

PARENT HANDBOOK

2011-2012

HAR SHALOM
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER



PJLL Partnership
for Jewish Life
and Learning
Commendation

MSDE
Maryland State
Department of
Education

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www.harshalomecec.org

August 2011
Sivan/Tammuz 5771

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center. We are pleased that you have chosen our school and we look forward to a year filled with stimulating, creative, and fun learning experiences. The staff and I believe that successful early childhood Jewish education is based on a child-centered, developmental approach to learning, and a partnership between staff and parents. Together we will work toward fostering the growth and development of your child in a safe, nurturing, accepting environment.

The Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center offers your child a traditional Jewish environment where they can learn and play. Among our goals for our preschool children is to provide an environment that encourages a strong Jewish identification through the weekly observances of Shabbat, the celebration of Jewish holidays, exposure to Jewish values, mitzvot, a connection to the land of Israel and the introduction of Hebrew through songs and games.

We are approved by the Maryland State Department of Education and commended by the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning for our Judaic curriculum.

Please be assured that our lines of communication are always open and that we welcome and value your comments, questions, and suggestions throughout the year.

This Parent Handbook was compiled for your information and reference. Please read it carefully, as it includes school policies and procedures. **Sign that you have read it on the signature page and return it along with your forms to the ECEC office.** If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call, send an email or stop by the Early Childhood office.

Shalom,

Liran Laor
Director, Early Childhood Education

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Where to Turn For Help or Answers!

Concerns or problems regarding your child and school:

Liran Laor, Director
301-299-7087 Ext. 235 (llaor@harshalom.org)

Questions about Enrichment, to leave a message for teachers, report an illness, change a pick-up person or time, request early drop off:

Sherri Eichberg, Business Manager
301-299-7087 Ext. 244 (seichberg@harshalom.org)

Ellen Ungerleider, Administrative Support
301-299-7087 Ext. 244 (eungerleider@harshalom.org)

ECEC PARENT COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Bonnie Handel 301-299-1524 (bonnieph@verizon.net)

SYNAGOGUE INFORMATION

Hazzan Henrique Ozur Bass	301-299-7087 Ext. 227
Jeff Ashin, President	301-230-4855
David Silver, Vice President, Education & Youth	301-299-7087
Michael Simmons, Executive Director	301-299-7087 Ext. 222
Rabbi Debbie Cohen, Director of Education	301-299-7087 Ext. 229
Main Office Phone Number	301-299-7087

In case of Emergency call 301 299-7087 ext. 244. If no one answers, call Ext. 248.



A current 2011-2012 school calendar can be found on the ECEC website www.harshalomecec.org.

Hours of Operation

Preschool	9:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Early Drop-off	7:30 a.m.-9:15 a.m.
Late Pick-up	6:00 p.m. - M-Th 5:00 p.m. – F (Sept-Oct & Feb-Aug) 4:00 p.m. – F (Nov-Jan)
Enrichment Program	12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m.
Parent/Toddler Program	9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. – Thursday
Ivrit La'mishpacha (Hebrew Parent/Child Program)	10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. – Tuesday
Play Date	9:30 a.m. – Mon.

Parents are encouraged to be on time for arrival and dismissal. Children are only dismissed from school into the care of their parents or other authorized person. Make sure that your child's emergency card includes the names of all authorized persons.



Congregation Har Shalom Mission Statement

Har Shalom, an egalitarian congregation affiliated with the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism, is dedicated to nurturing, enhancing, and passing on Judaism and Jewish living in consonance with the ideals of the Conservative Movement.

Our congregation seeks to encourage and stimulate all members to achieve higher levels of Jewish learning to enhance their ethical behavior and ritual observance, and to transmit these values to the next generation. Within a supportive community, we strive to foster meaningful worship experiences and a sense of being connected to God. Our synagogue provides a welcoming environment, a sense of belonging and spiritual enrichment both in daily living and times transition.

We are committed to lifelong learning; the understanding, appreciation, and performance of mitzvot; support for the local Jewish community, the State of Israel and Jews around the world; outreach to the unaffiliated; and dialogue and understanding among all Jews, as well as between Jews and their

neighbors. Through religious practice, education and g'milut hasadim, we endeavor to meet the ever-changing needs and responsibilities of our diverse community of Jews.

Philosophy

At Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center, we believe that each child is a capable and unique individual. Our program provides learning and positive social interaction opportunities for all children through a quality, inclusive and developmentally appropriate program in a safe and supportive community. Our program strives to meet the individual needs of each and every child and encourages them to explore, investigate and study their environment through meaningful, authentic and relevant, hands-on experiences.

Through an array of developmentally appropriate approaches, children develop cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills. In addition, our children develop spirituality and an intense feeling of pride in their Jewish heritage, as they observe and participate in Jewish customs, rituals, and holiday observances. As early childhood professionals, our aim is to give each child the opportunity to learn, develop and play to their fullest potential.

Educational Goals

To Help All Parents –

- understand their child's needs at different stages of growth and development
- become more aware of their role as the first teacher of their child
- begin to examine their expectations as parents and gain a better understanding of the interaction, which transpires between parent, teacher and child
- develop a positive attitude toward their child's first school experience
- allow parents the opportunity to create a partnership with Har Shalom ECEC by becoming involved in the school's Parent Committee and their child's total school experience
- to be partners in their child's Jewish education

To Help All Children –

- begin fundamental understanding and appreciation for Jewish holidays, customs, rituals and values, and Israel by fostering a strong Jewish identity
- learn to work and play independently, feel secure being away from home and be able to accept help and direction from adults
- develop social competence by learning to live effectively with other children and to value one's own rights and the rights of others
- develop a positive self-image and a view of themselves as individuals who have worth and competence
- realize opportunities to strive and succeed in the areas of physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual growth
- sharpen and widen their language skills in the areas of listening and speaking
- be curious - that is, to wonder, to question and to seek answers to questions and learn problem-solving techniques

strengthen physical skills, utilizing both large and small muscles
grow in the ability to express inner, creative impulses via dancing, music, movement exploration, art
media, clay, block building, drama, construction, water and sand, and exploring scientific areas
grow in the ability to channel inner, aggressive impulses - to turn aggression into hard work, to express
their feelings, to talk, to understand the difference between feeling angry and acting angry and to begin
to feel empathy for the needs of others

History

The Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) began in September 1971 as Har Shalom Nursery School, several months after the synagogue building was opened. The Congregation had planned for the incorporation of the preschool into its master plan; therefore, the classrooms were designed specifically for young children. The Har Shalom ECEC continues to be one of the prides of Congregation Har Shalom.

By 1972, one year after opening its doors, the school had expanded to its maximum capacity. In 1975, an additional program was added for two-year-olds. When the building was expanded in 1986, the school grew even larger.

In 1975, the ECEC was approved by the Maryland State Department of Education; a goal strived for since the inception of the school. The educational and physical standards of the school are thus guaranteed to be maintained at the highest level of expectancy. The Early Childhood Education Center is also affiliated with the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning and NJECN (National Jewish Early Childhood Network) .

In 2010, the ECEC extended its hours of operation to include working families. Now, both part time and full time students can enjoy a high quality Jewish Education.

Admission Policy

The policy of Har Shalom accepts students of all races, creeds and national origins. A child must be 2 years of age before entering our regular preschool programs. For our Parent/Toddler an adult, preferably a parent, accompanies the child to all sessions.

Special Needs and Inclusion Policy

We accept children with a full range of abilities and needs. We work in partnership with families to find innovative solutions to best meet the individual needs of each child.

Our classes offer an age-appropriate student to teacher ratio.

Allowance is made for modification in schedule, program, materials and expectations to meet individual needs.

Where necessary, the school may provide additional support, such as a facilitator in the classroom, at the parent's expense. The families must also be responsible for outside consultations, evaluations and professional services.

An interdisciplinary team of special needs consultants (OT, Speech & Language & Behavioral) is available through the Ivymount Center for Outreach in Education (CORE) Program. They provide a resource and support to parents and teachers, conduct classroom observations, give consultations to staff and parents and recommendations for professional referrals. In addition they provide training for staff to support children with special needs.

For children who are currently in other settings, observations may be conducted at the current setting to see how we can best meet the child's needs.

We will serve as a resource and support to families on referral to Child Find and other services available in the community.

We will try to be flexible in finding the best environment within the school with the option of changing the environment, if needed.

Any relevant information that can be provided to us, including, but not limited to consultations, evaluations and reports written by other professionals, IFSP's (Individual Family Service Plan) and IEP's (Individual Education Plan) and school reports are necessary to provide the best program possible. This information will be held in strictest confidence.

We will do our best to meet your child's needs, but we recognize our limitations. If we cannot meet these needs, we will make every attempt to work with you to find an alternative placement.

Licensing and Staffing

The Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center meets the requirements of the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning and of a non-public early childhood school established by the Maryland State Department of Education. The Director and percentage of the teachers were awarded an accreditation in the MSDE Voluntary Credential Program. It is also licensed by Health and Human Services of Montgomery County. Both certificates are on display in the Director's office.

Our experienced and well-trained staff is very sensitive to the individual needs of each child. They are carefully screened and selected based on their educational training, experience, warmth and interest in working with young children. The staff continues to grow professionally and maintains a high level of expertise through participation in continuing education activities such as workshops, conferences and course work in Early Childhood Education. The staff of the Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center is an extremely dedicated one, devoted to understanding the needs of each individual child and parent in the group. They strive to provide a warm, nurturing environment that offers security and trust, so your child will feel comfortable taking the "big step" from home to school. All teaching staff are college graduates, with degrees in Early Childhood Education or a related field. All teaching staff meets the requirements of the Maryland State Department of Education for teaching in a non-public preschool.

Discipline Policy

Har Shalom is dedicated to providing the best in early childhood education for young children. Our policy is to ensure a safe and secure environment for each child. Positive, age-appropriate discipline techniques are incorporated into our program. Cooperation between parents and our staff is vital in guiding the social and emotional development of our children. Through positive guidance, children learn that certain types of behavior are not acceptable. To minimize the need for disciplinary action, a few simple, understandable rules are established. These rules set the limits of behavior for the safety and protection of the children. Adults are supportive and consistent in their approach. Our goal is to teach appropriate forms of behavior, not to punish the child for his/her inappropriate behavior. To accomplish these goals we use the following techniques on a daily basis:

Prevention – The right combination of materials and equipment, time and space and a healthy emotional climate works wonders in creating an environment that keeps conflict at a minimum and is conducive to a child’s positive development.

Positive Redirection – When applicable, our staff uses positive redirection, or redirecting unacceptable behavior to an acceptable alternative.

Modeling – Teacher-modeled appropriate behavior and communication are provided to help children learn responsibility for their actions.

Limit Setting – We have a few clear, simple rules that vary according to the developmental level of the children. The teachers explain to children what they can do in a caring, positive tone and encourage the child’s efforts when he/she complies.

Problem Solving – We appeal to the preschooler’s growing intellectual and moral reasoning by using natural and logical consequences and asking questions to encourage problem-solving. Teachers help children identify their needs, feelings, causes, alternatives and choices. We provide cues and give children “scripts” to use when necessary.

Managing Behavior – When a child has a physical or emotional outburst, we provide comfort and privacy. This allows the child to regain composure and insures the safety of other children and staff. We may briefly separate the child from the group to allow him/her a “cool-down time” – a time to calm down and relax so that he/she can quickly return to the group. Cool-down time is not punishment. It is just what it sounds like: a quiet, relaxed, neutral break; a cooling-off period for the child to regain self-control. With help from a caring teacher, the child is encouraged to return to the group as soon as the child indicates he/she is ready to participate.

If undesirable behavior continues, it may be necessary to communicate with parents to discuss joint methods of addressing this problem. If a behavior problem becomes severe, or potentially dangerous, parents may be required to remove the child from school until a plan of action can be decided on, or an alternative placement can be made.

Withdrawal

The school reserves the right to terminate your child’s enrollment if it is judged your child is a danger to themselves or others or if the program is unable to meet the special needs of a child.

Biting

Biting is a common behavior among young children. Children who bite usually do so out of frustration. They may be responding to another child's aggression or to defend his/her possessions. Usually children who bite have not developed the language skills necessary to express themselves. In most cases, once the child is able to use words effectively, the biting behavior ceases. The staff at Har Shalom handles a problem of biting as follows:

Comfort the victim and care for his/her needs immediately. If possible, involve the biter in comforting. The wound is washed immediately with soap and water. Apply ice if necessary.

The teacher discusses the incident with both children.

If biting should occur again, the biter is removed from the room by a teacher to discuss and cool down. An incident report is completed and sent home with both the victim and the perpetrator and if the skin has been broken, both parents are notified.

We recommend parents of the victim consult with their child's pediatrician, especially if the skin is broken.

If biting is a recurrent problem, consultation between the biter's parents and teachers will be held to recommend strategies to implement, to prevent the behavior from continuing.

Tuition Billing and Payment

The school bills are computerized along with those of the Congregation. For those children whose parents are members, the school billing will be added to the regular bill. Parents are responsible for the full school year's tuition by December of the enrolled school year regardless of withdrawals for any reason. Tuition and deposits are **NONREFUNDABLE**. (See Fee Schedule).

If you have any tuition or billing problems, please contact the Bookkeeping Office at (301) 299-7087, Ext. 232.

Discounts

Members of Congregation Har Shalom will receive a reduction in tuition fees. If a family has more than one child attending our Early Childhood School, a 10% discount will be applied to the tuition of the younger or second child.

Activity Fee

There will be an activity fee for all students. The activity fee covers school bags, Hearing and Vision Screening, field trips and special school programs and events; a school T-shirt and challah and juice for school Shabbat. The activity fee is non-refundable. Please see the current year's fee schedule for your rate.

Enrichment

These programs are available from September through June for our 3 and 4-year-old children on a daily basis. Classes meet on Monday through Friday from 12:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Sign up is per semester. The first semester enrichment registration will be included in the summer mailing. Applications will be accepted on a first come first serve basis. For additional information, contact the ECEC office at (301) 299-7087, Ext. 244

Parking

We make every effort to provide an easy and safe access to the parking lot at Har Shalom. Please observe the following policies:

There is no parking in front of the building, along the curb of the school. "NO PARKING" signs are posted conspicuously at the curbing. Montgomery County Police have been directed to ticket any illegally parked cars in the restricted fire lanes.

Note the first lane of parked cars is a one way road.

Drive slowly while in the parking lot.

There are reserved spaces for the handicapped. These spaces are for those cars with handicap plates or special handicap permits. Please honor this for the convenient access of those with this special designation.

Refrain from using cell phones while driving in the parking lot.



Security

The entrance and exit to the school will be through the front door of the synagogue only, which is monitored by a security guard. The ECEC door will be opened from 9:05-9:25 am on days when the preschool is open. The front entrance must be used at all other times.

Snacks

Each class will have a dairy or parve kosher snack, including fresh fruit. There will be two items offered daily. All snacks are peanut and nut free.

We participate in the Maryland State Department of Education – Special Milk Program. This program makes milk available at no separate identifiable charge.

Daily Lunch Program

Our lunch program is included as part of our preschool program. Each child is to bring in a dairy/parve lunch. Lunch time is from noon to 12:30 p.m. The Parent committee sponsors Wednesday Pizza Lunch. A flyer will be sent home in the summer mailing.

We suggest that you:

DO SEND

Thermal lunch case or paper bag with child's first & last name
Dairy or parve lunch
Fresh fruit
Healthy food
Lunch that a child can open to encourage independence

DON'T SEND


Meat, chicken, shellfish, nuts, peanuts, peanut products such as peanut butter.
Candy, gum & sweets
Large portions
"Lunchable" type meals that include meat of any kind
Containers with metal tops



Hard candy, nuts, whole grapes & balloons are choking hazards. Please do not send to school.

Please remember lunchtime should be a positive experience for your child. The staff encourages, but does not "demand," that your child eat the "healthy" food first. Therefore, if you send in sugary snacks, you are giving permission to your child to eat it. A list of dairy lunch ideas is available in the ECEC office.

Food Products and Kashruth

Due to strict observance of Kashruth regulations, no home baked items may be brought and served for class consumption. Baked items from accepted stores will be permitted. Canned or packaged food must be clearly marked with a kosher symbol such as:  or KP (Parve). Please ask at the school when in doubt.

Baked goods purchased from Kosher Mart, Max's, Shalom's, Siena's, Goldberg's, Krispy Kreme in Falls Grove are Kosher. Prepackaged goods, such as Entenmanns, Sunshine and some Pepperidge Farm are also kosher. This is not an exhaustive list. Feel free to check with the Director for other kosher labels.

Peanut and Nut Free Policy

The ECEC and Religious Schools have an increasing number of children with peanut allergies, some of which are life threatening. In order to insure the safety of our children, the Synagogue has declared a peanut and nut free policy. This will mean that the entire Early Childhood Education Center and Religious School wings, with the exception of the Youth Lounge, **are PEANUT AND NUT FREE**

ZONES. We are asking for your cooperation in this matter. Please do not send in any lunch or snack food that contain or may contain peanut products.

Foods containing peanuts or nuts are not allowed in the ECEC and Religious School wings. Any foods that have an allergen warning on their label, such as "may contain traces of peanuts" or "processed in a plant that also processes nuts," or "manufactured on shared equipment" on the package will not be served to the children.

For Shabbat, birthdays and special occasions: Challah for Shabbat and cupcakes and cookies brought in from kosher bakeries for birthday celebrations will be served. On these days, the parent of the peanut allergic child will provide a snack/treat (kept on hand in the classroom) for their child.

The peanut allergic child's parent will sign off on all food to be given to their child and will keep a box of food for his/her child in the classroom for use as needed.

Some suggested foods are: cheese (string, cubes, slices, cottage cheese, cream cheese), eggs, rice cakes, applesauce, yogurt, fresh or canned fruit or vegetables, dried fruits, pita bread, bagels, certain cereal, pizza bagels, noodles, mac and cheese, fruit by the foot, real fruit roll ups.

The Youth Lounge is exempt since it is used for many purposes. It will be cleaned with extra diligence before any ECEC program to be held in that room. At Synagogue events and in the rest of the building, there will be a designated table with Peanut Free foods and products.

This policy has been put in place to ensure the safety of our children. Although it may be an inconvenience for some, it may save the life of an allergic child. We appreciate your diligent cooperation in this matter.

LABELS MUST BE CHECKED EACH AND EVERY TIME TO BE SURE THE MANUFACTURER HAS NOT CHANGED INGREDIENTS.

Please note it is impossible to create a list of "safe" snacks as manufacturers can change ingredients since the item was last purchased. Labels must be checked EVERY time.

Allergies



All parents must provide to the school information on any allergies their child may be experiencing. All snacks and foods served to children do not contain peanuts or peanut products. Severe allergies must be documented by the child's physician and procedures that need to be followed be discussed with the Director and the child's teachers. Epi-pens are to be provided by the parent with a physician's medication order form and kept in the Director's office, as well as, the child's classroom.

Class Size and Ratios

	Maximum # of Children	Staff/Child Ratios
2 Year Old classes	12	1: 6
3 Year Old classes	14	1: 7
4 Year Old classes	14	1: 7

Reporting Of Child Abuse

The Early Childhood Staff are required by law to report all suspected incidents of child abuse, physical or emotional or neglect to the proper authorities.

Pick Up Procedure

The safety of our children is our utmost concern:

Teachers will dismiss children individually to authorized adults. All drivers are to make EYE CONTACT with a teacher or assistant BEFORE a child is removed from the classroom. If someone other than a parent or authorized person is picking up your child, a written notification should be given to the teacher. The non-parental person picking up the child must provide a picture ID when they pick up the child, if the school is unfamiliar with that person.

Under no circumstances is a child to be left in the car while a sibling or carpool group is being taken into the school building. We do not consider such a procedure to be a safe one. Please instruct the driver picking up your child that leaving a child alone in the car is unacceptable and illegal. Also, please be very vigilant when walking through the parking lot with you child.

Parental Custody & Family Difficulties

If you have sole custody of your child and the other parent is not authorized to pick up your child, you must instruct the school of this fact and provide the school's Director with a certified copy of the court order confirming the custody (usually, both parents have equal custody rights unless a court or valid written separation agreement provides otherwise). Therefore, if you do not authorize your child's other parent or guardian to pick up your child, you must provide the school with a certified copy of the court order or separation agreement awarding custody solely to you or denying custody to the other parent or guardian. If you are experiencing custody difficulties, we strongly urge you to keep school staff advised of circumstances that might affect the school. In addition, please make your child's teacher aware of any changes that might affect his/her behavior at school.

Intoxicated Driver

If, in the opinion of the senior staff member present at the school, a parent or authorized person arrives to transport a child home appears to be in an intoxicated or drugged condition, the staff member must:

Notify the other parent or guardian of the situation.

Ask the person to leave their car at the school and take the child using another means of transportation.

Offer to call a relative, friend, or taxi (at parent's expense) to drive person and child home.

Perpetual Parent Lateness Procedure

The teacher will call a child's home by 12:40 p.m. for a.m. classes and 2:10 p.m. for enrichment. Afternoon staff is responsible for their children if a parent is late picking up. Parents are to be called after 10 minutes. Children are to remain in their classrooms for the first 15 minutes while waiting to be picked up. Under no circumstance may a child be left in another area of the building awaiting pick-up. After 15 minutes, children will be transferred to the late pick up room or Director's Office. Parents will be charged a late pick up fee. Teachers will provide the parents with a written warning if the child is picked up late twice. After 6:00 p.m., parents will be billed \$1 for each additional minute the child stays at school. The teacher will receive this payment. Please remember our staff has obligations, as well as, children to attend to after school.

Parent Conferences

An initial parent/child visit is held prior to the opening of school. In addition, each family has two individual conferences during the school year. Parents are encouraged to contact the staff, preferably at school, at any time during the year if they have a question or concern regarding their child. Informal conferences are held throughout the year when a teacher or parent has appropriate concerns. Progress reports will be issued at Parent-Teacher Conferences.

Our professional ethic requires that each employee maintain the highest confidentiality concerning individual children, their families, and the school's business. To maintain this professional confidence, no employee will disclose parent information to outsiders, including other parents or third parties and members of one's own family.

Field Trips



Numerous field trips are taken during the school year in our three, and four year old classes. A general permission slip is sent home at the beginning of the year, as well as, specific information prior to each field trip. The Har Shalom ECEC policy requires that parents who drive use seat belts for each passenger individually in their car at all times. Siblings may not accompany classes on these trips unless arrangements have been made with the Director, so that you, the parent, can be available to the children in the class. State law requires that children less than four years of age and/or less than forty pounds be placed in a car seat. Children older than 4 years old and 40 lbs must be secured in a booster seat.

Early Drop-off Program

Early Arrivals

7:30 - 9:15 a.m.

\$14/\$16 per session members/non-members
Free for full-day students

Please sign up for this program by calling the ECEC Office 24 hours in advance. This list will be published the first week of school.

Communication

A school roster will be released. However, this is for school use ONLY. It cannot be used for solicitation unless it involves school functions *and* prior authorization is obtained from the Director. A school newsletter, the Kol HaGan, will be sent home monthly online. The newsletter keeps parents aware of what's happening at the ECEC, as well as, Jewish holiday information.

In addition, individual class updates will be emailed weekly. A monthly program calendar, emails and letters are sent home regularly to inform parents of events, pertinent news items and upcoming meetings. **Check your child's bag daily and go on-line at our website: www.harshalomecec.org to keep current as to announcements and events.**

Holiday Celebrations

The cycle of the Jewish year offers many opportunities for our holiday celebrations. Traditionally, these special times include Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Purim, Passover, Yom Ha'Atzmaut and Shabbat. Children who do not normally attend school on the days of our special programs or events are welcome to attend provided the parent brings the child for the program and remains with him/her until the program is finished. We do not observe Halloween, St. Valentine's Day, or St. Patrick's Day.

Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated in special ways in the classroom. Parents may, if they wish, provide their child's **favorite peanut free kosher** cookies, cupcakes or healthy snack for the special day which must have a kosher symbol and in their original package. Please insure that all treats are identical for each child and make sure to be aware of any specific allergies in the class. **Balloons, peanuts or candy** are not to be sent as treats for the children, as well as foods that were prepared at home. Please check with your child's teacher regarding birthday celebrations, as each class has its own unique procedure.



When inviting other students to your home, please give careful consideration to the feelings, sensitivities and observances in relation to Shabbat and Kashruth. Please do not schedule a party on Shabbat, or serve non-kosher foods.

Please note: It is your responsibility to distribute invitations or thank-you notes. You may distribute in the school's cubbies **only if ALL the children in the class are invited.**

Parent Participation and Involvement

An effort has always been made at the Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center to involve parents in their child's first school experience. The Parent Committee coordinates volunteer opportunities throughout the year. Several parent education programs are planned for the school year. A questionnaire regarding those topics of interest to the parents is sent as part of the ECEC annual survey. The responses received help with the decision of topics for the year.

Parents are encouraged to offer constructive comments at any time. Questions regarding policy and/or progress should be brought to the attention of the Director, Liran Laor, at 301- 299-7087, Ext. 235.

Room Parents

Each class has two room parents. Room parents are responsible for:

- phone calls to other class parents on school business
- assist teachers when needed or secure volunteers for the class
- encourage other class parents to become involved in the school
- at least one room parent must attend each monthly Parent Committee meeting. If neither room parent can attend a committee meeting, the room parents are responsible for finding a representative from their class to attend the meeting.
- obtaining volunteers for ECEC programs and events.

Parent Committee

The Har Shalom ECEC Parent Committee is comprised of parents that meet monthly along with the Director.

The Committee discusses issues concerning the well being of our children and the school. They review the status of activity and fundraising planning, as well as new ideas for future events. It's a wonderful way to become active in your child's education and a fun way to get to know the staff and other parents!

All parents are invited and encouraged to attend the meetings that are usually held every third Wednesday alternating evening and morning times. Parents need not be Har Shalom members in order to attend and volunteer.

We need ALL parents' support in helping to coordinate the activities and events and volunteering during the activities, which enhance and enrich our children's school experience. Some popular programs by the Parent Committee are Family Shabbat Dinners, Pizza Bingo, Pajama Party, Picture Art, Truck Day, and many more! Without the parents' help, these programs would not be possible.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of Har Shalom members who oversee the early childhood education program at Har Shalom. This committee acts as an advisory board to the Early Childhood Director and liaison between the congregation board and the ECEC.

If you have a problem or concern, we suggest that you speak to your child's teacher. If you are not satisfied or comfortable with this, we suggest speaking with the Early Childhood Director. If that is not satisfactory, you may contact Jodi Chen, the Steering Committee Chairperson.

Emergency Procedures

Fire and evacuation drills are held monthly. Code red and black practice drills may also be held during the school year. Escape routes are posted near each classroom indicating how to direct the children outside. These routes will be discussed and practiced with the children.

Each family is to supply an emergency provisions kit labeled in a 2½ gallon Ziploc bag for their child at the beginning of the school year.

In case of a serious medical emergency (such as unconsciousness, broken bones, serious cuts, foreign object in eye, nose, ear, etc...) someone will:

Call 911 and ask for an ambulance

Notify the Director

Call the parent

The child's emergency form will be taken to the hospital with the child. A staff member will accompany the child until the parent arrives at the hospital.

The staff member will call the school to notify of the situation.

Upon return to the school, the staff member will complete an accident report, and put it in the Director's office. A copy will be given to the parent.

In cases of ingestion of poisonous material, we will call 1-800-222-1222. If an emergency occurs, such as power failure or fire, the Director will close the school when necessary to protect the health and safety of the children and staff. In such cases, all parents will be notified to pick up their children.

In an emergency where evacuation is necessary, we would all meet at the fire station across from Har Shalom parking lot. Parents will be contacted to pick up their child. Parents will be notified of all other accidents and incidents should they occur.

Snow Days, Regulations and Procedures

Please consult the following directive regarding snow day procedures for the Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center.



1. The ECEC will follow MCPS decision regarding school delays only on the first day of a weather event. In case of MCPS delayed opening, Early Bird will start at 9:15am and regular classes will start at 10:15am.
2. In case of MCPS closing, the ECEC will make an independent decision regarding opening.
3. If MCPS has an early dismissal in the afternoon, due to inclement weather, we will make an independent decision regarding early dismissal.
4. These independent decisions will be made in consultation with the Executive Director and the Steering Committee Chair. An announcement will be sent out via email, text message, posted on the ECEC Facebook page and on the voice mail at Ext. 244 or 235.

Kindly listen to the local radio stations listed below for a news broadcast of the Montgomery County Public Schools' plans for the day. Announcements will be made over radio station WTOP 103.5 FM. If there is to be an early dismissal, this announcement should be made as early as possible. You may call the ECEC office voice mail for announcements or check your email for notification.

IF YOU FEEL THAT THE WEATHER IS UNSAFE FOR DRIVING, PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME. REMEMBER TO WEAR SEAT BELTS AT ALL TIMES!!

Health Regulations

All children **must** have their **medical forms** completed prior to their admittance into the Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center. Children must be immunized against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, German measles and chicken pox. The Montgomery County Health Department requires a contraindication for any of the above immunizations be sent to the school by the child's physician. All of the above immunizations must be up to date and complete.

A child who has been prescribed an antibiotic for treatment of an illness should not return to school until at least 24 hours after the first dose of medication has been given. Also, a child should not return to school earlier than 24 hours after a fever of 101 degrees or above.

If you have any doubts about your child's state of health in the morning of a school day, please keep your child at home. We all suffer by coming in contact with a sick child and a sick child feels more comfortable in his/her own home.

The following are reasons for you to keep your child home:

Has a fever or had one during the previous 24-hour period.

Has thick nasal drainage or a constant cough.

Has crust on the eyes or mucus discharge from the eyes.

Has undiagnosed rash.

Is fussy, cranky, or generally not himself/herself.

Diarrhea (more than one loose stool or increased number of stools).

Vomiting (one or more times)

Has symptom of possible communicable disease. These are usually sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, headaches and/or abdominal pain accompanied by fever.

Respiratory distress (asthma that may severely restrict the child's activities, severe cold, chest congestion).

Teachers have the responsibility to notify parents or emergency contact, if a child appears sick so that someone can pick up the child as soon as possible. This is to prevent the spread of illness and for the health of the child. In the case where a parent cannot be reached, the emergency contact on the emergency form will be called to pick up the ill child. Please help us maintain a healthy, safe environment for your child and others by complying with this policy.

If your child has been exposed to a communicable disease or becomes ill with a communicable disease, it is imperative that you inform the school office as soon as possible. Examples of communicable diseases include: chicken pox, conjunctivitis, impetigo, fifth disease, and streptococcal pharyngitis. When warranted, a letter will be distributed to other families of children in the class informing them of the situation.

Please inform your child's teacher if he or she is on medication of any kind. Written authorization and instructions must come from your pediatrician for any prescription/non-prescription medication administered during school hours.

Whenever a child is absent for more than a week of school, a physician's note is required when the child returns. The school will make any accommodations that we can to meet your child's health needs.

Medication

In order to administer medication to your child while in school, a physician's medical order form must be filled out and signed by the parent and by your child's pediatrician. Without written authorization from your child's physician, we will be unable to dispense any medication. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medication. All medications are to be kept in the locked medication box in the ECEC office.



Head Lice

It is important that you let us know if your child has head lice. Head lice occur commonly among children. Having head lice is not a reflection on a child's hygiene, living conditions or cleanliness. They are not selective, but are more often seen in lighter and straighter hair. Any child identified with head lice will be sent home from school immediately and will not be readmitted until the child's head has been shampooed with appropriate treatment and all nits are removed. Your pediatrician is your best guide. According to Montgomery County Health Department guidelines, one treatment may not be sufficient to kill all the eggs. We recommend at least three applications of the medicated shampoo to minimize re-infestation. Check with your pediatrician.

Toilet Learning

Har Shalom ECEC accepts children who are still wearing diapers. We recognize that the toilet training process may be challenging for both children and parents. When to begin helping a child learn to use the toilet should be a decision made largely by parents and based on signs of readiness from the child. Often beginning too early leads to frustration and power struggles between child and adults. The importance of individualizing the age at which children learn to use the toilet cannot be over emphasized. We do not recommend that children be taken out of diapers before they exhibit signs of readiness. They must be able to control both their urine and bowel movements and be ready both physically and emotionally. Every child develops at his/her own pace and this indeed is another developmental milestone. If you are helping your child at home with this developmental task, please let us know so we can assist your child while in school. Proper diaper changing procedures will be followed. Universal precautions will be observed, including using rubber gloves, disposable diapers, and a disposable changing cover.

The school recognizes that occasionally children have “accidents.” Older children will be positively treated and encouraged to participate in cleaning themselves. Parents will be informed of any accidents. Please keep a labeled change of clothes at school. Parents or their emergency contact may be asked to pick up the child at teacher’s discretion; as such an event may indicate the child has an illness.

Vision & Hearing and Speech & Language Screenings

The Har Shalom Early Childhood Education Center feels that early detection of vision and hearing problems is of vital importance. As a result, all three and four year olds enrolled in the school are given both a vision screening test and a hearing screening. The cost is included in the Activity Fee. If there is a problem, parents will be notified of the results of these screenings.

There will be speech and language screenings by a licensed speech and language therapist for those children whose teachers or parents have concerns. These screenings will be at the parent’s expense. Recommendations for further testing will be made, when appropriate.

Clothing

Appropriate Clothing for Preschool

Closed shoes with rubber soles must be worn. Crocs, clogs, sandals, open-back and smooth-soled shoes and boots inhibit a child’s play and are a safety hazard on the playground and in the playroom.

Play clothes are appropriate attire for preschool. Jeans, play tee shirts and inexpensive clothing is suggested so that all children may engage in the total educational program of the school. The child should feel free to move and not be concerned about harming clothing with paint, clay, sand, water and dirt. Although we use only water-soluble materials, certain pigments are difficult to remove from

clothes. As art materials often attach themselves to children in their exuberance to participate, new or good clothes are not advisable. Drawstrings on the hood and neck of jackets, sweatshirts and coats can be a hazard if they become caught on an object. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has recommended that hood and neck drawstrings be eliminated from children's clothing. If your child wears a jacket, a coat or sweatshirt with hood or neck drawstrings, we ask you to remove the drawstrings or sew a seam through the drawstring at the middle of the hood or neck so neither end can pull out and become caught on an object. Please label all clothing with your child's name.

Labeling of Clothing and Lost and Found

All clothing, especially coats, sweaters, hats, boots and mittens should be clearly marked with the child's name.

When purchasing new clothing, please remember that snaps, zippers and buttons should be easily managed by the child. This will add to his growing sense of independence and responsibility.

Please check the Lost & Found Box and the cubbies in the hall periodically for items. Items not claimed by the end of the school year will be donated to charity.

Community Clothing For Emergencies

Clothing items are kept at the school to provide for emergency situations when there is not a change of clothes for a child. Soiled items are sent home and the community clothing items are to be laundered and returned to the school as soon as possible. If you have underpants, pants, tee shirts and socks that are in the 2T - 6 size ranges and you would like to donate them to the community reserve, we would be very grateful.

Toys

Except for toys that are needed to help ease your child's transition from home, we ask that toys be left at home unless requested for "Sharing Time." Check with your child's teacher for the specific day. Any item brought from home should be clearly labeled with your child's name. Guns and war toys may not be brought to the school. If a child must have a means to express feelings of aggression, we suggest clay or play dough to pound (manual dexterity); a punching bag to hit (vent anger while developing perceptual abilities); or finger paints (to soothe jangled feelings while practicing a developmental rhythmic movement).

Early Childhood Curriculum: An Overview

Jewish Life

One of our goals is to provide our children with a strong Jewish identity and to nurture their enthusiasm. Through prayers and Brachot (blessings), the pre-Shabbat and holiday activities, the inclusion of Biblical stories, the Hebrew language, and the connection to Israel through activities and

exposure to pictures and stories from the land of Israel, we wish to teach our children to identify with Jews around the world, and to enjoy the life experience of being Jewish.

Ta'am shel Shabbat

Friday is a special day in all our classes as we celebrate school Shabbat in our classrooms. Grape juice, challah and sometimes, the products of our own special cooking projects are served for this festive occasion. This is an opportunity to be a Shabbat parent that day and share a fun activity with your child's class. Every week we have an all school Shabbat Sing in the Burke Sanctuary led by Hazzan Ozur Bass. In addition, the Hazzan and Rabbi meet with the children for Shabbat and/or special programs.

Tzedakah and Mitzvot

The concept of helping others, giving charity and feeling compassion are not unique to Judaism. We incorporate these values into our everyday classroom life. Children are encouraged to accomplish special deeds at home and bring small change for tzedakah which we acknowledge in class. Each week when Shabbat is observed in the classroom, tzedakah coins will be collected and given to a designated charity. In addition, there may be times during the year when we have specific activities such as collecting food, clothing, books or toys for children and school supplies that are incorporated into our curriculum. We also emphasize Jewish values such as Hachnasat Orhim (learning to extend hospitality) and Gemilut Hasadim (learning to do good deeds for others).

Music

Music is part of our daily program. The children experience the joy of making music together, listening to and creating songs and rhythms, and responding to music through movement. In addition, all classes will meet with a music specialist weekly.

Physical Development

The children play outdoors almost every day. Our playground equipment affords our children to utilize both physical and social skills. Large muscle coordination is developed through running, jumping, balancing, and climbing activities available. When weather conditions do not permit us to go outside, we are able to use the Social Hall at Har Shalom. Special indoor equipment and riding toys are available for the children to use and there is ample space for them to run.

Art

Developmentally appropriate, open-ended art activities are provided for the children daily. Art projects are specifically designed to introduce a variety of media to the student and are coordinated with our units of study. We encourage process, not product. In addition, an art enrichment program is offered on Tuesday afternoon.

Literacy

Reading to the children introduces them to the world of literature and instills a love of reading. They have opportunities as well to create their own stories. As they see their own words flow into print on

the pages, they become very excited to see and hear a story they created. Shabbat, Bible and holiday stories complement our teaching of Jewish heritage in the classroom. At our writing center, the children have the opportunity to write letters, messages, stories, etc. Through poems and rhymes, they have an opportunity to develop phonemic awareness.

Science

Through various approaches, we hope each child will develop an awareness and appreciation of the natural world, powers of scientific observation, and a problem-solving attitude. Children are innately curious and learn best by doing. We follow their interests, expanding upon them, and provide, as many relevant first-hand experiences are possible.

Mathematical Concepts

The children are offered activities which teach the concepts of number (more, less and equivalents), size (larger, smaller), graphing, weight, volume, seriation, rote counting, enumeration, addition, subtraction and fractions. Through varied experiences, such as cooking, block play, and the sensory table, the children learn mathematical concepts experientially, as well as patterns through the calendar and other counting opportunities.

Social Competence

Young children must learn how to interact in a group, and must feel secure and appreciated at school, so that they may pursue their interests and learning activities with confidence and ease. We provide a free-flowing, relaxed atmosphere, within carefully defined limits, balancing structured and unstructured activities. We help the children learn how to cooperate within a group, to problem solve work collaboratively and to accept guidance from their teachers. We build their feeling of self-esteem by providing tasks at which they can succeed, and we help them to be accepted by their peers and feel part of a group.

Social Studies

Our children study a variety of topics throughout the year that are related to timely events happening in the world, as well as topics from the interests of the children. All activities are geared towards the child's level of development.

Shabbat Family of the Week

An opportunity is provided for each family to participate as the Shabbat family of the week. Parents and siblings, as well as grandparents and visiting relatives are encouraged to participate in this facet of our program. The parents assist with the program for the class by reading a story, aiding in reciting the blessings for wine, candles and challah and helping to enrich the meaning of Shabbat to the children.

The Parent Committee helps sponsor a Saturday evening Havdalah program as well as Friday evening Shabbat dinner with songs and dance for the entire ECEC community.

Gan Shabbat

A program for parents and young children meets on the third Saturday of each month. The service is held in either the Sofair Chapel or in the Gordon Sanctuary from 11:00-noon. An early childhood specialist conducts these family services incorporating familiar music and prayer for an enjoyable and meaningful morning Shabbat celebration.



Prayers and

Blessings

1. Shema

She- ma Yis-rael Adonai E-lo-hey-nu Adonai E-had. Hear, O Israel, Adonai our God, the God is one.

2. For eating bread

Ba-ruch A-tah Adonai E-lo-hey-nu Me-lech Ha-olam Ha-mo-tsi Le-chem Min ha-aretz. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

3. For drinking wine

Ba-ruch A-tah Adonai E-lo-hay-nu Me-lech Ha-olam Bo-rey P'ree Ha-ga-fen. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the wine.

4. Blessing for fruits

Ba-ruch A-tah Adonai E-lo-hey-nu Me-lech Ha-olam Bo-rey P'ree Ha-etz. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe who creates the fruit of the tree.

5. Blessing for vegetables

Ba-ruch A-tah E-lo-hey-no Me-lech ha-olam Bo-rey P'ree Ha-ah-damah. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the ground.

6. For lighting candles for Shabbat

Ba-ruch A-tah Adonai E-lo-hey-nu Melech Ha-olam A-sheh K'disha-nu B'mit votav V'tsi-vah-nu L'had-leek Ner Shel Shabbat. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, whose mitzvot add holiness to our lives and who gave us the mitzvah to kindle the Shabbat lights.