

# Downtown Jewish Preschool Parent Handbook



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## A NOTE FROM US

### **Welcome to our school!**

Thank you for choosing Downtown Jewish Preschool for your child. At DJP we are proud to offer a creative, progressive, Jewish environment where your child's individual style of learning will be valued and nurtured.

Our aim is to encourage enthusiasm and responsibility for learning and to foster each child's natural creativity and curiosity as we model kindness, respect, compassion and confidence.

Thank you for giving us the chance to teach your children. We are humbled by this responsibility and your faith, entrusting us with the monumental partnership in your child's education.

We look forward to an amazing year together of growth, learning and fun.

Please take a moment to review the Parent's Handbook so that we can be partners in creating the best, safest and most enjoyable experience at Downtown Jewish Preschool. Please don't hesitate to call or email with any and all questions.

We are here to serve you to the best of our ability.

Welcome to the family!

Sincerely,

*Rabbi Schneur and Devorah Kaplan*

## OUR GOALS AND VALUES

- ✓ To nourish your child's heart and mind as we develop cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills.
- ✓ To encourage self-confidence and individuality by helping young children to enhance their learning and socializing abilities.
- ✓ To foster enthusiasm and responsibility for learning and to encourage each child's natural creativity and curiosity.
- ✓ To provide a curriculum geared to the different and developing interests of each child.
- ✓ To provide a setting rich in materials and resources, a caring and highly qualified staff, a developmentally-appropriate program, and activities that are both teacher-guided and child-initiated.
- ✓ To provide rich and meaningful Jewish content, including education about Jewish holidays, music, traditions and the Hebrew alphabet and language.
- ✓ To communicate to parents the philosophy, goals and program of the Downtown Jewish Preschool and to provide opportunities for parent involvement and education.
- ✓ To enrich school experiences by using community resources and outside professionals in the field of early childhood education.

## OUR PHILOSOPHY

“Play” is not the opposite of “work” - both are part of everyone's life. For young children, there is no division between “play” and “work”; they are learning through everything they do.

At DJP, our classrooms are set up as an environment of learning. The centers that make up the design of the rooms change according to the current unit, so that the children are learning as they play. This also provides them the opportunity to explore the various centers as it arouses their curiosity, promoting independence and important self-help skills. DJP believes in an experiential and intentional approach to teaching and learning. This approach fosters children's intellectual development, as they are encouraged to explore their environment and express themselves through words, movement, drawing, painting, playing and other natural modes of expression. We promote an environment where children can develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills for a successful and meaningful life.

All of the dedicated, caring staff at the Downtown Jewish Preschool want to be certain that your child has the very best early childhood experience possible. Our Jewish values drive the curriculum, environment and school culture. We model and encourage kindness, respect, compassion, confidence and responsibility. Judaism teaches that the formative years of early childhood are vitally important. A child is viewed as a seed that we nurture with the utmost care, since the seed's every experience will shape and color the quality of its matured self.

Judaism underscores the uniqueness of every child with the axiom “Chanoch L'naar Al Pi Darko,” teaching us to learn with children according to their individual paths. We recognize that each child has his or her unique needs, interests and passions. Our children are viewed as collaborators: they are competent, curious, inquisitive, unique, and creative.

## WHO WE ARE AND HOW TO REACH US

Downtown Jewish Preschool is a project of the  
Downtown Jewish Center Chabad.

The Preschool is located in our education building.

Steen Family Jewish Education and Event Center  
1012 E Broward Blvd. Fort Lauderdale Florida 33301

### **Contact information:**

Our phone number: 954.667.8000

E-mail: [info@downtownjewish.com](mailto:info@downtownjewish.com)

Website: [www.downtownjewish.com](http://www.downtownjewish.com)

### **Director:**

Devorah Kaplan

E-mail: [Devorah@downtownjewish.com](mailto:Devorah@downtownjewish.com)

Direct number 754.234.5770

## HOURS OF OPERATION

DJP is for boys and girls aged 18 months through 4 years old.

### **Full day program:**

Monday - Thursday from 9:00am - 3:00pm

Fridays from 9:00am - 2:30pm

Mondays/ Wednesdays/ Fridays from 9:00am - 3:00pm (subject to 3-day preference &  
Director's approval)

**Friday dismissal is always at 2:30pm**

### **Half day program:**

Monday – Friday from 9:00am -12:30pm

Mondays / Wednesdays / Fridays from 9:00am – 12:30pm (subject to 3-day preference &  
Director's approval)

We offer early-care and after-care ONLY with sufficient parent interest.

### **Late policy:**

A consistent schedule is important for all children.

Children arriving after 9:15 must contact the office for permission to drop off late.

Drop off after 10:00 is not permitted without pre-authorization.

## TUITION POLICIES

### **Registration:**

The \$300 registration fee is a non-refundable processing fee.

### **Withdrawal Policy:**

In the event of early withdrawal, you are responsible for a pro-rated amount of the tuition, plus 30% of the annual tuition, not to exceed the total tuition amount for the year.

The registration fees are non-refundable. You may be eligible for a refund of tuition (less non-refundable deposit) if your contract is terminated. Your contract may be terminated if the Director chooses to dismiss a child based on procedures outlined in the Parent's Handbook, or for non-payment of tuition.

### **Security Fee:**

There is a \$500 security fee to help pay for the Security Guard.

## EXPULSION POLICY

### **Reasons for expulsion may be, but are not limited to:**

- If we find a child is a danger to himself or to others.
- If we cannot adequately support or provide for his or her needs.
- If a parent is abusive to children or staff.
- If payments are not made in a timely manner.
- If all paperwork is not submitted.

## SCHOOL CLOSINGS

### **Inclement Weather:**

Please note that if Broward County Schools are closed for inclement weather, we will also be closed. We will not make up for days closed due to bad weather.

### **Holidays:**

DJP will be closed for the Jewish and secular holidays and vacation. Please see attached calendar for dates of school closings.

## SNACKS AND LUNCH

Downtown Jewish Preschool provides morning snack. Snacks include fruit, vegetables and low glycemic carbohydrates such as pretzels or cheerios. **Children with allergies or food preferences such as; gluten-free, egg-free, dairy-free and the like, must provide their own snack and lunch.**

DJP offers you the opportunity to be included in our daily lunch program. A well-balanced, healthy, kid-friendly lunch is provided with changing menus. Details on the cost and menus are provided in your package for your consideration.

If you do not participate in the DJP lunch program, a Kosher dairy or pareve (no meat) lunch and afternoon snack should be sent with your child to school every day. We cannot heat or cool food items, so please be sure to send lunch in temperature controlled, insulated containers such as a thermos. We are a peanut and tree nut friendly school and each class will be assessed by the enrolled students' needs. As we strive to provide a healthy example, please send your child with a well-balanced, nutritious lunch. **Please do not send candy or juice boxes to school.** All lunchboxes and containers should be clearly marked with child's name. If sippy cups are brought to school, cups must be marked with child's name and date brought. Food brought from home will not be shared with other children out of respect for the individual kosher and dietary restrictions of each child.

## CLOTHING

Downtown Jewish Preschool does not have a set dress code and children are welcome to wear appropriate play clothing of their choice. Please bear in mind that the children will be playing outside and with a variety of materials and mediums throughout the day. Children tend to get messy and dirty. Although teachers try to ensure they wear smocks, sometimes their creativity carries them away. Any soiled clothing will be sent home in a plastic bag. Please make sure your child has a complete set of clothing at the school in case of an "accident". Please check periodically to see that the clothing fits your child and is appropriate for the weather. Children should wear sturdy, well soled shoes, that will always be practical and comfortable for them to wear during the day whether they are in the playground, sandbox, or in the classroom. Tennis shoes are the recommended footwear for their comfort and safety. Please send along appropriate jackets or sweaters when the weather gets cooler so that the children will be comfortable while playing outdoors.



## BIRTHDAY PARTY GUIDELINES

Birthdays are such an important day and we would love to celebrate with you at DJP.

We have put together these guidelines for celebrating a birthday in class:

- Birthday parties are celebrated on Fridays at our Shabbat party.
- Please notify us at least two weeks in advance to schedule your party and ensure that we put it on the calendar.
- You do not need to do ANYTHING for the party ☺  
The children will do everything from baking the cake to decorating a hat and more!
- Do not send party bags or any birthday items.
- We ask you to contribute a gift to the class in honor of your child.  
See our Amazon wish list for ideas.

Happy Birthday!

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

School begins at 9:00am sharp and ends at 3:00pm. We ask that you cooperate with our school policy and not bring your child before 8:55am or pick them up after 3:05 pm, except when Pre-care/After-care arrangements have been made.

- Parents may park on the street or in the school parking lot.
- You may also park at our properties 900 & 912 E Broward Blvd.
- Our security guard is here to keep us safe, so please heed his instructions carefully.
- **Teachers are NOT available for extended conversation during drop off and pick up.**
- No child will be released to a person not authorized in writing by a Parent/Guardian to pick them up. Please be aware, we will check Photo ID before releasing your child to someone unknown to us. They will also need to share your **password**.
- At DJP we appreciate the benefits of a parent walking the child to and from school.
- **How to drop off:**
  1. **Park.**
  2. **Bring your child to the front gate**
  3. **Share a morning greeting.**
  4. **Your child will be signed in**
- **Classroom doors lock at 9:15am. You must have permission to drop off after 9:15**
- **How to pick up:**
  1. **Park.**
  2. **We will bring your child to you or you will retrieve your child from the front door.**
  3. **The teacher will sign out your child.**
  4. **At 3:05 sharp all children still in school will be brought to aftercare.**

### **Pre-care and After-care: upon enough demand**

Pre-care: Monday – Friday 8:30am-8:55am

After-care: Monday-Thursday 3:05pm – 5:30pm / \$15 per hour

**Your card will automatically be charged at the end of each month for Pre-care and After-care.**

**PLEASE RESPECT YOUR CHILDREN AND BE PRESENT WHEN DROPPING OFF AND PICKING UP. WE STRONGLY DISCOURAGE CELLPHONE USE.**

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### **Fire/Disaster Drills:**

During the school year, we conduct fire and disaster drills teaching students our safety procedures in a non-frightening manner. During fire drills, the children will practice evacuating to a safe location away from the building. During disaster drills the children will practice evacuating to the innermost hallways away from windows and doors. During lock down the children will be ushered into the bathrooms or protected under tables and chairs while the teachers barricade the doors.

### **Vaccinations and Immunizations:**

Broward County requires that all Health and Immunization records be completed and presented to the school prior to opening day for your child to be admitted to class. Without current Health and Immunization forms, a child is not allowed in school.

### **Toilet Training:**

Children in the 2-year-old class do not need to be toilet trained. We are happy to assist in the training process. Children who are toilet training for at least one week and can verbally communicate their desire to use the restroom, can transition to training pants. Be sure to send plenty of extra underwear. For all diapered children, parents must provide diapers, wipes and scented bags for disposal.

### **Minor Injuries & Illness:**

Our school is well equipped to handle minor injuries, such as superficial cuts and bruises. If we have any questions as to the severity of an injury, we will contact parents at the emergency numbers we have on file. An incident report will be sent home. Parents will be contacted in the event their child becomes ill or injured at school. The school faculty will use their own discretion to determine if the child is well enough to remain at school.

### **Medications:**

Downtown Jewish Preschool will not administer prescription or non-prescription medications without an Authorization for Medication form filled out.

## Illness:

Children must be kept home when they have the symptoms of a contagious illness. This policy protects the recovering child, whose resistance to new infection is low, as well as his/her classmates and teachers. If your child requires medication upon returning to school, please stop by the office to complete a Medication Authorization Form. We certainly hope that everyone stays healthy, but we must state our health policy for the record. Our primary consideration is for the well-being of all students and staff, so while it is normal and even healthy for young children to be sick in the early years (it helps develop a strong immune system), communicability remains an important consideration in deciding if a child is well enough to be in school. Written communication from a physician must be provided regarding a child who has a condition that poses no threat to himself or herself or anyone else, for that child to remain in school. **We reserve the right to ask you to keep your child home until we feel comfortable having the child back in school, regardless of the doctor's note.**

Keep your child home if he or she has:

- Diarrhea - acute diarrhea, characterized as twice the child's usual frequency of bowel movements with a change to a looser consistency within a period of 24 hours.
- Vomiting - one or more episodes of vomiting within a period of 24 hours.
- Fever - elevated temperature over 99.5 F within 24 hours.
- Strep throat - sore throat or constant cough.
- Conjunctivitis - red eyes with a discharge, often a sign of conjunctivitis ("pink eye"), is highly contagious. When these symptoms accompany a non-contagious condition, we must have a doctor's note.
- Rashes - skin rash, excluding diaper rash, lasting more than one day.
- Runny nose - especially with green mucus.
- On Antibiotics - has begun an antibiotic for a contagious condition less than 24 hours ago
- Chicken Pox - Child may return to school when all lesions are crusted over.
- Head Lice - The DJP honors a no-nit policy. Child may return to school after the removal of all lice and nits.

- Pin Worms - Child may return to school 24 hours after treatment.
- Fifth Disease - Also known as Parvovirus, Fifth Disease is a mild illness and not serious in healthy children. However, it can cause serious complications during pregnancy. Because there could be pregnant employees and parents at our school, we ask that your child stay at home if you notice any symptoms such as low-grade fever, tiredness, or cold-like symptoms. Once your child breaks out in the rash (which looks like slapped cheeks and/or a lacy itchy rash on the trunk of the body) they are no longer contagious.
- Hand-Foot-Mouth – needs at least 2 weeks or until all symptoms are clear.
- Fussy – has been fussy, cranky or out of sorts for the last 12 hours.
- Had very little sleep the night before.

Children can return to school 24 hours **after** the fever or symptoms have disappeared.

Children too sick to participate in full program activities, including outside play, should be at home. Please call school when your child is absent due to illness. If your child becomes ill in school, or if we notice any concerning marks, or fever is at 99.5 or more, we will call you to take him/her home. If we can't reach you, designated emergency numbers will be called. The school reserves the right to determine if a child is well enough to be in school.

Each morning, the teachers in each room will conduct a quick health check on each child as they arrive. They will check for runny noses, fever and any other common symptom. They will also be noting down any bruises or bumps a child may have.

**\*Head injuries.**

Injuries at home and at school are common for young children. Most injuries can easily be treated with ice and or a band aid by our loving staff. However, we do take head injuries very seriously. If a child hits their head at school, we will determine the severity and upon our decision the child may be asked to be picked up and taken home. The child can return to school only after a medical evaluation and a note ensuring the child is ok and safe to return to school.

## STAY CONNECTED

- For your enjoyment, we will post **daily** photos and a short description of that day's events on our private **Facebook** page.
- **Kaymbu** daily notes will be sent at the end of each day, informing you of your child's essential needs such as diaper changes, nap time and food intake during the day. Occasionally, we will note if you need to replenish any items or any additional information regarding snack or lunch.
- Four times a year, you will receive a personalized portfolio, which is an assemblage of documentation that covers the 38 integral age appropriate skills and developments.
- E-mails with updates will be sent regularly from the director.
- You will be added to a class **WhatsApp** broadcast group for quick updates and reminders.

We urge you to stay up-to-date with what is happening in our classroom via our e-mail photo and video updates and are encouraged to visit our website often.

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline at DJP will take the form of positive classroom management. Our goal is for the child to learn self-management skills and inner control through participation in a safe, loving and well-planned environment. Children are provided with consistent routines and realistic limits and expectations.

Our teachers and staff are all trained in Conscious Discipline Program. Our classroom is equipped with the “feeling buddies” and a “quiet space or safe space”. Parents are encouraged to explore Conscious Discipline at your own convenience.

Children shall not be subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating or frightening. Discipline shall not be associated with food, rest or toileting. Spanking or any form of physical punishment is prohibited. We ensure that age appropriate, constructive disciplinary practices are used for children in our care.

For more information about our Conscious Discipline Program, visit [www.consciousdiscipline.com](http://www.consciousdiscipline.com)

## CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is primarily based on Developmentally Appropriate Practices and inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. It is combined with our Judaic curriculum to form a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate program. It is designed to promote each child's intellectual, social, physical and emotional growth. All games and activities are skill-based and goal-oriented, so that the children are growing with everything that they do. We like to call it 'Intentional Play'.

### **Intellectual:**

We encourage the children to develop self-motivation, active investigational skills through questioning, exploring and observing, and the thinking and problem-solving abilities needed to thrive in a world of challenge and competition. Children are surrounded with books, literacy experiences and exposure to the alphabet to prepare them for pre-reading and the reading that follows.

### **Social:**

We encourage each child to work and play with others, to develop language communication skills, to respect the rights and privacy of their peers and most of all to develop feelings of kindness, courtesy, helpfulness and acceptance.

The ability to work alone and with others in a positive way is extremely important. Children get to practice these skills daily as they play and work together and alone. Adults facilitate child interactions and model appropriate words and actions to use with friends, to join a group, to resolve conflict, to problem-solve together, etc. This is not something that can be mastered in one day. Social skills are developed and practiced throughout the year.

### **Emotional:**

Children are encouraged to develop a positive self-concept, to understand the difference between right and wrong and to develop responsibility. They are encouraged to recognize that people are different and to be accepting of others and we help them learn and practice appropriate ways to respond to others and to express their feelings constructively.

### **Physical:**

Children are provided constant opportunities to develop their small and large muscle skills, to develop finger strength and dexterity, and arm, eye and body coordination. All students have a minimum of 40 minutes of combined indoor and outdoor physical activity for every three- and one-half hours in care per day.



**Fine Motor Skills:**

Eye-hand coordination and the strengthening of small muscles (particularly in the hands and fingers) are very important in early childhood to prepare children for gripping instruments and writing. It is also important for them to be able to manipulate materials in various ways as they explore and experiment. We work on these fine-motor skills using play dough, clay, sand, blocks, art materials such as scissors, woodworking tools, small manipulative games, puzzles and writing instruments.

**Gross Motor Skills:**

Exercising the body's large muscles is important because the children are still working on coordination, balance, cross body movements and more. Outdoor play is a daily part of the program, where children can run, jump, climb, slide, kick and throw balls, swing and shoot basketballs. In addition, once a week the children have Super Soccer Stars and yoga.

**Math Skills:**

Many of the manipulatives that help develop fine motor skills, as previously mentioned, also teach math skills and concepts. E.g. building blocks of various sorts automatically offer lessons in balance, geometry, measurement, estimation, etc. Children are encouraged to count objects. This gives them a better concept of what numbers mean. Grouping, sorting, graphing, and matching are some other activities that are often taking place as the children play in class.

**Language Skills:**

Language is developed with the teachers modeling and encouraging the children to talk, to listen, even to write, at every opportunity, what they're observing or doing as they work / play. Books are an important and constant part of the curriculum and are always available to the children. Children are also given access to writing materials and art utensils and are encouraged to experiment with them.

**Science & Nature:**

A child's life is full of real things to observe, discover and experience. They then have opportunities to make predictions, see cause and effect, and be actively involved in science experiments. Outside, children find worms, bugs, plants, flowers, etc. Each of these discoveries becomes a miniature science project. The children will plant and tend our very own organic garden. They will be able to see and taste the fruits of their labor as their seeds grow and blossom over the year.

**Art & Drama:**

Exploration and expression are two ways of assessing the inner self. Art is a perfect forum to accomplish this. Art is not forced upon children but is made available in a most aesthetically pleasing way. Art activities are designed to be open-ended and process oriented rather than product oriented. Children are offered different media and a large variety of tools with which they are encouraged to explore and experiment.

Children also have the chance to play different roles as they interact and play side by side with their peers. In the dramatic play area children choose to be moms, dads, babies and animals (pets). In playing out these characters, children gain socialization skills and play out what they have seen modeled to them.

**Music & Movement:**

Music and song are an integral part of the program. Children will learn new songs, sing old songs, sing familiar songs, make up songs, listen to songs, and sing with and without tapes. Most of the time movement is a part of any music in the class. Rhythms and repetitions are subsequently introduced through music (which are helpful for math cognition).

Once a week the children have formal 'Music Together' time with the famous Miss Sue, formerly from Nova Mommy n Me.

**Alternating Enrichment:**

Activities will include: Music Together, sports, baking, art, gardening, tricycles & scooters, Hebrew language and yoga, all taught by masters in their field.

**Tradition and Jewish Pride:**

Lesson plans at DJP are built around the events, influencing the children at the time that they are being taught. Weather changes, special animal habits, national celebrations and holiday seasons all determine what will be brought into the classroom at any time of year. All these are laced into the general curriculum, to allow the children to learn from what is going on around them.

The children experience all the Jewish holidays through art, song, dramatic play, language and literacy.

## OUR STAFF

The adult's role in the children's journey is to support and facilitate their growth and development. To assume this role, to learn with young children, is a great privilege and responsibility. Teaching is a mission, a valued and time-honored Jewish tradition. We look for staff that are passionate and will offer a nurturing experience for the children.

Our teachers have a deep understanding of children and the way they think and have the desire to create meaningful relationships with the children. All our teachers believe in the importance of seeing each child as an individual. Our teachers plan and adapt the curriculum and the environment to meet the needs of each child.

In the Reggio Emilia approach, the teacher sees herself as a learner, alongside the children, open to new thoughts and ideas. The teacher listens carefully to the children, observes and documents their work, and provokes and stimulates their thinking. As teachers, we are committed to strengthening and enriching our knowledge of young children by continuing our own education. Our staff is made up of teachers, all of whom are chosen for their professionalism, as well as their caring and compassionate personalities.

All staff participate in annual in-service training, in order to remain alert to the ever-changing needs of today's families and to the findings of current research. Staff development is ongoing throughout the year. Our staff is trained in First Aid, CPR, anaphylactic care, as well as lockdown procedures.

## A FINAL NOTE

The DJP is a collaborative project between the Downtown Jewish Center and our community. We need your input and support to make this project flourish. We depend on your feedback to create a better product, and welcome suggestions, volunteer hours, and contributions. This community project will flourish, as we partner to build a meaningful Jewish experience for our families.

Through our combined efforts we can create an environment of warmth, discovery and learning.

*Thank you and welcome!*

## **Addendum A : BITING POLICY at DJP**

Biting is a subject that is disturbing to our children, parents and staff. It is typical for young children to use their mouths for exploring their world and expressing their feelings. There are many reasons toddlers may bite. Sometimes the biting is related to teething. Sometimes toddlers bite to express feelings they cannot express with words yet. We have seen children bite when they are frustrated, and we have seen them bite in excitement of a happy moment. No one can predict which children may bite. We are ready to help toddlers who do bite to learn other behavior. We are sympathetic to both the biter and the child being bitten.

The mission of the school is to enhance and promote positive development and growth. Our daily routines and schedules as well as trained staff are in place to eliminate as much frustration as possible. The atmosphere in our class is calm and serene, cheerful and happy. The activities are age appropriate and developmentally suitable for toddlers. We model calm behavior and discipline when necessary.

If a bite occurs, we help the child who was bitten. We reassure him or her and care for the bite. If the skin is not broken, we wash it with soap and water and use a cold pack. If the skin is broken, we follow medical advice – clean the bite with soap and water and cover it to protect it from getting dirty or infected. We will send home a note to both sets of parents indicating that a bite happened and what we did. In accordance with our confidentiality policy, parents will not be informed of the name of the child who did the biting.

After the appropriate medical attention is received by the child bitten, we attend to the biter.

Our response to the biter is dependent on the circumstances of the bite. We will usually have the biter help in the medical care of the bitten. Getting an ice pack and soothing the child. We encourage the biter to look at the bite and the child's sad face, to absorb the impact his bite had on the other child. Our overall message is to help the child learn the appropriate way to express his emotions, and or needs that he was seeking. We help give him language either verbally or bodily to share his feelings.

If biting is persistent, we will collect data to try and determine a pattern or trigger and will document the occurrences and information we glean. We will work on a plan to prevent further biting behavior that may include any of the following

1. Biting necklace
2. Shadow
3. OT/ PT eval
4. Behavior eval

We put our energy into both keeping the children in the classroom safe as well as helping the child with the biting issue. The plan will include the parents, so they can help and be aware of what is being done and the progress made.

We ask for parents to keep us abreast of what they are doing at home and how the child is progressing.

Children who bite at school don't necessarily bite at home. It is important for us to be consistent with the plan. Communication and cooperation are key to a positive outcome.