



Preschool

Parent Handbook



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Preschool Philosophy

Etz Hayim is a private Jewish Preschool for children ranging in age from 18 months through pre-kindergarten. Established in 2001, Etz Hayim's goal is to address each individual child's personal developmental needs. Each child's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development is a constant focus. We offer an atmosphere of learning that is nurturing and enjoyable for your child.

Curriculum

Play offers the greatest opportunity for learning at this age. Children develop at their own individual pace. They are encouraged to try a variety of activities as they become ready. They are encouraged to explore new activities and to play and coexist cooperatively with their peers. The morning is designed to give your child free-play time as well as structured learning experiences.

Some examples of themes that are introduced throughout the year are Jewish holidays, self identity, family concepts, colors, numbers, seasons, health and safety, animals, American celebrations, etc. The curriculum has been designed to provide a Jewish atmosphere throughout the program. The children are given a sense of Jewish identity through the weekly observance of Shabbat, the celebration of Jewish holidays and the introduction of Hebrew through songs, stories, and conversation. Through regular exposure, children gain a familiarity with the synagogue environment.

Routine

The daily classroom routine provides the children with the opportunity to become involved in a wide range of activities. As the day begins, each child is greeted and guided to a play area or activity. The children have the opportunity to play with toys that foster both gross and fine motor skills as well as

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eye/hand coordination. The children gather for circle-time and have outdoor play each day, weather permitting. They practice personal hygiene skills such as washing before snacks and lunch, as well as proper techniques for sneezing and coughing. Music is integrated into the program as well as a separate session each week with our music specialist.

Staff

All staff members are experienced, highly motivated and devoted early childhood educators. They work closely with the students and parents to provide a warm loving and secure environment. Our first priority is the children's well being physically as well as emotionally and mentally. We work to establish a strong sense of independence and high self-esteem for each child.

Parent Participation

Parents are encouraged to participate in a variety of ways. There will be many worthwhile opportunities for parent involvement. Being involved offers the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to the operation of the school as well as affording the opportunity to see first-hand what your child is experiencing at school and seeing the child interacting in the preschool setting. These opportunities also offer chances for you to interact with other parents.

Professional Affiliations

Etz Hayim Preschool is a member of the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning. Our teachers are affiliated with the National Association of the Education of Young Children. We are licensed by the Arlington County Childcare Department.

Admission and Enrollment

Application for Admission

A non-refundable application fee must be submitted with the application. While we are open to the community, siblings of currently enrolled students and Etz Hayim members will receive preference.

Involuntary Withdrawal

There may be times when our school may not meet the needs of a particular child. If the child's presence is determined to be detrimental to the child or other children in the class, a conference with the parents, teachers, and director will be arranged. All will discuss whether the child needs to withdraw from the program or be placed in an extended probationary status of specified duration to allow for further observation. When possible, parents will be given a full month's notice in order to secure other arrangements for their child. However, if the child is posing a danger to his/herself or others, immediate dismissal may be necessary.

Failure of parents to pay tuition on time, comply with regulations regarding opening and closing times as well as compliance with guidelines laid out in the Parent Handbook, will be discussed regarding correction.

Withdrawal

If a family requests withdrawal, a four-week written notice is required and the child's final month's tuition must be paid. Families who withdraw after February 15, regardless of notification, must pay full tuition for the remainder of the school year. Tuition paid to date is non-refundable. If a child is temporarily withdrawn from the Preschool for any length of time, the child's place will be reserved only upon continued payment of the month's tuition.

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Tuition

Tuition fees for the next school year are determined in May. In June, you will receive a payment coupon book. Tuition is due the first of the month beginning in July to April—ten equal monthly payments.

Late Fees

All tuition payments are due the first day of the month that your child attends school. Tuition payments over a week late will incur a \$10.00 late charge. The late charge will accrue daily (on days your child attends school) until the tuition payment is paid in full. Parents must prepay tuition prior to leaving for vacation in order to avoid late fees. If a child is sick the entire first week of the month, the family will not incur late fees. If needed, a meeting can be requested regarding this situation with the Preschool Director.

Attendance

For planning purposes, please inform Etz Hayim of any anticipated days that your child would be out. If there is an unforeseen absence, please inform the school as to the situation. It is helpful to know of any illnesses that have occurred. If you will be arriving with your child late or plan on picking your child up early, this too should be conveyed to the school at 703.979.4466 or preschool@etzhayim.net

Daily Routine

Hours of Operation

Early morning Drop-Off begins at 8:00 a.m.

Preschool classes are held Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Lunch Bunch is available 12:30 p.m.–1:15 p.m.

Lunch Bunch Plus Classes when held 1:15 p.m.–2:00 p.m.

EARLY MORNING DROP OFF: Etz Hayim Preschool offers an opportunity for Early Morning Drop Off for an additional fee. This is available from 8:00 a.m.– 9:15 a.m. Your child will be supervised in the large social hall allowing for music fun, large and small motor skill play, when possible outdoor play, and a time for your child to finish their breakfast. Arrangements for this option are best made in advance, but are available as well on a drop in basis.

Arrival

WALK-IN: Parents are to park and walk your child to school. Etz Hayim Preschool offers a parking lot on the corner of Route 50 and Garfield Street. Please follow the path along the front of Etz Hayim and enter the front of the building. Parents are welcome to walk their child into the social hall classroom, or transition their child to a staff member.

Departure

WALK-IN: Again parents are to use the Etz Hayim parking lot on Garfield Street and enter the front of the building. All children will be checked out as they are dismissed to the parent or designated person. Parents are welcome to take their children to the playground to play with their school friends.

AUTHORIZED PICK-UP: Parents have the opportunity to list any adult who is permitted to pick-up his/her child. If a child is to be picked up by someone not on the authorized list, the

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staff must have written notification signed and dated. Anyone picking up your child must show photo identification before the child will be released. Requests to prohibit a parent from picking up a child must have court documentation.

LATE PICK-UP: The staff at Etz Hayim gives their full attention to your child. It is important for the staff to be able to attend to their obligations following the school day. Please be considerate to the staff by arriving on time to pick up your child. If you have a situation where you will be running late, please inform the school as soon as possible. This allows Etz Hayim to make the necessary adjustments. Licensing requires that there be two staff members present whenever a child is present. Chronic lateness will incur fees to cover staffing.

School Closings

In most cases, Etz Hayim Preschool follows Arlington County Public School closing as well as being in accordance with all Conservative observances of Jewish Holidays.

In the event of inclement weather and Arlington County Public Schools are opening one hour late, Etz Hayim Preschool will open on time. In the event Arlington Public Schools open two hours late, Etz Hayim Preschool will open at 10:00 a.m. (one half hour later than the normal start time). This adjustment allows for appropriate time for the staff to make arrangements for their own families. There will be no early morning drop off available whenever there is a County late opening. In the event of an early closing, parents are responsible for picking up their child by the early closing time.

Please know that closing Etz Hayim Preschool is not a decision that is entered into lightly. In addition to considering the inconvenience to parents there are other factors. The Director will exercise her best judgement during inclement weather to safeguard the children and staff. Should the preschool need to

close early for any reason, each parent will be notified and staff members will wait with your children until all the children are picked up. If you have a problem with immediate pick-up, we will help you make alternate arrangements for care by another parent. Arlington County has one of the best records in the region for keeping schools open and we will generally follow their lead.

For scheduled closings for holidays and other events, please consult the school calendar.

Health Issues

Physical Exams and Medical Forms

Each child must have a physical exam form on file before attending school. All physicals must be less than 12 months old and include immunization records. A TB test is only required once upon entry to school. Your child should not require another TB while attending our preschool unless he/she has been exposed or travels to a high-risk country.

Illness

Etz Hayim Preschool understands that it is inconvenient to keep a child at home or arrange for alternate care when a child is ill. This is especially true when the illness is so unexpected and comes on rapidly. A sick child at school, however, exposes teachers, other children and their families to the same problems. A sick child will recover more quickly at home with appropriate rest. Please be considerate of the other children, and of your own, by not bringing your child to school when sick.

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We adhere to the Virginia Department of Health Guidelines. This listing should help you determine when your child should remain at home as well as give you the Etz Hayim Guidelines of when your child will be sent home from the school.

- An oral temperature of 100° F or higher within the last 24 hours. Your child should not return to school until his/her temperature has been normal for 24 hours without the aid of fever reducing medication.
- A cold with a runny nose, yellow/green nasal drainage or discharge
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea—your child should not return until 24 hours have passed since the last diarrhea-like bowel movement
- Persistent cough
- While on an antibiotic—24 hours worth of dosage
- Rashes you cannot identify or have not been diagnosed by a doctor
- Headache, earache, or stomach ache
- Signs of fatigue or generally feeling ill
- Crust on the eyes, pink eyes or mucus discharge from the eyes

Note: Please make certain to identify any allergies as noted on the child's health form.

Illness at School

If a child shows symptoms of illness while at school, the teacher/director will decide if a child is well enough to remain in class or must be isolated and sent home. It is imperative that any changes in phone numbers are conveyed to the Preschool. A child who is not feeling well just wants to go home as soon as possible.

Medications

Medications that are administered on a regular schedule should be given at home or after school. Students should not bring any medication to school. Medications such as diaper rash ointment, bug spray, and sunscreen that you are requesting application by the teacher should be sent in a labeled bag along with a completed Authorization To Give Medication form.

If a physician prescribes a medication to be kept on hand for an emergency, such as asthma or allergy medication, the parent must complete an Authorization To Give Medication form. It is most important, that the teacher be notified of the necessary medication and proper way of administering the medication.

Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency the parents will be notified, followed by the designated emergency contacts. In case of extreme emergencies, 911 will be contacted and a staff member will accompany the child to the emergency room.

Accidents

Parents will be notified immediately if a child becomes ill or seriously injured. In the case of a minor accident, an accident form will be filled out and given to the parent to sign when they arrive at pick-up.

Discipline Policy

At Etz Hayim Preschool, teachers take special care to gently guide children through the activities of the day. Naturally, there is an adjustment period for all the children in the early weeks of school. Teachers ease this adjustment by establishing limits as necessary. With guidance from teachers, children are encouraged to verbalize their feelings and work out disputes. Children are encouraged to “use their words.”

Children are never allowed to engage in behaviors that pose a safety hazard to either themselves or others. If aggressive behaviors such as hitting or biting occur, the teacher will communicate to the parents immediately regarding the incident and work with parents to determine why the behavior is occurring.

Miscellaneous

Clothing

Please think of your child’s comfort and provide simple clothing that is free of complicated fastenings. Toilet trained children need to be able to manage taking clothing off, and with a minimum of help. For example, please do not dress your child in overalls if he/she is unable to take them off. Clothing should be appropriate for the type of activities that go on at school. We get messy! Long dresses and sandals are not safe on the playground. Please dress your child in sneakers. Be attuned to the day’s weather. The day may start out cool and become warmer later on. Please dress your child in layers that are easy to remove. During the winter months, we continue to play outside. Your child needs appropriate clothing—winter coat, boots, hat, mittens, etc.

Parents should leave one season-appropriate change of clothes at school. Clothing should include pants, shirt, socks, underwear, or diaper and wipes—whichever is appropriate.

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When possible, an extra pair of sneakers might be helpful. All clothes must be labeled with the child's name and placed inside a labeled zip-lock bag. Please check the items regularly to ensure they fit your growing child.

Toys From Home

We have ample toys for your child at Etz Hayim. We discourage toys from home in the classroom. If your child must bring an item from home to help them adjust to school—they can “visit” it from their backpack when necessary.

Snacks

Etz Hayim Preschool provides a healthy, kosher snack daily. You will receive a “Fruit Friend” schedule for your family instructing you to provide fruit to your child's class. This is requested a few times during the school year and has proven to be a fun opportunity for your child to be involved in the selection of the fruit for their classmates.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special, and the staff at Etz Hayim enjoys celebrating with your child. You are welcome to celebrate with the class and you may bring a birthday snack to Etz Hayim. Our school follows kosher dietary laws, so please purchase bakery goods or ice cream containing the acceptable emblems of Kashrut. No baked goods from home are allowed. For guidelines, please note that all Entemann's baked goods and Carvel ice cream cakes available at Giant are good choices. Please note when planning a party at home, you may distribute invitations at school if every child in the class is receiving an invitation. Keep in mind that many families in our school observe the traditions of Conservative Judaism and some children will not attend parties held on Saturdays or Jewish holidays.



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