

THE WEINSTEIN PRESCHOOL
PARENT HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome Statement	3
Philosophy Statement	4
Program Goals / Curriculum Statement	4
Licensures and Accreditation	5
First Days of School	5
Separation and Adjustment	6
School Life	7
Clothing	6
Toys from Home	7
Show and Tell	7
Weinstein Tote Bag	8
Playground	8
Birthdays	8
Children with Special Needs	9
Guests	9
Health and Safety	9
Health Forms	9
Emergency Information	9
Food Allergies	9
Illness / Absences	10
Returning to School	10
Medication	10
Epi-Pen Policy and Procedure	11
Lice	11
Other Absences	11
Parent-School Communication	11
Cell Phone Policy	12
Conferences	12
Incident Report Form	13
Inclement Weather / Closings	13

WELCOME STATEMENT

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Weinstein School of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. We look forward to a new school year, and we feel privileged to share such a special time in your children's lives. This Handbook will explain many of the School's policies and procedures. Its purpose is to make life at school happier, safer and more productive for your child, and to provide you with the day-to-day practical information you will need throughout the coming year. We urge you to read it, share it with your caregivers and let us know if you feel there is anything that is unclear or needs to be amended. Our goal is to have things run as smoothly as possible for everyone.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation, and hope you will refer to the Handbook during the year. We will communicate with you throughout the school year via email and our Monday Morning Letter. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to the teachers, to Robyn, Kim or me. We will work actively to keep lines of communication open and to work with you on behalf of your children.

Sincerely,

Laura Lewkowict
Robin Mittleman
Kim Sucan

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Since its founding, the preschool of the Jewish Community Center of Atlanta has provided a warm and creative environment which seeks to preserve and foster young children's imagination, curiosity and intellect. Our program strives to facilitate children's social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth through a curriculum attuned to the individual child's unique pattern of development. We believe that children learn best in a clearly structured program, which emphasizes creative expression through "hands-on" experiences, provides opportunities for play and encourages respect for others. It is our goal to help children establish a secure sense of self so that they may develop the confidence to fulfill their potential. We believe that learning is an active process. Children of all ages need an opportunity to interact with their physical and social environment in order to understand the world and to find their place in it. Readiness in all areas (social, emotional, physical, cognitive, spiritual) is developed at the child's own pace through individual discovery, as well as through group interaction. Activities promote the development of problem solving, listening, communication, auditory, and visual discrimination skills. We encourage creativity, curiosity, self-direction, positive self-image and responsibility.

We are committed to building a strong sense of community between parents, teachers and children. Celebrating Shabbat and Jewish holidays helps children learn the joy of Jewish culture and heritage and strengthens the bonds of our community.

PROGRAM GOALS/CURRICULUM STATEMENT

The program goals and curriculum are based on the school's philosophy and the underlying respect for the individual child. Curriculum objectives are developmentally based and are guided by both knowledge of the typical development of children in a chronological span and by awareness of individual differences in patterns of growth, personality, learning style, and family background.

Learning is presented to children using a variety of sensory experiences to teach concepts. Young children learn by doing, and play is the medium through which children explore the world, learn about themselves and others. Our curriculum is an integration of thematic units blended with ideas from the Reggio Emilia approach, which is an emergent play based approach to learning. Emergent curriculum is an approach that permits learning activities to arise out of each child's interests, actions, or serendipitous events. The framework for this type of curriculum planning involves the following premises:

Curriculum is what actually happens in an educational environment, not what is planned to happen.

Young children invent and organize their own curriculum all the time. They are actively motivated learners, studying the world through their play (hence the phrase, “children learn through play”).

Young children are active learners. Curriculum planning should focus on action, not lessons to be taught.

Curriculum is always expanding. To carry out this approach teachers engage in an ongoing process of planning, analyzing, observing, and evaluating the children’s activities, ideas, needs and interest.

All classrooms and other activity areas at the preschool are set up with these premises in mind. In each classroom, there are clearly defined interest areas where children can engage in varying activities. Examples of some of these areas may include spaces for: art, reading, block building, dramatic play, sensory activities, and writing and drawing.

These spaces are created based on a child’s eye view, are adapted to meet the current interests and play needs, and are rearranged occasionally to renew interest in a particular area. Teachers suggest play possibilities through the arrangement of materials and having related props available. Open-ended use and transformation of materials is encouraged with the focus being on process rather than product. Long-term projects allow teachers to guide children through problem solving, hypothesizing and teamwork.

Children do not work in abstract workbooks, or learn to read through formal programs geared for school-age children. They will, however, be immersed in language and literature using concrete manipulatives to explore pre-quantitative concepts, and experiencing success in fine motor activities designed for their developmental level. Two published curriculum guides are used to support this development: The Zoo-Phonics Program and the Handwriting Without Tears program.

The Judaic Curriculum is based on standards set in eight areas of Jewish learning that together comprise the foundation which enables our “graduates” to leave with basics in Judaics as well as an awareness and pride in their own identities as little Jewish people. The eight Judaic areas are: Values, Holidays, Shabbat, Jewish Text, God, Hebrew, Israel, and Ritual.

LICENSURES AND ACCREDITATIONS

MJCCA Preschools adheres to the regulation of the Georgia Department of Human Resources and follows the guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Full Day programs are licensed by the State of Georgia through Bright from the Start; Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. All MJCCA Early Childhood school programs are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAYEC). In addition, we will be seeking SACS accreditation during the 2010-2011 school year.

THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL

SEPARATION AND ADJUSTMENT

A child's first school experience necessarily imposes a separation between parent and child. Starting school is one of the early steps of separation, a lifelong process that must be handled with great sensitivity. It is our goal to make sure each child and parent has time to develop the trust needed for successful separation, and to help the child make the transition from home to school. Once this begins, children are well on their way to seeing themselves as competent and independent individuals.

Each child will respond differently to the newness and unfamiliarity of school. Some will feel uncomfortable and hold back while others will run right in. Some parents and children say goodbye with ease, while others find it difficult. Some children will separate quickly; others need more time. All of these responses are normal.

If your child is clingy and won't let go, try to relax, as your child will surely sense your nervousness. It will take time for some children to trust their new teachers. Children know they are coming to "school", but they may have little or no concept of what school is all about. Remember, the teachers will help you with any separation difficulty you may encounter, and will work with you to formulate an individual plan, if needed. Be patient. We will be there to support you and your child.

We encourage you to have your child bring a stuffed animal with them on the day of open house to leave in their classroom. We have found that this helps alleviate some of the anxiety associated with the first day of school. Your child will have that familiar stuffed animal in their classroom on the first day to help comfort them and make the transition a little bit easier.

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT SAYING GOODBYE

- Once you decide to leave, don't hesitate; say goodbye quickly and tell your child you will see them later.
- ALWAYS say goodbye to your child – never sneak out. Don't expect a good-bye back.
- DO NOT ask your child permission to leave – a definite "I'm leaving now" is most helpful to your child.

- Prior to and at the start of school, speak positively to your child about school and read books to your child about starting school.
- Giving your child a transitional object can be helpful.
- Smile and relax.

SCHOOL LIFE

CLOTHING

WHAT TO WEAR

Children come to school to actively learn and play. School clothes should be comfortable, sturdy, washable and **labeled**. While we have washable paint and markers, glue, clay, outdoor play and cooking are some of the activities and materials that are unavoidably messy. Rubber soled shoes or sneakers are important for safety in both indoor and outdoor play. We discourage children from wearing flip-flops, open-toed sandals or jellies/Crocs as they can be dangerous on the playground and wet surfaces.

Please make sure to dress your child in clothing appropriate for the day's weather conditions (i.e. mittens, hats, coats, etc). We do go outside daily (weather permitting) and we want your children to be comfortable. Please try and avoid sending scarves and sweatshirts with hood strings, as these could cause injury on the playground equipment.

EXTRA CLOTHES

Each child must have a complete change of clothing, including socks and underwear, at school. "Potty trainers" will need more than one change of clothes. This "change of clothes" will need to be seasonally appropriate and fit your child. Please replace these clothes periodically as the weather changes and your child grows. It is helpful to keep an extra sweater or sweatshirt at school for your child. Each item must be labeled. The preschool cannot be responsible for any clothing that is not properly labeled.

TOYS FROM HOME / SHOW AND TELL

Please do not allow your child to come to school with toys or precious items from home. These often create sharing difficulties and can end up lost. Many classrooms will designate a sharing day when children may bring something from home to show during a discussion time. The teachers will clarify their classroom policy on Parent Night and notify you of dates and times. Please be aware that this is an activity specifically designed to further develop oral language skills. Please remember that toy guns and toy weapons are not permitted at school. Books are always a great option for sharing days, as are items that relate to the

monthly theme or are relevant to a current event. Items should be small enough to fit into your child's school bag to facilitate ease of transportation.

WEINSTEIN TOTE BAG

Children enrolled in the Weinstein preschool, the 2's, 3's, and Pre-K, will be provided with a school tote. We ask that all families use this tote to carry your child's belongings to and from school. It helps create a sense of school spirit and serves as a key organizational tool. These totes will fit neatly into cubbies and provide a neat and organized place for each child's belongings. This eliminates the use of all other carryalls including backpacks.

PLAYGROUND

We are proud of our playground and the diverse fine and gross motor activities that it creates. We have two developmentally appropriate playgrounds: an infant, toddler and twos playground and a 3 and 4 year old playground. During school hours, students are under direct supervision of preschool staff personnel. After school hours, students are not permitted to play on the playground without a parent or supervising adult present. Siblings of students and other children are not permitted to play on the playground during school hours.

We do go outside everyday and take advantage of the playground experience, so please make sure your child has the appropriate clothing for the weather. If your child has been sick, they need to return to school only when they are able to go outside. We do not have provisions to keep them inside while the rest of the class goes outside to play.

BIRTHDAYS

We encourage each parent to talk with your child's teacher if you would like to plan a special snack for your child at school. Should your child's birthday fall during the summer months, an "unbirthday" date will be chosen for you to celebrate your child's birthday. Please do not send party invitations to school for an out of school party unless everyone is included. Check with the teachers for an updated list of students. Carpooling to parties directly after school is not permitted unless each child in the class is invited. Additionally, birthday gifts should not be brought to school for any reason (i.e. unable to attend party, carpooling with another parent to party, etc.).

When planning parties, please keep in mind that the following items are **not allowed** at school parties; party favor bags, toys, latex balloons, candy of any kind, peanuts, or whole grapes as children can easily choke on these items. This rule is mandated by the Department of Human Resources due to concerns over choking. **Please save the lighting of "real" candles for the at home party. Our fire code prevents us from having an open flame at school.** Parents are welcome to donate a book to the library in honor of their child rather than bringing party favors.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

We believe that all children come to us as unique individuals with their own special needs. At the Weinstein School, we strive to include all children in our classrooms. In conjunction with the Adaptive Learning Center (ALC), our preschool can serve children with learning differences. ALC partners with accredited Early Childhood Education programs to implement inclusive preschool programming. They provide trained staff and therapists to support children with special needs as well as provide expert training to our teachers and staff on the concept of inclusive education and best practices for helping children who learn differently. ALC professionals help in the observation/fact gathering stage and will ultimately work with the director to determine a child's needs.

We will do everything in our power to meet the needs of all children, however if we cannot meet the needs of a child we will assist parents in finding a more suitable placement for them.

GUESTS

We invite parents to visit our preschool at anytime. We ask that you limit your visit to no more than 45 minutes. Because our teachers prepare well in advance for the day, we cannot invite cousins or friends to visit for the day. We do enjoy having Mommy, Daddy or an adult friend come and share their hobby, job, culture or other areas of interest with our classes. In order for teachers to plan their schedule, all of these visits must be arranged in advance with the Director.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

HEALTH FORMS

A current immunization record (form #3231) and health form signed by the child's physician or health department must be submitted prior to the child's first day of attending preschool. It is the parent's responsibility to update the file should the health records change during the year.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

If a parent plans to be away from the listed contact number, an applicable phone number must be provided, in order that the preschool can at least contact one parent, or designated person, at all times.

Parents are required by law to let us know if your child has an allergy, handicap, or other special needs and if he/she is under a doctor's care for any such condition. This information will enable us to continue appropriate care and education.

FOOD ALLERGIES

Food allergies should be noted on your child's health form. Please speak directly to your child's teacher about specific foods to be avoided and/or provided. In addition, parents in a class where there are allergies should consult teachers prior

to bringing snacks, food donations and “special day” treats. This prevents giving unknown ingredients to children with food allergies.

ILLNESS/ABSENCES

If your child has been diagnosed as having a communicable disease, please notify the preschool immediately, as we are required by state law to notify the parents of other children in the preschool. **We reserve the right to ask that children who have had a communicable disease bring a release statement from their doctor before returning to preschool.**

According to Georgia state law, children who are ill cannot remain in the school and should be symptom free for 24 hours prior to returning to school. Being ill includes:

- Frequent or deep cough
- Sore throat
- Undetermined rash or spots
- Fever of 100 degrees or more
- Upset stomach or diarrhea
- Consistent mucous discharge (any color)
- Red, glassy, eye(s) with a discharge

If a child becomes ill during the school day, one or both parents will be notified. In the event that parents cannot be contacted, those listed on your emergency pick-up form will be called. Pick-up arrangements and pick-up of child must be made immediately.

For this reason, it is imperative that emergency numbers are current and up-to-date. Please advise all persons designated to pick up your sick child that they will be expected to pick up children immediately when notified of a child’s illness.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Children returning to school after an illness should be well enough to participate in all activities. We go outside to play every day (weather permitting). Children too sick to go outside should not be in school.

MEDICATION

In the event medication needs to be given to your child during the time they are at preschool, you must bring it to the preschool office in the original prescription bottle or non-prescription bottle and fill out a **Medication Request/Release Form**. For the health and safety of all the children, please do not send any kind of medicine in your child’s bag or lunch box. There will not be any medication kept at school for use “as needed”. This includes teething medicine or gel, Tylenol, or cough syrup. Unless medication is for a chronic condition, or by a prior arrangement, it will not be given for longer than one week. Additionally, medicine must be dropped off and picked up in the preschool office by an adult. Medication may not be placed in the school bag.

EPI-PEN POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Weinstein School cannot be responsible for administering emergency treatment in the event of a life-threatening emergency or any invasive procedure such as the administering of epi-pens unless a liability waiver has been signed, notarized and submitted to the preschool office.

LICE

Lice are commonplace among children in preschool and elementary school. If your child contracts lice or nits (their eggs) you should:

- Notify the school
- Shampoo your child's hair with one of the available lice removal shampoos (Nix and Rid are very good)
- Check other members of the family for lice and shampoo if needed
- Wash your family's clothing and sheets in very hot water
- Check your child's hair again and REMOVE ALL NITS.

The Board of Health requires that any child returning to class must be ENTIRELY FREE OF NITS even if her/his hair has been shampooed. Children not meeting this condition will be sent home.

OTHER ABSENCES

If you know about an absence in advance, such as a vacation, please notify your child's teachers and the preschool office. To the extent possible, accommodations to complete holiday projects will be made so that your child can take his/her project home.

If you are going out of town and your child is remaining in school, please notify the preschool office and your child's teachers of your travel plans so we are aware of this change in your child's life.

If your child is absent for more than two days due to illness, your child's teachers will make every effort to contact your child. A call from a teacher or a classmate can often cheer up a sick child as well as teach about the mitzvah of caring for the sick.

PARENT-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Our community is built on the incredible partnership between parents and our staff. Therefore, you will be kept well informed about our preschool and classroom activities through various forms of communication (i.e. weekly newsletters, notes from the teacher, phone calls, etc.) If you need to pass along a message to your child's teacher, please send in a written note via the take home folder that is located in your child's school tote. Additionally, you may always call the preschool office or email your child's teacher.

Let us know in writing, in advance, if someone different will be picking up your child. For the child's protection, we cannot send children home with anyone that is not on the pick-up authorization list without written confirmation from the parent. If parents wish to speak with a staff or faculty member, and they are unavailable when you call the preschool, please leave your name and number(s) and times you may be reached. Every effort will be made to return your call as quickly as possible. If the call is about an emergency situation, please indicate this to the office personnel.

It is very important to keep the school informed of any changes in your child's life during the school year. A new caregiver, a new sibling, a death or illness in the family, a parental trip or move may affect your child's behavior in school. Be assured that all information is handled confidentially. When we are made aware of events such as these, we are more able to be sensitive and supportive of your child. Teachers send home notices regularly informing you of classroom information and upcoming events. It is critical that you read them. Please let your caregivers know how essential it is for you to receive all school communication and inform them of relevant information. Designate a special place for school notes at home. In the event of a divorce, separation or joint custody, we will make every effort to ensure communication is extended to both parents. Please help us by supplying the appropriate information.

CELL PHONE POLICY

We believe that the time you spend saying "good-bye" to your child in the morning is an important time, therefore, we will not open your car door in the morning if you are on a cell phone.

We will likewise not release a child at car pool if the driver is on a cell phone at pick-up. We would also like to remind you to have your phone turned off while in the classrooms and when attending preschool programs.

CONFERENCES

There are two parent conferences scheduled each year to discuss your child's development and progress. If possible, it is important for both parents to attend. This is a time when parents and teachers share their understanding of the child in order to work together in your child's best interest.

In addition, as the need arises, meetings can be scheduled with the teachers or Directors. We ask that you make an appointment so your time will be uninterrupted. Informal exchanges at the door during arrival or dismissal are valuable, but anything that requires discussion should be done by telephone or conference at an arranged time.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Minor accidents sometimes occur. Parents will be notified of minor scrapes, bumps and bites on an Incident Report Form, which will be sent home with your child. Please sign the form and send the back copy back to your child's teacher. In the event of a biting incident, parents of both the child who was bitten and the child who bit will be notified. The names of the children involved are kept confidential.

INCLEMENT WEATHER / CLOSINGS

In the event that we experience inclement weather causing schools to close, we will post whether we are closed at 6:00 A.M. on the website and on the school's phone message. We will not have make-up days for these school closings.

Should our preschool need to close for any reason due to an emergency, a telephone tree will be activated through individual classrooms.