specialized services, or for early intervention or preschool special needs services in the best interest of the child.

The Pennie Z. Davis Early Learning Center complies with all federal and state civil rights laws.



Health Policies

Sick Policy

1. Parents, or designated caretakers, of children who exhibit any of the following symptoms will be called to come to the ELC to pick up their child within a one hour time period for:
 - Fever of 100.4 degrees and above.
 - Vomiting 2 or more times in 24 hours (to be sure the child is not in danger of dehydration.)
 - Pink eye /conjunctivitis (can return to school with a doctor's note)
 - Unexplained rash (can return to school with a doctor's note)
 - Diarrhea. Exclusion is required for all diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper and toilet-trained children if the diarrhea is causing "accidents," and for children whose stool frequency exceeds 2 stools above a normal 24-hour period, or whose stool contains more than a drop of blood or mucus. Diarrhea is defined by stool which is occurring more frequently and/or is less formed in consistency than usual in the child, and not associated with changes of diet.

Students displaying any of these symptoms may be removed from class and brought to the designated area in the office to rest until parents/caregiver can pick-up.

2. Although the presence of a runny nose, clear or colored, may appear ominous, exclusion from school is not necessary unless accompanied by any of the symptoms listed in #1.
3. Please do not bring your child into the program with any of the above mentioned symptoms. If in doubt about your child, please keep your child at home.
4. Children sent home with a fever will not be allowed back into the program for **24 hours** after being discharged. **Children must be fever free (under 100.4 degrees), without fever reducing medication, for 24 hours before returning to school.**
5. Please alert the ELC when your child develops a communicable disease (chicken pox, strep throat, pinkeye, head lice, etc.) so that we can notify the other families of a possible exposure date. All names are kept confidential. Knowing what is going around in a class will help in early treatment and possibly slow or stop the spread of infection.
6. We understand that it is sometimes difficult for working parents to make arrangements for their sick children. However, the ELC program wants to make sure that we are watching out for the health of all of the children in our care. We are not set up to care for sick children.

Accident Procedures

In case of an accident, we will first try to notify the parents/guardians, then the listed emergency contacts, and then the child's physician. If it is impossible to reach any of the above, we will transport according to the emergency action procedure if necessary. Extreme emergencies may dictate other procedures deemed in the child's best interests. Whenever a child is injured, regardless of the seriousness of the injury, a parent or guardian will receive an incident report.

Always make sure you have an updated emergency information sheet on file. Please update this throughout the year when any of your contact information changes.

Medication

Medication is administered only when accompanied by a properly completed medication form including the child's name, name of medication, time and amount of dosage, and parent's signature. A separate form must be completed for each medication that is to be given. Forms are available in your child's room or at the front desk. Medication must be in its original container with the child's name on the prescription label. No medicine can be given after the expiration date on the label. Medication will not be added to juice, milk, etc.

Allergies

Please indicate on your health form if your child has allergies. We are happy to work with you in ensuring your child is safe in our care. If it is a life threatening allergy, we will need specific information on what to do in case of contact, as well as the appropriate supplies (for example an EpiPen, allergy medications, or inhaler). We will need an Action Plan from the doctor with his/her signature on file here at the ELC. If a child is highly allergic to nuts and stays for lunch, we will establish a nut-free zone in the room. Nuts may be limited or not permitted in some classrooms, due to children with allergies. Parents will be notified if that is the case in your child's classroom.



Food Guidelines

1. Out of respect for our families who keep kosher, the ELC is a meat-free and shellfish-free facility. This means that no meat (beef, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb) is allowed in any of our classrooms. We provide a list of healthy lunch ideas in your enrollment packet.
2. While the ELC would never let a child go hungry, the center is not equipped to provide lunches. If your child does not have a lunch for any reason, the ELC will make one, and \$10.00 will be charged to your account.
3. Because good nutrition is an important part of our program, we request that lunches be sent to school representing a balanced diet. Remember that the healthiest lunches include fresh fruits and vegetables.
4. Some classrooms may have a nut-free or peanut-free area due to life-threatening allergies. You will be alerted at the beginning of the school year if your child is in one of these classes. Please be respectful of this policy and contact the ELC if you would like more information.
5. All food sent to school should be pre-cut for the younger children, and be age-appropriate. For children 2 years old and younger, food should be cut into 1/4" pieces. For children between 2 and 3 years of age, food should be cut into 1/2" pieces. Peanuts, popcorn, suckers, and other foods that are common causes of choking are not allowed for any child.
6. Lunches can be refrigerated in our infant rooms. We recommend that you send your older child's lunch in a lunch box with an ice pack. That will keep your child's lunch cold until eaten.
8. While all classrooms have a microwave oven, please do not send items that need more than 20-30 seconds to reheat. We cannot cook frozen foods or prepare "cup of soup," macaroni and cheese cups, etc, which require more than 30 seconds in the microwave. You can also send hot foods in a thermos.
9. Please do not send food in glass containers.
10. Breakfast is provided for all of our full time children between 7:30a.m. and 8:15a.m. Snacks are provided for all children mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Please see the weekly menu posted on the bulletin boards located outside of each classroom.
11. Please remember that no food is allowed to be brought in from your home for the consumption by other children.

Helpful Suggestions for Passover Meals

Packing lunches and snacks for your child to eat at this time can be challenging. However, some grocery stores offer a vast array of items that are made for Passover. Fresh fruits and veggies are always great and dairy products like yogurt and cheeses are fine.

Children typically enjoy many things on matzah (the traditional unleavened "bread" eaten for the duration of Passover.) A few of the favorites are: plain or flavored cream cheese; peanut butter and jelly; tuna fish; buttered with cheese slices; egg salad, etc. You could also pack some of these items separately and your child may break their matzah and "dip."

Foods to avoid are: refined wheat or leavened bread products. More information will be provided prior to the Passover holiday.



Parent Involvement

The Pennie Z. Davis Early Learning Center has a Parent Committee who help with various items at the ELC. This committee meets and reviews policies, organizes special fund-raisers, and has several sub-committees that vary from year to year. Each year or two a new chairperson is selected by the Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center. That Chair is responsible for selecting the members of the committee. If you are interested in helping throughout the year, please contact the ELC Chairperson. This person's name is located in the school directory each year. In addition to the committee, help is always welcome in the classroom. Let your child's teacher know that you are willing to help. There are always tasks and projects with which they can use the extra help!

ELC Directory

Each year, the ELC provides a family directory that contains all of the contact information for all of the students, class lists, and the annual school calendar. We strive for confidentiality and we appreciate you not sharing the information outside the ELC.

Program Evaluation & Feedback

During each school year, the parents will be asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating all aspects of the program. Survey results will be reported to you from the director. Your feedback is extremely important to us! You are always welcome to give feedback on our program; the only way we get better is by listening to all of you. Please feel free to call, email or stop by the office at any time!





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