



# FAMILY HANDBOOK



The Jewish Federation  
OF OMAHA

# 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
JCC Executive Director.....	402-334-6417

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.



## 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, 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.

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.

## 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 and Yom Kippur. We are also closed two 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. A school calendar is provided, which includes all scheduled events and closings.

## Enrollment and Required Forms

The ELC enrolls children aged 6 weeks to 6 years. 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 children's files are confidential and are not available to unauthorized individuals. Please 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 to pick up after extracurricular activities. Full time hours are from 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. All full-time children need to be picked up by 6:00 each night, there is no grace period. The late fee is \$5.00 per minute, per child, for every minute past 6:00 p.m.

## Drop off and 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. Full time children are brought to one of the opening classrooms if they arrive before 8:30. Please check your child in and out each day.
2. All part time children should arrive no earlier than 8:55 a.m.
3. Please call the front desk or send a message in the communication app 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 check-out your child.
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 check them out on the communication app.
6. Adults are required to walk their child in and out of the building each day. For the safety of all children, please do not leave children unattended in vehicles, and vehicles may not be left idling in the parking lot or the fire lane. Designated Accessible parking spots are reserved for those with Accessible Parking Permits.

# Communication & Family Engagement

## Home/School Communication

We believe strongly in the value of open communication. The ELC uses a family engagement and classroom documentation app for early education programs. Parents of Infants, Toddlers, and Twos will receive real-time updates, frequently with pictures. 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.

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 send a note in the communication app or email the front desk staff. Your message will be given to the appropriate staff member, and your instructions clearly communicated.

We view childcare as a partnership between families and providers. We are all on the same team and are excited to be working together to help your child thrive. Classroom related concerns should be directed to your child's classroom teachers. Teachers are available via email and the communication app, as well as for brief conversations during drop-off and pick-up. If a more in-depth conversation is needed, please schedule a time to talk to your classroom teacher when they have more time available to devote to the discussion. If a concern cannot be resolved at the classroom level, please contact a member of the Administrative Staff. If more support is desired, the Administrative Staff will put you in touch with the appropriate person at the JCC or Nebraska Child Care Licensing.

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.

Observations, questions, and assessments can be shared verbally with classroom teachers, via email or messages in the communication app. If you have developmental concerns, please reach out to the Director for more detailed conversation and assessments. You may be asked to share experiences from home or fill out a standardized assessment questionnaire such as the ASQ.

There will be a scheduled conference time 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 he/she is working with the children. His/her job at that point is to be with the children. Remember, little ears can pick up so much! You can always send a message in the communication app, or call the front desk staff 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 a 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.

## 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.

## Social Media

The ELC has it's own private Facebook group/Instagram account, where we will sometimes post ELC pictures, updates and news. A release for approval is included with the annual Health Form releases.

## 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 to 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.

## 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.



# General Information

## 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. Two 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.

## 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.

## Holiday Celebrations

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.

## Meals & Snacks

Parents are required to send a **non-meat** lunch with each child every day. Children are provided breakfast between 7:30 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., 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. Finfish like fish sticks and salmon is OK. See additional food guidelines on page 13. **Classrooms 1 through 5 are nut-free.** 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.

## 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 happen! We also feel it is important to go outside whenever possible. When children go outside in cold weather, they should wear clothing that is dry and layered for warmth. In the winter months, please 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.

## Sunscreen

Children go outside and play every day, weather permitting. 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.

## Swimming

The ELC introduces the children to swimming in the JCC pool beginning in our Step 4 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. Students who are not fully toilet trained must wear a reusable swim diaper (Happy Nappy brand/style) together with a disposable swim diaper for each group class and private swim lessons.

## 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 crown 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 Havdallah. 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. Class lists are provided by the front desk staff, please let us know if you'd like one.

# Child Development & Guidance

## Guidance and Behavioral Support

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. If excessive biting occurs in a classroom we will work hard at resolving the issue in a timely manner. If the biting continues 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.

## 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 to 3 years old is from 1:00p.m. 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 time in our preK classrooms is from 1:00p.m. to 2:00p.m.

Nap items are laundered by JCC staff in commercial machines each week. If preferred, items may be sent home for parents to launder and return. Older children nap on cots or mats. Sheets are provided and laundered weekly.

We understand that as a child gets older the amount of nap time needed may vary. During this time children rest their bodies and minds, teachers rest their brains and voices, and everybody takes a break from each other. Classes will prepare by reading a quiet book, listening to special music, or watching a laser light show. It is not the expectation that all children sleep during this time, but it is the expectation that all children rest and create an environment where other children can sleep. Teachers are happy to help children fall asleep during this time with parental consent. Children who are still asleep at the end of rest time will be woken up by ELC staff. Children whose parents prefer that they not nap will not be actively put to sleep. If they fall asleep on their own we will wake them up at the end of rest time. Children who do not nap will not be given a special activity to occupy them during this time. Parents who do not want their children to nap are encouraged to sign up for ELC Enrichment Academies or JCC classes that meet during this time.

## Diapers & Potty Training

Our program uses disposable diapers only. We will provide 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.

# Health, Safety & Security

## 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. Nebraska state licensing requires an annual report of immunization status for all children in attendance of any Nebraska school.

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.

## 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 or a message on the communication app from the ELC related to the weather.

## 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.

## Safety and Security

The safety of the children is always the priority of our facility. Each classroom is equipped with a campus Emergency Procedure Guide which contains information to each classroom's specific location, and carries Emergency Supply Packs when leaving the classroom. Staff members receive regular training on emergency and safety procedures including injuries, accidents, fire, weather, and campus issues or campus emergencies. For security reasons, detailed procedures are not widely shared.

We regularly practice tornado, fire, evacuation and emergency drills. 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.

If a child is injured, classroom staff complete an Incident Report. Incident Reports are kept on file at the ELC and a copy is shared with families.

## Pets

The ELC does not allow pets in 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](mailto: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.



# 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 admin team 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 Spring for our Preschool 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 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.





# 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. 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 cooperate 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.

## 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. Rooms 1 through 5 are nut-free. Nuts may be limited or not permitted in additional classrooms, due to children with allergies. Parents will be notified if that is the case in your child's classroom.



# Food Guidelines

## Infant Feeding Policy

Formula, breast milk, and bottles can be left at school. Parents can leave a container of formula or a supply of frozen breast milk and staff will prepare bottles as needed. All formula must be in its original container.

All breast milk must be labelled with baby's full name and the date expressed/frozen, as teachers will offer the oldest milk first. We will also write when we received the milk. The ELC will provide the labels.

According to state licensing rules, frozen breast milk must be kept in a freezer for no more than 3 months at a center. Large quantities of breast milk should not be kept in the school freezers.

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. Finfish like fish sticks and salmon is OK. We provide a list of healthy lunch ideas upon request.
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. **Classrooms 1 through 5 are always nut-free. Classrooms 6 and 7 are nut-free when there is a child with a known nut allergy. Classrooms 8 through 11 will be assessed each year, depending on the severity of allergies.** 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 only.
7. Young children, classrooms 3 through 7, are most successful with lunches provided in a Bento-style box (which is then put into a lunch box with an ice pack). This helps foster independence, prevents small containers from being accidentally thrown away, and prevents paper plates from ending up on the floor. Of course, Bento-style boxes are welcome in all age groups. Please send your child's Bento-style box inside a lunch box with an ice pack.
8. The ELC will not heat lunches. Please send warm foods in a thermos, which can be then served in a Bento box or on a paper plate.
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.
12. During the holiday of Passover, we ask that all families avoid certain foods. The ELC will provide more information, including meal suggestions prior to the holiday.



# 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 and planned large motor activities in the gym. In addition, you can sign your child up for dance, 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.

## Enrichment Classes

The ELC offers a wide array of enrichment classes during the year. Classes typically include art, science, cooking, and much more. These classes take place during and after the regular morning classes and require an additional fee. Registration begins as soon as the information is posted. 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. To register for classes, please register by going to the JCC registration page via the JCC website or contact the JCC Member Services department at 402-334-6426. Enrichment classes typically fill quickly.



# Parent Involvement

The Pennie Z. Davis Early Learning Center has a Parent Committee who help with various items at the ELC. This committee organizes special fund-raisers, and activities that vary from year to year. Each year or two a new chairperson is selected by the Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center. The Chair is responsible for selecting the members of the committee. If you are interested in helping throughout the year, please contact the ELC Chairperson. 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!

## 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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The Jewish Federation  
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