



Beth Ami Community Nursery School

Parent Handbook

2011-2012

*Please note there are changes made yearly to this handbook that you are responsible for. Please read this in its entirety and note the updated changes.



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BETH AMI COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL

History

In May of 1979, Ellen Brosbe, an early childhood educator, Vivian Frye, a physical therapist, and Carol Silberman met to work on the creation of a nursery school at the Santa Rosa Jewish Community Center, presently known as Congregation Beth Ami. Many other congregants and parents worked tirelessly to build the school's excellent reputation.

The school opened with fewer than ten children, and currently has over 60 children starting their Jewish early childhood education. In 1987, our school expanded and added a twos program.

During the 2008-2009 school year we celebrated our 30th anniversary and we look forward to celebrating many more anniversaries with your help and support.



NURSERY SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Philosophy

Our nursery school is committed to quality early childhood education. We believe each child is unique and approaches learning in a variety of ways. We strive to present a program that teaches the whole child: socially, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. Our program stresses Jewish and universal values with an emphasis on creating a sense of community and caring for the environment.

We emphasize the process of discovery because we believe young children learn best when actively involved in play. We provide an environment where children are free to take risks, to ask questions, and to experiment with materials and ideas. The environment is designed to empower children to develop problem-solving and co-operation skills.

Our goals for each child are that they develop a positive self-image, independence, creative thinking skills, acceptance of and respect for differences, and a sense of community through their experiences at nursery school.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is child-centered, and encourages essential social skills. The teachers plan activities based on observations, the interests of the children and the occurrences in their lives. Our program emphasizes the importance of children as active participants in their learning, where exploration, discovery, and invention are of primary importance. We provide varied experiences with art materials, manipulatives, blocks, cooking, music and creative movement, language arts, dramatic play, and science. We provide activities that encourage literacy development, both oral and written, and beginning math concepts. Within the context of these curriculum areas, we emphasize the importance of decision-making, problem-solving, and learning by doing.

It is best for children to learn in small size classes. We maintain a 4:1 student-teacher ratio in the Twos class, and an average of 7:1 in the Threes to Fours classes.



We celebrate Jewish traditions through joyous holiday festivities and by celebrating the end-of-the week Shabbat (Sabbath) with music, dance, stories, art, play, and cooking. We welcome the Sabbath every Friday by singing, lighting the Sabbath candles, saying the blessing over wine (in our case, grape juice), and baking and sharing challah (braided egg bread). (Challah is baked on Wednesdays for children in the Tuesday/Wednesday Twos class.)

Learning Environment

The school provides a creative setting conducive to curiosity and discovery. The environment is designed to foster independence and responsibility. The classrooms are organized into learning centers with a variety of activities and richly textured materials. We encourage the children to make choices and follow their interests. Our yard is equipped with play and climbing structures, an area for wheeled toys, sand and water play, materials that the children use to create their own play spaces, and evolving gardens for work, observation, and interaction with the natural world.

Positive Discipline and Guidance

Discipline at BACNS is highly individualized and dependent on the particular child and situation. However, certain generalizations can be made. The goal of discipline is felt to be self-knowledge and self-discipline or self-control. Therefore, every attempt is made to assist the child in gaining tools in these areas. Our teachers help children identify and express feelings, understand consequences of behavior, and as much as possible, do their own negotiating and problem solving. When problems or conflicts arise, teachers will reflect and validate the feelings of all involved, ensure that all sides are heard, facilitate for conflict resolution, and when necessary, suggest or impose solutions or model negotiating skills. For example, a teacher might say, "It looks like you both want to play with that toy, but we only have one. What could we do to solve this problem?"

Our teachers model cooperation and problem solving. Through experience and practice, children learn to identify and express feelings and needs, to consider the needs of others, to negotiate and compromise, and to problem-solve on their own. Time out and punishment are not considered to be effective ways to facilitate the social learning or self esteem necessary for good problem solving. If and when a child poses a threat to him/herself or others or needs time and/or space to calm down, a child may be



removed from a situation, classroom, playground, etc. At these times, a teacher either remains with the child, talking calmly, or a quiet space is provided for the child somewhere in the classroom. It is usually left up to the child to determine when he/she feels ready to talk or re-enter the social scene. A child is never isolated or forced to remain alone. Alternatives for future situations may be discussed. For example, a child may be told, "It is okay to be angry, but it is not okay to hurt anyone or any of our materials. You may ..." and then alternatives may be suggested. Physical outlets may be provided for a very angry child when needed, such as foam balls to squeeze or throw, or play dough to pound.

Above all, primary methods of discipline at BACNS is to have a developmentally appropriate program that does not create unrealistic expectations of behavior or make demands on children that are stressful or not appropriate to their particular developmental level. The school provides a relaxed atmosphere which emphasizes respect for self, others, and the learning environment. Additional values the school encourages are: cooperation, caring, responsibility, self-esteem, initiative, negotiating and problem-solving skills.

Staff

The success of our school depends on the dedicated and skilled individuals who make up our staff. Our teachers have almost 200 years combined experience working with young children and have received their degrees and/or certification in Early Childhood Education. In addition, many of our teachers have advanced degrees in educational fields. Our staff is committed to on-going professional development which includes regularly scheduled in-service training and workshops, as well as attendance at local, state, and national conferences.

We feel fortunate that many of our staff members have been with us for over 20 years, helping our preschool continue to be a unique place of learning and discovery.

The Director is responsible for supervising the day-to-day operation of the Nursery School and works closely with the teachers in developing and implementing the daily program.



SCHEDULE OF THE DAY

Hours of Operation

The Twos program is offered Tuesday and Wednesday or Thursday and Friday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The Threes and Fours program is offered 2, 3, 4 or 5 days a week. School begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 1:00 p.m.

Young children need a sense of what to expect in their day. Therefore, we maintain a daily routine to fit the needs of each group of children. In general, the day offers periods of organized and free-choice activities, small and large group times, outside active playtime, and snack time. Our schedule is also flexible enough to accommodate field trips, seasonal changes, and the spontaneous needs and wishes of the group.

Extended Day Care (EDC)

We do not provide EDC for children in the Twos program.

For children in the Threes and Fours classes, we offer EDC from 8:00 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. and after school from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, and until 3:30 p.m. on Fridays. All EDC staff are qualified, experienced teachers.

To indicate your interest in enrolling your child in the EDC program, please fill out and return the Extended Day Care Sign-Up sheet enclosed in the right-hand pocket of this Parent Handbook. If you are unsure of your needs at this time, please speak to the Director at anytime when you have made a decision.

Morning Extended Day Care – AM EDC

Although school begins at 9:00 a.m., we realize some parents may require early morning childcare (8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.) as a regular ongoing scheduled arrangement. If you would like to use this service on an occasional basis, this must be arranged with the Director at least one week prior to the morning(s) desired, and only if there is space available.

If you are not enrolled in the morning EDC, a parent or guardian must remain with your child **outside** of the play-yard until class begins (9:00 a.m.).



Enrichment Activities

We further enrich our program by engaging specialists who teach music, art, yoga, pottery, and gymnastics on various days after our regular school sessions. Parents who choose to enroll their children in the enrichment classes pay for them separately from their regular monthly tuition and extended care services.

Summer School

Our summer program continues with our philosophy of emergent curriculum. Enrollment is generally lower in the summer, thus providing several unique and cherished opportunities for our children. The maturity of the children at this time of the year and the quality of relationship they have created with each other over the course of the previous academic school year results in an intimate atmosphere in the classroom and increased depth and meaning in their play.

ADMISSION POLICIES

Required Information

A complete and current individual file on each child will be maintained at the Nursery School.

The file will consist of:

- Identifying information
- Child's social and developmental history
- Child's medical history
- A physician's pre-admission report, including required immunizations or a waiver signed by the parents and physician, an emergency release form, a general field-trip permission slip, and an Admission Agreement signed by a parent.

This file will also contain three statements signed by a parent indicating that he or she has read this Parent Handbook, the Personal Rights sheet, and the Parents' Rights sheet.

All of these documents must be on file before a child begins school.



Age Prerequisite

To enter the Twos program, a child must be 2 years old by November 1st of the current school year. Children with fall birthdates may begin after their birthday at the discretion of the teachers, provided there is space available. To be enrolled in the Threes program, children must be 2 years and 10 months by the first day of school, and children must be 3 years and 10 months by the first day of school to enter the Fours program. (The Director will decide exceptions to these guidelines after consultation with staff and parents.)

In the event of full enrollment, priority in registration will be as follows:

1. Continuing students (those in current classes)
2. Siblings of a concurrently enrolled student
3. Congregation Beth Ami members
4. Siblings of previously enrolled students
5. New students who have at least one Jewish parent
6. New students

Application

Application and registration is ongoing beginning in early spring. Families wishing to enroll for the next school year should submit a completed application form and non-refundable application fee for each child returning or new to the school. Upon notification of admission or placement, a non-refundable deposit in agreement with the current tuition and fee schedule is **due no later than June 1st** to reserve this place. If we do not receive your payment by June 1st your spot may be filled.

Student Qualifications

Our goal is to best serve each child and family in the school. It is therefore important that each child is:

- Ready for the group experiences a nursery school has to offer
- Able to benefit from the program offered
- On the way to being toilet trained, with the exception of children enrolled in the Twos program

In following the Americans with Disabilities Act, please discuss your child's needs with the Director so that we are aware of any special circumstances. Full disclosure before admission is critical in order for us to best meet your child's needs. Admission may be reversed if the information submitted is



found to be inaccurate or incomplete and this results in our inability to provide for your child's needs.

Class Placement

The staff works thoughtfully and diligently at the complex process of determining placement of the children in each classroom. Multiple criteria are considered in making these decisions which include, but are not limited to: parents' desired schedule of days, specific parent requests, age and development of each child, the unique individuality of each child, gender balance and returning friend peer groups. We carefully attempt to honor requests; however the final decision is determined by the staff.

FINANCIAL POLICY

Registration Fee and Placement Guarantee Policy

Annual registration for our Nursery School takes place each year in early spring. At that time, families wishing to enroll their child for the next school year are asked to complete a registration form and to submit a **non-refundable application fee** for each child returning or new to our school. Then, once you have been notified that there is a space for your child, you must submit a **non-refundable placement guarantee payment** no later than **June 1 to reserve this spot**. The placement guarantee payment secures your child's place in the program and is therefore non-refundable. The placement guarantee payment will be applied to the annual tuition and will be forfeited for withdrawal prior to the end of the school year.

Payment of Tuition and Fees

Tuition and enrollment is for the full school year. Two tuition payment plans are available.

1) Payment in full:

- a) A 3% discount is available to families paying tuition in full **by cash or check on or before August 22nd**. Families enrolling or paying tuition after August 22nd are not eligible for the discount.
- b) You may pay tuition in full by credit card (Visa or MasterCard), however discounts do not apply on credit card transactions.



2) **Installment payments by credit/debit card:**

- a) Annual tuition will be paid in monthly installments through credit/debit card on file. Monthly payments will be automatically charged to the card on file on the 15th of each month that a payment is due. You will not receive a bill or invoice. If you would like an invoice/receipt of payment, you may request this at the main office.

Please note that nursery school tuition and childcare fees may be tax deductible for working parents. Please consult your tax professional for more information. Our Federal Tax ID number is 94-156 6549.

Insufficient Funds/Late Payment Fee

There will be a charge of \$20 if your credit/debit card is declined. Additionally, your payment would then be late and your account will be assessed a \$25 late fee. Your card will be charged again on the 16th of the month with the additional charges included. If your account is not current by the 20th of the month in which an installment is due, you may be asked to withdraw your child from the school until the situation is resolved. Should your account remain delinquent, you will be responsible for any attorney fees and collection costs in addition to the amount outstanding.

Please update the office with new numbers and expiration dates as soon as possible to avoid this situation.

Refund Policy

Refunds will not be given for:

- Holidays, vacation, and teacher in-service and professional development days
- School closure due to natural disasters or emergency
- Picking up your child early from class or after-school care
- Days your child missed due to illness—including days out because of contagious illness such as chicken pox, head lice, whooping cough, flu, etc.
- Days your child missed due to family plans, including vacations, visiting relatives, etc.



Program Changes

If you wish to change your child's regular schedule or extended daycare, you must request this in writing by filling out the Change in Schedule Form, located in the back of this packet and obtaining Director approval **prior to** the beginning of the month.

All change requests will be evaluated on the **last Thursday** of the month prior to which the new schedule will take effect.

1. The signature of the Director may be needed. You will be notified if there is room **prior** to assuming any schedule request change.
2. Dropping or decreasing scheduled extended day care hours will result in the following fees:
 - One month notice: No extra fee.
 - Less than one month: Fee for the full time originally reserved for that month.

Early Withdrawal

Thirty days written notice is required when a child withdraws from our program. Notice of withdrawal must be provided by US Mail attention Nursery School Director, 4676 Mayette Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95405 or by email to NS@BethAmiSR.org. Tuition will still be charged for the period from the date of enrollment until the 15th or the last day of the calendar month (whichever comes first) after the thirty day notification period.

Dropping your child from our program may result in the following refund (less any non-refundable fees):

- One month notice: Full refund of the paid annual tuition.
- Less than one month: No refund.

Late Pick Up

Being late for pick up time may result in a \$1.00 charge for every minute spent after designated time. Your child's safety is our priority, and we will do all we can during unforeseen incidences. (See Pickup under Arrival & Departure section for more details.)



Registration

A non-refundable application fee is due annually for each returning or new student along with the application.

TUITION AND FEES

Schedules

As we operate at full capacity, we ask that you adhere to the schedule you establish at the time of registration. If you wish to change your child's regular schedule or extended daycare, you must request this in writing by filling out the Change in Schedule Form and obtaining Director approval **prior to** the beginning of the month. All change requests will be evaluated on the **last Thursday** of the month prior to which the new schedule will take effect.

Extended Day Childcare Fees

Monthly extended day childcare fees are established at the time of registration, based upon each family's individual schedule. The rate for extended day care is \$7.00 per hour. All extended care is pre-arranged as there is no short-notice care available. Available hours for extended childcare are from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and until 3:30 p.m. on Fridays. Days assigned are not interchangeable. Should the needs of the family change during the school year, you must make requests in writing by filling out the Change in Schedule Form and obtaining Director approval **prior to** the beginning of the month.

Scholarships/Discounts

For families with more than one child attending the Nursery School, there will be a 10% reduction in the tuition for the second and third child.

Scholarships may be available on a limited basis for families unable to pay full tuition. All requests are confidential and are based upon need and verification of income. For further information, consult the Nursery School Director.



The Children's Jewish Education Endowment Fund (CJEEF) may have funds available to distribute as stipends to provide students and faculty that are members of Congregation Beth Ami with Jewish educational opportunities. Request for financial assistance during the school year can be submitted to the synagogue office Monday-Friday, 10 AM – 4 PM until Erev Rosh Hashanah. You may request a Dedicated Fund Request form from the Nursery School Director or the congregation office. Recipients will be notified by Erev Hoshana Rabbah.

EMERGENCIES AND NATURAL DISASTERS

In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, the Director and/or Executive Director, based upon all available facts at the time, will determine school closure. The Nursery School serves a large part of Sonoma County, and if an area in the county is affected by the natural disaster and many staff members are affected, the school may have to make an emergency closure or operate with only a skeleton staff. Parents will be notified as soon as possible, via telephone communication, if an emergency closure is necessary. There will not be any tuition refunds if the school is forced to have an emergency closure.

Emergency Procedures

If an emergency does arise at Congregation Beth Ami the following will occur:

- Should there be a reason for closing the Nursery School on any given day, staff will call the Executive Director, Nursery School Director, and the first scheduled nursery staff teacher.
- Staff will contact all the families that are expected to attend that day.
- After further assessment and feedback from the Nursery School Director and/or Executive Director, staff will contact all the families with an update.
- We will inform all families of any closure or delay in school operation. In addition, staff will inform families if we will remain closed until further notice.

If an emergency occurs while children are in attendance, the Director will assess the need for early pick-up, and staff will contact the parents. We will continue calling (from your "Identification and Emergency Information")



form) until someone is reached for pick-up. Rolling blackouts do not always cause the school to close. If a blackout occurs, we check with PG&E and other emergency information to assess our safety to remain on site. Should we need to evacuate, our temporary relocation site is **Spring Creek Elementary School across the street from Congregation Beth Ami.**

Emergency Preparedness Kits

Upon arrival on your child's first day of school, we will collect the emergency preparedness clothing kits to store at school in the event of an emergency. The instructions for the kit are in the back pocket of this handbook. You may collect your child's previous year's kit at our year-end potluck picnic. If your child is staying for the summer program, you may update your kit at that time.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Sign In & Sign Out

Preschool is governed by requirements established by the State of California. Rules of compliance dictate practices that assure the health and safety of children in our school.

It is critically important that each child be signed in and signed out each day with a written full signature and time of arrival/departure next to the child's name. Persons authorized to sign in and sign out children are listed on the emergency card. **In case of emergency, the sign in sheets enable us to immediately locate each child.**

ALL CHILDREN MUST BE SIGNED IN AND OUT EACH DAY!

Staff members are not authorized to sign children in or out. The Director has the responsibility to systematically check the sign-in sheets to ensure that sign-ins/outs are done regularly. State regulations specify that no one under the age of 18 may pick up or drop off, sign in or sign out a preschool child.

Only those individuals who have been previously authorized by a parent in writing will be allowed to pick up a child. If the staff does not know the



person who has been authorized to pick up a child, the staff person will ask for a picture I.D. If for any reason a child is being picked up by anyone not previously scheduled, a parent should put that information in writing and inform the teacher verbally as well.

In addition, carpool parents must sign in and out for all children riding with them. The licensing department agent inspects sign in sheets. When incomplete or illegible, we will be cited by the department. Continued lack of or illegible signatures will cause us to be fined. Please remember to legibly sign in and out of the program.

Arrival

School hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for the Two's. Please arrive on time so that your child is not uncomfortable about arriving after the rest of the class has already begun the day's activities and so that the group is not interrupted. Please do not bring your child early, unless you have pre-registered for early morning childcare, as teachers need and use this time to prepare for the day.

Pick-Up

If you find that you are going to be detained, please notify the school **immediately**. Your child's safety is our priority and we will do all we can during unexpected emergencies. All children must be picked up at their scheduled time. Families will be charged \$1.00 for each minute that they are late. Please be on time to avoid unnecessary stress and worry for both your child and the staff. Pick-up time for the Nursery School is 12:00 p.m. for Twos and 1:00 p.m. for Threes and Fours.

Authorization to Pick-Up Child

Children will not be released to any person who is not authorized by a parent to pick up the child as indicated in your child's file. Please use the AUTHORIZATION FOR CHANGE IN CHILD PICK-UP LIST form in the back pocket of this handbook to authorize a new person for a given day or period of time.

Copies of this form are also available in the Nursery School office. For any person other than parents or guardians picking up your child, we will ask for picture identification at our first contact until we are familiar with this person. Please have new pick-up persons bring their identification.



HELPING YOUR CHILD ADJUST TO SCHOOL

To make your child's adjustment to their new setting easier, you may need to be available for the first few days, as your child may not be ready to stay for the entire school day. Your child's teacher can give you suggestions for helpful departure routines and help facilitate the transition. Be sure to say good-bye when you leave.

DAILY NEEDS

Clothing

Appropriate clothing for play is extremely important. Children need to feel comfortable, free to fully explore the school environment, and be self-reliant during their school play. If children worry about getting messy, it could potentially interfere with creative experiences.

Please...

1. Make sure clothes are easily laundered. Preschool paint states they are washable, but certain fabrics launder better.
2. Garments should be easy for little fingers and hands to manage. This helps lead to the independence the children strive for. Overalls are not recommended.
3. A sweater or jacket should be provided even on sunny days. We recommend sunscreen; waterproof shoes/sandals (please, no flip-flops) for outside play on warm days. Additionally, children should bring rain boots and a raincoat during rainy weather.
4. It is recommended that all clothing be **labeled with the child's name**, particularly sweaters, hats and jackets. Parents and children get upset when their things are misplaced or lost.
5. Children need a complete set of labeled clothing to be kept in their cubby. It also helps for children to have a picture of themselves in their cubby to identify their cubby as a personal space.

Belongings

Unless you have been notified that it is a "sharing day", we ask that you leave your child's toys at home or in your car. Please check with your child's teacher about the appropriateness of any books, music, or toys you



wish to loan to the class. Toys of violence or war toys are not allowed at the school.

Lunches

Lunchtime has both learning and social opportunities and can be an important part of the school day. Since lunchtime is included in our Nursery School program, you will need to provide this meal in a lunch box or bag, with a drink. (No glass bottles please.) In order to preserve the rules of our kosher facility, no meat, poultry, or products containing animal fat are allowed at the school. (Deep-water fish like salmon or tuna are examples of kosher foods that are acceptable.) Examples of suggested foods are yogurt, cheese, fruits and vegetables. We recommend small portions of a variety of foods. We will inform you if your child's meal needs to be supplemented or changed. The emphasis here should be on nutrition, so please do not send candy or gum with your child. Teachers welcome any questions you might have regarding lunches.

Snacks

Please discuss any food allergies that your child may have with your child's teacher. The director will post a list of all children with food allergies in the kitchen visible to all staff and subs. Arrangements for special diets is best made with your child's teacher.

We offer wholesome and nutritious snacks each morning and afternoon. Sometimes, snacks are reflective of the Jewish holiday or the subject area being explored on a given day. All snack foods are appropriate for our kosher facility.

If you have a surplus harvest from your garden or orchard, this would be a wonderful gift to the school. Please speak to your child's teacher about arranging to bring in a special cultural dish or a birthday snack.

Extended Day Care Bedding

For afternoon nap or rest time we provide a padded floor mat. Your child will need to bring a labeled light blanket and a crib-size sheet. Please provide a cloth bag or backpack to contain the afternoon bedding. A small comfort soft-toy could also be part of the EDC kit. For health and hygiene, we ask that parents take bedding home for laundering once a week.



HEALTH AND SAFETY

Healthy Children at School

Your child's health is of major importance to all of us. Prior to enrollment, you must complete and return your child's health form signed by a physician and your child's immunization record, including tuberculin clearance. Each morning, your child's teacher assesses the health of each child. **Please wait until a teacher greets and accepts your child before leaving the premises.**

Your child will be sent home if there appears to be symptoms of illness present during the day. In such cases, the child will be separated from the other children and a parent will be contacted. Our **illness policy** is strict for the well being of all the children.

While we recognize the inconvenience to one's professional or personal commitments, when a child is ill, the health and safety of **all** children, parents and teachers is of utmost concern. **Please** keep your child home if he or she:

1. Has a fever (temperature over 100.4°) or has had a **fever during the last 24-hour period.**
2. Has vomited or has had diarrhea **within the past 24 hours.**
3. Has a symptom of a communicable disease: red dripping eyes, runny nose, fever, sore throat, headache, rash, abdominal pain.
4. Has been prescribed an antibiotic/remedy by a physician/practitioner within the last 24 hours. **Your child needs to be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school.** (The staff can administer medication, as long as the medication comes in the original container and a Medication Form is properly and fully filled out. Instructions must be left in writing on a form that we will provide.) **Please notify the school at once if your child has a communicable disease or has been exposed to one.**

In the event a child becomes sick at school, **we will first call the parent(s)** and then, if unable to contact the parent(s), proceed to the list of emergency contacts. **Per licensing requirements, every family needs to maintain a list of viable emergency contacts** as well as a phone number we can reach the parent **at all times.**



If you have an additional child (i.e. sibling of student) that is ill ~ Please **DO NOT** bring the sick sibling onto the school campus when dropping off. Please leave the sick sibling at home, ask another parent to drive your child that day, ask a parent to watch the sick sibling in your car while you drop off, ask a parent to bring your child into school for you or wait at the gate for teacher (or parent) assistance.

In Case of Accidental Injury

The staff will administer necessary first aid treatment to your child. For other minor injuries we will make an attempt to contact a parent. If we cannot reach you or a contact from your emergency list, we will call the child's physician or one of the school's consulting physicians. When necessary, we will call an ambulance. You will be expected to assume responsibility for any incurred expenses. There is a signed consent form about this policy in each child's file.

Whenever first aid is given, teachers fill out an “Ouch Report” and place a copy in your child’s cubby and in their file.

SPECIAL EXPERIENCES

Birthdays

Children enjoy celebrating their birthdays at school. Each teacher invites you to bring a special birthday treat for your child's birthday. Please speak to teachers about appropriate snacks and make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance.

Also, please do not hand out party invitations at school, as this can cause hurt feelings. We will provide a mailing list for your convenience. When planning a private birthday party, remember some may not be able to attend from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night, the Jewish Sabbath.

Field Trips

Field trips offer the three- and four-year-olds a unique opportunity to experience an environment away from school. Much thought and planning goes into developing curriculum for these trips. Children are prepared with information and what to expect. Afterwards, all subject areas are



integrated to educationally capitalize on the learning stimulated by the outing. Excursions may include visits to farms, parks, museums, markets, and neighborhood walks into the community. Each child will need a signed permission slip that will be kept on file. We encourage all parents to participate in the program by volunteering to drive on trips or accompanying us to increase our adult-to-child ratio for these events. All children must travel in car seats. We ask the parent to secure the seat when possible. The law requires all drivers to have a copy of their current insurance on file at the school specifically listing the driver(s) by name.

The Twos class does not participate in off-campus trips but often goes for walks within the facility.

Shabbat

Although the Sabbath lasts from sundown on Friday until three stars are sighted on Saturday evening, we celebrate Shabbat every Friday with an Oneg Shabbat, when we sing songs and recite the blessings over the candles, the grape juice and the challah (egg bread). We encourage and welcome families to join us in our celebration at 12:00 noon, when we sing.

Families take turns bringing in a double batch of challah dough so that the children can braid their own loaves each week. Each family provides the challah dough several times a year. You may also bring flowers and/or tablecloths to decorate the room when your turn to bring challah dough comes around. Recipes for challah are available in the classroom or Director's office.

Gemilut Hasadim (Acts of loving kindness)

An important part of the curriculum is acts of sharing, being kind to others, and doing good deeds. This is also an age-old Jewish tradition known as Gemilut Hasadim (acts of loving kindness). The Nursery School practices this tradition day by day in the classroom and on the play yard in ways appropriate to the age, development, and understanding of each child. Unpredictable events in our world and certain holidays and observances also provide ways to practice Gemilut Hasadim throughout the year.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Communication

Along with our commitment to the children's development, we value open and ongoing communication with parents. In addition to yearly scheduled conferences, teachers are available for informal conversations. We hope that you will feel free to contact staff members if you have any need to talk about your child's progress.

In order to keep channels of communication open and facilitate mutual respect, please follow the procedures below:

1. Speak with staff directly involved with your child.
2. After you speak directly with the teacher, if you feel the issue is still not resolved, bring it to the attention of the Director.
3. When you feel further attention is necessary, contact the Executive Director of Congregation Beth Ami.

Please respect classroom hours as time for the children. If you need to communicate with a teacher and she is busy, you can always request a phone call from the teacher or request a scheduled appointment. Each classroom has a notebook for you to communicate with your teacher.

Phone Calls

The Nursery School welcomes your comments and questions. Please feel free to call. Since the teachers' first priority is your child, they may not be able to come to the phone during class hours. The teacher or director will call you back as promptly as possible. When you need assistance after 10 a.m. and the Director is not available, please press "0" to be directed to the synagogue office and they will find the director or provide you with immediate assistance.

Additional Communication

Please check your child's art folder and/or cubby daily for communiqués. If you are driving a carpool, make sure that you get any flyers to the parents who are in your carpool. The Director and Parent Committee send a periodic newsletter/communiqué throughout the year. Please refer to our website at www.BethAmiSR.org and click on Education for the most up to



date information. Since we do the bulk of our basic communication via email, please be sure to have your current and updated email address on file.

Parent Committee

Many opportunities are offered both formally and informally for parents to participate in the nursery school community. The Nursery School's Parent Committee is comprised of all parents of children attending the nursery school, alumni and congregants who wish to be involved in creating and supporting Nursery School activities and goals. The Parent Committee acts as a liaison between parents, Congregation Beth Ami, and the Nursery School Administration. One committee member will also serve as our liaison between the Nursery School Parent Committee and Congregation Beth Ami.

The purpose of the Parent Committee is to increase benefits provided by the school to the children and their families and to facilitate parent's greater involvement in the nursery school and in their children's education. We hope that all interested parents will join this committee and know that they are truly valued as an integral part of the Nursery School community.

Some of the principal goals of the Parent Committee are:

- Raising funds for the school
- Assisting with Jewish holiday celebrations for the nursery school community
- Inspiring and fostering family involvement in the school
- Identifying concerns and suggestions of parents and providing a vehicle for communicating between home and school
- Welcoming all new families and supporting each other in joyous and difficult times (birth, adoption, illness, death, family stress)

The Committee meets monthly or more often when needed. Anyone wishing to attend a committee meeting is welcome to do so. It is



recommended that there are representatives from each class attending meetings. If you wish to make a presentation to the Committee, please contact the Chairperson five days in advance of the monthly meeting to discuss your thoughts for placement on the agenda.

Parent Work Hours

Families are very generous, utilizing their time to enhance our school. We hope that all families will get involved and become a part of the Nursery School community. Over the course of the school year, each family is responsible for completing a minimum of only **five (5)** work hours. Families can help in many ways or may choose an option of paying \$100 in lieu of their time.

The activities that count towards work hours should benefit the morale, the physical environment, and the well-being of the school. Here is a list of activities that count toward the five work hours:

- Working in the garden
- Working on the annual fundraiser (planning, organizing, setup/cleanup, etc.)
- Working **during** the annual fundraiser (serving, helping with auction, etc.)
- Office work
- Cleaning/organizing classrooms
- Fixing/building structures in and out of the classroom
- Scholastic Books parent for the classroom
- Making food for teacher meetings or special school events (you will be notified when cooking for particular events is requested)
- Set up/working during event/clean up for any of the Jewish Events for our Nursery School Community (i.e. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Channukah, Tu B'Shevat, Purim Carnival and Passover)

All parent work hours must be completed by April 30th. If the hours are not completed, \$100 may be added to your account.



Parent Education Workshops

We occasionally offer parent workshops throughout the year on a variety of topics. Your ideas and suggestions for workshops are always welcome. We will alert you to special parenting and family events in our community. If you are interested in a specific or particular subject on Parent Education, please contact your teacher and/or director.

Fundraising

Tuition income alone does not cover the total operating costs of our nursery school. To balance our budget, we depend on raising at least \$12,500 this year through a variety of fundraising efforts. We must have support from all of the families in our school community to accomplish that goal. Without fundraisers, the school's tuition would have to be increased to a level that many of our families might not be able to afford.

Our largest annual fundraising event is a fabulously fun evening. Businesses from far and wide donate to our Live/Silent Auction. Tickets are sold to each nursery school family, congregation members and the community. Each year, we host a themed event which includes food, wine, and music/dance. The date of the event will be announced early enough for you to make plans to join us.

Donations

Donations to the Nursery School are always appreciated. Anyone interested in making a tax-deductible contribution may do so via the Director or Congregation Beth Ami office. Traditionally, families in our community have made contributions to the school in honor, memory or recognition of others and in celebration of birthdays and anniversaries. All cash donations and donated materials directed to the nursery school benefit the children at Beth Ami Community Nursery School and are tax-deductible.

Special Events

Over the course of the school year, we celebrate special events such as Jewish Holiday celebrations, our annual fundraiser, and our year-end potluck picnic. These celebrations are for all our nursery school families. We welcome and encourage your participation in preparing and organizing for these events. Your support and participation is highly valued in helping



to create a strong sense of community. These dates are on the calendar, and we hope that you will plan to attend.

Jewish Holidays

The following Jewish holidays, listed in chronological order as they are celebrated during the school year, are an important emphasis in our preschool curriculum. These holidays differ from year to year as we follow the lunar calendar. Jewish holidays are observed from sundown to sundown like Shabbat.



Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins the ten-day period known as the High Holidays. Rosh Hashanah is also known as the “birthday of the world”, the “day of remembrance” and the “day of the shofar.” Rosh Hashanah celebrates the ability of people to change and grow, as it is a time for deep thought, self-examination and prayer.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the holiday in which the Jewish people ask for forgiveness and forgive others. Yom Kippur, the most solemn and holy day of the Jewish year, is the last day of the ten days of awe and marks the end of the ten-day period of the High Holidays.



Sukkot, is a fall harvest festival. Sukkot is also known as the “Festival of the Booths”, as it commemorates the time the Jewish people lived in temporary huts (sukkot) during their wandering and during their time of harvest in the fields. Sukkot is a time of feasting and of giving thanks for the harvest.



Simchat Torah, meaning “rejoicing with the Torah”, is a happy holiday celebrated with gaiety and festivity. On Simchat Torah the last portion of the Torah in the book of Deuteronomy and the first verses of the book of Genesis are read in the same Temple service, signifying that the Torah has no beginning and no end.



Hanukkah, a joyous holiday celebrated for eight days, commemorates the victory of the Jews over the Greeks and thus Jewish independence and the right to once again, practice the Jewish religion.



Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Temple after the victory over the Greeks. Hanukkah is also called the “Festival of Lights” in remembrance of the miraculous oil that burned in the Temple menorah for eight days at the time of the rededication of the Temple.

Tu B'Shevat, celebrates the “Birthday of the Trees.” This Jewish holiday validates the importance of nature and stresses the need for people to care for trees, plants and objects in nature. It is customary to plant trees on Tu B'Shevat.



Purim, a time of merriment and great fun, is one of the happiest of Jewish holidays. The festival of Purim derives from the biblical story of Esther and commemorates the Jewish people’s success over people who tried to destroy them.

Pesach, celebrates the most important event in Jewish history, which is the Jewish people’s exodus from Egypt. This holiday recalls the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, their eventual freedom and their arrival in the Promised Land in Canaan. Pesach is celebrated for eight days with a special meal, special foods and specific traditional practices. Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot comprise the cycle of festivals spanning the Exodus story.



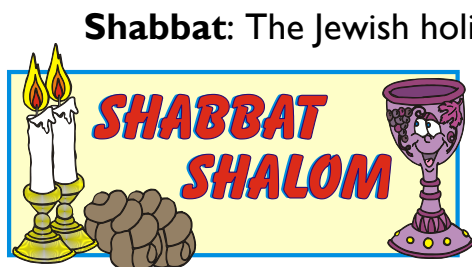
Yom Ha-atzmaut, the “Day of Independence,” is the Jewish holiday celebrating Israel’s attainment of

statehood. Israel’s Independence Day commemorates its establishment once again as the homeland of the Jewish people.

Lag B'Omer, is a minor Jewish holiday that focuses on the importance of study and learning. Lag B'Omer is celebrated on the 33rd day of the 50 days of the counting of the “omer”, or the measure of the newly ripened barley. The Lag B'Omer holiday provided a break from this serious harvest time.



Shavuot, celebrates the day the Jews were given the Torah, the guidelines of Jewish life, on Mount Sinai. It is also a celebration of the time of harvest and the offering of the first fruits of the new harvest. On Shavuot the Jewish people decorate the synagogue with greens and flowers, wear white clothing and eat dairy dishes.



Shabbat: The Jewish holiday of Shabbat is a joyous occasion celebrated every Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. Shabbat commemorates the creation of the world in six days and the seventh day of rest. Shabbat is a special time for people to come together each week to be with family and friends, to rest, to think, to share, to sing and to have a good time. The observance of Shabbat begins with a traditional ritual that includes blessings while lighting candles, drinking wine and eating challah (twisted egg bread).

Non-Jewish Holidays

As a school, we do not celebrate Halloween or Valentine's Day. Both celebrations are related to the Christian Saint Days calendar and are not compatible with our Judaic focus or with Congregation Beth Ami as an institution.

Please support us by telling your children that our costume holiday with treats is Purim, when we dress up and distribute *mishloach manot* (gifts of food). Please also support us by the following:

- Do NOT bring candy to school, in lunch or to distribute to the children (at any time but specifically) for Halloween
- Do NOT send your child wearing a costume to school for Halloween
- Do not bring Valentine's Day or Halloween cards or other related items to school

As a part of multicultural focus, we welcome families with other traditions and celebrations to bring us information and materials about them. As an example, we have had parents visit classrooms during Lunar New Year to introduce the children to that holiday. Please speak to teachers about the



appropriateness or desirability of activities or treats for celebrations other than Jewish holidays.

**We look forward to a very
successful, educational, and wonderful year
with your children and families.**