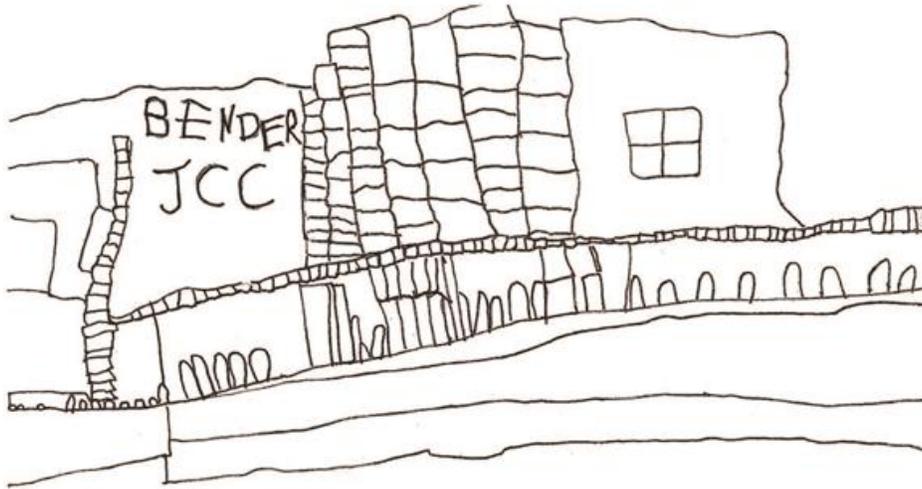




**Bender JCC
Early Childhood Center
Family Handbook
2020-2021**



**6125 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 20852
301-348-3839
Benderjccgw.org**

Dear Families,

Your child's preschool years are astounding years of growth and development. For healthy growth, children must be in a setting that engages their interest, inspires them to ask questions, develop theories, and search for answers. Preschool years are meant for learning how to be a friend, how to be part of a community, and how to communicate and connect. Preschool years are a celebration of the uniqueness of each child and should be filled with joy and love. Our talented and devoted staff look forward to partnering with you, the family, so that your child is given the opportunity to grow and thrive. The first step in this partnership is reading this Family Handbook.

Our Family Handbook is your guide to understanding who we are as a community and what to expect throughout the year. It is essential that every family read this handbook as a first step in becoming an active partner in our preschool community. Throughout the year, we work to support each individual child in the classroom and also support our larger community. This is the basic philosophy that underlies many of our policies and procedures. Nothing is random; every policy is meant to strengthen our larger community while also be respectful of the needs of individuals and their families. It is a challenging balance but one that is essential for any strong educational community.



We are very excited that you have joined us for this year of learning and celebration. We look forward to getting to know you and your child, and to being an important part of your child's daily life.

After reading this handbook, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you and have a great year!

Rabbi Sarah Meytin
Director of the Bender Early Childhood Center

Re-Opening After COVID-19

While there will be many adjustments to the program to meet health and safety requirements, we look forward to providing the values-inspired, warm and enriching environment that enable your children to thrive, while ensuring a welcoming preschool community for our families to connect. We know that much feels different right now. We look forward to being able to have your children back with us, so that at least ONE thing can feel right again!

How our values will shape our re-opening:

- **Masa: Journey (Reflection, Return and Renewal):** Families and staff will recognize that we are on an unfolding journey together. We will approach our re-opening and new ways of being together with awe and wonder, encouraging staff, students, and families to marvel in our flexibility, creativity, capacity for change, resilience, and vision of the future.
- **B'rit: Covenant (Belonging and Commitment):** We are in a sacred relationship with each other. It is our obligation and our desire to keep each other safe and we will be mindful and supportive of the emotional and physical health needs of our children, staff, and families. We seek to ensure that each member of our community has the ability to care for themselves and their family members appropriately and fully. We commit to providing a developmentally appropriate early childhood program that continues to meet the needs of our students. Our families commit to supporting our effort through compliance with health and attendance policies, and appreciation for our holy work.
- **Tzelem Elohim: Divine Image (Dignity and Potential):** We see the divine in each and every member of our community and value each person's unique contribution. We will do all we can to keep each other safe, and allow each person to bring the best of themselves to our work, as we are all blessed by each other's divine gifts.
- **Hit'orerut: Awakening (Amazement and Gratitude):** We will view each day as a special gift. We will cultivate a sense of gratitude and appreciation in ourselves and our students. We will focus on the wonder of what is, not the loss of what was or the question of what is to come.
- **Tikkun Olam: Repair of the World (Responsibility):** We will notice the inequality in suffering around us - Who is sick? Who is lacking sustenance? Who is needing attention or companionship? We commit to using our time together to address the needs in the larger community of which we are a part. The work is great, and we must do our part to help.

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General Information

Email	preschool@Benderjccgw.org
Phone	301-348-3839
Address	6125 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 20852
Snow Line	301-348-3839
Emergency	In case of an emergency, call the Bender JCC Front Desk at 301-881-0100.

Who's Who?

Rabbi Sarah Meytin—Director of the Bender Early Childhood Center (ECC) smeytin@benderjccgw.org

Contact Sarah for:

- School policies
- Safety concerns
- Parent concerns
- Overall school communications
- If, after speaking to the appropriate staff member, an ongoing issue needs resolution

Brenda Footer – Assistant Director of the Bender Early Childhood Center

Contact Brenda for:

- Curriculum questions
- Teaching staff concerns
- General Preschool information
- Enrollment questions
- Changes in children's hours; adding a drop-in day

Rachel Assal Albert – Developmental Support Coordinator ralbert@benderjccgw.org

Contact Rachel for:

- Support for families and staff regarding children who have specific challenges in the classroom or different learning needs

Classroom Names and Ages

Aretz Classrooms (Land Animals) — Toddlers (18-24 months), 2-year-olds and 2-year-olds turning 3

1. Pandot – Toddlers
2. Koalot – Koala – Toddlers
3. Dubim-Bears
4. Arayot-Lions
5. Peelim-Elephants
6. Shualim-Foxes
7. Soosim-Horses

Mayim Classrooms (Water Animals)—3-year-olds-turning 4

- Dagim-Fish
- Tzavim-Turtles
- Meduzot-Jellyfish
- Dolfinim-Dolphins

Shamayim Classrooms (Sky Animals)—4-year-olds turning 5

- Nesharim-Eagles
- Yonim-Doves
- Zmirim-Nightingales

Hours of Operation

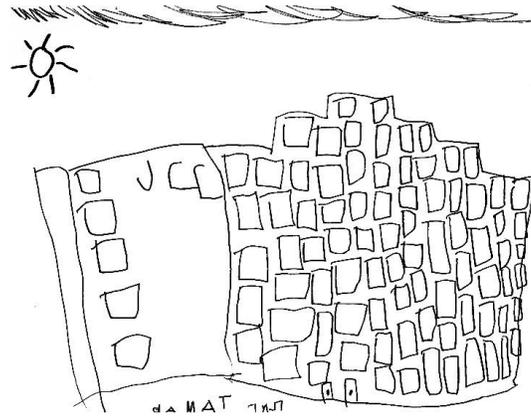
The Bender ECC will be open 8am-4pm, Monday-Friday.

Program

Our Mission, History and Values

THE BENDER JCC PRESCHOOL

Our preschool has been a part of the Bender JCC since its inception and has served young children for over forty years in this building. While we remain true to our mission of bringing Jewish education and experiences to our children and families, our preschool has evolved and developed throughout the years. We work to bring a more progressive and research-based approach to preschool education. As a community of learners, our teachers continue to reflect and study, to remain on the cutting edge of early childhood education.



We are proud to be inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to teaching. Recognized as a model of excellence in early childhood education, and named as one of the “Ten Best Schools in the World” by Newsweek magazine, schools in Reggio Emilia have at their foundation the belief that children are competent, full of potential, and active in constructing knowledge through their interactions and in relationship with the world and people around them.

How we learn

The rich curriculum in our preschool is driven by the long term projects that emerge from the children’s questions and theories. Together, children and teachers are researchers and investigators, as they look for materials and resources to help them answer their questions, build on their ideas, and construct new knowledge. The children represent their thoughts and understandings in a multitude of ways. We can see the reflection of the children’s growing understanding of the world as they test their hypotheses, share perspectives, and exchange knowledge with peers and adults.

We Are a Sheva School

Sheva, the Hebrew word for the number seven, is the name of the JCCs of North American Learning Framework and it signifies the seven core elements of exemplary early childhood practice. It is deeply rooted in the latest research in child development as seen through a Jewish lens. We are a Sheva Learning Community because our core values are reflected in the Sheva construct. These values guide all that we do. In 2017, the Bender JCC Preschool was chosen by the JCCA to be a Sheva Lab Community, and serve as an example for visiting early childhood educators as an example of cutting edge early childhood education.

The Sheva Core values include:



Children as Constructivist Learners

Children are natural learners. A Jewish expression of values emphasizes that teachers inspire children to question their world and appreciate multiple perspectives. Based on an image of the child as a competent and capable learner full of potential, teachers and children engage in research as a way of co-constructing knowledge. When children are agents of their own learning, they build life-long critical thinking skills and are more deeply invested in the process.



Early Childhood Directors as Visionaries

Visionary leaders galvanize a process for creating and living a shared vision for the school. Inspired by the richness of our Jewish expression of values, we work with families, teachers and lay leadership to create an environment that cultivates a diverse and vibrant community. While all ECE directors serve their communities, JCC ECE directors must be visionary leaders focused on nurturing the minds, souls, and hearts of children and their families.



Early Childhood Teachers as Professionals

At the JCC, educators view themselves as lifelong learners, constantly engaging in the pursuit of learning opportunities, as prized by our Jewish tradition. The combination of education, experience, and passion enriches educators', children's and families' lives. We listen with the understanding that the relationships between school leadership, colleagues, children, families and community members depend on the richness of each conversation.



Families as Engaged Partners

We view family engagement as essential to building a healthy school community. Every early childhood program includes family events, newsletters, and committees. JCC early childhood centers go beyond this to actively listen to and incorporate parents' perspectives into how we think about teaching and learning. JCCs support and encourage families' Jewish journeys.



Environments as Inspiration of Inquiry

Early childhood programs are rich with materials that inform, instruct and engage children. Our vision for the early childhood learning environment suggests an intentional place for children that provokes wonder, curiosity, intellectual engagement and creativity with endless possibilities. Children and families approach the environment with questions. Attention is given to indoor and outdoor classrooms and common spaces to create community, build connections, and encourage and support opportunities for Jewish living.



Discover CATCH as Shmirat HaGuf (taking care of our bodies)

To help address the nation's critical obesity problem, JCC Association, in collaboration with the University of Texas School of Public Health and its CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Child Health) program, has created Discover: CATCH Early Childhood. Based on a foundation of Jewish values, we nurture a love of physical experience in children ages 3 to 5, and encourage them to develop life-long healthy eating habits.



Israel as the story of the Jewish People

For thousands of years without the benefit of modern technology, Jews managed to create powerful images and representations of Israel as a place that most Jews had never seen or experienced. Israel thus permeated the lives of Jews, visited and revisited in the mind throughout the course of a lifetime. When such images of Israel were vivid in the hearts and minds of parents, a connection to Israel could be transmitted at an early stage and in a natural way to young children. Now that such images have become less and less a part of most parents' reality, educators are called upon to make up the difference at the crucial developmental stage of early childhood.

In the Classroom

Flow of the Day

While each teacher structures the day to best reflect the rhythm of the individual class community, every classroom will typically incorporate the following during the core preschool hours:

- Choice Time (Mini-atelier (in-classroom Arts Studio), Construction, Dramatic Play, Science and Nature Investigation, Books, Literacy/Message Center, Cooking)
- Small Group Work (collaborative project work)
- Snack (may be a separate experience, or incorporated into Choice Time)
- Outdoor Classroom—nature explorations, games, imaginative and gross motor play
- Lunch

The children in our full day Aretz and Mayim Program take naps from 1 PM-3 PM in their own classrooms. Mayim children who no longer take a full nap will have a 30-minute rest before engaging in quiet play in the classroom.

The children in our Shamayim program do not have a formal nap or rest period, but we are able to accommodate children who need to rest or sleep during this time.

When we are curious about a child's words and our responses to those words, the child feels respected. The child is respected. 'What are the ideas that I have that are so interesting... I must be somebody with good ideas.'
-Vivian Paley

In the late afternoon, students have a second snack before dismissal.

Roles of the Teacher

- To demonstrate a strong belief in the image of the child as capable through their interactions, expectations, and the environment.
- To partner with the children in their learning experience and research.
- To provoke ideas, problem solving, and conflict.
- To listen for children's ideas and theories and build on them for further exploration.
- To organize the classroom and materials to be aesthetically pleasing.
- To organize materials to help children make thoughtful decisions about the media.
- To document children's work to make the process visible to the children, the teachers, and families.
- To provide children with opportunities to express their knowledge through representational work.
- To create an ongoing dialogue about the projects with parents and other teachers.
- To foster the connection between home, school and community.

Role of the Family

Families are a vital component in the Reggio philosophy and our school. Parents/guardians are viewed as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children. Teachers respect parents as each child's first teacher and involve them in every aspect of the curriculum. Families are encouraged to participate in different ways in the life of the classroom.

We ask that you:

- See yourself as a partner with the school, and be open to understanding our approach
- Attend Back to School night
- Read all email communications from the classroom and school administration
- Communicate any concerns with the Lead Teacher and ask questions
- Add your perspective to our long term projects
- Share any ideas or connections you hear from your child that you find interesting
- Share your skills and talents
- Participate remotely in the classroom experiences



- Reach out to other families and create new relationships
- Send in interesting repurposed and natural materials for the class to use
- Bring in additional changes of clothing, diapers, etc. as necessary

Role of the Environment

In our approach, inspired by Reggio Emilia, the environment is considered “the third teacher” and recognized for its potential to inspire children. We strive to create spaces in which every material is intentionally chosen, and every area is evolving to encourage children to delve deeper into the investigations of their theories. We look for ways that the space can encourage collaboration, communication, exploration, and ways for the children to make their thinking visible. You may notice that the walls, furniture, and carpeting are kept neutral in order to highlight the work of the children. You may also notice that the materials are open-ended in order to encourage creative thinking. Most materials are either made of wood, recycled, are real-life props, or are found in nature. We would love if you could collect interesting materials for us.

Good Mornings and Goodbyes

The preschool is open from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Please arrive to school during your designated drop-off time. Families needing to arrive late or pick up early will need to coordinate with the ECC office staff to allow for a health-screening in the security vestibule upon arrival. After a clear screening, staff will walk a late-arriving child to the ECC.

Drop-off procedures and daily health checks for students

Carpool will be staged at the East Jefferson and theater entrances. In order to limit exposure, entrance to the preschool facility will be granted only to children and staff following a health screening interview. Because of the current licensing restrictions parents may not be let into the center unless they have a specific need. Drop off will begin at 8am and be staggered in 10-minute drop off windows to allow for easier flow. Two floaters from each age group will assist with carpool. Parents will have a large “1” “2” “3” or “4” to place in their front window so staff can easily see which age group(s) the child in the care attends.

This process takes time and we have limited staff available to transport children. Please plan appropriately. Because this process requires extra staffing and additional protective gear, we ask that you arrive to dropoff your child no later than 8:30 AM.

[Parents will be asked to take their child’s temperature and verify the reading with a staff member before the child is taken out of the car.](#) The school will have no-touch thermal thermometers to take the temperature if parents do not have a personal thermometer. The thermometer will be disinfected in between uses. A [health questionnaire](#) will be completed and parents will sign. No children will be permitted to exit their vehicle if they have a temperature of 100°F or above, have trouble breathing, a cough, sore throat, or visibly look ill. Children must be awake at drop off.

Car seats and strollers must remain in the cars, and may not be brought into the school. Children’s toys from home will not be permitted in the classroom except at nap time. Pacifiers will not be permitted in the classroom except at nap time.

Separation

Children sometimes have difficulty with separation at drop-off. Please know that this normal and we have the experience to help ease you and your child through this time. You should create a goodbye ritual with your child and stick to it—maybe one kiss, and one high-five. Do not ask your child for permission to leave. It is important that you show your child that you believe in their competence and that they will be okay. If your child cries or clings, prolonging the good-bye will only make it harder for yourself and your child. 13

We are there to help during these transition times to comfort your child once you leave. We offer comforting words such as, “I know it’s hard to say good-bye.” We will hug them and then work to engage them in a fun experience in the classroom. Once you have gone through your good-bye routines a few times, your child will get to know what to expect and the good-byes will be less difficult. After a short period of time, your child’s anxiety about you leaving ends quickly after you leave. Should this not be the case, we want you to know that we would call you to let you know how they are doing.

Your child will pick up on your confidence about having chosen a good place for them to be while you are away. Good feelings are contagious.

Pick-Up Procedures

Children's hands should be washed prior to bringing them to their parents. We will use Walkie-Talkies and have a teacher or floater walk the child to the East Jefferson exit with their belongings. Parents should exit the car (while wearing a mask, and respecting social distancing as possible) and collect their child and their belongings. Teachers will do their best to maintain 6' distance from the parents and may not place children in their cars or car seats.

If the child is being picked up by anyone other than the expected person or there is a change in their schedule for the day, please be sure that the preschool office and teacher is informed of the change in writing. Make sure that your child's emergency card includes all the names of authorized pick-up persons. Children will not be dismissed to any person who does not have permission to pick them up without a note, email, or phone call from the parent/guardian. Please send an email to preschool@benderjccgw.org and cc the teacher if there are different pick up arrangements. If you give verbal permission (over the phone, for example) for a new person to pick up your child, we will ask you to follow up also with the permission via email so that we have a record of the permission. All persons authorized to pick up a child must be at least 16 years old.

Lateness:

Adults who are picking up should be on time for dismissal. Imagine how a small child feels when all the other children have been picked up and he or she is still left. If you find you will be unavoidably delayed, email us at preschool@benderjccgw.org or call 301-348-3839. The family will be charged \$5 for the first 5 minutes after 4:00 PM, or the time your child's program was scheduled to end or portion thereof; \$2 for each additional minute after the first 5 minutes. **This policy also applies to early dismissal days.** If a family is late in picking up their child more than 3 times, the child's continuation in the program will be reevaluated.

The Classroom and Beyond

The Center

Due to COVID-19 concerns, access to the JCC facility outside the preschool-wing will be limited until further notice. Use of outdoor facilities and grounds will continue.

We are so fortunate to have access to the wonderful Bender JCC facility, which includes a gymnasium, art and dance studios, walking paths, the indoor Mercaz play space, gardens, and large grassy areas. The multigenerational and multicultural community at the Bender JCC enhances our children's learning experiences.

Our Staff

It is our priority to employ experienced and talented staff members that meet our high standards. We provide ongoing professional development to support our staff in remaining lifelong learners. The ECC program is a professional educational setting and sets clear standards and expectations for all teachers and staff members. Throughout the year, staff members receive formal and informal observations, opportunities for professional growth and constructive feedback. While we are proud of our talented and hardworking staff, there are situations when a staff member's contract must be terminated or not renewed for the coming school year. The decision to terminate a staff member is never easy and can be based on issues not readily seen by families. Please know that these decisions are always based on the best interest of the children and the school. Details of the termination are governed by the protocol of human resources and are not shared with the public by the school or the Bender JCC. We will inform families of these changes as is appropriate.

At times it is necessary to have substitute teachers take the place of one of the staff in the classroom if they are absent for any reason. Due to COVID-19 concerns, we will be using our floating teachers as much as possible to limit excess exposure in the school. All of our teachers, including our substitute teachers, go through the same hiring procedures and background checks as our staff. 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 shift in a classroom may not take leave at the same time; however, sometimes an emergency situation arises where that may happen, in which case we will assure that an experienced person who is familiar with the children in that class is in the room that day. When a long-term substitute is required, families will be alerted to that change in as timely a manner as possible.

Specialists

We offer a variety of specialized activities for each class. In addition, school-wide special programs are scheduled throughout the year. We also work with the different departments of the Bender JCC to make use of the wonderful facilities available to us. We currently offer Music for all our classes. Our Shamayim classes engage in other enrichment opportunities such as Sports and Hebrew. Our Shamayim classes have instructional swim during the year, in addition to the summer. Families are welcome to join us via Zoom for *Shabbat* Sing on Friday mornings. We also have a mobile Atelier/Arts to further enrich the classroom experience for students and deepen the understanding of materials through their use in classroom project work.

Families

Together we are better! We take the idea of a partnership with our families very seriously. It is only through the strong partnership of the home and the school that a child can have the richest preschool experience. Families are asked to read the class and school newsletter so they can better discuss with the children the different topics they are studying and share with the teachers their thoughts and observations. Due to COVID-19 concerns, family celebrations, holidays, and school events will continue online this year. Families are encouraged to join us as much as possible, so that the home/school connection is strengthened. Communication is essential to a strong home/school relationship. Please email the Lead Teacher to set up a time to meet via Zoom if there is a concern. Please inform teachers about children's interests and comments related to class projects as well as about family members' skills and talents that can be shared with the class.

Our goal is to build an amiable school where children, teachers, and families feel at home. Such a school requires careful thinking and planning concerning procedures, motivations, and interests.
--Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio approach

Early Childhood Parent Committee (ECPC)

The ECPC is open to all parents of children in our program. The ECPC hosts social gatherings for ECC families, organizes tzedakah (righteous giving) projects, provides room parent support for classes, coordinates class gifts for teachers, and is the fundraising arm of the ECC. The ECPC holds meetings every other month that are open to all families. We ask that you try to attend these meetings as your input is important. Notices will be sent home regularly inviting you to upcoming ECPC meetings

Room Parents

We need you! Please consider volunteering to be a Room Parent. It is a great way to get to know other families and to make a difference in the school. Room Parents serve as an important point of contact for the families in your child's class. You will receive help from the Room Parent Coordinator! Please let your child's teacher know at the Open House or Back to School Night if you are interested.

Field Trips

Due to COVID-19 concerns, there will be no field-trips to stores or other destinations this year. Field trips can be a valuable part of the learning experience. Our classes go on regular walks through our neighborhood, and every child is required to have a signed permission slip for these walks on file. Periodically, classes go on field trips beyond our neighborhood to highlight various aspects of their curriculum, for which we will send an additional field trip permission form. Parent/guardian volunteers are needed for supervision of the children and sometimes for transportation. While family participation makes these special experiences possible, it also gives families an opportunity for active involvement in the preschool. When on field trips, please follow the instructions of the teachers. Please do not purchase anything, including food, for your child(ren) or any other children while on these trips.

Shabbat and Havdalah

Although *Shabbat* does not begin until sundown on Friday, we anticipate its arrival by kindling the Shabbat candles with the children during Friday morning snack time. Teachers will provide a sign up system to allow parents and family members to join us remotely for your child's Shabbat celebration. The teachers will provide more details of ways to participate in this special occasion.



Children are encouraged to bring a couple of coins for Tzedakah (righteous giving) on Fridays. In the past, the money the children collect has helped to feed needy families in the US and Israel, support cancer research, purchase toys for sick children at NIH, and much more.

All are welcome to join us for Shabbat Sing via Zoom. Please check with your teacher for times.

Every Monday morning, the whole school joins together to celebrate Havdalah, a ceremony to welcome the new week. Families are welcome to join us via Zoom. Please check with your teacher for times

The Outdoor Classroom

We have two lovely playgrounds as well as many areas around the Bender JCC for our children to learn outdoors—fields, gardens, hills, and our back patio. One of our playgrounds is a natural playground, with many opportunities for imaginative play, digging, and construction. This playground has a water pump that is open during the warmer months of the year, and allows children the amazing experience of water play as they create paths in the sand pit and add water to our mud kitchen.

Teaching children about the natural world should be seen as one of the most important events in their lives.
—Thomas Berry

When children are engaged in messy sensory play, they learn to wonder, to solve problems, to take risks, and to understand the properties of these materials. Our goal is to involve the children in diverse, and possibly messy, outdoor experiences every day, even when it is cold, hot, raining, or snowy. We will stay out for shorter periods on these types of days, but it is important that children are sent with weather appropriate clothing every day. Every child should have snow boots and warm coats for snowy weather, and raingear for rainy days. You are asked to keep a pair of rain boots and a complete change of weather-appropriate clothes, including socks and underwear, in school at all times.

Beyond the Garden

One of the important Jewish values we work to teach and model for our students is “Shomrei Adama”, our responsibility for caring for our earth. This is evident in our preschool in a number of ways. Our children are very active in planting, caring and picking from our preschool garden, giving our children a sense of pride and a knowledge of nature and growth. The annual bunnies in our garden are also appreciative of our planting and the children love bunny sightings.

In addition, our preschool is very active in recycling paper and plastic throughout the year. There are recycling baskets in each classroom and a bin for recycled bottles in our hallway. We use recycled and natural items in our art, and avoid plastic when there is an alternative. We no longer purchase all of the construction paper found in many preschools. We stopped using paper and plastic during snack time and purchased real plates and cutlery for the children. We ask that every child have their own labeled water bottle. While this has not totally eliminated the use of paper plates and plastic spoons and forks, it has greatly reduced the use of these products. In addition to helping reduce waste, using real dishes and cutlery give a sense of aesthetics that is very important to our approach. While these are small steps, we believe the message that everyone can find ways to help care for our earth is important for our children.

Communication

Director

Rabbi Sarah Meytin, Director, is responsible for creating a vision and direction for the school which mirrors the foundational values of the organization. She oversees the daily running of the preschool, making certain that what happens in the school reflects best practice in Early Childhood education. When there are issues that can't be

resolved by the classroom teacher, the director is available to help find a path for better communication and resolution. Collaboration is essential for running an excellent educational setting and the voices of staff, families and students are essential in her role as director. Each Friday, Sarah will send out an email to parents with information about upcoming programs and events from the school, ECPC, and the larger JCC community, as well as policy reminders and important calendar items of note. Please be sure to read the email each week to ensure you do not miss any important notices or opportunities.

Accounting

Please contact the school office preschool@benderjccgw.org if you:

- Have a billing questions
- Would like to change your child's program
- Need drop in care (the form can be found on our website)

Communication with Families

Communication will occur as usual between teacher and parent via daily emails. Because face-to-face interactions will be limited, teachers will also schedule monthly check-in meetings with families via Zoom. Additional phone calls or video meetings will be scheduled as needed. Back to School Night and family conferences will be held via Zoom.

Weekly updates from the ECC Director will continue via email. The EC Director and EC Administrative team will communicate with parents regularly and clearly regarding potential necessary changes to the program and policies, and will thoroughly update families regarding health information in a timely manner. Because face-to-face interactions with parents will be limited, the ECC leadership will schedule three Zoom meetings during the school year (early fall, mid-winter, mid-spring)

Issues, Concerns, or Feedback

If you have an issue or concern, you are encouraged to address problems in a direct way with the person or people with whom you are having a challenge. If you have been unsuccessful in reaching resolution in talking with a classroom teacher, you are encouraged to speak to the Preschool Director. If you require further assistance, you may speak to the Chief Programs Officer or the Chief Executive Officer.

We are all part of one community, and we therefore have responsibilities to one another. We ask that you provide feedback in a productive manner and refrain from engaging in conversations or behaviors that undermine the integrity of the school. We also ask that you not approach the child or parent of a child who has had a dispute with your child; this can lead to an escalation of the issue. Please trust the school to intercede on your behalf.

Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences

Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences are scheduled twice a year for which the teachers will prepare a written conference form based on developmentally appropriate objectives. See the [2020-2021 school calendar](#) for scheduled time periods. Families or teachers may request additional informal conferences if necessary. Due to COVID-19 concerns, all family conferences will take place via Zoom.

Absences and Family News

We care about your child and family! Please send an email to your child's teachers as well as the preschool (preschool@benderjccgw.org) to let us know if your child will be absent, or if there is any good or bad news that we should know about. We love to see new baby photos!

Policies

Program Changes

According to the Terms of Enrollment, 30 days written notice is required for preschool schedule changes. If prior written notice is not given, you will be responsible for the month's tuition. You will need to fill out an Automatic Payment Form.

A \$25.00 fee will be assessed for each credit card payment or EFT that is denied. It is the parent's obligation to notify the preschool of any changes in their credit card or EFT account.

Class Placement

The Bender ECC follows Montgomery County's age cut off, which requires children to be five years old by September 1 in order to start in Kindergarten. Following this, children are placed in classes according to their age on September 1 (i.e. a child who is two-years-old on September 1 and turns three on October 15 will be in a "2s turning 3" classroom for the year, along with other children who will turn three during the school year). In making class placements when there is more than one class per age group, we work hard to balance a number of different factors. We take into consideration gender balance, temperaments, individual needs, previous friends and classmates, and parental requests. While we do solicit parent input in the spring, we do not guarantee to abide by parent requests and will not make changes once placements are complete as we work hard to ensure that we place each child in the best possible placement for that child, and that each class is the best mix of teachers and students we can provide. Class assignments are not announced until teachers send out welcome letters to students in mid-August for the following school year.

Holiday Care

Holiday Care is offered on certain days when the preschool is closed but the Bender JCC building is open. The hours for Holiday Care are 8:00 AM-4:00 PM and the cost per day is \$85. Registration is available online. Holiday Care is only available to children currently enrolled in the Bender JCC preschool. Space is limited. There are no refunds due to illness or absence. Current school staff will be supervising Holiday Care, but we cannot guarantee in advance which staff members will be working on a particular day. Please check the school calendar for the dates when this is offered.

Screen Time Policy

Screen time is not permitted for children under the age of two beyond the weekly school-wide Havdalah and Shabbat Sing. We know children learn best through moving their bodies and engaging their senses. Content on "screens," including phones, tablets, and computers, should be used with children under the age of three in our program only on extremely rare occurrences and never for more than five minutes at a time. Older children may occasionally use computers, tablets, or phones in the course of research or to supplement learning in an investigation. They should never be watching a screen for more than 10 minutes at a time (with rare exceptions that must be approved by the Curriculum Director) and not for more than 30 minutes, total, in a week.

Medical and Health Policies

Medical Forms

Medical and immunization forms completed by your child's physician must be on file in the school office prior the first day of school. All children should have immunizations consistent with the current MSDE vaccine Chart:

- [MSDE Vaccine Chart 2020-2021 \(PDF\)](#)

For the health, safety and welfare of both staff and students, the Bender Preschool program follows all the State of Maryland vaccination requirements for students entering our program. Documentation of compliance with these requirements shall be provided to the center for all students upon entry to the ECC. The center will monitor on-going vaccination compliance for children 18 months to 5 years who are enrolled in the ECC. This follows the standards and policies of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and the American Council on Immunization and Prevention. **There are no religious or personal exemptions to this policy. Medical exemptions will be reviewed by the Director of ECC with medical consultation as necessary.**

In addition, all families must submit written documentation of a blood-lead screening. All information is confidential and will not be released to outside sources without written approval from parents.

Allergies

After all children have enrolled, but prior the first day of school, all physicians' medical reports and health history forms will be reviewed. Children who have any allergies are asked to complete the allergy protocol form, even if the allergies are not life-threatening.

A master list of those children with allergies, including a photograph, will be created and placed in every classroom. Parents/guardians of these children are required to provide the following:

1. Photograph of child (for the master allergy list above)
2. Two copies of an allergy treatment protocol from the child's physician which includes the particular child's unique history of symptoms and reactions – one will be posted in the child's classroom and the other will be kept in the master student folder
3. A bottle of Benadryl (if prescribed by the physician), to be kept in the administrator's office, with dosing instructions
4. Two Epi pens (if prescribed by the physician) – one will be kept in the administrator's office as a back-up and the second will be kept by the staff person in charge of the child (in other words, wherever the allergic child goes, the Epi pen goes, kept safely by the adult in charge)
5. All food the allergic child will eat during any given day including lunches, snacks and celebration treats (ex: a treat to eat for a birthday celebration) will be provided by families for their child if they are not able to eat the food provided by the school.

Children with allergies which must be treated with medication will not be permitted to start school until all medical forms and a physician's allergy treatment protocol have been received by the office. An earlier deadline date will be set for these children due to the need for creating the school/classroom plan explained below and for staff and education. A 'school/classroom plan' will be developed for the child with allergies based on the information provided by physicians and family. This plan will be tailored and individualized to the specific needs of the child.

- All staff in charge of a child with allergies will be provided with specific information and/or training regarding the child's allergies and treatment plans (ex: how to administer an Epi pen).
- Staff will maintain current certification in First Aid and CPR.
- The school will maintain properly stocked and readily available First Aid Kits.
- A letter will be sent out to all families in a classroom where a child with allergies has been identified, outlining the responsibilities of the classroom community to assure the health and safety of this child. Staff will be responsible for assuring that families and classmates follow through on the identified accommodations.

Health Policy

For the health and safety of all children and staff, **it is imperative that you keep sick children home!** If your child has a pre-existing medical issue, such as asthma, we highly encourage that you consult with your healthcare provider to decide the best time for your child to re-enter group care. The following information is based on recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Montgomery County Department of Health, and OCC guidance.

This Health Policy is Fluid and May be Updated

If guidelines from local, state, or national health officials are updated this handbook will be revised to comply with the new guidelines. If and when guidelines change, we will notify you promptly and implement those changes at the Bender ECC immediately. Failure of a family to adhere to this sick policy may result in exclusion from the program.

Symptoms Of Covid-19 And Method Of Spread

Symptoms

These are the known symptoms of COVID-19. Some of those infected with SARS-CoV-2 may have mild symptoms or be asymptomatic.

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills - Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19

Methods of Virus Spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

Daily Health Screenings

Prior to being allowed entry into the Bender ECC, everyone, including staff, must present the Daily Health Screening Form, including a temperature check. Anyone that has the following will be denied entry into the facility:

- A temperature of 100°F or above.
- Signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection or COVID-19, including a sore throat, nasal congestion or runny nose not attributed to allergies, new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, fatigue/malaise, headaches, body aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, new loss of taste or smell.
- In the previous 14 days, has had contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID -19; is being tested for COVID-19; is ill with a respiratory illness; or has travelled internationally.

Parents/guardians are asked to take their child's temperature before coming to the facility and again upon arrival at the facility. Parents are asked to use their own thermometer and show staff the reading. The ECC will have no-touch and ear thermometers for confirming readings or for taking temperatures when parents do not have their own.

At drop-off teachers and/or staff will make a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness, including flushed cheeks, shortness of breath, cough, fatigue, rash or extreme fussiness.

All children's temperatures will be taken again at lunch time and as needed throughout the day.

Bender ECC Sick/Exclusion Policy

We understand the importance of child care to all of our families and their work. While we cannot anticipate an interruption in service, it may be necessary for the school to close due to recommendations by the health department or widespread illness. We are doing our part through frequent hand washing, increased cleaning and sanitization protocols, and daily health screenings of everyone entering our premises. Please help do your part and keep your child home if they or anyone in close contact with your child becomes sick.

Sick Child Exclusion Criteria

Because children may only have mild symptoms, or may be asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19, **if a child or family member has any of the following, the child may NOT attend school:**

- Fever of 100 or above
- Cough, runny nose, shortness of breath or other symptoms of respiratory infection
- Chills or repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea

Procedures When a Child Becomes Sick at School

- Children who have a temperature of 100°F or higher, or who are displaying symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, flush cheek, shortness of breath, rash, fatigue, or extreme fussiness and other childhood ailments such as vomiting, or diarrhea will be sent home.
- Children who are displaying symptoms of any illness will be placed in a designated “sick room” classroom or office to isolate the child and help prevent the spread of the virus or infection.
- Parents must pick up sick the child within 30 minutes of being contacted. If parents are unable to pick up within the allotted time, the family’s emergency contact will be asked to pick up the child. All of the child’s belongings will be sent home, including water bottle, nap/rest items, coat, lunch/snack items, etc. All must be washed/sanitized before returning to school.
- If a child or staff member becomes sick at school, the school will report to the Montgomery County Department of Health and CDC, as well as licensing, for guidance. In the case of a suspected Coronavirus case among staff or students, the classroom will be closed for 48 hours (or longer, if required by regulatory agencies). After 24 hours, the classroom will be deep cleaned and disinfected. The classroom may reopen after 48 hours or when permission is granted from regulatory agencies.
- Symptom-free staff and children in a closed classroom should not attend or work in another facility or venue, including Bender ECC family homes, which would potentially expose others.
- Communication will occur via email from the school if we have a child or staff with an exposure to COVID-19.

Return (After Illness) Policy

- Children and staff presenting with a fever may return 72 hours after symptoms subside without medication, such as Tylenol or ibuprofen, or with a doctor’s note confirming a diagnosis other than communicable illness (ie. fever from teething)
- Children and staff presenting with a cough or shortness of breath, or other symptoms excluding fever, AND HAVE NOT been around anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 must stay home until [48 hours](#) after the symptoms subside without medications, such as Tylenol. If the symptoms worsen, they should contact a healthcare professional.
- Children and staff presenting with fever, cough, or shortness of breath who may have been around someone with COVID-19 (or suspected COVID-19) [may not return until:](#)
 - 3 days with no fever AND
 - Symptoms improved AND
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared
 - Must have a doctor’s note releasing them from isolation and stating that they may return to work/care
- If a parent or staff member believes they or their child has had close contact with someone with COVID19 but are NOT currently sick, they should monitor their/their child’s health for the [14 days following the exposure](#). They should not go to school and should avoid public places.
- If a staff member or child is diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return under the following conditions:

- 3 days (72 hours) with no fever AND
- Symptoms improved AND
- 10 days since symptoms first appeared
- Must have a doctor's note releasing them from isolation and stating that they may return to work/care
- The CDC recommends [14 days of quarantine](#) after exposure based on the time it takes to develop illness if infected. Thus, it is possible that a person known to be infected could leave isolation earlier than a person who is quarantined because of the possibility they are infected.

Closing Due To COVID-19

Should a COVID-19 exposure or illness present in the school community, the ECC will contact the local health department and licensing agency. They will determine whether we will need to close the entire school or just one or more classes. The length of time for closure will also be determined by the local health department in consultation with the licensing specialist. Closure may be shortened, and the child care program may be able to reopen, if a person with symptoms of COVID-19 is tested for COVID-19 and results are negative. Reopening decisions and approvals are made on a case-by-case basis by the local health department.

- The parents of a class that is directly affected will be called by administration.
- All confirmed or probable cases of COVID-19 will immediately be reported to the Maryland Department of Health and Maryland State Department of Education.
- Closure of one or more classes, per health department guidance, will happen when a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 presents within 48 hours of attendance at the school.

Refunds for closure

If a classroom or the school is closed for 2-weeks or less, programming will continue via Zoom and no refunds will be issued. If the closure extends to 4-weeks, 50% of one-month's tuition will be refunded to families. In the event that the school needs to close longer than 4 weeks, no further tuition will be billed until the school has set a reopen date.

Medication

Medication by prescription or purchased over the counter will not be administered without a signed Physicians Medication Form (on school website) on file in the school's office. All medications must remain in their original containers.

Sunscreen/Diaper Cream/Insect Repellent

Staff will apply diaper cream, sunscreen, and/or bug repellent throughout the day only if written permission has been granted in advance. Parents must also provide the topical ointment(s), labeled with their child's name, to be used on their child. We are not able to use one child's ointments on another child. We feel it is important to take children outside every day and therefore we ask families to apply sunscreen each morning before school. We will reapply, with permission, as necessary throughout the day.

Handwashing

Handwashing is very important in the prevention of spreading illness. Child will be assisted in washing their hands upon arrival in the classroom each day. In addition, we wash hands before eating or handling food and after using the toilet or having a diaper changed. According to our State licensing regulations, we may not use hand sanitizer on the children.

Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. For adults only: If hands are not visibly dirty, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not readily available.

- All children, staff, or allowed visitors are required to wash hands upon arrival.
- Before and after preparing food and drinks.
- Before and after eating or feeding children.
- Before and after administering medication or ointment.
- Staff- before and after assisting toileting/diapering.
- Staff and children- after toileting/diapering
- Upon reentry to the classroom from outside, and various activities such as art or sensory play.
- Hand-sanitizer may not be used on children
- Teachers will assist children with handwashing

- After assisting children with handwashing, staff should also wash their hands.

Guidance (Discipline) Policy

Young children are learning how to be with others in the world and at times have mistaken behaviors. Impulse control is a major area of growth and learning for children. Some learn immediately how to direct their anger or frustration in productive manners, and some require more time to learn to control these impulses. We believe that children learn by being involved in the process of resolving conflicts, by learning to express their feelings with words, and by thinking about what it means to be part of a community. We work to create a culture of empathy and understanding. Learning not to hit or bite is part of what children have an opportunity to practice in school.

- We require all staff to provide a positive model of behavior by treating children, families and one another with friendliness, care and courtesy.
- We ask that all families and visitors who enter our school help support the guidance of children by providing a positive model of behavior as well.
- We require all staff to use positive strategies for handling any conflict by helping children find solutions in ways which are appropriate for the children's ages and stages of development, such as prevention, redirection, providing choices, or conflict resolution
- When children behave in unacceptable ways, we engage in dialogue with them to help them learn more appropriate ways of being with others.
- We do not have children say "I'm sorry" after a harmful action. Young children do not have an adult understanding of what sorry means and may not really feel sorrow over what they did. Being sorry means contemplating the impact of what they have done and feeling regret for having done it. Simply saying "I'm sorry" can become a magic incantation of absolution for some children, as though the words alone are enough to free them from the responsibility for and consequences of their choices.
- We do not use any punitive strategies such as "time out", and never send children out of the room by themselves.
- We never use physical punishment or touch children in punitive ways.
- We do not shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's behavior.
- We do not use techniques intended to single out, threaten, bribe, or humiliate individual children or groups of children.
- We work with families to address recurring misbehavior, using objective observation records to help us respond appropriately.
- Our Learning Specialist provides support to staff and families regarding behavioral and developmental issues.
- Details of any events in which a child hurts another person, are brought to the attention of the Director and are recorded in an Incident Report. The privacy of all children involved in any such incident will be preserved. Not all incidents require an incident report for the child who hurt the other, unless this behavior is purposefully aggressive or part of pattern of behavior. Written incident reports are reviewed by the director and will be provided to families once approved. This may take more than a day if the Director is away from the school. However, the family of the child who is hurt will be verbally informed of the situation on the same day. In addition, any serious injury, especially one that leaves a lasting mark, and any injury to the "neck and above," or the genital area, will be reported to parents as soon as possible via a phone call.

Biting Policy

Children sometimes bite other children. Although not all toddlers and two-year-olds bite, biting is considered a normal stage in child development. Children may bite for a variety of reasons, rarely with the intent to hurt another child. When a bite occurs, the teacher will quickly position their own body between the two children. The child that is bitten is immediately comforted in a manner that meets their emotional needs at the moment. For example, the teacher may rub the child's back or hold their hand while at the same time, verbally validating the child's feelings. Clear communication that biting is not acceptable will be conveyed to the child that bit. This communication may take different forms depending on the child's age, developmental stage, and individual needs. For example, the teacher may say calmly and firmly, "don't bite, biting hurts," or the teacher may offer all their attention to the child that received the bite. Doing this is a tangible yet nonverbal manner of communicating that biting is not an acceptable way of expressing one's self.

We will respond to bites as follows:

1. Families are informed about the event by receiving a phone call immediately (within an hour) following the incident.
2. Both sets of parents are notified that their child was bitten or their child bit.

3. A written report of the event is reviewed by the school director or assistant director and sent home to the parents.
4. The teachers carefully document the sequence of actions just before, during, and the response to the bite. In the event a pattern emerges, the recorded information will be used to develop a discrete plan of action.
5. A pattern of biting is indicated if three bites occur within a one-month time frame.
 - a. If an action plan is formed and put into place, a multidisciplinary team, including the classroom teacher, age group mentor, developmental support coordinator, parents, and possibly outside professionals (as appropriate), will meet to discuss how best to support the child.
 - b. The developmental support coordinator will use the information from the team to clearly outline the strategies that will be used to address and extinguish the biting behavior. The strategies may include work in the classroom and suggestions for parents to implement at home.
 - c. For the multidisciplinary team to be successful and ultimately address the challenging behaviors, parents are expected to be active members in the processes and follow through with agreed-upon steps in a timely fashion.

Special needs and inclusion policy

We accept children with a full range of abilities and needs. We work in partnership with families to find innovative solutions to best meet the individual needs of each child.

- Our classes offer age-appropriate student to teacher ratio.
- Allowance is made for modification in schedule, program, materials, and expectations to meet individual needs.
- Where necessary, the school may provide additional support, including a one-on-one facilitator, in the classroom at the parent's expense. Families must also be responsible for outside consultations, evaluations, and professional services.
- Other support providers, such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists, are welcome to provide on-site support and services to children in our program. Such services must be coordinated with the director of the Bender ECC.
- Special needs consultants are available through Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) Infants/Toddler Program. They provide support and help to parents, conduct classroom observations and give recommendations for professional referrals and training for staff to support children with special needs.
- For children who are currently in other settings, observations may be conducted to see how we can best meet the child's needs.
- We will serve as a resource in finding available services for the children.
- We will try to be flexible in finding the best environment within the school, with the option of changing the environment, if needed.
- We work closely with Montgomery County Childcare Resource and Referral Center and consult them on classroom management and behavior.
- Any relevant information that can be provided to us, including, but not limited to consultations, reports written by other professionals, IEP's, and school reports, is helpful in providing an appropriate program for your child. This information will be held in strictest confidence.
- We will do our best to meet your child's needs, but we recognize our limitations. If we cannot meet these needs, we will make every attempt to work with you to find a more suitable alternative placement where your child can thrive.

Reporting Abuse Policy

In Maryland, the child abuse law mandates that educators who suspect a child is being abused or neglected must report the matter to Child Protective Services. Any person who in good faith makes a report of abuse or neglect is immune from any civil liability or criminal penalty.

Clothing Policy

Children are encouraged to wear play clothes and closed-toe rubber soled shoes that fit well. Daily activities include active and messy play, and they should feel comfortable enough to enjoy themselves without worrying about their clothes or their safety. It is best not to dress your child in jewelry as it can be a safety concern. Please consider your child's skills at dressing and undressing for the bathroom when dressing for school. Outdoor clothing, including boots should also be easy for children to manage.

We go outside almost every day, so please dress your child appropriately. If your child is too sick to go outside, they are considered too sick to be at school. Each child is asked to keep a pair of rain boots in their cubby for rainy day play.

Please write your child's name on all sweaters, jackets, coats, hats, scarves, caps, snow pants, boots, mittens, extra clothing, etc., with a permanent marker or purchase labels through the ECPC <http://www.benderjccgw.org/ecpc/>.

Each child needs to have at least one extra set of weather-appropriate clothing, including socks and underwear, at school in case it becomes necessary to change. Please bring a complete change of clothing to keep at the school, labeled with your child's name. Please be sure to supply a new change of clothes every season. If your child comes home wearing these "extra clothes", please send a new set to school the next day. Children who are toilet training may need to keep multiple sets of spare clothing in school.

Diapering and Toilet Training Policy

Children do not need to be toilet trained in order to attend the preschool. If your child wears diapers, you must provide diapers and wipes and replenish when needed. When a child demonstrates an interest in using the toilet, ECC staff will work collaboratively with families to assist with the toileting training process. If your child does have a toileting accident, soiled clothing will be put in a plastic bag and placed in your child's cubby for you to take home. Please send in another extra set of clothing the next day.

Personal Items from Home Policy

Due to COVID-19 concerns, children's toys from home will not be permitted in the classroom except at nap time. Pacifiers will not be permitted in the classroom except at nap time.

Babysitting Policy

Staff members are not permitted to babysit for families who have children in the staff person's class. The Bender JCC does not authorize or take any responsibility for work done by our staff outside the Bender JCC. All babysitting is considered private work and not done under the auspices of the JCC.

Food Policies and Information

Kashrut (Jewish Dietary Laws)

The Bender JCC and ECC observe the laws of *kashrut*.

NO MEAT OR SHELLFISH MAY BE BROUGHT INTO THE BENDER JCC OR THE PRESCHOOL.

Any food product sent to school for class consumption must bear a supervised *kashrut* seal. A plain K or P (*pareve*) will not be accepted. No home-baked items may be brought to school, except for individual lunches. Check with the school office if you have any questions. We appreciate your cooperation and adherence to these policies.

Families are asked not to send food for a class birthday celebration. Each class will have its own special way of honoring your child on their special day.

When planning classroom celebrations outside of school, please be sensitive to the fact that many of our families observe the laws of *kashrut* and that some children may have food allergies.

Food Allergies

Some of our classrooms have been designated allergen-free, according to the health and safety needs of the students in the individual class. The teacher will inform you if your classroom is allergen-free and there will be a sign posted in the classroom. If the room is peanut free, you may not send peanut butter for lunch. If a child in the classroom is diagnosed with an anaphylactic or other severe allergy during the school year, the room will then be

converted to an allergen-free classroom as needed and families will be notified which products will no longer be allowed in the classroom. It is the policy of the school, whether it is an allergen-free room or not, that children are not allowed to share food.

Snacks and Lunch

No communal food will be served aside from weekly pre-sliced challah and grape juice (both served wearing gloves). Children will bring all food from home, including snacks and lunch. **Children may only bring dairy or vegetarian lunches.** Fish (not shellfish) is also an excellent choice. Food will not be heated in the microwave. Warmed food may be brought in thermoses. Children must bring reusable water bottles which will be sent home to be sanitized daily. Please send your child's snack in separate bag, clearly labeled with their name and "snack." For example, a paper bag that says, "Sarah's Snack."

Birthdays

Birthdays are important celebrations in the lives of the children and their families. New rituals will be created this year to allow virtual gatherings with families. **Due to kashrut and allergy issues, families are asked not to send any snacks to celebrate the birthday.** Balloons, goodie bags, performers and candy are not permitted.

Our foundational value is community and inclusion. We have children who come from varied religious backgrounds. In an effort to make everyone comfortable, **please refrain from hosting and inviting children to birthday parties on Shabbat (Saturdays).** At home birthday party invitations will be gladly distributed by teachers only if the whole class is invited and the party does not take place on *Shabbat*.



The Bender JCC also offers options for birthday celebrations. For more information, check the Bender JCC website <https://www.benderjccgw.org/birthday-parties/>.

Emergencies, School Closings, Safety, and Security

National Emergencies

In the event of a national emergency, your child will be well supervised at all times by Bender JCC staff. You may call the school office at 301-348-3839 for instructions. If you are unable to get through on the telephone, please check the Bender JCC website for further instructions. You can be assured that your child's safety is our first priority and they will be well taken care of.

Inclement Weather Policy

The Bender JCC makes every effort to remain open during inclement weather. In the event of a weather delay, closing, or early release, we will send an email, post information on our website, and send a text alert to those who have signed up. You can sign up to receive Bender JCC text alerts by [clicking here](#) or visiting www.benderjccgw.org. Please watch local news, call 301-881-0100, or visit Benderjccgw.org for updates. Information will be updated as weather conditions require.

Security

Due to COVID-19 concerns, no visitors will be allowed into the school building.

When you become a member of the Bender JCC, you will be issued an ID badge. Please have your card with you at all times. You will need to scan this badge upon entering the building as well as the Early Childhood wing. If someone who is not a member will be dropping off or picking up your child on a regular basis, such as a caregiver or grandparent, go with them to the membership desk and they will be issued a non-member badge that will allow them access.

For security purposes, all families must enter and depart through the front door of the Bender JCC. While this can be an inconvenience, the safety of the children is our top priority. Please do not open the door for any person you do not know as this compromises the safety of our children. It is every family's responsibility to carry their own Bender JCC ID with them while in the Bender JCC.

Bender JCC Parking Lot

There is a great deal of traffic in the Bender JCC parking lot. For the safety of our children, it is vital that families follow these rules:

- Keep your eye on your child in the parking lot at all times.
- Never park in a spot that blocks another car
- Never park in the fire lane
- Use extreme caution when driving within the parking lot.
- You may not leave your car parked at the Bender JCC parking lot when you are not using the Center.

Helpful Information

List of What Families Must Provide

- Families must provide a minimum of 2 child-sized, clean masks for their child each day.
- If in the Aretz or Mayim program, nap items – cot sheet (crib sheet fits best), blanket, pillow, lovie (only to be allowed at nap time). Items will be sent home to be laundered at least once a week.
- Large bag for carrying the bedding home and storing in the cubby
- Reusable water bottle/thermos
- A family picture and a picture of the child
- For children in diapers-diapers, wipes, cream (with a signed ointment permission form)
- Sunscreen (be sure to sign sunscreen permission form, which does not need to be signed by a doctor)
- Any medications for allergies etc., with a medical form completed by a doctor, i.e. epi pen, Benadryl
- For all students: at least one full change of clothing, including socks and underwear
- Rain Boots



Please do not send in any toys, books, or other items from home.

Blessings that we say at Preschool

- **MEZONOT:** Blessing for food that is made from grain but is not bread:
Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei minei mezonot.
Blessed are you L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who creates various kinds of sustenance.
- **HAMOTZI:** Blessing for bread:
Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam Hamotzi lechem min haaretz.
Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.
- **HAGAFEN:** Blessing over grape juice or wine:
Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri hagafen.
Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.
- **PRI HA-AITZ:** Blessing over fruit:
Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri ha-aitz.
Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

- **PRI HA-ADAMA:** Blessing over vegetables:
Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri ha-adamah.
Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe who creates the fruit of the earth.
- **SHABBAT CANDLES:**
Baruch atah A-donay, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tsivanu l'hadlik neir shel Shabbat.
Blessed are you, Lord, our G-d, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us with his commandments and commands us to light the candles of Shabbat.

Holidays

We are pleased to offer a children's program which is rich in Jewish culture, tradition, and values. At the Bender JCC Preschool we celebrate all of the Jewish holidays as well as Thanksgiving, Presidents' Day 30 and Martin Luther King Day. We do not celebrate Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day or Easter. The Jewish holidays are an integral part of our program. We celebrate Jewish holidays through hands-on sensory experiences. To promote our core value of community, families are invited to join the children via Zoom for Shabbat celebrations and special family events.

Jewish Holidays

Shabbat : The Jewish Sabbath starts at sundown every Friday and lasts until sundown on Saturday. It is written in the Torah that G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh...giving us Shabbat. In many Jewish homes, candles are lit to welcome the Sabbath. Each classroom has a Shabbat celebration on Friday mornings with challah (twisted bread) and "wine" (juice). Each age level also participates in Shabbat Sing with our music teacher in the lobby atrium. Families are welcome to attend Shabbat Sing.

Rosh Hashanah: This two-day holiday is the Jewish New Year. It is a time of personal reflection of our past and future behavior. The children enjoy apples and honey, which are symbolic of hope for a sweet year.

Yom Kippur

This is the most solemn holiday of the year--the Day of Atonement. It is an adult fast day and a day of prayer. We discuss with the children how to be the best we can be.

Sukkot: Sukkot recalls the journey of the Jews from Egypt to the Promised Land when they lived in *sukkot* (booths). It is also a harvest holiday symbolized by the *Lulav* (palm branch) and *Etrog* (citron). We decorate our *Sukkot* with fruit, and enjoy a snack in the Center's *Sukkah* in the front of the building.

Simchat Torah: On this joyous holiday, we complete the reading of our Torah for the year and immediately start reading the Torah all over again. This is a happy holiday for children as they march around the Bender JCC singing songs and carrying flags.

Chanukah: "The Festival of Lights" celebrates the Maccabean victory, when brave Judah Maccabee and his small band of followers saved the Jewish people from the Syrians. For the eight days of *Chanukah*, the *Chanukiah* (an eight-branched candelabra) is lit to recall the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem and to give thanks for the great miracle of the survival of the Jewish people. At school, we light the *Chanukiah* and say the blessings, prepare potato latkes (pancakes), as well as other special activities.

Tu B'Shevat: On *Tu B'Shevat* we celebrate the New Year of the Trees. Trees are a symbol of life, a symbol of Jewish people. Children do some planting and sample a variety of fruits.

Purim: *Purim* is the jolliest of all the holidays, commemorating how Queen Esther and her uncle, Mordechai, saved the Jews of Persia from a plot by the Prime Minister, Haman, to destroy them. We eat *hamantaschen* (triangle shaped cookies). During the reading of the *Megillah*, the children make loud noises by shaking groggers (noise-



makers) whenever the name Haman is said. The children prepare *Mishloach Manot* (gifts) to be shared with friends and the less fortunate.

Passover: Passover (*Pesach*) commemorates the experiences and ordeals of slavery in Egypt, and the Exodus following them. The *Seder* is a special family occasion. Prayers and songs from the *Haggadah* (the story of Passover) are read, and certain foods are eaten. The classes will prepare their own model *Seders* and invite families.

Lag B'Omer: This holiday recalls the struggle of the Jews to regain their independence as a Jewish nation. Today, the holiday celebrates Jewish survival. At school, we celebrate with outdoor activities.

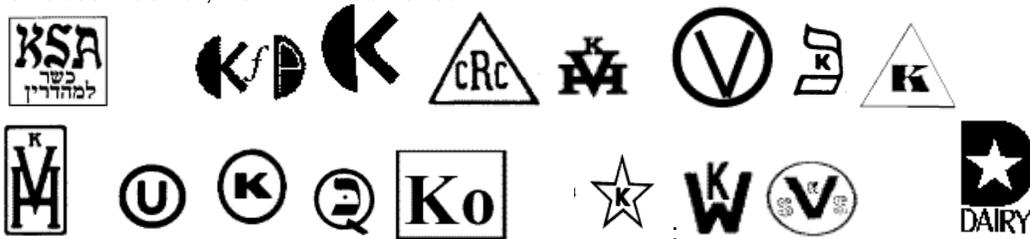
Yom Ha'Atzmaut: *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* is the Independence Day of modern Israel. We celebrate by making gifts for Israel and presenting them to the JCC's Israeli emissary.

Other Holidays

Diversity is an important value in our school and we respect the many different cultures, religions and life choices that exist in our community. While we do not celebrate Christmas and other religious holidays that are not part of the Jewish tradition, we do encourage children to share family traditions and rituals, whatever the religion or culture. In our school we do not celebrate Halloween, St. Valentine's Day or St. Patrick's Day, but we also do not discourage children from participating outside the school day. Mother's and Father's Day present a challenge in trying to create a setting which acknowledges diversity and the need to be sensitive to all families. There are many different family structures where there may not be a father or mother present. We have children who have experienced the death of a parent, families where there has been difficult divorce situations, families where the main caregiver is a grandparent, single parent families, and children from same-sex couples. As these holidays fall at the same time of year as the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, which celebrates the receiving of the commandments at Sinai, we use the framework the 5th commandment, honoring our parents, to thank all those who help take care of our children. This allows us to be sensitive to all the families in our school. In school, children may create a gift or card for those special people.

Kashrut Certifications

The following symbols of kosher supervision can be found on products which may be used in the Center. For more information about *kashrut*, visit www.kashrut.com.



The laws of Kashrut, keeping kosher, are based on verses from the Torah and later rabbinic literature. Rabbinic authorities today continue to rule on these laws, as our culture adopts new science and technology which effects what we eat and how we eat. The laws can be extensive and there are many interpretations according to denomination and personal choice, so the practice of "keeping kosher" can mean something different to different people. For many, keeping kosher is seen as a way to connect to Jewish history and culture, or a way to strengthen their sense of identity. Our preschool kashrut policy attempts to be inclusive, so that members of our community at all levels of observance can feel comfortable eating in our facility. Here is one website to learn more about Kashrut, although there are many other resources <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/what-does-it-mean-to-keep-kosher/>.

Sheva Jewish Lenses

The following seven Jewish Values of the Sheva Framework help us to focus our intentions and serve as Jewish 'lenses' through which we see our curriculum and the life of our school community.

מוס

MASA / JOURNEY

Reflection, Return & Renewal

In order to move forward in a meaningful way, we must reflect upon the past. Our travels are more important than the destination.

צלם אלוקים

TZELEM ELOKIM / DIVINE IMAGE

Dignity & Potential of Each Person

The image of the child as capable and competent is a core Reggio philosophy value. We view children, families and colleagues with dignity. This is a lens of accountability, empathy and self-worth.

ברית

BRIT / COVENANT

Belonging & Commitment – Community

A bound and trusted relationship allows us to unite with others in pursuit of a shared vision. It enables us to grow, take risks, and share with honesty.

דרש

DRASH / INTERPRETATION

The spirit of inquiry within human nature is the drive that aides in reflection and growth. To question, to debate, to interpret, and to communicate are all essential components of the Jewish tradition.

התעוררות

HITORERUT / AWAKENING

When we as adults take the time to slow down, we become more aware of the miracles that exist in every moment, allowing gratitude to flow freely through us. Young children are more apt to wonder, naturally embracing life with exuberance.

תיקון עולם

TIKKUN OLAM/REPAIR OF THE WORLD

Repairing the world is done with a spirit of generosity and a partnership with families and children to continuously make a difference in our community. There is a sense of responsibility to perform social "acts of kindness" every day.

קדושה

KEDUSHA/HOLINESS

We envision holiness in terms of sacred time, spaces and intentions. We find holiness at distinct times in the Jewish calendar, such as Shabbat and holidays. We also unearth holiness in our daily experiences as we observe the interactions of children, listen to their voices, and discover life together.

Examples of Materials to Collect for the School

- Judaica
- Computer keyboard letters and parts
- Beads
- Buttons, notions
- Hardware (rubber and metal washers, eyehooks, swivels, screws, nuts, bolts...)
- Clean rubber or plastic tubing
- Seed pods and interesting nature items
- Rope, cord, tassels
- Transparent, clear and colored, plastic boxes, Petri dishes, plastic slides, containers
- Wire (brass, silver, copper, colored), chicken wire, wire mesh, plastic mesh, copper and aluminum screen
- Costume jewelry
- Old CDs
- Puzzle pieces
- Plastic caps and lids (clean)
- Large Cardboard Tubes (no paper towel or toilet paper)
- Dowel rods (clear and wooden)
- Plexiglas mirror pieces
- Springs
- Corks
- Gears from small clocks, appliances
- Colored foils
- Ribbon/lace
- Interesting wooden pieces
- Old game pieces
- Rubber stamps
- Corrugated cardboard and interesting cardboard shapes
- Packaging materials
- Old keys
- Charms
- Silk or dried flowers
- Wallpaper and decorative paper
- Driftwood

tubes)

- Wooden massage tools
 - Seashells (big and small)
 - Stationary and unused invitations
 - Leather strips
 - Tape (colored, cloth, metal)
 - Wicker baskets
 - Thimbles
- Fabric
 - Spools (without thread)
 - Beautiful stones
 - Metal or wood kitchen items/gently used pots and pans
 - Other materials identified by you as fabulous! And remember, multiples of anything are interesting!

We are looking forward to a wonderful year!