



# PARENT HANDBOOK

# ETZ HAYIM PRESCHOOL - PARENT HANDBOOK

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## **Preschool Philosophy**

Etz Hayim is a private Jewish Preschool for children ranging in age from 18 months through pre-kindergarten. Established in 2001, Etz Hayim's goal is to address each individual child's personal developmental needs. Offering an atmosphere of learning that is nurturing and enjoyable, Etz Hayim is dedicated to helping your child grow and flourish.

## **Curriculum**

Etz Hayim Preschool offers a play-based curriculum through a Jewish lens. Play offers the greatest opportunity for learning at this age. Lessons are child-centered and allow children to choose activities of interest to them while providing opportunities for cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth. As they become ready, children develop at their own individual pace and are encouraged to try a variety of activities. The preschool day is designed to give your child free-play time as well as structured, learning experiences.

Some examples of themes that are introduced throughout the year are Jewish holidays, self-identity, family concepts, the natural world, health and safety, math concepts, American celebrations, etc. The curriculum has been designed to provide a Jewish atmosphere throughout the program. The children are given a sense of Jewish identity through the weekly observance of Shabbat, the celebration of Jewish holidays and the introduction of Hebrew through songs, stories, and conversation. Through regular exposure, children gain a familiarity with the synagogue environment.

## **Routine**

The daily classroom routine provides the children with the opportunity to become involved in a wide range of activities. As the day begins, each child is greeted and guided to a play area or activity. The children have the opportunity to play with toys that foster both gross and fine motor skills as well as eye/hand coordination. The children gather for together-time and have outdoor play each day, weather permitting. They practice personal hygiene skills such as washing before snacks and lunch, as well as proper techniques for sneezing and coughing. Music is integrated into the program as well as a separate session each week with our music specialist.

## **Staff**

All staff members are experienced, highly motivated and devoted early childhood educators. They work closely with the students and parents to provide a warm loving and secure environment. Our first priority is the children's physical, emotional and mental well-being. We work to establish a strong sense of independence and high self-esteem for each child. All staff participate in at least 16 hours of training each year and are First Aid/CPR certified. Teacher to child ratios are strictly maintained at 1:5 for children under the age of 2; 1:5 for children ages two to three and 1:8 for children ages 4 and older. All staff complete several background checks, including FBI fingerprinting, are required to have an annual physical and TB Screening, and are strongly encouraged to receive an annual flu vaccine.

## **Parent Participation**

Parents are encouraged to participate in a variety of ways. Being involved offers both the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to the operation of the school and affords the opportunity to see what your child experiences at school. These opportunities also offer chances for you to interact with other parents.

## **Professional Affiliations**

Etz Hayim Preschool is a member of the Department of Jewish Life and Learning through the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington. Our teachers are affiliated with the National Association of the Education of Young Children. Etz Hayim Preschool is monitored by the Commonwealth of Virginia and is exempt from regulation at the local level under the auspices of a religious institution pursuant to Section 63.2-1716 of the Code of Virginia.

## **Admission and Enrollment**

### **Application for Admission**

Applications are accepted throughout the school year. New students must submit an application form, proof of identification (birth certificate or passport) and a non-refundable application fee. A full application for returning students is not required. A letter of intent, sent home in early January, is all that is needed to secure a space for returning students. While we are open to the community, siblings of currently enrolled students and Etz Hayim members will receive preference.

### **Involuntary Withdrawal**

There may be times when our school may not meet the needs of a particular child. If the child's presence is determined to be detrimental to the child or other children in the class, a conference with the parents, teachers, and director will be arranged. All will discuss whether the child needs to withdraw from the program or be placed in an extended probationary status of specified duration to allow further observation. When possible, parents will be given a full month's notice in order to secure other arrangements for their child. However, if the child is posing a danger to his/herself or others, immediate dismissal may be necessary.

Chronic failure of parents to pay tuition on time, comply with regulations regarding opening and closing times as well as compliance with guidelines outlined in the Parent Handbook, may also be reason for involuntary withdrawal.

### **Withdrawal**

If a family requests withdrawal, four weeks written notice is required and the child's final month's tuition must be paid. Families accepting a position but withdrawing after August 1<sup>st</sup> will be considered a withdrawal from school, and you will be responsible for one full tuition payment for an August 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup> withdrawal, two full tuition payments for a September 1<sup>st</sup> through 30<sup>th</sup> withdrawal, three full payments for a October

1<sup>st</sup> through 31<sup>st</sup> withdrawal and so on. Families who withdraw after February 15<sup>th</sup>, regardless of notification, must pay full tuition for the remaining months. All monies paid to date for incoming students are non-refundable. If a child is temporarily withdrawn from the preschool for any length of time, the child's place will be reserved only upon continued payment of tuition.

## **Tuition**

Tuition fees are determined in May and take effect beginning the new school year. Tuition payments are to be made payable to Congregation Etz Hayim and can be mailed or attached to the outside of your child's backpack.

### ***COVID-19 Impact on Tuition***

We anticipate that we may be required to close school for a period of time due to COVID-19. If the governor, state and local health officials close schools for less than 2 weeks, there is no change to tuition payments. If school closes for 2-4 weeks, the first scheduled payment after the closing will be reduced by 40%. For a school closing of 4-8 weeks, the first scheduled payment after the closing will be reduced by 40% and the second payment will be reduced by 60%. If school is closed beyond 8 weeks, tuition payments will be suspended until school reopens.

Any tuition paid after August 1, 2021 is non-refundable. Tuition will not be reduced due to a child being absent due to illness, travel, self-quarantine after travel, weather delays or closings or holidays and scheduled breaks noted in the school calendar.

## **Late Fees**

All tuition payments are due the fifteenth day of the month beginning August 1<sup>st</sup> and ending May 1<sup>st</sup>. Tuition payments over a week late will incur a \$10.00 late charge. The late charge will accrue daily (on days your child attends school) until the tuition payment is paid in full. Parents must prepay tuition prior to leaving for vacation in order to avoid late fees. If a child is sick the entire week prior to the 15<sup>th</sup>, the family will not incur late fees. If needed, a meeting can be requested regarding this situation with the Preschool Director.

## **Attendance**

For planning purposes, please inform Etz Hayim of any anticipated days that your child would be out. If there is an unforeseen absence, please inform the school as to the situation. It is helpful to know of any illnesses that have occurred. If you will be arriving with your child late or plan on picking your child up early, this too should be conveyed to the school.

(703) 979-4466 or [preschool@etzhayim.net](mailto:preschool@etzhayim.net)

# **Daily Routine**

## **Hours of Operation**

Preschool classes are held Monday – Friday

Half Day Program 9:30 – 12:30

Full-Day Program 8:00 to 5pm

### **Early Morning Drop Off**

Etz Hayim Preschool offers an opportunity for Early Morning Drop Off for an additional fee. This is available from 8:00 – 9:25. Your child will be supervised in the large social hall allowing for music fun, large and small motor skill play, and a time for your child to finish their breakfast. Arrangements for this option are best made in advance but are available as well on a drop-in basis. Please park in our parking lot located at the corner of South Garfield Street and Arlington Boulevard and escort your child to the side entrance.

### **Lunch Bunch**

All preschoolers can extend their day and eat lunch with friends. Please send in a dairy lunch (no meat) that does not require refrigeration or heating.

When packing lunches, please do not pack anything that contains or may contain peanuts or tree nuts, this includes things such as peanut butter and almond butter, some granola bars and other pre-packaged foods. Food processed in a shared facility are okay, but if a label reads *may contain (or contains) tree nuts or peanuts*, it will be disposed of immediately.

### **Afternoon and Evening Care**

Afternoon Care is available to any child over the age of 2 currently enrolled in the half day program, space permitting. Please request afternoon care at least one business day in advance to ensure a space is available for your child. For Monday care, all requests must be made no later than 4pm the preceding Friday.

Evening care is available for any child enrolled in the full day program or staying for afternoon care. To ensure proper staffing, please let us know at drop off if your child will be staying for evening care.

## **Arrival**

### **Parking**

Preschool parking is available in the synagogue parking lot located at the corner of South Garfield Street and Arlington Boulevard. All other parking on neighborhood streets, including all of South Fenwick Street and the Arlington Blvd access road between S. Fenwick and S. Fillmore Streets for preschool purposes is in violation of the preschool's zoning ordinance and strictly prohibited. Parking for early drop off may be available out front along Arlington Blvd. Please use extreme caution when parking on Arlington Blvd, and load/unload children from the curb side only.

### **Early Drop off (8:00 – 9:25)**

Parents and caregivers are to park in the lot at the corner of South Garfield Street and Arlington Boulevard and escort your child to school. Please go to the side entrance of the building on South Fenwick St. Ring the bell and an early drop off teacher will pick your child up.

### **Walk-up (9:30am-9:45am)**

Parents and caregivers are to park in the lot at the corner of South Garfield Street and Arlington Boulevard and escort your child to school. Please follow the path along the front of Etz Hayim and to your designated drop off location for your child's class. Teachers will greet children outside for a brief health screening and then escort your child to their classroom. Parents and caregivers are not permitted inside the building at this time. Arrivals after 9:45am, should ring the buzzer at the front door for access. A teacher from your child's class will then meet you at the appropriate drop off location to escort your child to class.

## **Departure**

### **Walk-up (12:15pm-12:30pm)**

Parents and caregivers are to use the Etz Hayim parking lot on Garfield Street only and wait near the front door of the building. All children will be checked out as they are dismissed to the parent or designated person.

### **Late Stay Pick up (12:30 – 5:00)**

Parents and caregivers are to park in the lot at the corner of South Garfield Street and Arlington Boulevard and proceed to the side entrance of the building on South Fenwick St. ring the bell and a late stay teacher will bring your child to you.

### **Authorized pick-up**

Parents can list any adult who is permitted to pick-up his/her child. If a child is to be picked up by someone not on the authorized list, the staff must have written notification signed and dated. Anyone picking-up your child must show photo identification before the child will be released. Requests to prohibit a parent from picking up a child must have court documentation.

### **Late pick-up**

The staff at Etz Hayim gives their full attention to your child. It is important for the staff to be able to attend to their obligations following the school day. Please be considerate to the staff by arriving on time to pick up your child. If you have a situation where you will be running late, please inform the school as soon as possible. This allows Etz Hayim to make the necessary arrangements. Licensing requires that there be two staff members present whenever a child is present.

Chronic lateness will incur fees to cover staffing. One late pick-up of 15 minutes or less per school year is at no cost. Each additional late pick up will be assessed at a few of \$5.00 for every 5 minutes late (0-5 minutes \$5; 6-10 minutes \$10; etc.).



### **Accessible Drop Off and Pick Up**

All preschool classrooms are located on the lower level of the synagogue. If your child requires elevator access, please come to Door #1 for drop off and pick up and your child will be escorted by their teacher on the elevator. Accessible Parking is available on S. Fenwick Street directly adjacent to the building.

## **Non-COVID School Closings**

Etz Hayim Preschool will be closed in accordance with all Conservative observances of Jewish Holidays. The preschool also closely follows Arlington Public Schools for other closings such as Federal Holidays and school breaks. For scheduled closings for holidays and other events, please consult the school calendar.

In the event Arlington Public Schools close for a weather emergency, Etz Hayim Preschool will close. In the event Arlington Public Schools open two hours late, Etz Hayim Preschool will open at 10:00 (one half hour later than the normal start time). This adjustment allows for appropriate time for the staff to make arrangements for their own families. There will be no early morning drop off available whenever there is a late opening. In the event of an early closing, parents are responsible for picking up their child by the early closing time.

Please know that closing Etz Hayim Preschool is not a decision that is entered lightly. In addition to considering the inconvenience to parents there are other factors. The Director will exercise her best judgement during inclement weather to safeguard the children and staff. Should the preschool need to close early for any reason, each parent will be notified and staff members will wait with your children until all the children are picked up. If you have a problem with immediate pick-up, we will help you make alternate arrangements for care by another parent. Arlington County has one of the best records in the region for keeping schools open and we will generally follow their lead.

*Please see COVID-19 Impact on Tuition on page 4 for details on COVID-19 related closings.*

## **Health and Well-Being**

### **Physical Exams and Medical Forms**

Each child must have a physical exam form on file before attending school. All physicals must be less than 12 months old (6 months for children under the age of 2) and include immunization record. The physical and immunization record must be updated annually. ***A TB test is only required once upon entry to school, but a risk assessment is required annually.*** Your child should not require another TB test while attending our preschool unless he/she has been exposed or travels to a high-risk country.

As a preschool with Jewish values, we follow *Pikuach Nefesh* which states it is a person's duty as members of society to protect all of its members. Therefore, the Virginia immunization schedule must be met. In cases where a delayed schedule is recommended by the physician, a note from the physician is required, along with a projected schedule of immunization. In cases where a physician has determined that a child cannot receive one or vaccinations for medical reasons only, we require a doctor's note confirming this.

## **Illness**

Etz Hayim Preschool understands that it is inconvenient to keep a child at home or arrange for alternate care when a child is ill. This is especially true when the illness is so unexpected and comes on rapidly. However, a sick child at school, exposes teachers, other children and their families to the same problems. A sick child will recover more quickly at home with appropriate rest. Please be considerate of the other children, and of your own, by not bringing your child to school when sick.

We adhere to the Virginia Department of Health Guidelines. This listing should help you determine when your child should remain at home as well as give you the Etz Hayim Guidelines of when your child will be sent home from the school. *Please note: our sick policy has been modified based on current recommendations from the Virginia Dept. of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the duration of the Pandemic.*

- An oral temperature of 100 degrees F or higher within the last 4hours. *Your child may not return to school until his/her temperature has been normal for 24 hours without the aid of fever reducing medication.*
- A cold with a runny nose, yellow/green nasal drainage or discharge
- Vomiting- your child may not return until 24 hours have passed since the last episode of vomiting.
- Diarrhea – your child should not return until 24 hours have passed since the last diarrhea – like bowel movement
- Persistent cough- A child with uncontrollable coughing fits should be kept home and should not return to school until the cough is under control without the aid of a cough suppressant for 24 hours.
- While on an antibiotic – 24 hours worth of dosage
- Rashes you cannot identify or have not been diagnosed by a doctor
- Headache, earache, or stomachache
- Signs of fatigue or generally feeling ill
- Crust on the eyes, pink eyes or mucus discharge from the eyes
- A child with symptoms of Covid 19 may return to school with a negative PCR test or a note from a doctor.

Note: Please make certain to identify any allergies as noted on the child's health form.

## **Illness at School**

If a child shows symptoms of illness while at school, the teacher/director will decide if a child is well enough to remain in class or must be isolated and sent home. A child who is not feeling well just wants to and needs to go home as soon as possible.

## **Medications**

Medications that are administered on a regular schedule should be given at home before or after school, whenever possible.

Medications such as diaper rash ointment that you are requesting application by the teacher should be sent in a labeled bag along with a completed **Authorization To Give Medication** form. Any medicated diaper cream that needs application for a longer period than listed on the package instructions requires written permission from a physician.

If a physician prescribes a medication to be kept on hand for an emergency, such as asthma or allergy medication, the parent must complete an **Authorization To Give Medication**, and submit an **Allergy Action Plan** or **Asthma Action Plan**. It is most important, that the teacher be notified of the necessary medication and proper way of administering the medication. Emergency medications will be kept in the classroom emergency bag for the duration of the school year.

All staff are certified to administer emergency medication (epi-pen, inhalers) and apply topical over the counter medications such as sunscreen, insect repellent and diaper cream. Only the director is authorized to administer any other over-the-counter or prescription medications.

## **Emergencies**

In the event of a medical emergency the parents will be notified, followed by the designated emergency contacts. In case of extreme emergencies, 911 will be contacted and a staff member will accompany the child to the emergency room. It is imperative that any changes in phone numbers or emergency contacts are conveyed to the preschool as soon as possible.

## **Accidents**

Parents will be notified immediately if a child becomes ill or seriously injured. In the case of a minor accident, an accident form will be filled out and given to the parent or caregiver at pick-up. In some cases, the director may also call the parent.

## **Discipline Policy**

At Etz Hayim Preschool, teachers take special care to gently guide children through the activities of the day. Naturally, there is an adjustment period for all children in the early weeks of school. Teachers ease this adjustment by establishing limits as necessary. With guidance from teachers, children are encouraged to verbalize their feelings and work out disputes. Children are encouraged to “use their words.”

Children are never allowed to engage in behaviors that pose a safety hazard to either themselves or others. If aggressive behaviors such as hitting or biting occur, the teacher will communicate to the parents immediately regarding the incident and work with parents to determine why the behavior is occurring.

## Miscellaneous

### Clothing

Please think of your child's comfort and provide simple clothing that is free of complicated fastenings. Toilet trained children need to be able to manage taking clothing off and on with minimum help. For example, please do not dress your child in overalls if they are unable to take them off.

Clothing should be appropriate for the type of activities that go on at school. **We get messy!** Long dresses and sandals are not safe on the playground. Please dress your child in sneakers. **Be attuned to the day's weather, as most of our days will be spent outdoors.** The day may start out cool and become warmer later. Please dress your child in layers that are easy to remove. During the winter months, we continue to play outside. Your child will need appropriate clothing – winter coat, boots, hat, mittens, etc.

Parents should leave one season- appropriate change of clothes at school. Clothing should include pants, shirt, socks, underwear, or diaper and wipes – whichever is appropriate. When possible, an extra pair of sneakers might be helpful. All clothes must be labeled with the child's name and placed inside a labeled zip-lock bag. Please check the items regularly to ensure they fit your growing child.

### Toys from Home

Toys from home will not be permitted in school during the 2022-2023 School Year.

### Snacks

Etz Hayim will supply a dry snack. Fruit will be provided by a fruit friend each day. Water bottles sent to and from school should be washed prior to coming back to school the next day.

### Birthdays

Birthdays are special, and the staff at Etz Hayim enjoys celebrating with your child. We are currently working on a variety of ways we can celebrate these special occasions in a safe manner. When planning a party at home, you may distribute invitations at school if every child in the class is receiving an invitation. Keep in mind that many families in our school observe the traditions of Conservative Judaism, and some children will not attend parties held on Saturdays or Jewish holidays.

### Social Media

We encourage you to take pictures and videos of your children when visiting the preschool. Please be aware that everyone has different privacy needs. Please do not post

pictures or videos with CEH teachers and staff or other people's children on Facebook, YouTube or other social media sites without asking permission of the families first.

## **Toilet Training**

A child must be developmentally ready to begin the process of learning to use the toilet independently. There is no right or wrong time. Etz Hayim Preschool does not have toilet-training requirements for any class. *The preschool considers a child fully toilet trained when s/he does not need to be asked or reminded to use the restroom, and when s/he alerts a teacher when s/he needs to use the toilet. A child should be able to hold his or her bladder and bowels for a few minutes after informing a staff member they need to use the restroom. Until such time, a child should come to school in diapers or pull-ups.*

As children are toilet training, we will support your efforts at home in the following ways:

- Build-in frequent bathroom breaks into the schedule for the youngest classes.
- Encourage children to use the restroom during the regular classroom bathroom break.
- Offer praise as children begin to master different steps of the toilet training process.
- Offer aide to a child only when requested by the child.
- Under no circumstance will CEH Preschool staff forcibly remove a child's clothing and seat them on the toilet as part of the toilet training process.

I acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of the 2022-2023 Parent Handbook.  
(Please sign, date and return this page no later than August 29, 2022).

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Parent(s) Signature

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Parent(s) Name Printed

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Date

Comments/Questions: