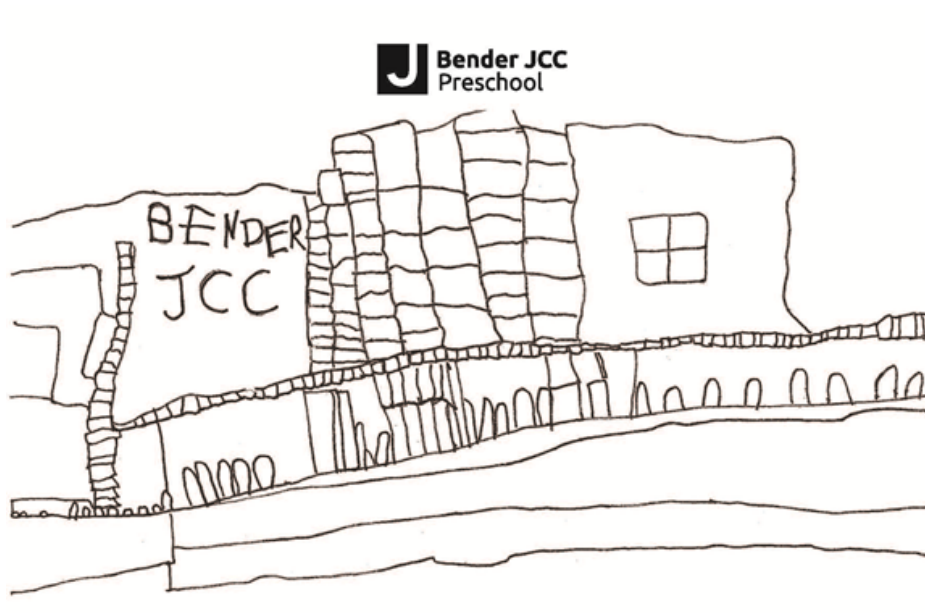




Bender JCC
Early Childhood Center
Family Handbook
2023-2024



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

It is the policy of the State of Maryland that all public and publicly funded schools and school programs operate in compliance with:

(1) Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

(2) Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, which states that public and publicly funded schools and programs may not:

- i. Discriminate against a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;*
- ii. Refuse enrollment of a prospective student, expel a current student, or withhold privileges from a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of an individual's race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; or*
- iii. Discipline, invoke a penalty against, or take any other retaliatory action against a student or parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint alleging that the program or school discriminated against the student, regardless of the outcome of the complaint."*

Preschool in the Age of COVID-19

While there have been adjustments made to our program to meet the health and safety requirements of preschool in the age of COVID-19, we look forward to continuing to provide the values-inspired, warm, and enriching environment that enables your children to thrive while also ensuring a welcoming preschool community for our families to connect.

How our values shape our program:

- **Masa: Journey (Reflection, Return and Renewal):** Families and staff will recognize that we are on an unfolding journey together. We will approach 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
Emergency In case of an emergency, call the Bender JCC Front Desk at 301-881-0100.

Hours of Operation

The core day of the Bender ECC will be 8am-4pm, Monday-Friday. Aftercare will be 4pm-5:30pm, daily.

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 progressive and research-based approach to preschool education. As a community of learners, our teachers continue to reflect and study in order to remain on the cutting edge of early childhood education.



How we learn

The rich “emergent” curriculum in our preschool is driven by the long term projects that emerge from the children’s questions and interests. 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.

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.

מסע	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 אלוהים	TZELEM ELOHIM / DIVINE IMAGE	Dignity & Potential of Each Person
The image of the child as capable and competent is a core 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	Inquiry, Dialogue, & Transmission
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

Amazement & Gratitude

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

Responsibility

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

Intentionality & Presence

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.

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, Manipulatives, Books, Literacy/Message Center, Cooking, etc)
- 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 toddlers, 2s, and 3s programs take naps or rest from 1 PM-3 PM in their own classrooms. 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 4s program have a short rest period with dimmed lights and an audio book or meditation. We are also able to accommodate children who need to sleep during this time.

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 resolution.
- To support each child's development across domains (social, emotional, cognitive, gross/fine motor, creative, spiritual).
- 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 in a respectful manner reflecting our shared values
- 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

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

The preschool is open from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday, with aftercare from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM. To help facilitate a smooth morning carpool, please arrive to school during your designated drop-off time.

Drop-off procedures and daily health checks for students

During the school year, carpool will be staged at the East Jefferson entrance. Drop off will begin at 8 AM and be staggered in 10-minute drop off windows to allow for easier flow. Teachers from each class will assist with carpool. Parents will have a large name sign to place in their front window so staff can easily see which child is arriving.

Separation

Children sometimes have difficulty with separation at drop-off. Please know that this is 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 you and your child.

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 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

Parents should park in a designated parking space and come in through the main entrance of the JCC for pick up. Continue to the preschool and to your child's classroom. Students who are not enrolled in aftercare should be picked up no later than 4pm daily.

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. We need the pick-up person's full name and cell phone number. Make sure that your child's registration form includes all the names of persons authorized for pick-up on a regular basis. 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. We will need the person's full name (first/last) and cell phone number. 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. Our staff work hard and need to leave on time at the end of the day. It is a show of respect to be timely. 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

We are so fortunate to have access to the wonderful Bender JCC facility, which includes a gymnasium, art and dance studios, indoor and outdoor pools, 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. All of our teachers, including our substitute teachers, go through the same hiring procedures and background checks. 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. Depending on the year, we offer weekly Music, Yoga, or Movement for all of our classes. Our 4s classes engage in other enrichment opportunities such as weekly “PE” and instructional swim during the school year. Our rising 4s and kindergarteners have daily swimming lessons during the summer as well. Families are welcome to join us for Shabbat Sing on Friday mornings. We also have an atelier/art studio to further enrich the classroom experience for students and deepen the understanding of materials through their use in classroom project work.

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.

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 Back to School Night if you are interested.

Field Trips

Field trips can be a valuable part of the learning experience. Our classes go on regular walks through our neighborhood, and permission for this part of our curriculum is granted in our supplemental registration forms. On rare occasion, 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

Every Monday morning, the whole school joins together to celebrate Havdalah, a ceremony to say “goodbye” to Shabbat and “Hello” to the new week.

Although *Shabbat* does not begin until sundown on Friday, we anticipate its arrival by enjoying a “*ta’am shel Shabbat*,” a taste of Shabbat, by kindling the Shabbat candles, and having grape juice with challah for snack. Teachers will provide a sign-up system to allow parents and family members to join us for your child’s Shabbat celebration. The teachers will provide more details of ways to participate in this special occasion.

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. When children are engaged in messy sensory play, they learn to wonder, solve problems, take risks, and 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 intentional about the materials we use and our environmental impact. We use recycled and natural items in our art and avoid plastic when there is an alternative. We provide real, reusable plates and cutlery for the children. We ask that every child have their own labeled reusable water bottle. While this has not totally eliminated the use of paper plates and plastic spoons, forks, and cups, 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 it is an important message for our children that everyone can find ways to help care for our Earth.

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

Please contact the school [registrar](#) if you:

- Need a receipt or FSA form completed

Communication with Families

Communication will occur as usual between teacher and parent via daily emails. Additional phone calls or video meetings will be scheduled as needed. Family conferences will be offered in person and via Zoom.

Weekly updates from the ECC Director will continue via email. The ECC Director and ECC 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.

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 Executive Officer. We 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.

We are all part of one community, and we therefore have responsibilities to one another. We ask that you provide feedback or raise concerns in a productive manner reflective of our shared values. We expect families to refrain

from engaging in conversations or behaviors that undermine the integrity of the school both in direct communication with others and on social media.

Families who verbally attack, threaten, intimidate, or otherwise communicate in ways that are not respectful to staff or other families may be removed from the program.

Family Conferences

Family Conferences are scheduled twice a year. Prior to each conference, teachers will ask your participation in completing the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), which is a developmental screening, for your child. See the [school calendar](#) for scheduled time periods. Families or teachers may request additional informal conferences if necessary. Family conferences will be offered in-person or via Zoom. Childcare for your ECC student(s) will be provided during the time of your in-person family conference.

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

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. The only exceptions to this policy are Zoom programs held online due to COVID precautions.

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 pre-approved) and not for more than 30 minutes, total, in a week.

Fees

Fees information

- A \$250.00 Non-Refundable Registration Fee is payable with the Online Registration.
- \$70.00 ECPC Dues are payable with the Online Registration.
- The credit card or bank account used for payment today will be used to process the monthly tuition payments. Please contact the registrar through the online web contact form to make any changes or updates to your monthly payment method.
- Fees for the school year are calculated on an annual basis and may be paid in monthly installments. No fees or tuition will be prorated due to school closings for the following reasons: snow days, one week closure in August for classroom preparation, teacher training, family vacation or other extended absences, child or family illness or quarantine. The school cannot take responsibility for school closings necessitated because of health, safety, inclement weather, holidays or any other emergencies that may arise. Due to the unusual circumstances of Covid-19, if a class is closed for more than one day programming will continue via Zoom and no refunds will be issued.
- A \$25 fee will be assessed for each credit card payment or EFT that is denied. It is a family's obligation to notify the preschool of any changes in their credit card or EFT account.
- If the account is delinquent by two (2) months, the child may not continue in the program. A 35% collection fee will be added to the amount due and the account will be turned over to a collection agency.

- A family membership is included with preschool tuition. Membership will begin the week before school begins, when teachers are preparing the school, and continue through the weekend following the last week of the summer program. For 2023-2024, the dates of family membership are August 21, 2023-August 18, 2024.

Refund Policy/Withdrawal Policy

- If paid in installments, tuition will be billed beginning August 1. If a child is withdrawn after August 1, all deposits, including ECPC dues, will be forfeited and no refund will be given.
- The Bender ECC has an annual tuition with a 30-day withdrawal policy effective August 1st or upon enrollment into the program. If you give notice of withdrawal before the 15th of the month, the next and final tuition installment will be prorated by 50%. When notice is given from the 16th to the end of the month, the next tuition payment will be charged in full and will be the final payment.
- If a child is withdrawn from the Preschool after school begins, you will forfeit all advance payments and still be responsible for any balance due, including your final tuition installment.
- If the Bender ECC determines we cannot meet your child's needs, no further tuition will be charged, and partial refund for the current month may be given if withdrawal is before the 15th of the month.

[Full enrollment terms and conditions are included at the end of this document.](#)

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 2022-2023 \(PDF\)](#)

Immunization Policy

- 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.** The Bender ECC also requests that all children receive a flu shot in the fall, to be completed by October 31 each year. The JCC reserves the right to require COVID-19 vaccinations for all eligible children.

In addition, all families must submit written documentation of blood-lead screenings consistent with state requirements. 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.

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

1. Completed allergy protocol and medication authorization form, both completed by parents and pediatrician.

2. An unopened bottle of Benadryl (if prescribed by the physician), to be kept in the administrator's office, with dosing instructions.
3. Two Epi-pens/Avi-Qs (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/Avi-Q goes, kept safely by the adult in charge).
4. 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.

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.

Illness Policy

For the health and safety of all children and staff, **it is imperative that you keep sick children home!** We require parents to contact the school if your child develops any sick symptoms. Please communicate:

- What symptoms they have
- When each symptom started
- What their temperature is

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 Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)/Office of Childcare (OCC) guidance.

Symptoms of Covid-19

Symptoms

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

- Fever equal to or greater than 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Difficulty Breathing
- Diarrhea or Vomiting
- Severe headache (esp. with fever)
- New loss of taste or smell

COVID Policy, Updated Fall 2022

During indoor play time, masks will be optional for all children and staff. Parents who wish their child to remain masked should send a well-fitting mask and at least 3 extras daily and communicate this request to your child's teachers.

During water play, aquatics, eating, and nap/rest time, masks will not be worn, per MSDE guidelines.

No quarantine after travel is needed as long as child is asymptomatic.

When symptoms develop

- Must test for COVID as soon as possible. Antigen/home test is allowed.
- If positive, child must quarantine for a minimum of 7 days. When the child is 48 hours fever free and other symptoms resolving they may return but must mask for the remainder of their 10 days. Day 0 is the day symptoms start or a positive test is taken (whichever is EARLIER).
- If COVID test is negative, follow regular school sick exclusion policy above. If symptoms continue for 3+ days, retest with antigen test at day 4.

With confirmed exposure

- If exposed but asymptomatic, students may continue coming to school but will be asked to wear a KN95+ mask for 7 days. Children unable or too young to mask may continue to attend school after exposure if they are asymptomatic. However, a parent may NOT opt a child out of masking after exposure (if a child is 2+ and is able to mask we will require them to do so while indoors). If the exposure is to someone within the household, students must be able to mask for 10 days to stay in school.
- If the child develops any symptoms they will be immediately excluded and will require a COVID test and resolution of symptoms to return, per our sick and COVID policies above.

Procedures When a Child Becomes Sick at School or at Home

- Children who have a temperature of 100.0°F or higher, or who are displaying symptoms such as coughing, persistent sneezing, flush cheeks, persistent or colored runny nose, shortness of breath, rash, fatigue, vomiting, or diarrhea will be excluded from school. If a child has no specific symptoms but is not able to participate in the regular school program due to fatigue or fussiness, they will also be excluded.
- 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 may 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 with COVID 19, the school will report to the Montgomery County Department of Health as well as licensing, per current state regulations.
- 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

- A negative COVID test, complete resolution of fever, vomiting, or diarrhea (without medication), and reduction in other symptoms is required before a child will be readmitted to school.
- A child may return to school without a COVID test and symptoms resolving if a health care provider documents that person has another specific diagnosis or pre-existing condition that are causing the *current* symptoms, the specific associated symptoms are documented, and confirms the symptoms are not communicable (i.e. allergies, teething).
- Children diagnosed with Strep Throat may return no sooner than 24 hours after beginning antibiotic treatment. Students diagnosed with Pink Eye (conjunctivitis) may return once treatment has started.

Refunds for closure

In the rare instance that a class is closed due to a COVID outbreak, short daily programming will be offered via Zoom. No refunds will be made for COVID closures.

Medication

Medication by prescription or purchased over the counter will not be administered without a signed [Physicians Medication Authorization Form](#) (also linked 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 (permission is requested on the ECC registration forms). 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. Children 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.

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 just have children say "I'm sorry" after a harmful action. 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 encourage children to notice how another child is feeling about their words or actions and ask them to make amends. By coupling words with actions, we help children to take responsibility for their behaviors and help them build skills for resolving conflicts in the future.
- 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 Developmental Support 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 (within an hour) 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 various reasons, rarely with the intent to hurt another child. When a bite occurs, the teacher quickly positions 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 hurt child's feelings.

The teacher will position her body to be sure all children are safe. She will focus her attention on the child that was bitten until that child is assisted by another teacher or is calmed and comforted. The teacher will then look for a way to redirect the child that has bitten. Every effort will be made not to call attention to the act of biting, thus withholding any type of reinforcement for that behavior.

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. The team will see if a pattern of biting is indicated (three bites occur within a one-month time frame)
 - a. If a pattern is established an action plan is formed and put into place. A multidisciplinary team, including the classroom teacher, curriculum director, 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 to be used in addressing 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 process and follow through with agreed-upon steps in a timely fashion.

If your child receives bites in school, we will be working with both the teachers in the class and the family of the child to extinguish this behavior. We ask that you not approach the child or parent of the child who has bitten your child; this can lead to an escalation of the issue. Please trust the school to intercede on your behalf.

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, IEPs, 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. Many companies offer stickers that can be ordered for this purpose.

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.

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.

Health Policy

The Bender ECC will only exempt from the immunization law children and staff that have a medical exemption that is signed by a physician who is not related to the child or adult. As a private organization the ECC has the right to not recognize religious or personal exemptions. The ECC bases this decision on the responsibility to protect all children and adults enrolled in the ECC from infections that can be prevented or ameliorated by immunizations. Enrollment in our program signifies understanding and acceptance of the Health Policy for Early Childhood programs affiliated with the Bender JCC. Should a family not adhere to the policy, they will jeopardize their child's place in the program.

Participation Agreement

Enrollment in the Bender ECC conveys approval for a child to participate in all school activities. Parents/guardians understand that physical or other activity that could result in injury. Enrollment in the program is optional and any child who uses the Bender JCC does so at his own risk. Hereby, parents/guardians, heirs, executors, and administrators waive any and all rights and claims of any kind that they may have against the BENDER JCC as well as with employees, invitees, and agents of the aforesaid for any and all damages, and injuries, whatsoever, which an enrolled child may suffer or incur in connection with attendance or participation at the BENDER JCC or in connection with my child's use of the facilities or programs of the BENDER 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 brought from home.

Snacks and Lunch

The school will provide morning and afternoon snacks for all children. Students will bring lunch from home.

Children may only bring dairy or vegetarian lunches. Fish (but 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.

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

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, your child will be well supervised at all times by Bender ECC 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. Should we have an emergency requiring lock down, shelter in place, or evacuation, **staff will not be available to respond to parents until children are accounted for and settled in school or an alternate location.**

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

For security purposes, all families must enter and depart through the front door of the Bender JCC, unless otherwise instructed by the ECC administration. While this can be an inconvenience, the safety of the children is our top priority.

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.
- Cell phone use is prohibited during carpool and while driving in the parking lot.
- Never pull around a car parked in the carpool lane.
- 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 3 child-sized, clean masks for their child each day. We request that children be provided with KN95 or equivalent masks.
- If in the Toddlers, 2s, and 3s programs, please send nap items –crib sheet, blanket, pillow (if desired), stuffed animal or other “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
- A framed 5x7 or 4x6 family picture and a picture of the child
- For children in diapers: diapers, wipes, and cream (please be sure permission has been granted on your child's registration forms)
- Sunscreen (with a signed ointment permission form)
- 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
- Rain Coat (*optional*)



All items should be labeled with your child's first and last name.

Blessings that we (may) 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 God, 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 God, 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 God, 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 God, 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 God, 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 God, 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, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and President's 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. (*In person when we are allowed to have visitors back!*)

Jewish Holidays

Shabbat : The Jewish Sabbath starts at sundown every Friday and lasts until sundown on Saturday. It is written in the Torah that God 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.. Families are welcome to attend Shabbat Sing via Zoom (*or in person when visitors are allowed back!*).



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.

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 Assyrians. 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 and the first signs of spring in Israel. Trees are a symbol of life and a symbol of the Torah. 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. We also have a costume parade and *spiel* (performance of the Purim Story).

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 may prepare their own model *Seders* and invite families to join in various ways.

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.

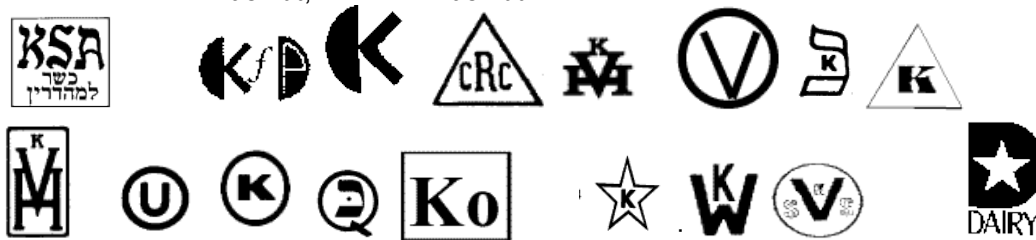
Yom Ha'Atzmaut: *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* is the Independence Day of modern Israel. We celebrate by making gifts for Israel and presenting them to the JCC's Israeli emissary.

Other Holidays

Diversity is an important value in our school and we respect the many different cultures and religions 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 their 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 of 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/>.

Examples of Materials to Collect for the School

As a Reggio-inspired school and to embody the spirit of Tikkun Olam, we prefer to use natural and re-used materials as much as possible. Please find here examples of the types of items we use in school and would love for you to donate!

- Judaica
- Computer keyboard letters and parts
- Beads
- Bottle Caps
- Buttons, notions
- Hardware (rubber and metal washers, eyehooks, swivels, screws, nuts, bolts...)
- Clean rubber or plastic tubing
- Seed pods and interesting nature items
- 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

- 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 tubes)
- Wooden massage tools
- Seashells (big and small)
- Stationary and unused invitations
- Leather strips
- Tape (colored, cloth, metal)
- Wicker baskets
- Thimbles
- Rubber stamps
- Corrugated cardboard and interesting cardboard shapes
- Packaging materials
- Old keys
- Charms
- Silk or dried flowers
- Wallpaper and decorative paper
- Driftwood
- 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!

ENROLLMENT TERMS & CONDITIONS

Bender Early Childhood Center Enrollment Terms and Conditions (These terms and conditions apply to all children in your household registered for a Bender JCC ECC Program.)

- Registration fees are non-refundable.
- Billing begins the month before attendance begins (August 1 for regular school year start) or immediately upon registration for delayed start. We charge a 3% processing fee for any credit card transactions related to ECC. Payments are accepted by ACH with no additional fees. A 2% discount is provided for annual tuition paid in full in advance.
- Tuition payment is required regardless of absence including, but not limited to, vacation, illness or unforeseen closure due to COVID-19 or otherwise.
- The Bender ECC will not refund tuition or fees for any closures due to COVID-19.
- Fees for the school year are calculated on an annual basis and divided evenly over ten (or 12) months beginning August 1, 2020 for families requesting to pay in installments. Therefore, no fees or tuition will be prorated due to school closings for the following reasons: snow days, one week closure in August for classroom preparation, teacher training, family vacation or other extended absences. The school cannot take responsibility for school closings necessitated because of health, safety, inclement weather, holidays or any other emergencies that may arise.
- Tuition may only be pro-rated 50% for students beginning from the 16th to the end of the month.
 - The Bender ECC has an annual tuition with a 30-day withdrawal policy effective August 1st or upon enrollment into the program. Billing begins the month before enrollment.
 - When a family provides 30-day notice of withdrawal before the 15th of the month, the next and final tuition installment will be prorated by 50%. When notice is given from the 16th to the end of the month, the next tuition payment will be charged in full and will be the final payment.
- A \$25 fee will be assessed for each credit card payment or EFT that is denied. It is your obligation to notify the preschool of any changes in my credit card or EFT account.
- If the account is delinquent by two (2) months, the child may not continue in the program. A 35% collection fee will be added to the amount due, and the account will be turned over to a collection agency.
- Families must be current on their payments to enroll in additional preschool programs.
- A full facility 12-month family membership is included with preschool registration. Membership will begin the week before the first day of the school year and continue through the weekend following the last week of the summer program. For 2023-2024, the dates of family membership are August 21, 2023-August 18, 2024. The included membership will be revoked if you choose to withdraw from the program.

We are looking forward to a wonderful year!