



Beth Ami Community Nursery School

Parent Handbook

2016-2017

* Returning parents please note that every year there are changes made to this handbook. Please read this in its entirety and note the updated changes.



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BETH AMI COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

History

In May of 1979, Ellen Brosbe, an early childhood educator, Vivian Frye, a physical therapist, and Carol Silberman met to work on the creation of a nursery school at the Santa Rosa Jewish Community Center, presently known as Congregation Beth Ami. Many other congregants and parents worked tirelessly to build the school's excellent reputation.

The school opened with fewer than ten children, and currently has over 60 children starting their Jewish early childhood education. In 1985, our school expanded and added a Two's program.

During the 2015-2016 school year we will celebrate our 36th anniversary and we look forward to celebrating many more anniversaries with your help and support!



NURSERY SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Philosophy

Our nursery school is committed to quality early childhood education. We believe each child is unique and approaches learning in a variety of ways. We strive to present a program that teaches the whole child: socially, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Our program stresses Jewish and universal values with an emphasis on creating a sense of community and caring for the environment.

We emphasize the process of discovery because we believe young children learn best when actively involved in play. We provide an environment where children are free to take risks, to ask questions, and to experiment with materials and ideas. The environment is designed to empower children to develop problem-solving and co-operation skills.

Our goals for each child are that they develop a positive self-image, independence, creative thinking skills, acceptance of and respect for differences, and a sense of community through their experiences at nursery school.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is child-centered, with themes and activities emerging from the observations of the teachers, the interests of the children, and the occurrences in their lives. This emergent curriculum is inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, which emphasizes the children's competence, the importance of relationships, and the role of children in constructing their own understandings of their world through interactions with people, materials, and the environment.

Our program emphasizes children as active participants in their learning, where exploration, discovery, and invention are of primary importance.

We provide activities that encourage literacy development, both oral and written, and beginning math concepts. Within the context of these curriculum ideas, we emphasize learning by doing, creativity, decision-making, problem-solving, and reflection.



We celebrate Jewish traditions by reading stories, singing songs in Hebrew and Yiddish, folk dancing, cooking together, learning about and celebrating the holidays, and by celebrating the end-of-the-week Shabbat (Sabbath) together as a school. We welcome Shabbat every Friday by singing, lighting candles, saying the blessing over grape juice, and baking and sharing challah (braided egg bread).

We teach Jewish values such as *Kavod* (respect/honor), *Hesed* (loving kindness), and *Tza'ar Ba'alay Cha'yim* (avoiding cruelty to animals). These values are woven into the fabric of our everyday, and are of huge importance to children. Our child-centered curriculum and focus on social-emotional learning are daily examples of the *Kavod* that we show our students. We guide our students to show each other *Hesed*, which they do by comforting another child who gets hurt or inviting a lonely child to join in the play. When we care for class pets, observe snails without disturbing them, and remove a spider from a play area without harming it, we show demonstrate the importance of *Tza'ar Ba'alay Cha'yim*.

Low Ratios

We offer low student-teacher ratios and small class sizes, which maximize our ability to observe and get to know each student, to individualize our curriculum, and to develop meaningful relationships. Our ratios are:

- 4:1 student-teacher ratio in the Two's class (for a maximum of 8 students and 2 teachers each day)
- 6:1 in the Three's (for a maximum of 12:2 per day)
- 7:1 in the Four's (for a maximum of 14:2 per day)

Learning Environment

The school provides a creative setting conducive to curiosity and discovery. The environment is designed to foster independence and responsibility. The classrooms are organized into learning centers with a variety of activities and richly textured materials. We encourage the children to make choices and follow their interests. Our yard is equipped with play and climbing structures, an area for wheeled toys, an imaginative play area, sand and water play, natural and human-made materials that the children use to create their own play spaces, and evolving gardens for work, observation, and interaction with the natural world.



Teachers design projects which emphasize “process” rather than “product.” What the child experiences and learns in the creative process is especially important. We encourage parents as well to try to focus their words of encouragement on the process and the learning: “You chose such vibrant colors. Which is your favorite?” or “Tell me about your project” are safe and encouraging responses that invite the child to participate in a dialog about his/her day.

Positive Discipline and Guidance

Discipline at BACNS is highly individualized and dependent on the particular child and situation. However, certain generalizations can be made. The goal of discipline is that it will lead to self-knowledge and self-regulation or self-control. Therefore, every attempt is made to assist the child in gaining tools in these areas. Our teachers help children identify and express feelings, understand consequences of behavior, and as much as possible, do their own negotiating and problem solving. When problems or conflicts arise, teachers will reflect and validate the feelings of all involved, ensure that all sides are heard, facilitate for conflict resolution, and when necessary, suggest or impose solutions or model negotiating skills. For example, a teacher might say, “It looks like you both want to play with that toy, but we only have one. What could we do to solve this problem?”

Our teachers model cooperation and problem solving. Through experience and practice, children learn to identify and express feelings and needs, to consider the needs of others, to negotiate and compromise, and to problem-solve on their own. Time out and punishment are not considered to be effective ways to facilitate the social learning or self esteem necessary for good problem solving. A child will never be left unattended, or subjected to punishment, humiliation, or any other acts of a punitive nature.

If and when a child poses a threat to him/herself or others or needs time and/or space to calm down, a child may be removed from a situation, classroom, playground, etc. At these times, a teacher either remains with the child, talking calmly, or a quiet space is provided for the child somewhere in the classroom. It is usually left up to the child to determine when he/she feels ready to talk or re-enter the social scene. Alternatives for future situations may be discussed, as will validation of the feelings behind the behavior. For example, a child may be told, “It is okay to be angry, but it is not okay to hurt anyone or any of our materials. You



may...” and then alternatives may be suggested. Physical outlets may be provided for a very angry child when needed, such as foam balls to squeeze or throw, or play dough to pound.

Above all, the primary method of maintaining discipline at BACNS is to have a developmentally appropriate program that does not create unrealistic expectations of behavior or make demands on children that are stressful or not appropriate to their particular developmental level. The school provides a relaxed atmosphere which emphasizes respect for self, others, and the learning environment. Additional values the school encourages are: cooperation, caring, responsibility, self-esteem, initiative, negotiating, and problem-solving skills.

We believe that guiding children towards social independence is a critical component of the nursery school experience. Young children are in the process of gaining the language skills and life experiences necessary to negotiate conflict successfully. As they work towards independence, they often struggle to navigate problems with each other peacefully. We are fully dedicated here at BACNS to helping them use their words to express their needs to each other and to come up with solutions together.

We are also fully dedicated to keeping the school environment a safe one for all kids. Hitting, biting, kicking, or other acts of physical aggression will result in a phone call home and may require that the child go home for the remainder of the day.

In the case of repeated behavioral issues, a cooperative home-to-school behavior plan will be put into place. Such a plan will be devised collaboratively with the teachers, director, and parents, and will include regular check-in meetings, at-home and at-school strategies for encouragement and consequences, benchmarks for improvement, and a modified schedule or a requirement that someone come to school to shadow the child. At the end of the time frame, the child’s placement in the school will be reassessed by all involved.

Staff

The success of our school depends on the dedicated and skilled individuals who make up our staff. Our teachers have more than 100 years combined experience working with young children and have received their degrees



and/or certifications in Early Childhood Education. In addition, many of our teachers have advanced degrees in educational fields. Our staff is committed to on-going professional development which includes regularly scheduled in-service training and workshops, as well as attendance at local, state, and national conferences.

We feel fortunate that many of our staff members have been with us for over 10 years, helping our preschool continue to be a unique place of learning and discovery.

The Director is responsible for supervising the day-to-day operation of the Nursery School and works closely with the teachers in developing and implementing the daily program.

SCHEDULE OF THE DAY

Hours of Operation

All of our CORE classes are offered Monday-Friday and are open to student enrolling anywhere from 2-5 days per week. School begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 12:00 p.m. for the Two's and 1:00 p.m. for the Three's and Four's.

Young children need a sense of what to expect in their day. Therefore, we maintain a daily routine to fit the needs of each group of children. In general, the day offers periods of organized and free-choice activities, small and large group times, outside active playtime, and snack time. Our schedule is also flexible enough to accommodate field trips, seasonal changes, and the spontaneous needs and wishes of the group.

Extended Day Care (EDC)

We offer EDC five days a week for students of all ages starting at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 5:30 p.m. All EDC staff are qualified, experienced teachers.

EDC must be pre-arranged with the office! If you choose to buy a regular EDC package of hours, you may choose how your hours are distributed, but they must be done so in **a schedule that is pre-arranged with the office and consistent from one week to the next.**



If you would like to use extended care occasionally, on a drop-in basis, this also must be **pre-arranged with and confirmed by the director at three school days prior to the day desired**, and only if there is space available.

Parents are asked to sign up for regular EDC on their enrollment applications when possible. To indicate your interest in enrolling your child in the EDC program after applications are in, please fill out and return the Extended Day Care Sign-Up sheet enclosed in the right-hand pocket of this Parent Handbook. If you are unsure of your needs at this time, please speak to the Director at anytime when you have made a decision. We will do our best to accommodate your requests.

So that we may staff appropriately in the afternoon and the morning, pickup must occur promptly at the time indicated on your schedule or you will incur late pick-up fees (see p. 15). Accordingly, if you are **not** enrolled in the morning EDC, a parent or guardian must remain with your child **outside** of the play-yard until class begins (9:00 a.m.).

Enrichment Activities

We further enrich our program by engaging specialists who teach music, art, gymnastics, etc. on various days after our regular school sessions. Parents who choose to enroll their children in the enrichment classes pay for them directly to the enrichment program and separately from their regular monthly tuition and extended care services.

If your child is signed up for enrichment and EDC on the same afternoon, EDC hours are counted for billing purposes starting at 1:30.

If your child is signed up for enrichment only, please be outside the classroom as the class ends to avoid late pickup fees.

Summer School

Our summer program continues with our philosophy of emergent curriculum. The maturity of the children at this time of the year and the quality of relationship they have created with each other over the course of the previous academic school year results in an intimate atmosphere in the classroom and increased depth and meaning in their play.



Summertime lends itself to all kinds of learning and exploration. From habitats and life cycles to the water cycle, conservation, and gardening, there's an endless stream of inspiration that emerges from the time spent outdoors during summer. We also welcome the opportunities to come together often as a school, visiting different classrooms, picnicking on the grass, and starting our days with a good morning Misdar Boker, a school-wide sing-a-long to welcome the day.

ADMISSION POLICIES

Required Information

A complete and current individual file on each child will be maintained at the Nursery School.

The file will consist of:

- Identifying information
- Child's social and developmental history
- Child's medical history
- A physician's pre-admission report
- Required immunizations or a waiver signed by the parents AND physician (As of 1/1/2014, even a personal belief waiver must be signed by a physician per Child Care Licensing).
- An emergency release form
- A general field-trip permission slip
- An Admission Agreement signed by a parent

This file will also contain three statements signed by a parent indicating that he or she has read:

- This Parent Handbook
- The Personal Rights sheet
- The Parents' Rights sheet.

All of these documents must be on file before a child begins school.

In the event of full enrollment, priority in registration will be as follows:

1. Continuing students (those in current classes)
2. Siblings of a concurrently enrolled student
3. Siblings of previously enrolled students



4. Members of any Sonoma County Synagogue
5. New students who have at least one Jewish parent
6. New students

Application

Application and registration is ongoing and begins in early February. New and returning families wishing to enroll for the next school year should submit a completed application form and non-refundable application fee for each child returning or new to the school. Applications are preferred before April 1 so that we may place students in classes appropriately. We will continue to accept applications after that date however, and place students in classes if there is space. Once we are full, new applicants will be placed in a wait pool.

Student Qualifications

Our goal is to best serve each child and family in the school. It is therefore important that each child is:

- Ready for the group experiences a nursery school has to offer
- Able to benefit from the program offered
- On the way to being toilet trained, with the exception of children enrolled in the Two's program

Should the need arise for regular one-on-one support for your child (i.e. an aide), continued placement may be dependent on the family providing one.

In following the Americans with Disabilities Act, please discuss your child's needs with the Director so that we are aware of any special circumstances. Full disclosure before admission is critical in order for us to best meet your child's needs. Admission may be reversed if the information submitted is found to be inaccurate or incomplete and this results in our inability to provide for your child's needs.

Class Placement

The staff works thoughtfully and diligently at the complex process of determining placement of the children in each classroom. Multiple criteria are considered in making these decisions which include, but are not limited to: Parents' desired schedule of days, specific parent requests, age and development of each child, the unique individuality of each child, gender and personality balance, and returning-friend peer groups. We carefully attempt to honor requests; however, the final decision is determined by the staff.



FINANCIAL POLICY

Application Fee

Each application (for each child, each school year) must be submitted with a non-refundable application fee.

Placement Guarantee

Upon notification of admission to the program, each family must submit a **non-refundable placement guarantee payment equal to 10% of the annual CORE tuition** for each child no later than **May 15th to reserve this spot**. The placement guarantee payment will be applied to the last month of the annual tuition and will be forfeited for withdrawal prior to the end of the school year.

Payment of Tuition and Fees

Tuition and enrollment is for the full school year. Two tuition payment plans are available.

1) Payment in full:

A 3% discount is available to families paying tuition in on or before August 1st. Families enrolling or paying tuition after August 1st are not eligible for the discount.

2) Installment payments by credit/debit card:

Annual tuition (minus the placement guarantee) will be paid in monthly installments through credit/debit card on file. Monthly payments will be automatically charged to the card on file on the 15th of each month from August-April. You will not receive a bill or an invoice. If you would like an invoice/receipt of payment, you may request this at the main office in person or via e-mail.

Please note that nursery school tuition and childcare fees may be tax deductible for working parents. Please consult your tax professional for more information. Our Federal Tax ID number is 94-156 6549.

Insufficient Funds/Late Payment Fee

There will be a charge of \$25 if your credit/debit card is declined. Your card will be charged again on the next business day with the additional



charges included. If your account is not current by the last business day of the month in which an installment is due, you may be asked to withdraw your child from the school until the situation is resolved. Should your account remain delinquent, you will be responsible for any attorney fees and collection costs that may be incurred in addition to the amount outstanding.

Please update the office with new account numbers and expiration dates as soon as changes occur to avoid this situation.

Refund Policy

Refunds will not be given for:

- Holidays, vacation, and teacher in-service and professional development days
- School closure due to natural disasters or emergency
- Picking up your child early from class or after-school care
- Days your child missed due to illness—including days out because of contagious illness such as chicken pox, head lice, whooping cough, flu, etc.
- Days your child missed due to family plans, including vacations, visiting relatives, etc.

Program Changes

If you wish to change your child's regular schedule, or extended daycare, you must request this in writing by filling out the Change in Schedule Form, located in the back of this packet, and by obtaining Director approval at least **one week prior to** the beginning of the month for the schedule change to take effect on the first of the month. The signature of the director is needed for approval, and you will be notified if there is room prior to assuming any schedule request change.

30 days notice is required to drop scheduled school days or extended day care hours, so that we may make an attempt to fill those days/hours. If the request is made with less than 30 days notice, you will be charged for the full 30 days.

Early Withdrawal

30 days written notice is required when a child withdraws from our program. Notice of withdrawal must be provided by US Mail attention



Nursery School Director, 4676 Mayette Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95405 or by e-mail to NSDirector@BethAmiSR.org. Tuition will be charged for the period from the date of enrollment until 30 days after the notification has been received.

The placement guarantee, application fee, and tuition fees prior to the 30 day mark are non-refundable.

Late Pick-Up

Late pick-up is NOT the same as drop-in extended care. Drop-in care is scheduled with the director at least three school days prior to the day in question.

Being late for pick-up time will result in the following charges:

- 1) The first time, there will be a 15-minute grace period, followed by a \$10 charge for each additional 15 minutes late.
- 2) The next time and beyond, there will be a \$10 charge for every 15 minutes (with no grace period).

Please keep in mind that your child's safety is our priority, and we schedule our afternoon staff based on the number of children we expect to have with us after CORE hours.

If you find that you are not able to get to school reliably by your scheduled pick-up time, feel free to schedule additional EDC hours to give you more wiggle-room.

TUITION AND FEES

Tuition Schedule

CORE tuition is as follows for children in all classes:

<u>CORE SCHOOL DAYS</u>	<u>Annual Tuition*</u>
2 days.....	\$3790 (\$379/month)
3 days.....	\$5200 (\$520/month)
4 days.....	\$6600 (\$660/month)
5 days.....	\$7690 (\$769/month)



Tuition for students who start mid-year is pro-rated.

Drop-in CORE school days MAY be available for a daily rate of \$45/day (for CORE hours only). Please ask the director and receive confirmation of availability at least three school days before drop-in care is needed. Once confirmation is received, the cost will be added to your account and will be forfeited in the case of a last minute cancellation/absence.

Extended Day Childcare Fees

Families may sign up for extended day childcare schedules with their applications or they may add hours later if there is room. Families purchase a package of hours for a flat monthly rate. Packages start at 5 hours/week and extend up to 35 hours/week. Those hours may be scheduled any way the family needs (in half-hour increments), as long as the schedule is consistent from week to week. Any changes to the schedule must go through the director for approval and are based on availability.

Late pick-up and drop-in care are NOT included in the EDC package (even if you have extra hours in your package) as they require additional/flexible staffing.

Drop-in extended care MAY be available for an hourly rate of \$10/hour. This will be charged by the full hour even if only a fraction of the hour is used. As with drop-in CORE school days, please ask the director and receive confirmation of availability at least three school days before drop-in care is needed. Once confirmation is received, the cost will be added to your account and will be forfeited in the case of a last minute cancellation/absence.

Packages are as follows:

<u>Pre-Arranged Extended Care (EDC)</u>	<u>Monthly Cost</u>	
Up to 5 hours/week.....	\$140/month	(\$7/hour)
6-10 hours/week.....	\$252/month	(\$6.30/hour)
11-15 hours/week.....	\$340/month	(\$5.67/hour)
16-20 hours/week.....	\$408/month	(\$5.10/hour)
21-25 hours/week.....	\$459/month	(\$4.59/hour)
26-30 hours/week.....	\$496/month	(\$4.13/hour)
31-35 hours/week.....	\$520/month	(\$3.72/hour)



Scholarships/Discounts

A 10% tuition discount is offered for current members of ANY Sonoma County Synagogue. For families with more than one child attending the Nursery School, there will be a 3% reduction in the tuition for the second (and third) child. Any family that wishes to pay in full by August 1 will receive a 3% discount. Multiple discounts will be applied in the above order.

Scholarships may be available on a limited basis for families unable to pay full tuition. All requests are confidential and are based upon need and verification of income. Applications are available in the BACNS office and are due no later than June 1 (or the following business day) for a determination for the coming school year. If you wish to learn how you can make a gift (donation) of an extra day/week for a child to attend BACNS, please see our Director and learn more about the Jill Tager Scholarship Fund. For further information, consult the Nursery School Director.

The Children's Jewish Education Endowment Fund (CJEEF) may have funds available to distribute as stipends to provide students and faculty that are members of Congregation Beth Ami with Jewish educational opportunities. Request for financial assistance during the school year can be submitted to the synagogue office Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. until Erev Rosh Hashanah. You may request a Dedicated Fund Request form from the Nursery School Director or the congregation office. Recipients will be notified by Erev Hoshana Rabbah.

EMERGENCIES AND NATURAL DISASTERS

In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, the Director and/or Executive Director, based upon all available facts at the time, will determine school closure. The Nursery School serves a large part of Sonoma County, and if an area in the county is affected by the natural disaster and many staff members are affected, the school may have to make an emergency closure or operate with only a skeleton staff. Parents will be notified as soon as possible, via telephone communication, if an emergency closure is necessary. There will not be any tuition refunds if the school is forced to have an emergency closure.



Emergency Procedures

If an emergency does arise at Congregation Beth Ami the following will occur:

- Should there be a reason for closing the Nursery School on any given day, staff will call the Executive Director, Nursery School Director, and the first scheduled nursery staff teacher.
- After further assessment and feedback, the director will inform all families of any closure or delay in school operation via e-mail AND automated phone call.
- In addition, we will inform families if we will remain closed until further notice.

If an emergency occurs while children are in attendance, the Director will assess the need for early pick-up, and parents will receive an e-mail and an automated call. If we can't get in touch with you, we will continue calling (from your "Identification and Emergency Information" form) until someone is reached for pick-up. Rolling blackouts do not always cause the school to close. If a blackout occurs, we check with PG&E and other emergency information to assess our safety to remain on site. Should we need to evacuate, our temporary relocation site is **Spring Creek Elementary School across the street from Congregation Beth Ami.**

Emergency Preparedness Kits

Upon arrival on your child's first day of school, we will collect the emergency preparedness clothing kits to store at school in the event of an emergency. The instructions for the kit are in the back pocket of this handbook. You may collect your child's previous year's kit at our year-end potluck picnic. If your child is staying for the summer program, you may update your kit at that time.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Sign In & Sign Out

Preschool is governed by requirements established by the State of California. Rules of compliance (CCR, Title 22, Sections 101226.1{b} and 101229.1) dictate practices that assure the health and safety of children in our school.



It is critically important that each child be signed in and out every day following this protocol:

- 1) Sign in when entering the school and sign out when picked up, each day, with a written full legal signature (the same as is on your driver's license and/or credit cards)
- 2) Write the time of arrival/departure next to the child's name.
- 3) If your child is signed up for enrichment, please check that box when signing them in.

Persons authorized to sign in and sign out children are listed on the emergency card. **In case of emergency, the sign in sheets enable us to immediately locate each child.** The sign-in/out sheets are a legal document which transfer responsibility for the child between the center and the child's authorized representative.

Staff members are not authorized to sign children in or out. The Director has the responsibility to systematically check the sign-in sheets to ensure that sign-ins/outs are done regularly. State regulations specify that no one under the age of 18 may pick up or drop off, sign in or sign out a preschool child.

Only those individuals who have been previously authorized by a parent in writing will be allowed to pick up a child. If the staff does not know the person who has been authorized to pick up a child, the staff person will ask for a picture I.D. If for any reason a child is being picked up by anyone not previously scheduled, a parent should put that information in writing and inform the teacher verbally as well.

In addition, carpool parents must sign in and out for all children riding with them. The licensing department agent inspects sign in sheets. When incomplete or illegible, we will be cited by the department. Continued lack of or illegible signatures will cause us to be fined. Please remember to legibly sign in and out of the program.

Arrival

Upon arriving, please wait until your scheduled start time and then accompany your child to his or her classroom and sign in. If your child is in



the four's class (or in early care), you may then escort your child to the yard.

Pick-Up

Please pick up your child at or before their scheduled pick up time. If they are on the yard at pick-up time, please take them with you to sign out (unless you have arrived early enough to do so on your own and still pick them up from the yard on time).

If you find that you are going to be detained, please notify the school **immediately**. Your child's safety is our priority and we will do all we can during unexpected emergencies. All children must be picked up at their scheduled time. Please see the late pick-up section (on p. 15) to see the fee schedule for late pick-up. Please be on time to avoid unnecessary stress and worry for both your child and the staff. Pick-up time for the Nursery School is 12:00 p.m. for Two's and 1:00 p.m. for Three's and Four's.

Safety for all during arrival and pick-up time is a priority. Chasing games, while great fun, do not ensure a safe trip through our campus and parking lot. If a teacher is not pre-occupied with the needs of children, drop-off and pick-up times are ideal times to impart information or ask for feedback regarding your child.

Authorization to Pick-Up Child

Children will not be released to any person who is not authorized by a parent to pick up the child as indicated in your child's file. Please use the **AUTHORIZATION FOR CHANGE IN CHILD PICK-UP LIST** form in the back pocket of this handbook to authorize a new person for a given day or period of time.

Copies of this form are also available in the Nursery School office. For any person other than parents or guardians picking up your child, we will ask for picture identification at our first contact until we are familiar with this person. Please have new pick-up persons bring their identification.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Healthy Children at School

Your child's health is of major importance to all of us. Prior to enrollment, you must complete and return your child's health form signed by a physician and your child's immunization record, including tuberculin clearance. Each morning, please assess the health of your child. **Please wait until a teacher greets and accepts your child before leaving the premises.**

Your child will be sent home if there appears to be symptoms of illness present during the day such as fever, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, or a cough. In such cases, the child will be separated from the other children and a parent will be contacted. Our **illness policy** is strict for the well-being of all the children. Please be prepared to pick up your child immediately when called.

While we recognize the inconvenience to one's professional or personal commitments, when a child is ill, the health and safety of **all** children, parents, and teachers is of utmost concern. **Please** keep your child home if he or she:

1. Has a fever (temperature over 100.4°) or has had a **fever during the last 24-hour period**. If you have used fever-reducing medicine in the last 24 hours to stave off a fever, please keep your child home another day.
2. Has vomited or has had diarrhea **within the past 24 hours**.
3. Has a symptom of a communicable disease: red dripping eyes, runny nose, fever, sore throat, headache, rash, abdominal pain, ear ache, swollen glands, mucous, coughing/sneezing, acts listless or drowsy, has a headache, or flushed face, or has indication of head lice.
4. Has been prescribed an antibiotic/remedy by a physician/practitioner within the last 24 hours. **Your child needs to be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school.** (The staff can administer medication, as long as the medication comes in the original container and a Medication Form is properly and fully filled out. Instructions with doctor's orders must be left in writing on a



form that we will provide.) **Please notify the school at once if your child has a communicable disease or has been exposed to one.**

We may require a doctor's note for your child to return to school (such as in the case of a rash or a diagnosis of allergies rather than pink eye).

If you notice any behavior or symptoms that indicate possible illness, please do not send your child to school if you administered a decongestant, Tylenol, cough syrup, etc. Medication often masks the symptoms, but the contagious illness is not deterred. In the event of head lice, please inform the office immediately. We require that children be free of all nits before returning to school.

In the event a child becomes sick at school, **we will first call the parent(s)** and then, if unable to contact the parent(s), proceed to the list of emergency contacts. The child will be isolated until the parent or an authorized adult arrives for pick up. Parents are asked to arrive within 30 minutes of receiving the call or make arrangements for others to supply care. We feel that children who are too sick or tired to play outside or fully participate in our program should be at home. Children with non-contagious medical restrictions, documented by a physician, will be kept inside during inclement weather at the parent's request or the teacher's discretion.

We appreciate your support in this situation, as our staff all strive to provide optimal care at all times for individual children and meet the needs of the group, at the same time.

Per licensing requirements, every family needs to maintain a list of viable emergency contacts as well as phone numbers where we can reach the parents at all times.

If you have an additional child (i.e. sibling of student) who is ill, **PLEASE DO NOT** bring the sick sibling into the classroom when dropping off your student.



In Case of Accidental Injury

The staff will administer necessary first aid treatment to your child. For other minor injuries we will make an attempt to contact a parent. If we cannot reach you or a contact from your emergency list, we will call the child's physician or one of the school's consulting physicians. When necessary, we will call an ambulance. You will be expected to assume responsibility for any incurred expenses. There is a requirement that a signed consent form about this policy be in each child's file.

Whenever first aid is given, teachers fill out an "Ouch Report" and place a copy in your child's cubby and in their file.

The Front Gate

Your children's safety is our number one priority. Our keycoded front gate is a part of our ongoing effort to keep our children and school safe. Each family will choose a 4-8 digit code that allows them to enter our school premises. We ask that families only share this code on a need-to-know basis (with caregivers who will be picking your child up regularly, for example). Should you forget your code, please press the buzzer and someone in the office will let you in.

HELPING YOUR CHILD ADJUST TO SCHOOL

To make your child's adjustment to their new setting easier, talk about it a lot before hand. Make sure you talk about your child's teacher by name, talk about how you are going to drop them off, you won't go far, and you will come back right after lunch (or nap, depending on your child's schedule). If this is your child's first school or out-of-home care experience, it can be helpful to read stories about school, such as, "T'was the Night Before Preschool." Your child's teacher can give you suggestions for helpful departure routines and help facilitate the transition.

We can also learn from you about what makes your child feel secure. Some children need a transitional object to take from school to home. We ask all families to provide a picture of the whole family so that your child can look at it for comfort. It may help to have a phrase that you can say to your child each time you part, something like: "Mommy's/Daddy's/etc. never gone long and s/he always comes back." Be sure to say goodbye when you leave.



We know that it can be very hard to hear and to see, but we hope that you won't be anxious or embarrassed if your child is very upset and cries. We suggest that you stay in the room until they feel relatively secure, but not long enough for them to continually prolong the 'good bye ritual' and prevent you from leaving. Complete your good bye, and even if their objections are loud and strong, make your exit.

A teacher will help your child to enter into an interesting activity or perhaps offer a comforting lap. Soon, your child will accept the procedure and then grow to function without Mom or Dad around. Usually, separation protests last only a few minutes after the parent is out of sight. Parents may phone for reassurance at any time during the day.

Sometimes, while still at home, your child might announce some morning that they do not want to go to school today. The best procedure is to say, "Now is the time to go to nursery school. Later we will be together" or "Nursery school is your work and I will be doing my work when we are apart." At times a child is reluctant to attend school, fearful they may be missing out on special times that Mom or Dad shares with a younger sibling. Assure them of your plans to spend time together after school and your confidence of their success in school.

DAILY NEEDS

Clothing

Appropriate clothing for play is extremely important. Children need to feel comfortable, free to fully explore the school environment, and be self-reliant during their school play. If children worry about getting messy, it could potentially interfere with creative experiences. Rugged, washable play clothes and tennis shoes are ideal for Nursery School.

Please...

1. Make sure clothes are easily laundered. Preschool paint containers state that they are washable, but certain fabrics launder better.
2. Garments should be easy for little fingers and hands to manage. This helps lead to the independence the children strive for. Overalls are not recommended.



3. A sweater or jacket should be provided even on sunny days. We recommend sunscreen and waterproof shoes/sandals (please, no flip-flops) for outside play on warm days. Additionally, children should bring rain boots and a raincoat during rainy weather.
4. It is recommended that all clothing be **labeled with the child's name**, particularly sweaters, hats, and jackets.

Change of Clothes

Children need multiple articles of labeled clothing to be kept in their cubby. This will help tremendously in the case of potty accidents, water play, spills, etc. We find that, while we have extra clothes here, children often prefer to wear their own. This should include:

- Socks
- Underwear and/or pull-ups and/or diapers
- Pants and shorts
- Long- and short-sleeved shirts
- Extra pair of shoes if possible
- Sweatshirt or jacket

Please check regularly (and especially when your child is wearing different clothes at pick-up then they were wearing at drop-off) and replenish as needed. Whenever your child changes sizes, please refresh as well.

Belongings

Unless you have been notified that it is a “sharing day,” we ask that you leave your child's toys at home or in your car. Please check with your child's teacher about the appropriateness of any books, music, or toys you wish to loan to the class. Toys of violence or war toys are not allowed at the school.

Lunches

Lunchtime has both learning and social opportunities and can be an important part of the school day. Since lunchtime is included in our Nursery School program, you will need to provide this meal in a lunch box or bag, with a drink. (No glass bottles please.) **In order to preserve the rules of our kosher facility, no meat, poultry, shellfish, or products containing animal fat are allowed at the school.** (Fish with fins and scales like salmon or tuna are examples of kosher foods that are acceptable.) **Examples of suggested foods are yogurt, cheese, fruits,**



and vegetables, beans, nut butters, tofu, grains, vegetarian sandwiches, eggs, and pasta. We recommend small portions of a variety of foods. We will inform you if your child's meal needs to be supplemented or changed. The emphasis here should be on nutrition, so please do not send candy or gum with your child. Teachers welcome any questions you might have regarding lunches.

Snacks

Please discuss any food allergies that your child may have with your child's teacher. The director will post a list of all children with food allergies in the kitchen visible to all staff, subs, and all others engaged in snack preparation. Arrangements for special diets are best made directly with your child's teacher.

We offer wholesome and nutritious snacks each morning and afternoon. Sometimes, snacks are reflective of the Jewish holiday or the subject area being explored on a given day. All snack foods are appropriate for our kosher facility.

If you have a surplus harvest from your garden or orchard, this would be a wonderful gift to the school. Please speak to your child's teacher about arranging to bring in a special cultural dish or a birthday snack.

Extended Day Care Bedding

For afternoon nap or rest time we provide a padded floor mat. Your child will need to bring a labeled light blanket and a crib-size sheet. Please provide a clearly labeled cloth bag or backpack to contain the afternoon bedding. A small comfort soft toy could also be part of the EDC kit. For health and hygiene, we ask that parents take bedding home for laundering once a week.

SPECIAL EXPERIENCES

Birthdays

Children enjoy celebrating their birthdays at school. Each teacher invites you to bring a healthy birthday treat for your child's birthday. Please speak to teachers about appropriate snacks and make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance.



Also, please do not hand out party invitations at school unless the entire class is invited, as this can cause hurt feelings. We will provide a mailing list for your convenience.

Field Trips

Field trips offer the three- and four-year-olds a unique opportunity to experience an environment away from school. Much thought and planning goes into developing curriculum for these trips. Children are prepared with information and what to expect. Afterwards, all subject areas are integrated to educationally capitalize on the learning stimulated by the outing. Excursions may include visits to farms, parks, museums, markets, and neighborhood walks into the community. Each child will need a signed permission slip that will be kept on file. We encourage all parents to participate in the program by volunteering to drive on trips or accompanying us to increase our adult-to-child ratio for these events. All children must travel in car seats. We ask the parent to secure the seat when possible. The law requires all drivers to have a copy of their current insurance on file at the school specifically listing the driver(s) by name.

The Two's class does not participate in off-campus trips but often goes for walks within the facility.

Shabbat

Although the Sabbath officially begins at sundown on Friday and lasts until three stars are sighted on Saturday evening, we celebrate Shabbat at school every Friday morning with an "Oneg Shabbat," when we sing songs and recite blessings over the candles, the grape juice, and the challah (egg bread). We encourage and welcome families to join us in our celebration at 12:00 noon, when we sing together and read a story with Rabbi Miller.

Families take turns bringing in a double batch of challah dough so that the children can braid their own loaves each week. Each family provides the challah dough several times a year. You may also bring flowers and/or tablecloths to decorate the room when your turn to bring challah dough comes around. Recipes for challah dough are available in the classroom or Director's office, and on our website.



COMMUNICATION

Along with our commitment to the children's development, we value open and ongoing communication with parents. In addition to yearly scheduled conferences, teachers are available for informal conversations. We hope that you will feel free to contact staff members if you have any need to talk about your child's progress.

Teachers will also communicate with you via documentation around the classroom. Look for documentation panels that show pictures and descriptions of children's thought processes, and a written list of what happened in class that day.

In order to keep channels of communication open and facilitate mutual respect, please follow the procedures below:

1. Speak with staff directly involved with your child.
2. After you speak directly with the teacher, if you feel the issue is still not resolved, bring it to the attention of the Director.
3. If you feel further attention is necessary, contact the Executive Director of Congregation Beth Ami.

Please respect classroom hours as the teachers' time for the children. If you need to communicate with a teacher and they are busy, you can always request a phone call from the teacher or request a scheduled appointment. Each classroom has a notebook for you to communicate with your teacher.

Weekly E-Mail Newsletter

Our Friday afternoon newsletter is our primary method of communication with parents regarding school closures, school policies, upcoming events, and important dates. You are responsible for the information in the newsletter, so please make sure that each parent or guardian provides us with an e-mail address that you check regularly.

Weekly Photo E-Mail

At the end of most school weeks, you will receive an e-mail of photos and videos that are tailored to your child. They may include photos of your child engaged in learning, and may also include photos of classroom and/or school-wide projects and happenings.



Phone Calls

The Nursery School welcomes your comments and questions. Please feel free to call. Since the teachers' first priority is your child, they may not be able to come to the phone during class hours. The teacher or director will call you back as promptly as possible.

Automated Phone Calls

In the event of an emergency or a last-minute school closure, you will receive an automated phone call from the director. Please make sure that your mobile and home phone numbers are up-to-date in our records so that we will be able to contact you.

Information Requests

Any parent of a child attending Beth Ami Community Nursery School has the right to review documentation concerning his or her child, so long as this review keeps confidential the records of other children.

In the event that two parents are separated or divorced and sharing custody, and one parent requests information, that request shall be granted, and both parents shall receive copies of the information requested, unless BACNS receives a court order or valid legal objection from one parent to bar the other from receiving the information.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Family involvement in the Nursery School is an integral component of our program. Our community is made up of our families, and the more we get to know each other, the more involved we are in each others lives, the more we celebrate together and work together and lean on each other, the stronger we become. **Please contribute to our warm, vibrant community by being an active part of it:** Reach out to a new family so that they feel welcome and included, look at photos around the classroom with your child so that they can see how much you value what they are learning, volunteer at an event so that you can get to know other parents and see first hand what is happening at school.

We thank you for making our school a richer place by being a part of it, and by participating in the following ways:

1. **Challah:** If your child attends on Fridays, on a rotating basis, each family will sign up to bring unbaked challah dough for the class to bake in celebration of Shabbat (about once every 2-3 months).
2. **Field trips:** Parents who are able are asked to chaperone/drive on field trips, so that we are able to schedule them.
3. **Fundraising:** So that we may keep tuition as low as possible while maintaining a high quality program, families are asked to help with our fundraising effort by donating items to our auction and participating in it, and by attending our yearly fundraiser.
4. **Work hours:** Families are responsible for volunteering a total of five hours per year. See below for a variety of ways to complete hours.

There are also other ways to get involved at the school. We welcome all interested parents to join in as often as they want and are able to.

Parent Club

The Nursery School's Parent Club is comprised of all parents of children attending the nursery school who wish to be involved in creating and supporting Nursery School activities and goals. The Parent Club acts as a liaison between parents and the Nursery School Administration.

The purpose of the Parent Club is to increase benefits provided by the school to the children and their families and to facilitate parent's greater involvement in the Nursery School and in their children's education. We



hope that all interested parents will join this club and know that they are truly valued as an integral part of the Nursery School community.

Some of the principal goals of the Parent Club are:

- Raising funds for the school, including organizing the annual fundraiser and auction.
- Assisting with Jewish holiday celebrations and other major events for the Nursery School community
- Inspiring and fostering family involvement in the school
- Organizing class field trips and mom's/dad's nights out.
- Identifying concerns and suggestions of parents and providing a vehicle for communicating between home and school
- Welcoming all new families and supporting each other in joyous and difficult times (birth, adoption, illness, death, family stress)

The club meets monthly or more often when needed. Anyone wishing to attend a committee meeting is welcome to do so. It is recommended that there be representatives from each class attending the committee meetings. If you wish to make a presentation to the Parent Club, please contact the Chairperson five days in advance of the monthly meeting to discuss your thoughts for placement on the agenda.

Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is comprised of current and alumni parents, as well as experts on Early Childhood Education and other fields from the broader community. They meet monthly with the director to provide guidance on the direction of the school. Topics are dependent on the immediate needs of the school and range from revising the parent handbook and school policy to tuition plans and more.

Parent Work Hours

We hope that all families will get involved and become a part of the Nursery School community. Over the course of the school year, each family is responsible for completing a minimum of **five (5)** work hours. Families can help in many ways or may choose an option of donating \$100 to the school if the time is not doable.



The activities that count towards work hours should benefit the morale, the physical environment, and the well-being of the school. Here is a list of activities that count toward the five work hours:

- Working in the garden
- Office work
- Cleaning/organizing classrooms/supply rooms, etc.
- Fixing/building structures in and out of the classroom
- Making food for teacher meetings or special school events (you will be notified when cooking for particular events is requested)
- Set up/working during event/clean up for any of the Jewish Events for our Nursery School Community (i.e. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Channukah, Tu B'Shevat, Purim Carnival and Passover)
- Doing prep work for teachers
- Working on paperwork for the office.
- Active involvement in the Parent Club and/or Advisory Council

All parent work hours must be completed by the end of the school year. If the hours are not completed, we will approach you about donating \$20 per unfinished hours in lieu of time.

Parent Education Workshops

We occasionally offer parent workshops throughout the year on a variety of topics. Your ideas and suggestions for workshops are always welcome. We will alert you to special parenting and family events in our community. If you are interested in a specific or particular subject on Parent Education, please contact your teacher and/or director.

Fundraising

Fundraising is an important part of making our school run well and keeping us current and of the highest quality. We work hard to keep tuition costs as low as possible while maintaining our low ratios and supporting our wonderful teachers, and keeping our classrooms stocked with rich materials. In order to close the gap between tuition and the cost of a high quality program, the Parent Club works on a variety of fundraising initiatives each year and families are encouraged to participate in any way that they can.



Donations

Donations to the Nursery School are always appreciated. Anyone interested in making a tax-deductible contribution may do so via the Director or Congregation Beth Ami office. Traditionally, families in our community have made contributions to the school in honor, memory, or recognition of others and in celebration of birthdays and anniversaries. All cash donations and donated materials directed to the nursery school benefit the children at Beth Ami Community Nursery School and are tax-deductible.

Scholarship Donations

In recent years, we have created the Jill Tager Scholarship Fund so that our school can be accessible to all. We appreciate the help of anyone who wants to give the Gift of Beth Ami by giving a tax-deductible donation to our scholarship fund.

Special Events

Over the course of the school year, we celebrate special events such as Jewish Holiday celebrations, our annual fundraiser, and our year-end potluck picnic. These celebrations are for all our nursery school families. We welcome and encourage your participation in preparing and organizing for these events. Your support and participation is highly valued in helping to create a strong sense of community. Many of these dates are on the calendar, some will come later in the newsletter, and we hope that you will plan to attend.

Jewish Holidays

The following Jewish holidays, listed in chronological order as they are celebrated during the school year, are an important emphasis in our preschool curriculum. The dates of these holidays differ from year to year as we follow the lunar calendar. Jewish holidays are observed from sundown to sundown like Shabbat.



Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins the ten-day period known as the High Holidays or “the Days of Awe.” Rosh Hashanah is also known as the “birthday of the world,” the “day of remembrance,” and the “day of the shofar.” Rosh Hashanah



celebrates the ability of people to change and grow, as it is a time for deep thought, self-examination and prayer.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the holiday in which the Jewish people ask for forgiveness and forgive others. Yom Kippur, the most solemn and holy day of the Jewish year, is the last day of the ten days of awe and marks the end of the ten-day period of the High Holidays.



Sukkot is a fall harvest festival. Sukkot is also known as the “Festival of the Booths,” as it commemorates the time that the Jewish people lived in temporary huts (sukkot) during their wandering and during their time of harvest in the fields. Sukkot is a time of feasting and of giving thanks for the harvest.



Simchat Torah, meaning “rejoicing with the Torah”, is a happy holiday celebrated with gaiety and festivity. On Simchat Torah, the last portion of the Torah in the book of Deuteronomy and the first verses of the book of Genesis are read in the same Temple service, signifying that the Torah has no beginning and no end.

Hanukkah, a joyous holiday celebrated for eight days, commemorates the victory of the Jews over the Greeks, and the right to once again, practice Judaism. Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Temple after the victory over the Greeks. Hanukkah is also called the “Festival of Lights” in remembrance of the tiny amount of oil that miraculously burned in the Temple menorah for eight days at the time of the rededication of the Temple.



Tu B'Shevat celebrates the “Birthday of the Trees.” This Jewish holiday validates the importance of nature and stresses the need for people to care for trees, plants, and objects in nature. It is customary to plant trees on Tu B'Shevat.



Purim, a time of merriment and great fun, is one of the happiest of Jewish holidays. The festival of Purim derives from the biblical story of Esther and



commemorates the Jewish people's success over Haman, who tried to destroy them. It is a holiday celebrated by retelling the story, dressing up in costume, and making and shaking groggers (noisemakers) whenever Haman's name is mentioned.

Pesach celebrates the most important event in Jewish history, which is the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt. This holiday recalls the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, their eventual freedom and their arrival in the Promised Land in Canaan. Pesach is celebrated for eight days with a special meal, special foods, and specific traditional practices. Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot comprise the cycle of festivals spanning the Exodus story.




Yom Ha-atzmaut, the "Day of Independence," is the Jewish holiday celebrating Israel's attainment of


statehood. Israel's Independence Day commemorates its establishment once again as the homeland of the Jewish people.

Lag B'Omer is a minor Jewish holiday that focuses on the importance of study and learning. Lag B'Omer is celebrated on the 33rd day of the 50 days of the counting of the "omer," or the measure of the newly ripened barley. Historically, the Lag B'Omer holiday provided a break from this serious harvest time.

Shavuot celebrates the day the Jews were given the Torah, the guidelines of Jewish life, on Mount Sinai. It is also a celebration of the time of harvest and the offering of the first fruits of the new harvest. On Shavuot the Jewish people decorate the synagogue with greens and flowers, wear white clothing, and eat dairy dishes.



**SHABBAT
SHALOM**



Shabbat: The Jewish holiday of Shabbat is a joyous occasion celebrated every Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. Shabbat commemorates the creation of the world in six days and the seventh day of rest. Shabbat is a special time for people to come together each week to be with family and



friends, to rest, to think, to share, to sing, and to have a good time. The observance of Shabbat begins with a traditional ritual that includes blessings while lighting candles, drinking wine, and eating challah (twisted egg bread).

Non-Jewish Holidays

As a school, we do not celebrate Halloween or Valentine's Day. Both celebrations are related to the Christian Saint Days calendar and are not compatible with our Judaic focus or with Congregation Beth Ami as an institution.

Please support us by telling your children that our costume holiday with treats is Purim, when we dress up and distribute *mishloach manot* (gifts of food). Please also support us by the following:

- Do NOT bring candy to school, in lunch or to distribute to the children (at any time, but specifically) for Halloween
- Do NOT send your child wearing a costume to school for Halloween
- Do not bring Valentine's Day or Halloween cards or other related items to school

As a part of our multicultural focus, we welcome families with other traditions and celebrations to bring us information and materials about them. As an example, we have had parents visit classrooms during Lunar New Year to introduce the children to that holiday. Please speak to teachers about the appropriateness or desirability of activities or treats for celebrations other than Jewish holidays.

**We look forward to a very
successful, educational, and wonderful year
with your children and families.**