

# Washington DCJCC Preschool Parent Handbook



*It is our intention to foster a nurturing environment of open-ended exploration, curiosity and growth for children, teachers and parents that deepens our connections to Judaism, the community and the world around us.*

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We are delighted that your child will be attending the Washington DCJCC Preschool. We are very proud of our program and look forward to having your family become part of our preschool family.

The Washington DCJCC is a place where adults and children grow and learn together in a nurturing and creative environment. Our values reflect our belief that children learn best in a rich environment that focuses on the interweaving of cognitive and creative ways of thinking and learning. Our staff is truly committed to working in partnership with you and your child to provide for the highest quality early childhood experience.

I look forward to getting to know both you and your child and sharing a rewarding preschool experience.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Rabin Spira  
Director, Early Childhood, Youth & Family Programs

## **GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE WASHINGTON DCJCC PRESCHOOL: The Basics**

### **Contact Information**

Washington DC Jewish Community Center  
1529 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Washington, DC 20036

Entrance is on Q Street NW

t. (202) 518-9400 (switchboard)

f. (202)518-9420

washingtondcjcc.org/preschool

**Tax ID Number:** 52-1398151

Sarah Rabin Spira, Director, Early Childhood, Youth & Family Programs

t. (202) 777-3278 e. [sarahr@washingtondcjcc.org](mailto:sarahr@washingtondcjcc.org)

Laura Caplan, Leadership Team (focusing on curriculum)

e. [laurac@washingtondcjcc.org](mailto:laurac@washingtondcjcc.org)

Lindsay Jones, Leadership Team (focusing on logistics)

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Kendall Nordin, Leadership Team, Atelierista-Acting Pedagogista

e. [kendalln@washingtondcjcc.org](mailto:kendalln@washingtondcjcc.org)

Registrar (handles all billing and files)

t. (202) 777-3256 e. [registrar@washingtondcjcc.org](mailto:registrar@washingtondcjcc.org)

Arna Meyer Mickelson, Chief Executive Officer

t. (202)777-3261 e. [arnam@washingtondcjcc.org](mailto:arnam@washingtondcjcc.org)

Joshua Ford, Chief Program Officer

t. (202)777-3249 e. [joshf@washingtondcjcc.org](mailto:joshf@washingtondcjcc.org)

These numbers are available for you to contact your child's teacher in case of an emergency. If a phone is located inside a classroom, please know that the ringer volume may be turned to low or mute during naptime.

- Preschool Classrooms 1-2 (3-year olds, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor): (202) 777-3220
- Preschool Classrooms 3-4 (4-year olds/PreK, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor): (202) 777-3224
- Preschool Classroom 5 (2-year olds, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor): (202) 777-3236
- Preschool Classroom 6 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor): (202) 777-3212

## **General Operations Information**

The Washington DCJCC Preschool is open year-round, 7:30 am-6:00 pm. Exception: some holidays we close at 3:00 pm; please see your annual school calendar for details.

The Preschool is licensed for children ages 2-5; therefore, a child must have had his/her second birthday in order to start preschool.

We are a twelve month program and parents are responsible for tuition from the first day of school through August 31<sup>st</sup> of the school year. Parents who withdraw a child for an extended period of time (e.g. vacation) are still required to pay for those months. All fees and tuition are non-refundable.

## **History of Our Preschool**

As a participant in the Washington DCJCC Preschool, you are an important part of an agency that has deep roots in the history of the Washington Jewish community and continues to be a thriving force in the nation's capital.

The goals of the Washington DCJCC ("16<sup>th</sup> Street J") are to preserve and strengthen Jewish identity, heritage, tradition and values through a wide variety of social, cultural, recreational and educational programs and services. The Center accomplishes these goals in ways that reflect the unique location and role of the Center in the nation's Capital and the many contributions of the American Jewish community in the United States.

While the Center is designed primarily to fulfill the needs of the Jewish community and to preserve and enhance the culture, traditions, ethics, and philosophy of Judaism, membership and participation in activities of the Center are open to all residents of the metropolitan area. The Washington DCJCC is a member of the Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA), a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, and a designated agency of the United Way.

The Washington DC Jewish Community Center was incorporated in 1985. In January 1997, the Washington DCJCC moved into our present home at 1529 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW. This building is the original site of the area's Jewish Community Center, where President Calvin Coolidge spoke at the ceremony commemorating the laying of the cornerstone. Today, the thriving 16<sup>th</sup> Street J has an annual budget of almost \$6 million, serves 250,000 people each year and involves hundreds of families, young adults and seniors in Jewish social, recreational, service and educational activities.

Our building facility includes a pool, gymnasium, racquetball and squash courts, aerobic studio, a 250 seat theater, an art gallery, social hall, library and a kosher café—all of which are available to our children and families. The Preschool classes are on the second and third floors of the building and feature large, bright and sunny classrooms. We offer many child-size amenities, and we have a large lobby area that is used for group activities and celebrations.

We certainly hope that you take advantage of all that the Washington DCJCC has to offer!

### **Preschool Goals and Philosophy**

- As a Jewish Community Center, we are a meeting ground for a variety of individuals and families. We are dedicated to exposing our children to the richness of Jewish values and traditions while respecting the diversity of our families.
- We believe that our children benefit from a strong relationship between family and school. Our program is based on the spirit of “community” where children, parents and staff feel a strong sense of partnership and belonging.
- We recognize the unique qualities of individual children and feel that children learn best by being active, experiential learners. We provide a rich environment where children have the opportunity for discovery and growth. We encourage the love of learning and the development of an inquisitive mind.
- We believe that children deserve to grow at their own rate in a warm, nurturing and supportive environment.
- We are committed to a Reggio Emilia-inspired curriculum for our preschoolers.

The Washington DCJCC families represent the brilliant diversity of our nation’s capital. We welcome all children, regardless of religion, race, ability or cultural background, to experience our exciting, nurturing program which incorporates Jewish—and universal—values such as *Tikkun Olam* (healing the world), *Tzedakah* (charity and justice) and equal rights for all.

### **A Reggio Emilia-Inspired Curriculum**

Our educational vision is based upon the emergent curriculum principles of the world-renowned schools for young children in Reggio Emilia, Italy. As a school community, we are committed to values based on an image of children as curious, competent and capable of co-constructing knowledge. Our journey begins as our staff asks questions, listens to children, collaborates with them and documents their work. As children discover and explore, they may work on investigations that may last a few days to a few months. All projects must be meaningful to them and their world. By creating a classroom environment that allows for open-ended learning and discovery, we give children a chance to express themselves and understand their world. We also believe that learning is a cooperative venture which includes other children, their teachers, their families and our larger community. Literacy, math, social studies, science, music and arts are all emphasized through a framework of hands-on experiences.

### **Re-Registration of Currently Enrolled Children**

All currently enrolled children are guaranteed enrollment for the following school year, provided parents return the registration form and deposit by the specified deadline. Payment of fees, including Washington DCJCC membership, must be current in order to re-enroll a child.

In January, parents of currently enrolled children will receive a registration form for the upcoming school year. In order to guarantee your child’s spot for the upcoming year, parents must include the deposit (the September and August tuitions and activity fee) with the signed contract for the upcoming year.

As a general principle, we do not move children from one class to the next except at the end of the school year in August.

## **Application Process for New Students**

A waitlist application form must be submitted with a non-refundable \$50 application fee. We give siblings registration priority, and we then go by date of application.

Parents of children turning two years old will be notified in February if their child has been accepted for enrollment in the two-year old class for September. Parents of children who will be three or four-years-old will be notified in February or March, after our re-enrollment process has finished.

## **Cleaning and Sanitation**

We firmly believe that regular cleaning decreases the spread of illnesses and germs. General housekeeping chores are part of the teachers' daily routine. Toys are sanitized often. A room should never be left "messy" at the end of the school day. A professional cleaning crew also takes care of cleaning, vacuuming and mopping on a nightly basis. They also clean rugs/carpets and wax the floors as needed.

## **Getting To the 16<sup>th</sup> Street J**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Street J is located at 1529 Sixteenth Street NW. We are at the corner of 16<sup>th</sup> and Q, on the east side of 16<sup>th</sup>. The entrance to the J is on Q Street.

Our closest **Metro** stop is Dupont Circle on the Red Line. Take the north exit out of the station (it will say "North—Q Street"). When you get to the top of the escalator, turn right (heading toward Circa and Firehook) and walk to 16<sup>th</sup> Street. It will take 10-15 minutes.

The **Metrobus** 16<sup>th</sup> Street Line (S1, S2 and S4) stops in front of the J. The L2 line and 14<sup>th</sup> Street Lines (52, 53, 54) also stop near the J. Check [www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com) for detailed directions from your home.

There is street parking (but check the signs on 16<sup>th</sup> Street during rush hour, 7:00–9:30 am and 4:00–6:00 pm) and a parking lot on the east side of the J on Q Street (see the Parking section for details).

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## **BEING AT PRESCHOOL**

### **Beginning Preschool**

We are eager for all of our children to make a successful adjustment to preschool. Talk to your child about school and all of the great things to look forward to. Tell him or her about the wonderful things that they are going to explore at school. Children often enjoy being able to go to the store for a lunchbox and school bag before school begins. You may make arrangements to visit the school with your child before s/he starts. Tell your child the teacher's name and remind her/him that you will be coming to pick her/him up at the end of the day.

Separation is natural and affects different children in different ways. On your child's first two days of school, plan to have your child leave earlier than their normal schedule. Several hours can be a very long time to a child in a new situation. Please make arrangements so that you can spend time in the classroom with them. When it is time to leave, please give your child a clear goodbye. The teachers will take over and engage your child and start developing a relationship and comfort.

The first day of school for the 2008–2009 year is Tuesday, September 2. To ease the transition of children new to our program, pick-up time for all **NEW three and four year old students** will be 12:45 pm on that day.

Children who are entering our **two-year old classes (Preschool classrooms 5–7 for 2-year olds, 2 ½ year olds and the late 2s/early 3s class)** will have an abbreviated schedule to ease their transition. On Tuesday, the children will attend school from 9:30–11:00 am with a parent. On Wednesday, the twos will attend from 9:00–11:30 am and on Thursday from 9:00 am–12:30 pm. Friday will be a full day.

Returning students will start with their regular schedule.

Children separate from their parents and adjust to school in many different ways. One child runs into the classroom and never looks back. Another may take several weeks to feel comfortable in a new setting. Some children make an easy transition in the beginning and show separation difficulties later in the year. All situations are normal, and we are well prepared to help your child in a way that is best for him or her.

Parents also separate from their children in different ways. It will be helpful to both you and your child if you say goodbye happily and reassure your child that he or she is going to have a wonderful day. Your show of confidence will enable your child to do that.

If you need to check on your child's progress, during the day, please feel free to do so!

### **Saying Good-Bye**

When leaving your child at school, it is helpful to direct him/her to an activity in the room or to a teacher. When it is time to leave, give him/her a clear goodbye. The teachers will take over and engage your child and start developing a relationship of trust and comfort.

Many children have difficulty separating and feel anxious either about their new environment. The separation may well have the same effect on you! It is important to have a positive attitude to convey the expectation that your child will have a wonderful time at preschool.

### **Orientation**

The Director will let you know about bringing your child for a visit before the first day of school. She will also let you know the schedule for your child's first week. This may vary slightly from one child to another or from class to class. She will give you a list of supplies, such as extra changes of clothing, which you should bring the first day.

We offer a Parent Orientation Open House during our staff training and transition time before the start of school. This is a great opportunity for new and returning families to meet their new teachers and explore their new rooms. Please note that the teachers will be working on preparing the rooms for the first day of school, and they will not "look ready" at the time of the open house.

### **Forms Needed Before your Child's First Day**

*We cannot accept responsibility for your child if these forms are not complete and current!*

- **DC Health Form for Preschoolers:** This physical health and immunization record is required by law to be renewed each year. Please note that D.C. law requires that all children be inoculated against hepatitis and varicella. They also require a lead screening and a TB test. Please make sure it is dated!

- Emergency Contact and Pick-Up Form
- Enrollment Information Questionnaire
- Permission to Take Off Grounds
- Authorization for Child's Emergency Medical Treatment
- Dental Health Form (for all children three years and older)
- Tuition Contract

These forms must be updated annually and may be found on our website: [washingtondcjcc.org/preschool](http://washingtondcjcc.org/preschool)

For your child's safety, if there is a change in address, home or work phone numbers, emergency contacts or caregiver, please notify us in writing immediately.

## What Your Child Will Need at School

### To Be Left At School:

1. **One box of 100 count latex gloves** if your child is still in diapers or is toilet training. As gloves run out, the staff may ask you to replenish the supply.
2. **Disposable diapers and wipes, if necessary.** Each child will have his or her own supply of diapers and wipes kept at the changing table or by the bathroom. The staff will notify you when your child's supplies are low.
3. **A complete change of clothes:** shirt, bottoms (pants, shorts or skirt), underpants and socks. Please label all items with your child's name. Children who are in the process of toilet training should bring several changes of clothes and possibly an extra pair of shoes.
4. **A blanket and a cot sheet** for naptime. At the end of each week, the sheet and blanket will be returned home. Please wash the items and return them to school on your child's next day here.
5. **Photos.** Please bring in an individual picture of your child and a framed family photo. We will use the individual photo to identify the child's cubby and any personal space. The family photo will make your child feel at home and remind us all that we are a partnership between home and school.

### To Be Brought In Daily:

1. **A dairy or vegetarian lunch.** The Center provides a morning and an afternoon snack.
2. **A bag or backpack** for carrying home important papers, artwork and assorted treasures.

## Security Blankets and "Comfy" Items

If your child needs an item to help her/him make the transition from home smoother, please feel free to send it. This can include a blanket, stuffed animal or any other item your child needs. Please do make sure it is labeled.

## Billing

At the beginning of each year, you will receive a contract with the amount of your monthly tuition. Tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. If you do not pay by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month, you will be assessed a late fee of \$25. If payment is not received by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, your child will not be able to attend until payment is made. If payment is not made by the end of the month, your child will be withdrawn from the Preschool. However, if you are experiencing temporary financial difficulties, please see the Director before tuition is due, and we will attempt to work out a solution in confidence.

All deposits, fees and tuition are non-refundable.

We will bill credit cards and bank accounts (Electronic Funds Transfers (EFTs)) on the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) of each month, or on the nearest business day if the fourth falls on a Saturday or Sunday. If for any reason we are unable to bill according to this schedule, we will alert you promptly.

A convenient way to pay is by credit card; we accept Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express. If you would like to have automatic monthly credit card payments, please see the Preschool Registrar for paperwork. You will need to bring your credit card with you to sign up for automatic debit.

You may also pay by a bank draft (automatically taking tuition from your bank account each month, the same way that a check would work). To do so, please see the Preschool Registrar and bring a copy of your voided check.

You may also bring a check each month. We do not accept cash payments.

For the current-year tuition rates, please visit [washingtondcjcc.org/preschool](http://washingtondcjcc.org/preschool) or contact our Registrar.

### **Kashrut Food Policy**

The Preschool follows the *Kashrut* policy of the Washington DCJCC. All food brought into the school by parents must be dairy or vegetarian, and all of the food supplied by the school will be strictly kosher. All foods that are shared in class and school activities must have a kosher symbol on them. This policy reflects a sensitivity to and awareness of the diverse practices within the Jewish community. Please feel free to ask any questions regarding our dietary policy.

### **Lunches and the Peanut Aware Policy**

We ask that parents bring in a veggie or dairy lunch because the Washington DCJCC adheres to a kosher food policy. This means you cannot send meat (including red meat or poultry) or non-kosher foods such as pork and shellfish (e.g. shrimp or crab). We thank you in advance for respecting this policy.

In order to plan a nutritious lunch for your child, try to include the following:

- Protein (egg, dairy, soy, fish)
- Fruit
- Vegetable
- Grain (bread, pasta, rice, etc.)
- A drink

*\*We strongly suggest keeping sugary foods to the bare minimum. We also ask that you do not pack candy in your child's lunch or send it in to share with others*

Some popular lunch options:

- A drink or two!
- Applesauce or a fruit cup
- Bagel with cream cheese/spread
- Bean or vegetable burrito
- Breadsticks
- Cereal with milk in a separate container

- Cheese and crackers, or cheese sticks/string cheese
- Egg or tuna salad
- Eggs—scrambled, hard-boiled or in an omelet
- Fish sticks
- Fresh fruit
- Fruit salad
- Hummus and pita
- Mac-and-cheese (or another item brought in a Thermos, such as spaghetti)
- Muffins
- Pasta—with sauce or as a salad with cheese, egg, tuna and/or whatever veggies they will eat
- Peaches or bananas in sour cream, yogurt or cottage cheese
- Pizza or pizza bagels
- Raisins
- Sandwiches: cheese; almond/cashew/nut butter and jelly (or bananas or celery); hummus; tuna; egg salad; cream cheese (with cucumber or jelly)
- Tofu
- Tofu dogs (“not dogs”) or tofu “chicken nuggets”
- Vegetable soup (no meat base)
- Vegetarian lasagna
- Veggies
- Yogurt

To aid your child’s feeling of independence and to help alleviate confusion during lunchtime, please peel eggs and fruit with rinds (e.g. oranges); cut grapes; etc. Please pack a spoon or fork when necessary. For the two year olds, please do not include popcorn, nuts, whole grapes, raisins or raw carrots. These foods can cause choking.

We will try to return leftover food to the lunch bag. This may give you an indication of what your child has eaten. In the afternoon, we offer the students the option of something from their lunch and/or the J’s afternoon snack. Staff members interact with children while they are eating and work with those children who need guidance, containers opened, etc. Children and teachers use this time to work on socialization and table manners.

Please pack at least one drink. We recommend freezing your child’s drink(s) the night before to use as an ice pack in their lunch. It will keep cold food cold and will thaw before lunch time (usually around Noon). You may use an actual ice pack. Glass bottles are not permitted. Label the lunchboxes, please!

Thermoses (labeled) may be brought, but the staff cannot heat foods.

Again, please inform us of any food allergies or restrictions (such as being a vegetarian).

**Peanut Aware:** Our Preschool does not allow peanuts to be sent in the lunches. We do this to protect the safety of our students with severe peanut allergies. If your child has a severe allergy to other kinds of nuts (i.e. they cannot be near tree nuts), we'll make sure they are in a nut-free area for lunch. When possible and necessary for snacks, we will offer alternative choices for a child with food allergies. You may wish to send your child with a midmorning snack if you have concerns. We cannot guarantee a peanut-free environment, but we will do our best.

Please remember to alert us to any food allergies.

## Snacks

Nutritious snacks will be provided in the morning and afternoon. They include such items as cheese and crackers, fresh fruit, vegetables and dip, cereal and milk, and yogurt. Processed products such as pretzels, cereal and crackers must have a *heksher* (kosher symbol), indicating that the product was prepared under Rabbinic supervision.

We welcome your donation of snacks as long as it has the appropriate kosher markings. Please consult with staff members before bringing food in.

If your child has special dietary needs, please inform us.

## School Holiday Calendar

The Preschool will be closed for the following Jewish holidays:

- Rosh Hashanah (two days)
- Yom Kippur (a day and a half)
- Sukkot (two days)
- Shemini Atzeret (one day)
- Simchat Torah (one day)
- Passover (first two and last two days)
- Shavuot (two days)

As you may know, the Hebrew calendar runs on a lunar calendar, which varies from the solar secular calendar. Therefore, each year, the Jewish holidays are celebrated on different days on the secular calendar. Observance of Jewish holidays starts at sundown, and early closing times will be posted on the annual calendar.

The Preschools will close on the following federal holidays:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor Day</li> <li>• Thanksgiving (Thursday and Friday)</li> <li>• Christmas Day</li> <li>• New Year's Day</li> <li>• Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inauguration Day (when applicable)</li> <li>• President's Day</li> <li>• Memorial Day</li> <li>• Independence Day</li> </ul>
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In addition, we are closed for a winter break at the end of December. We also close for a number of days at the end of August for teacher training and preparation for the upcoming school year.

While we respect the diversity of our families' observances in the home and outside of school, we do not celebrate the holidays of Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day or Easter at the Washington DCJCC Preschool.

## Ta'am Shel Shabbat (A Taste of Shabbat)

Friday is a special day in our week: it is when the Preschool celebrates the Shabbat with a sing-along, blessing recitation and special snack of challah and grape juice. We celebrate and remember this day of rest that separates Shabbat from the week. We have found that this tradition is fun for all of the children, even those who do not observe Shabbat at home. We say blessings for the candles, "wine" (grape juice) and challah. The blessings (*brachot*) are listed below for your convenience. We welcome and encourage parents to join us.

For the candles: *Baruch atah Adonai, elohainu melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu l'hadlik ner shel shabbat.*

Blessed are you, our G-d, ruler of the universe, who has commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights.

For the Wine or Grape Juice: *Baruch atah Adonai, elohainu melech ha'olam, borei pri hagafen.*

Blessed are you, our G-d, ruler of the universe, who has created the fruit of the vine.

For the Challah: *Baruch atah adonai, elohainu melech ha'olam, hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.*

Blessed are you, our G-d, ruler of the universe, who has given us bread from the Earth.

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## FAMILIES, STAFF and COMMUNICATION

### Staff

All of our staff are carefully chosen based on the special qualities, experience and talents that they have to offer to the children in our program. We also believe that it is important for our teaching staff to be dedicated learners themselves, and we provide numerous opportunities for continuing education and professional development throughout the year.

All of our teachers go through an interview process with the Director and our current teaching staff. They spend time in a classroom for a working interview as well. We do check references and perform thorough background checks for all staff. They are also CPR and First Aid trained. We offer continuing professional development in the form of training, conferences, mentoring and classes.

Lead teachers meet the DC licensing requirement and often exceed the necessary qualifications. All have taken formal early childhood education classes, and many hold degrees in early childhood education or a related field. They are also well acquainted with Jewish values and traditions.

Assistant teachers also exceed basic requirements. Most of our assistant teachers are degreed and others have early childhood education training and/or several years of experience working in an early childhood setting.

Substitute teachers are interviewed by the Director and must provide references, as all other staff does. They are also required to spend a day at school with us for a working interview. The Director compiles an approved sub list, and teachers make arrangements for their own substitutes. When one team member in a classroom is absent, the other staff member assumes the role of leading the class for that day. Our policy is that two teachers from the same classroom may not take leave at the same time; however, sometimes an emergency situation arises where that may happen. When a long-term substitute teacher is needed, the Director will fill that position.

The Director of Early Childhood, Youth & Family Programs is responsible for overall administration. The Director supervises all of the teaching staff, Registrar and the Camp Director/Assistant Director for Youth & Family Programs. She is available to discuss any issues or concerns that you may have.

The Registrar is responsible for all preschool billing and record keeping and is the person to contact if you have any questions about financial issues or any forms that are in your child's records.

Arna Meyer Mickelson, Chief Executive Officer, and Joshua Ford, Chief Program Officer, are available to discuss any concerns or questions you may have that are not or cannot be handled by the Early Childhood Director.

Arna Meyer Mickelson, Chief Executive Officer  
t. (202)777-3261 e. [arnam@washingtondcjjcc.org](mailto:arnam@washingtondcjjcc.org)

Joshua Ford, Chief Program Officer  
t. (202)777-3249 e. [joshf@washingtondcjjcc.org](mailto:joshf@washingtondcjjcc.org)

## **Parent Participation**

We welcome and encourage parental involvement in a variety of ways. The Parents Committee is open to all and meets on a regular basis throughout the year. The committee plans and organizes special events and fundraisers and supports the program and staff.

We have family activities throughout the year. These events are a great opportunity to get to know other families at the Preschool and to see your child in action with their school friends. We have a back-to-school dinner, Thanksgiving lunch, Chanukah party, Purim party, Passover Seder and summer class celebrations.

Parents are always welcome for lunch, birthdays or simply for visits. Please make arrangements for celebrations with your child's teacher. We also invite parents to share their talents, occupations or hobbies with us.

The Preschool Steering Committee, made up of parents representing each of the classrooms, allows for quick communication between the school and parents, as well as discussing topics that may help move the school forward in a systematic manner. This group meets monthly and has frequent discussions via email.

## **Communication**

At the Washington DCJCC Preschool, we pride ourselves on open communication. We feel that it is extremely important to be in close contact with parents in regard to your child's day. We can talk with you during morning or afternoon pick-up, or you can call during the day. Since drop-off and pick-up can be rushed and busy times for children, parents and staff, if you would like to have more than a few moments to chat, we encourage you to set up a phone conference or a personal conference time with the classroom teacher.

We also ask that you share with us information that may be affecting your child in school so that we can best understand and assist. Examples include health issues or a change at home, such as the passing of a family member, a family visit or a new sibling.

Communication is very important to us! No question is ever too small or too "silly" to ask. Please feel free to call with any of your questions or concerns. Sarah Rabin Spira, the director, can be reached at (202) 777-3278 or [sarahr@washingtondcjjcc.org](mailto:sarahr@washingtondcjjcc.org). You are also welcome to stop by the office at any time to talk.

## Written Communication

There are a variety of ways that we communicate with parents:

- **Today We Newsletter:** A daily e-mail will be sent out each day highlighting the activities of each class. It will also remind you of calendar events. Please add [todaywe@washingtondcicc.org](mailto:todaywe@washingtondcicc.org) to your approved senders list.
- **Parents' Bulletin Board:** Notices are posted on a designated board in the Preschool Lobby which changes frequently and contains valuable notes, curriculum information, Center information, child development articles and other materials. Please keep an eye on it.
- **Notices and Letters:** These are sent home frequently, covering such topics as meetings, speakers, programs, etc.
- **Class Roster:** this includes addresses, telephone numbers and email.

Please remember to check your child's mailbox daily!

## Other Communication

- **Open Door Policy:** We have an open door policy for parents. You may drop in any day, at any time, to observe your child or join in our activities. Please remember that during the school day, the teachers must focus on the children, so please do not use this as a time for a conference.
- **Conferences:** These individual meetings are scheduled in the late fall. However, when a parent or teacher feels that it is necessary, a meeting can be arranged at any time.
- **Back 2 School Night:** This occurs in September and is for parents/guardians and staff only. It provides a chance for parents/guardians to hear about the school's objectives, goals and purposes. It is an excellent opportunity to meet other parents in your child's classroom.
- **Parent Meetings:** There is a Parents Committee open to all parents/guardians that meets throughout the year. Sometimes the meetings feature a speaker or program. The meetings begin at 6:00 pm, and we provide baby-sitting.

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## HEALTH, SAFETY and DISCIPLINE

### Illness and Medication Policies

#### Mary Had a Little Cold

Mary had a little cold,  
But wouldn't stay at home.  
And everywhere that Mary went,  
The cold was sure to roam.

It painted Anna's throat bright red,  
And swelled poor Jennie's head.  
Dora had a fever,  
And a cough put Jack to bed.

It wandered into Molly's eyes,  
And filled them full of tears.  
It jumped from there to Bobby's nose  
And then to Jimmy's ears.

The moral of this little tale  
Is very quickly said:  
Mary could have saved some pain,  
With just one day in bed!

*\*courtesy of the Valley of the Sun, JCC Shemesh Day Camp*

For the protection of the health and well being of all children and staff at the Preschools, the following rules must be adhered to in regard to sick children.

- *Fever:* A child with a fever is to be excluded until fever-free for 24 hours. A fever is defined as a temperature greater than 100 degrees. Children who are sent home with a fever may not return to school the following day.
- *Strep Throat:* Your child may return to school 24 hours after antibiotics have been started.
- *Vomiting:* A child may return to school 24 hours after the last episode.
- *Colds:* A cold's symptoms are described as an irritated throat, watery discharge from the nose and eyes and sneezing. A cold may or may not include a fever. Children are often most contagious in the early, runny stage of a cold. A green discharge can signal infection and a child may return to school after 24 hours of medication.
- *Diarrhea:* Your child may return 24 hours after the last episode.
- *Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye):* Bacterial: Your child may return to school after antibiotic treatment has begun and eye ooze has stopped. Viral: May return with doctor's note that the child is no longer contagious.
- *Ear Infections:* A child may return to school once antibiotics are administered.
- *Rashes:* A child may return to school with a doctor's note.
- *Head Lice:* We have a strict no-nit policy, in common with the DC Public Schools. No child may be present while there are any nits present in his or her hair.

*Please do not request that a child remain indoors.* If your child is too ill to go outside with us, he or she is too ill to be at Preschool.

If your child should become ill at school, she/he will be brought to the Preschool office, and the a staff member will call you. Your child will rest in the Preschool office until s/he is picked-up.

If a communicable illness or disease should arise in our school, we will let the families know via email, but we will maintain the privacy of any family involved.

While every effort will be made to maintain the health of each child, our school, like others, may be subject to pediculosis (head lice). We offer several steps to keep such a situation under control:

1. Students are encouraged to wash their hands regularly.
2. Students are not allowed to share combs, brushes, hats or other grooming aids with non-family members.
3. Discovery of lice requires that the child be sent home and treated. All nits must be removed before the child can return to school. Upon their return, the child's scalp will be inspected by a staff member.

If a case of lice is discovered at home, please report it to the school. We keep details of reports and incidents confidential, but we do need to alert parents about them.

## **Medication**

DC licensing regulations stipulate the following requirements:

1. A parent must administer the first dose of any medication at least two (2) hours before bringing the child to school. All medication that needs to be administered to your child at Preschool requires an accompanying note from the prescribing doctor. The note can be a copy of the prescription or a simple handwritten one with the signature and date of visit clearly visible.
2. The medication must be in its original prescription bottle and must be accompanied by the appropriate measurement spoon.

3. A copy of the Authorization to Medicate form is available on our website: [washingtondcjcc.org/preschool](http://washingtondcjcc.org/preschool)

## **Discipline**

The Washington DCJCC Preschool follows the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices set by the National Association for the Education of Children (NAEYC). These guidelines recognize that each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style and family background. While some behaviors are typical for a specific “age and stage” we recognize that children learn appropriate social behaviors at different rates. With that in mind, we observe and make individual behavior plans when necessary.

We believe in “positive discipline” which focuses on good behavior, rather than bad. We may need to redirect a child and speak with them about appropriate behavior. When necessary, we speak to a child with a firm, but caring voice. At times, it may be necessary to remove the child from the rest of the group. If a behavior persists, we will contact the child’s parents and ask them to come in for a conference.

At that time, we will work in conjunction with the family and teaching staff on a behavior management plan that meets with the needs for that particular child. It is also our practice to consult with specialists who work with children and families. We are particularly fortunate to have a close relationship with the Early Childhood specialists at the Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA) and the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning (PJLL). With the permission of the family, those agencies can send a license social worker out to observe and access the child or provide the names of other area resources.

As a community agency, we believe in working with families during difficult times. We in turn ask for the family’s cooperation and assistance so that we may be able to continue our relationship with them. If we are unable to make progress in improving a child’s behavior, we may need to assess the appropriateness of our program for that particular child.

In the event that one child consistently harasses another, either verbally or physically, we will contact the parents of both children. When there is a continued problem affecting the welfare of the entire class, parents will be informed about how the issue is being addressed.

## **Biting and Injuries**

When a child hurts another child, we will first attend to the child that has been hurt and then speak with the other child. In the case of a bite or an injury where we must apply first aid, we will call the parents of both children. A written incident report will also be sent home.

Should an unusual incident occur, we will also complete a written incident report for the family and our files. When possible, we will talk to the parent/guardian(s) in person or by phone as well.

## **Building Security**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Street J takes security concerns very seriously. We have a full-time Security Director on site and a trained Crisis Management team. Our Security Director constantly monitors situations that would affect the safety and security of our children and makes plans accordingly. We will keep parents up-to-date when specific situations arise.

We have evacuation and emergency response systems in place to best protect the students and staff in our program. We conduct periodic fire/evacuation/security drills for the entire building, including the Preschool.

Please note that the way to enter the Q Street location is through the entrance on Q Street. Members must show their ID to enter the building and parents will be given a preschool ID card to show at the front desk.

Both the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Lobby doors and Preschool Lobby doors are locked and alarmed during the school day and can only be exited in the case of an emergency. Should the need arise to unlock either of these entrances during the school day, there will be a security or staff member posted at the door.

**It is important that the doors be securely closed behind you!**

If you have questions about these and other security systems in place, please contact us.

### **Emergency Medical Treatment**

In the course of normal supervised play, children occasionally get injured. We offer First Aid and Child CPR training to our teachers and have other trained staff on-site to handle most of our medical needs. In most cases, a note will be sent home explaining the incident. Should there be a need for emergency services for a student, we will take the appropriate measures as required by the situation and the details on your child's Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment.

For more severe cases, the Preschool Director or the most senior staff member will make an assessment about further medical attention. Depending on the severity of the injury, your child may be taken to the hospital, and you will be notified immediately. A Washington DCJCC staff member will stay with your child until a parent arrives.

### **Evacuations**

In the event of an emergency that requires that we evacuate the building, we will go the following locations:

1. Our primary evacuation site is John W. Ross Elementary School at 1730 R Street NW.
2. Our secondary contingency site is the Foundry Methodist Church at 16<sup>th</sup> and P Streets.
3. Our third location is the Church of the Holy City on 16<sup>th</sup> and Corcoran Streets.
4. In the event that we need to move further from downtown location, we will use the Grace Lutheran Church at 16<sup>th</sup> and Varnum.

*Please keep this information with you on school days.*

In the event of a need to evacuate the building, children and teachers will conduct themselves as if it were a fire alarm. Teachers have been given instruction of the different fire routes out of the building.

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## **GENERAL POLICIES and INFORMATION**

### **Absences**


School is a wonderful opportunity for your child to build their skills and establish new relationships with other children and adults. These relationships thrive when your child is consistently in school. In the event that your child will miss a day or more of school, please contact the Preschool Director by 8:30 am so that we can notify the teachers: (202) 777-3278, [sarahr@washingtondcjjcc.org](mailto:sarahr@washingtondcjjcc.org). We do not offer refunds for days your child misses.

## Activity Fee

Instead of paying admission for each field trip and special show, parents are asked to pay an activity fee at the beginning of each school year. The Preschool Registrar will collect this fee with your deposit.

## Birthdays and Special Occasions

Birthdays are special times in children's lives. We are pleased when children share this occasion with their classmates. Birthday treats may be brought in for your child's class. Please contact the child's teacher in advance to plan for this. We like these events to be low-key and ask that you do not send in "goody bags." You may want to donate a book to the class to remember the occasion. Latex balloons are a choking hazard and are prohibited.

All processed foodstuffs, including treats intended for class and school activities, must have a *heksher*, or Kosher symbol (e.g. k or ) , on the package. Fresh fruit or muffins are always a good option. We ask that you not send products containing peanuts or peanut by-products.

Entenmann's has approved ready-made products, and some approved kosher bakeries are Katz's, Shalom Kosher and the Kosher Pastry Oven in Wheaton. Some Carvel cakes have approved kosher certification, and all Baskin-Robbins cakes, except for those containing marshmallow, are kosher. If you need help identifying kosher foods or bakeries, please feel free to contact us.

Please be sensitive to all children's feelings when sending out invitations to parties. **Invitations may be distributed in school only if the whole class is invited.** Birthday parties held on Shabbat (Friday night and Saturday day) will exclude some children from participating.

## Bringing Items from Home

We discourage children from bringing toys from home. Some classes have a scheduled "show and tell" experience where children can bring items from home. Please make sure that everything brought in is **LABELED**, and that no belonging is extremely valuable. The staff can not be responsible for any lost items. Also, please make certain that no toy weapons are brought into school.

We do appreciate when parents send in a book or item that is relevant to a topic that the children are focusing on. Just let the teacher know that you are sending an item in.

If your child needs a "comfy" at naptime, make sure that it is labeled.

## Clothing

Children often get dirty through the use of paint and other hands-on material, or toilet accidents. Please take this into consideration when planning your child's preschool wardrobe. Please send in a change of clothes to keep in your child's cubby in case they need to change during the day. These should include diapers (if your child wears them); pull-ups (if you have begun toilet training) or underwear; shirts, bottoms, and socks. Labeling is extremely important. Please keep track of these clothes and their seasonal appropriateness.

We take the children outdoors in all types of weather. Raincoats with hoods/hats, boots, warm snow apparel and sneakers (not party shoes or shoes which do not provide support) are all essential, depending upon outdoor temperatures and conditions. You may want to keep a "playground safe" pair of shoes in your child's cubby.

## Computers

We are fortunate to have access to computers in two of our classrooms. We use these as tools for the teachers to communicate with the parents via email, to prepare their “Today We” notes and to type up documentation. They may also use it for research. For the children, their use is limited to research and typing up their own notes with the direct guidance of the teachers. They will not be used for playing games or independent web-surfing.

## Disclosure of Information

The Washington DCJCC shall not disclose information concerning an individual child or the child’s parent(s) or guardian(s) to persons other than the Center staff or government officials acting in the course of their duties, unless the parent(s) or guardian(s) grant written permission for the disclosure, or unless disclosure is necessary in an emergency situation.

## Field Trips

Field trips can enhance the curriculum and children’s learning experiences. The teachers will arrange several field trips throughout the year, guided by the appropriateness for the age, weather conditions and interests. Parents are asked to volunteer to drive and/or chaperone at least one field trip. Car seats are required for all children under the age of four and fewer than forty pounds.

## Late Pick-Up Fees

In the event that a parent or caregiver arrives late, there will be a late fee of \$25 for any portion of the first ten minutes and \$1 per minute thereafter.

## Membership

All families whose children are enrolled in the Washington DCJCC preschool are required to be members of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street J, although you may join at the time that your child begins school. Parents are required to maintain a current membership during their child’s enrollment; membership must be renewed each year.

## Naptime

We offer two-and-a-half hours of rest time each afternoon. We provide a cot or mat for all children with the expectation that they will use the time to rest. As the children get older, we will allow other quiet naptime activities. Each child will have her/his own labeled rest-time cot/mat. A washable, size-appropriate, labeled blanket needs to remain at the Preschool for rest-time and will be sent home weekly for washing.

## Parking

Families may use the designated spaces in the lot adjacent to the rear of the building for drop-off and pick up at the designated times. **Do not leave your car in the lot all day.** You may also park in front of the building in the drop-off area for up to fifteen (15) minutes at a time. Please do not park in the alley across from the J; you will get a ticket.

## Preschool Hours/Pick-Up Policy

School opens at 7:30 am and closes promptly at 6:00 pm. It is extremely important that you arrive on time to pick up your child. Late pick-ups can cause anxiety for the children involved. It also often creates

problems for the teachers on duty. In addition, we are not licensed to care for children after 6:00 pm without a parent present.

We recommend that you plan to be at the Center earlier than pickup to allow yourself adequate time for unexpected traffic, a brief chat with the staff and time to exit the building.

For your child's security and your piece of mind, your child may only be picked up by those individuals listed on your Emergency Authorization form. If you have not personally introduced us to this person, we will ask for identification.

The Preschool requires written notification whenever the usual person is not picking up your child. For example, if a visiting grandparent or other relative is visiting, we must have written notification (email is fine). This policy also includes carpooling or any other temporary pick-up arrangements.

Many parents work out arrangements with other families to be able to pick up their children in cases of emergency. If you expect to be late, please add those parents' names to your child's emergency authorization form. If this person will be picking your child up, please call the school and let us know. This way, we can let your child know who is picking him or her up. If we do not have formal permission, we will not release your child to another parent, and you will be charged a late fee.

## **School Photographs**

School photographs are taken once a year. Individual as well as class pictures are sent home in packets and can be bought from the photographer.

Throughout the school year, the 16<sup>th</sup> Street J will take pictures of preschool activities. We will often post these candid action shots on our documentation boards. Occasionally, the Washington DCJCC will use these photographs in our newsletter and our promotional literature. We ask for general permission to use photographs of your child in the contract signed by all families:

*I understand that photographs taken of my child at the Washington DCJCC may be published (print or electronic.)*

## **Snow and Inclement Weather Policy**

We will go outside as much as possible, so please dress your child appropriately. If there is a heat advisory, we will keep the kids inside for most or all of the day. The J has an indoor pool, gym, racquetball/squash courts, community hall and classrooms to be able to continue the fun, no matter the weather.

It is our sincere hope that we will be able to remain open throughout the winter. However, there may be conditions that force us to close for safety.

Our policy regarding closings is determined by a number of factors:

- a) If the Federal Government is closed, the Preschools will be closed.
- b) If the roads surrounding the Preschools are determined to be hazardous, or if indications are that it will not remain safe to drive all day, we will close the Preschool.

If we decide to open late or not to open due to inclement weather, will put a message at the following numbers: (202) 777-3278, 777-3220, 777-3224 and 518-9400.

If we begin to experience inclement weather during the day, we will endeavor to remain open. Should we determine that it is necessary to close, we will notify parents and try to give you two hours in which to arrive. It is important for you to arrange to pick up your child as soon as possible, as chances are that weather conditions will continue to deteriorate.

If you have questions about the J's emergency procedures, please contact Eli Elfassi, the J's Director of Security, at 202.777.3201 or [elie@washingtondcjjc.org](mailto:elie@washingtondcjjc.org).

## **Strollers**

One of the many benefits of being at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street J Preschool is that it is so easy to access from many locations. If you are walking here, please feel free to leave your stroller. *However*, since we use all of our programming space and for fire safety, you must fold up your stroller each morning and leave it in the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Lobby (not the Preschool Lobby) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

## **Television**

Occasionally, we will use video to enhance a lesson or demonstrate a point directly related to a project, for example to show an animal in motion, an example of a dance or for a “tour” of Israel. These will be used for specific educational purposes, and we will limit the duration of the videos.

## **Toilet Training**

We understand that most two year olds are not toilet trained, and this is not a requirement at the Washington DCJCC Preschool. When your child is ready, we work closely with the parent and child to toilet train the child in a consistent, calming, encouraging manner. We celebrate success and keep a positive upbeat attitude when the child has an “accident.” The parent and school should follow a consistent and similar schedule, or the child’s training will be erratic. Your child’s teachers will keep you posted on progress—please keep us abreast of all news, for example, when your child comes to Preschool with only underwear on!

Parents need to provide the school with diapers, wipes, and latex gloves for their child. Please bring a large size package of each to leave at school. The staff will let you know when you need to replenish.



## **Washington DCJCC Preschool Checklist**

### **To Be Left At School:**

1. **One box of 100 count latex gloves** if your child is still in diapers or is toilet training. As gloves run out, the staff may ask you to replenish the supply.
2. **Disposable diapers and wipes, if necessary.** Each child will have his or her own supply of diapers and wipes kept at the changing table or by the bathroom. The staff will notify you when your child's supplies are low.
3. **A complete change of clothes** (shirt, bottoms (pants, shorts or skirt), underpants and socks.) Please label all items with your child's name. Children who are in the process of toilet training should bring several changes of clothes and possibly an extra pair of shoes.
4. **A blanket and a cot sheet** for naptime. At the end of each week the sheet and blanket will be returned home. Please wash the items and return them to school on your child's next day here.
5. **Photos.** Please bring in an individual photo of your child and a family photo. These will be used for various purposes throughout the school year.

### **To Be Brought In Daily:**

1. A dairy or vegetarian lunch
2. Comfortable play clothes
3. Closed-toed, rubber-soled shoes
4. A bag or backpack for carrying home important papers, artwork and assorted treasures.

### ***Optional Items:***

- ◇ Sunglasses (unbreakable)
- ◇ Hat
- ◇ Sunscreen

### ***Please Do Not Bring:***

- ◇ Glass containers or bottles
- ◇ Toys or valuable items
- ◇ Peanuts or peanut products

***PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING!***