

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

# About Our Program

At the JCCGW Preschool, we view curriculum as everything that happens during our time together with the children. We believe that each moment offers an opportunity to explore relationships and to create a community that nurtures children, teachers, and families. There are always questions to pursue, hypotheses to investigate and discoveries to celebrate. At the heart of our approach lies the belief that children are competent, ready to learn and full of emerging ideas and creativity. Our curriculum is based on and inspired by a combination of the foremost approaches to early childhood education including, Reggio Emilia, the Project Approach, and the Creative Curriculum, whose objectives and assessment tools align with the Maryland State Pre-K standards.

At the JCCGW Preschool, children are engaged in a play-based, child-centered, emergent curriculum that integrates literacy, math, social studies, science, the arts, motor development, social skills, and Jewish traditions and values into all parts of the child's day. We emphasize the development of higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills, which are the foundation of every good learner's academic ability. Our teaching strategies are based on goals in four major areas of development: **social/emotional, physical, cognitive and language.**

A unique strength of our curriculum is the use of children's interests and the world around them to inspire their learning. Teachers observe children's play and listen carefully to children's questions so they may support emergent projects, ideas and creations that come directly from the children. Children are given many opportunities for making choices, working cooperatively, and expressing themselves in different media. Jewish holidays, customs, traditions and values come alive through the hands-on experiences that are at the heart of our program.

If you were to peek into our classrooms, you may see children involved in a community meeting, dressing up, baking challah, immersed in constructing with Legos or blocks, up to their elbows in sand or play dough, looking at books, having a Passover Seder, creating a village for trains, going on a nature walk, sorting objects, playing instruments, making signs or drawing self-portraits. You will see teachers watching and listening to children, documenting their play with photos and notes, offering resources to support and extend their play, and playing alongside them.

On a typical day at the JCCGW Preschool, children might hear a story about Noah's Ark, build replicas of Noah's Ark in the block area, research ships on the internet, sail a boat in the Center's swimming pool, pretend to be pairs of animals while walking to the playground, and create a cruise ship out of boxes and chairs for use in dramatic play.

We are so fortunate to have access to the wonderful Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, which includes art studios, dance studios, walking paths, the recreation station, and large grassy areas. The multigenerational and multicultural community at the Center enhances our children's learning experiences.

Our exceptionally-qualified teachers understand child development and have a deep respect for each child's unique attributes. We take great pride in hiring early childhood education professionals who are warm and enthusiastic, who nurture and inspire, and who strive to meet the needs of every child. Our staff members work closely with the curriculum director and behavioral specialist, and are encouraged to attend classes, workshops, and conferences in order to stay on the cutting edge of early childhood education.

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# Program Core Values

- **The Image of the Child**

We honor each child as an Individual, and each individual as a citizen of the classroom and school community. Each person is created *b'tzelem elokim*, in God's image, and therefore must be treated as a unique individual with an important role in our community.

- **Interactions**

Children learn best through their interactions with the world and others. This definition includes interactions between children, between children and adults, and children and their environment. For this reason we create an environment where children feel safe to share and explore their theories and ideas. The role of the adults is to listen and respond in a thoughtful and respectful manner. This value is reflected in the *mitzvot* that are considered *ben adam l'chavero*, how we interact and treat each other.

- **Community**

Our school is a *kehillah kedosha*, a holy community, inside and outside the classroom, which provides meaningful connections and a sense of belonging for children, families and staff. We build community by celebrating holidays and important moments in the life of our families, embracing values through a Jewish lens and strengthening these connections in all aspects of the school.

- **Diversity**

We provide an inclusive Jewish environment and celebrate pluralism and diversity. The *lulav* that is used during the holiday of *Sukkot* is only complete if it is made up of the palm branch, the willows, the myrtle and the *etrog*—only with these very different species is the *lulav* complete. So it is with our community.

- **Collaboration**

*Hevrutah* is the art of study which understands that the best learning is done in partnership with others. We believe that collaboration and partnership among students, staff and families create a dynamic educational environment through the addition of different perspectives.

- **Empowerment**

We believe in the potential and ability of every child. We challenge children and trust them to rise to that challenge. When children are the co-creators of the curriculum and their environment, they are empowered. This empowerment helps foster social/emotional well-being and a sense of independence.

- **Environment**

A child's experience is enriched not only by those around him or her but also by the setting. A classroom environment that reflects an emphasis on aesthetics and natural beauty creates a rich setting for learning. Access to a variety of inspiring materials and a well-planned physical space which fosters meaningful encounters, are essential. *HaMakom*, The Place, is one of the many names of God in Jewish tradition and liturgy. It is only through our relationship with our place, our environment, that we find meaning.

- **Lifelong Learning**

We believe that every member of our community must be committed to lifelong learning. This means that there is the potential for every one of us, children and adults, to change and grow. *Pirke Avot*, *The Ethics of Our Fathers*, teaches us: "Who is wise, the person that learns from everyone". This openness to new ideas and perspectives creates meaningful relationships, as we learn from each other.

## Registration Priority

WHO	WHEN	HOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently enrolled JCCGW Preschool students</li> <li>• Siblings of currently/formerly enrolled JCCGW Preschool students</li> <li>• Parenting Center program participants</li> </ul>	January 2-13, 2013*	Registration must be <b>delivered</b> to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. JCCGW Preschool office</li> <li>2. "Blue Box" registration located on the wall outside the Parenting Center.</li> </ol>
Children who are new to the JCCGW Preschool program with JCCGW Membership	January 14-20, 2013	Registration may be <b>mailed</b> to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attention of the JCCGW Preschool</li> <li>2. "Blue Box" registration located on the wall outside the Parenting Center.</li> </ol>
Children new to the JCCGW Preschool program who are not members of the JCCGW	<u>After</u> January 21, 2013	Registration may be <b>mailed</b> to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attention of the JCCGW Preschool</li> <li>2. "Blue Box" registration located on the wall outside the Parenting Center.</li> </ol>

**\*After January 13, 2013 priority spaces can no longer be reserved for currently enrolled students.**

### Eligibility Age for September 2013

- Children registering for the Transition Twos may turn 2-years-old between September 1, 2012 and December 31, 2012. These students will join the class **on the day of their 2nd birthday**. Children who attend the Transition Twos in the 2013-2014 School Year will need to attend a two year old class for the 2014-2015 school year.
- Children registering for the 2-year-old class must turn 2-years-old on or before September 1, 2013.
- Children registering for the 3-year-old class must turn 3-years-old on or before September 1, 2013.
- Children registering for the 4-year-old class must turn 4-years-old on or before September 1, 2013.
- Children registering for the Transitional Kindergarten class must have completed a 4-year-old program at the JCCGW Preschool or another approved preschool program. Children should turn 5-years-old by December 31, 2013.
- Children registering for the Kindergarten class must turn 5-years-old by September 1, 2013.