



# TEMPLE BETH ZION-BETH ISRAEL

**ABIGAIL R. COHEN PRESCHOOL  
LAURIE WAGMAN PLAYSCHOOL**

## **PARENT HANDBOOK 2018-2019**

**ABIGAIL R. COHEN PRESCHOOL AND LAURIE WAGMAN PLAYSCHOOL  
300 SOUTH EIGHTEENTH STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19103-6695**

## Our Philosophy

Our early childhood philosophy embraces the importance of play as the essential vehicle for how children understand their world. We provide opportunities for learning, exploration, creativity, and self-expression based on the idea that children have the interest and potential to construct their own knowledge with the support of educators who collaborate, nurture, and inspire them. Our educators create engaging classrooms where stimulating, challenging, and satisfying learning opportunities emerge, allowing the children to explore and discover who they are and the world around them. Using both intentional planning and emergent curriculum children develop essential academic competencies in language and literacy, science, math, the creative arts, higher-level thinking skills, and social and emotional development. We seek to impart a lifelong love of learning and to illuminate a deepening sense of Judaism as a joyful and meaningful experience in our children's lives.

## Message from the Director of Early Childhood Education

My goal "b'lev" is create an environment where children and families are all treated with respect and kindness, and feel welcomed each day by caring teachers, administrators, and clergy. A school where children are safe, challenged intellectually and creatively, and teachers are valued and feel a partnership with the parents. For everyone, I want to create a joyful Jewish experience that is open for all who want to experience it and be a part of the BZBI community.

– Risa Young, Director of Early Childhood Education

## Our Goals for Children and Families

- Create a joyful Jewish environment that embraces children's diverse talents and interests, where children are valued and respected as capable and competent;
- Provide an enriching environment of diverse materials and experiences that encourages creativity, curiosity, and exploration;
- Support children's growing independence, ability to relate to a group, and formation of a positive self-image;
- Nurture Jewish identity through stories, song, and celebrations and a develop a strong sense of community spirit;
- Enable children to develop the range of academic and social and emotional skills to ensure a successful transition on their educational journey;
- Encourage friendship, kindness, and respect for one and another and respect for the environment.
- Provide opportunities for families and teachers to work in partnership to support children's growth and development;
- Engage families in a variety of social experiences to encourage a community of support, friendship, and collaboration;
- Encourage a lifelong relationship with BZBI

## **Curriculum**

### **Emergent Curriculum, Themes, and Projects**

Our teachers utilize themes, projects, and emergent curriculum in an integrated approach to learning. Teachers closely observe and record children's so that they can develop studies and projects based on their interests. Our learning is infused with Jewish content and values and our themes or studies focus on topics that engage children in many different learning domains. For example, when children make play dough they are developing reading, math, science, and language skills, in addition to sensory exploration, and cooperative learning. Our teachers have clearly defined learning goals that are interwoven into the themes, projects, and small and large group activities.

### **Language, Literacy and Creative Thinking**

The acquisition of language and literacy skills and fostering creativity is one of the main objectives of our early childhood classrooms. By engaging children in rich conversations and creative activities throughout the day, in all content areas, we will expand their vocabulary, foster creativity and higher order thinking skills, and provide them with the essential tools to become independent and proficient readers, proficient writers, and confident speakers.

### **Hebrew Language Program**

Our children are exposed to everyday Hebrew in a weekly or bi-weekly Hebrew class taught by an Israeli educator. We incorporate elements of Chalav u'Dvash©, an innovative Hebrew language instruction program that utilizes developmentally appropriate activities and interactive teaching aids, along with vocabulary that relates to the Jewish calendar and classroom themes or studies.

### **Music Program**

Our Music Specialist incorporates original music, Jewish music, movement, and games into the curriculum using vocal techniques, movement and body percussion, and Orff-Schulwerk instruments. Children will gain an understanding of melody, rhythm, tempo, range, body percussion, patterns, unison and solo, vocal levels, and coordination.

Classroom teachers will also include the music program repertoire into their daily program, as well as, best loved children's songs in both English and Hebrew. We have many opportunities to bring children together for Havdalah, Shabbat, and community sing-a-longs.

## **School Policies**

**We ask that you share school policies and procedures with all family members and caregivers who are responsible for dropping off and picking up your child.**

### **Clothing and Shoes**

Please dress your child in comfortable, washable clothing for play. Please select clothing that permit easy self-dressing, and supply extra pairs of underwear, pants, and socks. Mark all clothing, including outdoor clothing (coats, hats, gloves, etc.) with your child's full name.

We also ask that you choose play shoes that fit your child securely and shoes that are appropriate for outdoor play and maneuvering on the stairs. During inclement weather days, if your child is wearing rain or snow boots to school, we ask that you bring a change of shoes. Boots can be difficult for children on the stairs.

Messy investigations and art are central to children's learning. We provide smocks for water play, painting, and other messy activities, but accidents happen and we do not want the children to feel inhibited or worried about their clothing. We go outside daily, weather permitting. Please dress your children in seasonally appropriate clothing and shoes and keep all outer wear in the cubby as opposed to your child's stroller.

**Please provide a zip-lock bag containing one set (pants, top, socks, and underwear if appropriate) with seasonal spare clothes for your child in case of any messy accident. All articles of clothing, as well as the bag, should be clearly labeled with your child's name.** If we provide your child with spare clothing that we keep on hand, we ask that you return it clean. While your child is going through toilet training, please bring in extra underwear, pants, and socks.

### **Communicating with Teachers and Administration**

We are here to support you and your child and we are always open to hear your questions or concerns. We ask that you follow protocol if you have questions or concerns related to the classroom or the ECE program. We encourage parents to direct all classroom related questions or concerns to your child's Lead Teacher. If your inquiry is not adequately addressed then please contact the Director. In some cases, the Lead Teacher will refer you to the Director. It is best to schedule an appointment with the Teacher or Director to discuss concerns that may require privacy or more focused time.

All questions related to tuition, enrollment, and program policies should be directed to the Director or ECE Program Coordinator. Changes to your child's daily schedule should be directed to the ECE Program Coordinator.

### **Admissions and Reenrollment**

We make every effort to offer admittance while adhering to the need for a balanced class mix of age and gender. Children are accepted with preference given to synagogue members and siblings of current students or graduates of the school. All current families are guaranteed a space the following year. In December current students have the opportunity to reenroll for the upcoming school year. Siblings are also enrolled during this time. In January enrollment is opened up to new applicants. We welcome all families regardless of religious affiliation.

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance is crucial for your child. Please email or leave a message for your child's teacher if your child will be late or will not be attending school on a particular day. Although rare, exceptional circumstances occur where the family of a child who is currently enrolled for two or three mornings per week temporarily requires additional days. If this situation occurs, please contact the Director. If our enrollment allows, we will do our best to accommodate your request. Please keep in mind that we must adhere to our license ratios.

Siblings or visitors may not be dropped off for "child care" during the course of an event you may be attending at the synagogue or when another school is closed for the day. Our license guidelines only permits care of children who are fully enrolled in our program. Please do not put your child's teacher or the Director in the awkward position of having to deny your request.

### **Enrollment Agreement**

The Enrollment Agreement is the contractual document that clarifies the terms of the Agreement related to tuition payments, refunds, and enrollment in the school. Families are responsible for adhering to the Enrollment Agreement. If there are any changes that occur that affect your ability to meet the terms of the Enrollment Agreement we ask that you contact the Director.

### **Use of Social Media**

We use photographs in printed and electronic media for the purpose of communications and marketing for the synagogue and synagogue programs. These publications include our website, social media, blogs, newsletters, brochures, flyers, advertisements, promotional videos, newspaper articles, event journals, directory, and the like. Our photography and social media consent form gives you the opportunity to grant permission for your child's photo, image, name, likeness, or other personal identifier to be included in our marketing materials.

### **Child Care Policy (RE: Hiring Teachers for Home Child Care)**

***We do not allow private child care (babysitting) arrangements with our teachers in order to ensure the professional integrity of their relationship with you. We ask that you kindly adhere to this policy.***

## Transition to School

At the start of the school year our youngest children will have transition schedule so that they can gently ease into the school day. A transition schedule is provided prior to the start of the school year. Our main goal is to ease children's anxiety and help them to know that there is a caring adult who is here for them. We also work closely with parents to help ease their concerns.

Separation from your child in the morning is often the hardest part of the day. As your child becomes acclimated after the initial few sessions, it is helpful to say goodbye and leave promptly. After years of facilitating these goodbyes, here are some things we have learned:

- It is best not to linger. Watching you walk away is the hardest part for your child, so the longer and more drawn out it is, the more difficult it may be.
- Be honest and consistent. Tell your child you can stay only if you plan to stay, but when it is time to go, leave promptly. If you tell your child you are in a hurry and your child pleads with you to stay and you do stay, plan to deal with increased resistance each day.
- Never sneak out! Always tell your child when you need to go.
- Relax. As hard as it is, know that your child is almost always fine shortly after your departure.

If your child continues to experience difficulties with separation, we will work with you to best meet the needs of your child, you, and the classroom.

## Arrival Time

School begin at 8:30 AM and we ask that all children are here no later than 9:00 AM. Some mornings children will begin their day at 9:00 AM with special gatherings such as Havdalah, Hebrew, or music. Some classes start their morning at 9:00 AM with a classroom meeting where children are formally greeted, they discuss the day's schedule and focus, and engage in conversation or singing.

We ask that you feed your child breakfast prior to coming to school. If your child is eating on the way to school, we ask to finish before entering the classroom.

## Security Guard

A security guard is stationed at the main door of the Synagogue for the duration of the school day. The guard is there for the safety of the community. Please refrain from asking the guard to watch your car, your dog, or a baby in a stroller. This is distracting from their duty and not permissible.

## Parking Cars

Ten-minute parking with your hazards flashing and a Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel placard placed visibly in your car's windshield is permitted during arrival and dismissal. Placards are available in the synagogue office. This is a privilege that is given to us by the Philadelphia Parking Authority

which is not to be abused as it can be revoked.

### **Parking Strollers**

For safety reasons, it is very important that strollers are not left at the stairwell or entrances/exits. Strollers may be parked on the special mats in the main Sanctuary and may be kept there throughout the school day. Please do not leave strollers in any other part of the building. We encourage you to label your stroller with your family name.

### **Sanctuary Decorum and Supervision of Children**

Children must be supervised at all times and are may not play or run throughout Sanctuary and they are not permitted to go onto the bima. No open food or beverage is permitted in the Sanctuary at anytime.

### **Dismissal**

Please be prompt for dismissal. If you arrive early, please do not enter the classroom, so the closing sequence of the day is not disrupted. If you need to pick up your child early, please tell the teachers in advance so they can meet you outside the classroom with your child. You are welcome to wait in the Sanctuary until it is time to pick up your child.

- **Playschool** students are dismissed at 12:00 PM; 1:00; or 3:00 PM
- **Preschool** students are dismissed at 1:00 PM; or 3:00 PM
- **PreK** students are dismissed at 3:00 PM

### **Signing Out Children**

Parents and caregivers are required to sign out your child at the end of the day so that we have a record that your child was picked-up. The teachers will have the form at dismissal time. Once you or your caregiver has taken charge of your child, please supervise his/her activities while you leave the synagogue.

If you are unavoidably detained in picking up your child, please notify the school immediately so that the teachers can reassure your child. We will be flexible if this is a one-time occurrence. However, if you are more than 15 minutes late on more than three (3) occasions without making prior arrangements with your child's teacher, you will be charged a late fee. We reserve the right to dismiss your child from the program if tardy pick-ups become excessive.

### **Emergency Contacts/Authorized Pick-up(s)**

It is important to make sure that we are updated when there are changes to your Emergency Contacts and Authorized Pick-up. Each family must provide the school with names of individuals who are authorized to pick up your child, and these authorized individuals will be asked for photo identification if we have not met them previously. If you have a change of plans regarding pick-up, that information **must** be given in a hand-written note to the Director or Program Coordinator and they will inform your child's teacher. We will also accept a phone **call from the parent and an email** verifying who will be picking up your child. We have a change of Authorized Pick-up form in each

classroom for you to fill out. **No child will be dismissed to a new person unless the information is in writing and contains your signature.**

***\*The Emergency Contact & Service Agreement Forms must be reviewed and signed by a parent mid-year to verify that the information given at the start of the school year is current.***

### **Food and Kashrut (Kosher) Policy**

Lunch and snack are not only times to eat, but also times for children to socialize with their friends and engage in meaningful conversations and reflections with staff. These times also give children the opportunity to practice eating on their own and learning about nutrition and healthy foods. Each preschool serves a morning and afternoon snack that is simple and nutritious, such as whole wheat bread, bagels, crackers, fresh fruit, as well as water.

#### **Please remember:**

- We are a **nut free** facility for the safety of all children. Do not send in any food that may contain peanuts, tree nuts, or any other nut. Make sure to check all food labels for packaging in a nut free facility.
- Please avoid all foods that are considered a choking hazard according the AAAP (raisins, whole grapes, popcorn, nuts, seeds, uncooked carrots, celery, etc.)
- We follow Kosher Dairy diet at the school. Children who eat lunch at the school are asked to bring in nut free, parve, vegetarian lunch; no meat or chicken. Fish, fruits and vegetables, dairy and soy products, pasta, breads, etc. are permissible. Children may not share food items during lunch.
- Families are encouraged to bring in nutritious lunches that are easy for young children to eat and are discouraged from sending in sweet treats and beverages, and hard candies.
- All food brought into the synagogue for the children to collectively eat must be unopened, nut free/from a nut free facility, and certified kosher with the exception of fresh fruits and vegetables. Food may not be cooked, cut up, or prepared at home, even if you keep a kosher home. The easiest way to be sure a product is kosher is to look for a “K” or “U” on the package. No meat may be brought into the building.

#### **LUNCH IDEAS:**

- **ALL Must be KOSHER AND PARVE (Marked with K or U)**
- **WE ARE NUT-FREE so you must make sure it is made in a NUT FREE FACILITY**
  - Sandwiches with pita, bread, bagels, or wrap
  - Sunflower butter sandwiches
  - Veggie burgers or veggie nuggets
  - Yogurt, cottage cheese, sliced cheese, string cheese, cream cheese
  - Hummus with vegetables or crackers for dipping (Hummus must be nut free)
  - Pizza bagels
  - Applesauce
  - Pasta salad, quinoa, grain salads
  - Vegetable soup or pasta in a thermos



- Fresh Fruit or Vegetable cut or peeled (GRAPES MUST BE CUT IN HALF)
- Fruit and vegetable squeeze packs
- Healthy cookies, graham crackers
- Water instead of juice (Your child can bring their own, labeled water bottle each day)

### **Communications and Conferences**

Strong communication between home and school is essential in order for a successful and happy school experience. The school disseminates general information to parents in several ways. Teachers will send weekly emails with highlights of the week, photos, and updates about the upcoming week. An E- newsletter will be distributed at the end of each month with an overview of the month, news updates from our specialists and PTA, and information about upcoming preschool and community events. Bulletin boards inside and outside the classrooms provide another view into each classroom. We know that parents are excited to see photos of their child, however, we encourage teachers to limit their use of photo taking to ensure that we are balancing documentation with personal engagement.

You are encouraged to tell your child's teacher or the Director — in confidence if desired — of any changes or events in your family or home which may affect your child's behavior or require special attention. Sharing of this kind information is the best way for all of us to work together to support your child with any difficulties or changes to their routine.

Formal **parent-teacher conferences are held twice per year** (fall and spring), but we encourage informal discussions throughout the year. Please feel free to arrange a meeting with your child's teacher at your mutual convenience. If you wish to contact your child's teacher during school hours, please call or email the Director. We prefer that you do not disturb the teachers and communicate any urgent matters with the Director. By the same token, the Director or teaching staff will advise you of any difficult situations that may arise in the classroom.

Teachers are only permitted to communicate with parents via their school's email address. We ask parents to follow this policy.

### **Guiding Children's Behavior**

Our teachers interact with the children in our program with concern and respect. Guiding children's behavior in a supportive, positive and non-punitive manner leads to the development of empathy, self-control and self-esteem and establishes a positive and successful learning environment. We believe that children need to learn about positive social behavior, care of materials, safety, voice control and appropriate ways to express feelings.

Our staff facilitates the development of social skills, self-control and self-regulation in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling. We encourage expected behavior, redirecting children to more acceptable activities, setting clear limits and intervening to apply consequences for unacceptable, harmful behavior. Our expectation of children's behavior is age-appropriate and respectful of their developing capabilities. Staff interacts with the children in a calm and supportive manner.

We provide an environment that supports children's independence and decision-making skills. In addition, staff encourages and teaches the children conflict-resolution skills to help them work through issues when they arise. Children are provided with the tools and practice they need to resolve conflicts, with staff modeling the behavior, encouraging children to talk to one another, helping children arrive at a resolution and supporting them so that the resolution works.

As children grow and develop there may be some behavioral or psychological issues that arise. Should this occur, each child's case is treated individually and always with the utmost respect for the family and confidentiality. Families, teachers, and the Director will work together to resolve any issues which may occur. Should you have any concerns regarding your child's development, we request that you speak to the Director. Occasionally, a child's developmental and social needs require a change in programming. These individual modifications will be discussed amongst parent, teachers, and administration and a new enrollment agreement with the school will be created that meets the child's needs.

It is the policy of the school that in an instance of one child injuring another (e.g., biting, kicking, etc.) the identities of the children will be kept confidential. Parents of involved children will be notified of any incidents; however, no names will be divulged, unless, in the judgment of the teacher and the Director feels there is sufficient justification for revealing this information (e.g. health or medical concerns).

### **Illness**

Our goal is to keep all children and adults our community as healthy as possible throughout the school year. We require a 24-hour exclusion period after the onset of cold or flu symptoms (behavior changes, watery eyes, sneezing or drippy nose, etc.), as this is the time when your child is still contagious. If families follow this guideline and watch their child closely, we can eliminate a good portion of illness. If a child comes to school ill or becomes ill during the school day, we will request the family to have an authorized adult take the child home immediately.

## Guidelines for Keeping Your Children Home

**If you detect these conditions in your child, do not send your child to school.** If we detect these conditions, we will send your child home.

- Fever over 100° auxiliary in the last 24 hours.
- Diarrhea in the last 24 hours (continual loose or watery stools, not one movement).
- Vomiting in the last 24 hours.
- An undiagnosed rash.
- Heavy, dark discharge from nose.
- Mucous discharge from eye(s)
- Deep cough, sneezing, and general malaise
- Nits or lice

If your child is ill, please call or email the school and let us know the diagnosis. If it is a communicable disease, we must inform other families immediately as to the symptoms and the contagion period so they may observe their own children. If your child has contracted an infectious disease, please ask your pediatrician when your child may return to school and provide a doctor's note upon your child's return.

We adhere to the following guidelines for these most common illnesses regarding readmission to school:

- **Ear infections** must be treated (on medication 24 hours) and fever gone.
- **Conjunctivitis** ("pinkeye") - no discharge or pus and improvement in the eye color for 24 hours after being treated. **Inform Director**
- **Strep throat** - no fever and 24 hours after treatment has begun. **Inform Director**
- **Scarlet fever** - no fever and 24 hours after treatment has begun. **Inform Director**
- **Chicken pox** - no new lesions ("pox") and all lesions scabbed over. **Inform Director**
- **Impetigo** – No oozing lesions and return with a note from physician. **Inform Director**
- **Ringworm** - 24 hours after treatment has begun. **Inform Director**
- **Cocksackie** – 24-48 hours no fever and blisters have healed. **Inform Director**
- **Lice** – **children must be "nit free" before returning to school** **Inform Director**

It is generally not necessary for your child to stay home with a minor cold (e.g. clear runny nose) and no fever. **However, if your child has severe cold symptoms (coughing and/or excess mucous and sneezing) or if they appear tired, it is best to keep them home.**

## Medication

State law prohibits the school from administering any medicine (prescription and over-the-counter) without a note from your child's physician. We request that medication be given prior to or after school. If it is necessary to administer medication during school hours, you must provide a note or fax information with written permission from the medical doctor concerning the administering of the medication as well as a note stating your permission for the school to administer the

medication which includes the dates, dosage, times, type of medication, and your signature.

The medication must come to preschool in the original bottle labeled by the pharmacy with:

- Child's name
  - Date of prescription
  - Prescribing physician's name and phone number
  - Directions for administration of medication; i.e. dosage and times
- 
- The medication will put into a labeled zip lock bag with your child's name and classroom and given to the Director or Program Coordinator. The medication will be kept in the office or refrigerated, if required.
  - The Director or Lead Teacher will be in charge of administering the medication and noting the time dosage was given.
  - The school is required to return all unused medication.
  - All documentation pertaining to the administration of medication will be retained in your child's file.

**Please note:** We do not administer non-prescription medication unless it is authorized by the child's physician and follows the same medication administration protocol.

### **Sunscreen**

Sunscreen is considered an over-the-counter medication. We request that parents put sunscreen on children prior to coming to school. If we need to administer sunscreen during the school or camp hours, parents must complete a Sunscreen Permission Form and provide the sunscreen with the child's name on the bottle.

### **Allergies and Dietary Restrictions**

It is extremely important that you notify us in writing of any dietary restrictions or food allergies your child might have. Due to the confidentiality mandate of the Department of Social Services, we cannot release this information. However, families may notify families in their class about their child's specific allergies or restrictions.

### **Injuries and Accidents**

**Minor Injuries:** Minor injuries will be immediately treated at preschool with an appropriate cleansing measure, water or ice as necessary, bandages and ample amounts of comfort and kindness. At pick-up time the teacher or Director will inform family about what transpired via an Incident Report, which will be completed by the teacher. Families will be contacted directly whenever there is an incident that leaves a mark or bruise or if there is any cause for concern. Details will also be noted in the Incident Report.

**Major Injuries/Emergencies:** If a child is seriously injured at preschool, the following steps are taken immediately:

- If injury is life threatening, staff will call 911 and notify parent or adult emergency contact.
- If injury is not life threatening, the parent or adult named on the child's emergency card is contacted and requested to immediately take the child for medical care.
- If no designated adult can be reached, the Director and/or staff will contact your child's doctor for directives.
- An incident report will be completed by the staff and accompany your child home.
- **In case of an emergency**, we will immediately contact the parent/guardian. If they cannot be reached, we will try to reach the emergency contact(s) listed on your child's information form. We will also attempt to contact your pediatrician. In a true emergency, we will seek immediate emergency care as well as contact the parent/guardian or the emergency contact(s) for treatment. **Parents must have medical and emergency care statements on file. These forms must be completed and returned prior to the first day of school. Please also inform us if your Emergency Contact Person has changed.**

### **Safety Protocols and DHS Childcare Licensing Regulations**

Our early childhood program is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and we adhere to the licensing regulations as set forth in Chapter 3270 for Child Care Centers. A copy of Chapter 3270 is available for parents to review on-line or in our common space outside the PreK classroom.

### **Fire Drills**

In accordance with our license, fire drills are done every 60 days. All children participate. We will email parents after fire drills are completed.

### **Emergency Drills**

Our administrators and staff are trained to oversee emergency drills, including shelter in place, which we conduct twice a year. Emergency Procedures are posted in each classroom.

### **To Bring or Not to Bring?**

We permit appropriate books, music, cultural objects, nature specimens, or other special objects to be shared with the class *with the teacher's approval*. Our youngest children may bring a "sippy" cup (clearly labeled with your child's name), and as your child is initially adjusting to school, he/she may bring a "special soft object," which will help comfort him/her.

**Please do not send food, money, toys, jewelry, gum, or candy to school with your child**, as these items raise a number of difficulties in the classroom, especially conflicts related to ownership and sharing. Furthermore, these items distract from the use of the educational materials in the classroom. Inappropriate objects will be placed in the child's cubby until dismissal.

**Children who remain for nap/rest time** should bring a small blanket and, if needed, a soft toy or lovey. Rest time blankets/toys must be kept in a large zip lock bag or zipped sweater bag labeled with your child's name. Blankets are sent home at the end of the week to be washed and must be returned the following week.

**We encourage all of the children to bring in a water bottle** each day so that they can have access to water as needed. Label your child's water bottle. Water bottles are sent home daily. This helps us to greatly reduce our dependence on disposable cups.

### **Diapers and Wipes**

Diapers and wipes are provided by the school. Children are checked periodically throughout the morning and changed as needed, at least one time if they are in school until 12:00 PM. If you have special requirements with respect to diapers or wipes (e.g., cloth diapers, allergy to a particular brand), we ask that you provide these items for your child and be in communication with teachers about supply.

**We do not supply pull-ups.** When your child has transitioned to pull-ups we request that you send a weekly supply. Please put them in a labeled zip lock bag. Please speak with the teachers to make sure that you are working together to support your child's success.

### **Toilet Training**

Children are encouraged to use the potty chair or toilet as part of our daily routine. As your child shows awareness of urinating or defecating, and you are ready to introduce toilet training at home, then we will work with you to support this effort. We ask that you speak with the teachers to develop a plan together. When children are in the process of toilet training you will be asked to bring in extra clothing as accidents may be more prevalent.

### **Donations & Upcycling Materials**

We welcome donations for our "materials library" of new and unusual art materials, papers, and any type of natural materials for our art, science, and sensory explorations. Our materials library includes buttons, ribbons, cards, spools, yarn, wood, corks, shells, pine cones, PVC pipes, gift wrap, fabric, drawing paper, shredded paper, and many other items. Please check with the Director if you would like to make a donation and want to be sure that it is appropriate.

We also welcome donations of gently used children's books, dramatic play props (dress-up costumes, jewelry, purses, shirts and ties) and kitchen equipment (in good condition). We do not accept donations of commercial "Disney-type" materials, and stuffed animals.

## **Birthdays**

We are happy to celebrate your child's birthday in class. Please check with your child's teacher in advance to coordinate scheduling. Any food brought in must be from a kosher and nut-free facility, and may not be baked in your home. We suggest the School Safe brand, available at Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. Please check with the Director or Program Coordinator for other ideas. Please do not send in small favors or candy for the children.

Another special way to celebrate your child's birthday is by donating a book from the teacher's book wishlist to the school. Your child will delight in presenting a birthday gift to the class and will begin to understand the pleasure that can be derived from giving as well as receiving. Teachers will be happy to share a book wish list with you.

Please do not distribute birthday party invitations in school unless every child in the class is invited. When planning birthday parties and group activities, please remember BZBI encourages the observation of Shabbat along with other Jewish holidays and festivals.

## **Field Trips and Daily Outings**

Our licensing guidelines require children to have outdoor time and gross motor play daily. Weather permitting; our children will go outside, using Rittenhouse Square as a play and learning space, and the surrounding neighborhood including the local library. We follow all safety and ratios guidelines when taking children outside of the building. Outdoor play does not take place until children have all transitioned into the daily classroom routines and we feel that it is safe to venture outside with the group. The younger classrooms will begin with short neighborhood walks. Teachers carry their classroom lists and contact information, cell phones, and a first aid kit. More formal field trips are scheduled in advance.

On Field Trips the Playschool maintains a ratio of one adult for every two children, our Preschool three -year-old classes maintain a ratio of one adult to every four children, and our Pre-K class maintains a ratio of one adult to every five children. We welcome you to join the class as a chaperone. There is no childcare at the school during field trips.

## **Snow and Emergency Closings**

We follow the Philadelphia Public Schools closing and delayed opening schedule in times of inclement weather. Visit our website at [bzbi.org](http://bzbi.org) for school closings and other important information. Please note that days closed due to inclement weather conditions will not be rescheduled.

## **Jewish Life and Community at BZBI**

"Where You Belong" is not just our tagline, it is a guiding principle. All are welcome to our preschool and to worship with our community. If you are new to the liturgy, have grown up with it all your life, are returning to observance, or are seeking to learn more and build a new relationship with Judaism, we are committed to an open, inclusive, and egalitarian Conservative Jewish tradition.

### **Parent Association (PA)**

Family involvement is a longstanding tradition at BZBI. We encourage family members volunteer, share their time, talent and resources, and get involved in our vibrant and dynamic community.

The role of the Parent Association is to build community among parents and teachers with the goal of supporting the success of our school. We plan social and fundraising events throughout the year such as Parents' Night Out, Hanukkah Sip n' Shop, and the Purim Carnival. The PA helps organize Havdalah events and Family and Kabbalat Shabbats. These opportunities are a great way to engage with other families outside of class time and share in Jewish traditions. During the school year the PA also organizes and supports various tzedakah projects, including a Pajama Drive and Challah for Hunger.

Thanks to PA fundraising, we have been able to purchase additional play equipment and classroom supplies, increase programming, send our children on field trips and give back to both the synagogue and the Philadelphia community. We are looking to continue to grow our fundraising efforts to enrich our children's experience at BZBI. The PA meets monthly and all are encouraged and welcome to attend.

### **Class Parents**

Class parents are a vital part of our community as they serve as a liaison between the teachers, Director, and the PA. Class Parents assist in communicating with parents about upcoming classroom and community events, share information with the Director about classroom or school-wide celebrations or concerns, and disseminate important communications in collaboration with our teachers. The role of class parent is critical but requires very little time and effort to be effective. All of the work of the class parents can be done via email and telephone.

### **Early Childhood Education Committee**

The Early Childhood Education Committee serves as a liaison between the BZBI Executive Board, the Director of Early Childhood Education. The ECE Committee supports the Director of Early Childhood in the development of the school's budget and the implementation of policies and procedures. The ECE Committee members are also available to parents and teachers who may have specific concerns that cannot be addressed by the Director. If you have questions or concerns that you would like to address please reach out to the ECE Co-Chairs Alexandria Romirowsky and Jenna Benn Shersher.

### **BZBI Early Childhood Grandparents/Special Friend Club:**

The Grandparent/Special Friend Club provides opportunities for your child's grandparent or special friend to be involved with our community. Twice a year we will send your child's grandparent(s) or special friend a message and/or gift, made by your child. Each year we host day where grandparents and special friends join us in celebration of the children. Grandparents and Special Friends also have the opportunity to support the growth and development of our school.



### **Shabbat, Jewish Holidays and Jewish Content in the Early Childhood Program**

The primary way we mark time include (but are not limited to): celebrating holidays (Jewish and national) and birthdays, observing changes in the seasons and other natural phenomena, developing daily routines, and documenting our work over the course of the school year.

Learning about and celebrating Jewish holidays is an integral part of our community experience. It brings us into conversation with Jewish values, history and each other.

### **The rhythm of Jewish life is deeply influenced by the cycle of the Hebrew calendar:**

- **The week:** organized into six weekdays (technically from Saturday night through Friday afternoon) and Shabbat (a 25-hour “day of rest” that starts on Friday at sundown and ends on Saturday after sunset).
- **Holidays** (“holy days”): including both “major” and “minor” ones, with at least one per month (for 11 of 12 months!).
- **The year:** The Hebrew calendar is “lunisolar” – it is based on the cycles of the moon but, to ensure that the agriculturally based holidays would occur in their proper seasons, the lunar calendar is adjusted to match up with the solar cycle.

In our ECE program, we typically focus on the following Jewish holidays, identified by their Hebrew names.

- **Weekly:**
  - Shabbat
  - Havdalah
- **September to December:**
  - Rosh Hashanah
  - Yom Kippur
  - Sukkot
  - Simḥat Torah
  - Ḥanukkah
- **January to June:**
  - Tu B'shvat
  - Purim
  - Pesah (Passover)
  - Shavuot

Teachers and clergy collaborate to lead children through engaging investigations of Jewish time

inspired by holiday themes, which allows for a holistic integration of holidays into the year's curriculum.

### **Shabbat**

Each week our children welcome Shabbat by lighting candles, blessing the wine (grape juice) and the challah, as well as, singing songs and engaging in discussions. Classrooms join together bi-weekly to sing, dance, and celebrate the light of Shabbat. Several times year family members join us for a special musical Family Shabbat led by our clergy and Music Specialist.

Each child also has a turn to take home a "Shabbat Bag" filled with everything needed to celebrate Shabbat at home, including a notebook to write and/or draw a picture about their Shabbat. Children share their journal entry when they return to school on Monday or Tuesday.

### **Havdalah**

In the same way that we mark the arrival of Shabbat with ritual, we also mark its departure and the start of a new school week with ritual. Havdalah (a Hebrew word that means "making a distinction or separation," in this case distinguishing Shabbat from the rest of the week) eases the transition back to school on Monday and Tuesday mornings.

More detailed information about each Jewish holiday, Shabbat and Havdalah, as well as many other topics, can be found on [www.MyJewishLearning.com](http://www.MyJewishLearning.com). We also encourage you to speak directly with Rabbi Yosef Goldman or Rabbi Abe Friedman about additional opportunities for Jewish learning (formal, informal, virtual and personal).

### **Other Holidays**

National holidays such as **Thanksgiving and Martin Luther King Day** are marked throughout the year with an emphasis on the aspects of these holidays that are most relevant to the children. In keeping with our commitment to inclusivity and gathering for celebration and commemoration – there are also opportunities for the children to experience secular and cultural holidays from other traditions.

There are two holidays – **Halloween and St. Valentine's Day** – that have a long history of being considered "out of bounds" for Jewish institutions. Ostensibly, this is because they have "religious" origins (pagan in the case of Halloween and Christian in the case of St. Valentine's Day). While there is actually significant debate about the connection to other religious traditions, it is clear that the way they are marked in America today is completely secular. That said, while we respect the individual families and staff members who choose to mark these holidays, we do not celebrate these holidays in our school.

We request that you support our policy of not observing these two holidays (no costumes, no decorations, no candy, etc.) in our classes. Informal discussions of trick-or-treating, like discussions

about Christmas, vacations to Disneyland, and other exciting events in the lives of our children, will not be discouraged in any way, and any group discussion is at the discretion of staff.

## **Ways to Engage at BZBI**

### **Membership**

At BZBI, our goal is to help you find connection – through traditional or alternative options for prayer and spiritual engagement, adult education, Shabbat and holiday opportunities for families with young children, arts and cultural experiences, and social justice initiatives. If you are interested in further supporting our community, please reach out to Rabbi Yosef Goldman or Terri Soifer, Director of Community Engagement to continue the conversation.

### **Tot Shabbat and Special Programs for Young Families**

Families are invited to join us for our weekly Tot Shabbat at 11:00 AM. Throughout the year we offer special programming for young families with children. You do not need to be a member to attend any of these events. We invite you to experience Shabbat with our community.

### **Youth and Family Education**

Once your child graduates from our Early Childhood program, they can continue to grow at BZBI through our Neziner Hebrew School. Hebrew School begins in PreK in our Bonim program and continues through High School.

### **Continuing Education at BZBI**

Our Early Childhood program is the beginning of lifelong learning at BZBI. We offer multiple opportunities throughout the year for adults to continue their Jewish education, as well as family engagement through our young family programming. You can learn about our education programs on our website at [bzbi.org/learn/](http://bzbi.org/learn/).

### **Social Justice/Tikkun Olam**

BZBI's social justice initiatives reflect the passions and talents that our families bring to our community. We are always working towards a more just Philadelphia. There are opportunities to volunteer at BZBI and with community partners, as well as advocacy around immigrant and refugee work. To learn more, check out [bzbi.org/get-involved/serve/](http://bzbi.org/get-involved/serve/).

## **Government Mandated Policies**

### **Mandated Reporters**

In the state of Pennsylvania, all professionals who care for children are “mandated reporters” of suspected child abuse and, as such, are required by law to report “reasonable suspicion” of child abuse to either a law enforcement agency or a county child protective agency. This law was created to protect children and to provide services for families. Child abuse and/or neglect are any actions or inactions that result in the harm or potential risk of harm to the child and include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and verbal abuse and physical neglect. Child abuse must be reported when a legally mandated reporter, such as a member of our teaching staff, has knowledge of actions, or

observes a child in his or her professional capacity or within the scope of his or her employment, and is lead to suspect child abuse.

Our staff is experienced and trained in assessing situations that may lead them to make a child abuse referral, which include, but are not limited to, the following: physical indicators of abuse, behavioral/psychological indicators displayed by the child during his or her time at the preschool, environmental problems, families' suspicions and statements made by the child.

When the a staff member observes and determines that there is sufficient cause to suspect a child is being abused or neglected, Pennsylvania state law mandates that we report our concerns to the Department of Human Services Childline and Abuse Registry Intake Unit.

**State law further mandates that families may not be notified first to prevent possible concealment should concerns be legitimate.**

### **Limited English Proficiency Statement**

It is our responsibility to ensure that all children have meaningful and equal access to Early Childhood Education programs. This responsibility encompasses the most basic of human needs, the need for communication and understanding.

In order to ensure effective communication, the Early Childhood Education staff will make every effort to ensure communication and understanding for children and their immediate families who are identified as Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Once a child or family has been identified as needing translation or interpretive services, the staff will contact an appropriate agency on their behalf.

### **Nondiscrimination in Services**

Admission to Early Childhood Education programs, provision of services, and referral of clients are made without regard to race, color, religion, disability, ancestry, national origin (including Limited English Proficiency), age, gender, or sexual identity.

Program services shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods may include but are not limited to: equipment redesign, use of aides, the use of alternative services delivery locations, and any available reasonable accommodation. Structural modifications may be considered as a last resort among available methods.

Any individual who believes they have been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination with any of the following:

Department of Public Welfare      PA Humans Relations Commission  
Bureau of Equal Opportunity      Philadelphia Regional Office  
Room 223, Health & Welfare Bldg.      110 N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 501  
PO Box 2675      Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Harrisburg, PA 17105

US Dept. of Health & Human Services Commonwealth of PA  
Office for Civil Rights      DPW Bureau of Equal Opportunity  
Suite 372, Public Ledger Bldg.      Southeast Regional Office  
150 S. Independence Mall West      801 Market Street, Suite 5034  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111      Philadelphia, PA 19107

Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel  
Donna Rosenthal, Executive Director  
300 S. 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

