



# JRC Early Childhood Center

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## Parent Handbook

Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation | 303 Dodge Avenue, Evanston, IL 60202 | 847-328-7678 |

[www.jrc-evanston.org](http://www.jrc-evanston.org)

Dear Families,

Welcome to the JRC Early Childhood Center and thank you for allowing us to participate in the growth and development of your child. The Board of Directors of the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation of Evanston, Rabbi Rachel Weiss, Cantor Howard Friedland, Rabbi David Eber, and the staff at the JRC Early Childhood Center also welcome you and your children to our school. This handbook is designed to introduce you to our school—its philosophy, programs, policies, and procedures. Please read it and use it as a guide throughout your child's years at JRC. Feel free to contact me with any questions, comments, or concerns you have. We hope the information in this handbook will help answer your questions and make you feel at home at JRC.

I look forward to getting to know you and working together to create a wonderful and enriching preschool experience for your child.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelli Patt". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Shelli Patt  
JRC Early Childhood Director  
Phone: 847-328-7678, ext. 2227  
Fax: 847-328-2298  
Email: [spatt@jrc-evanston.org](mailto:spatt@jrc-evanston.org)

### **JRC Early Childhood Center Mission**

To provide high-quality early childhood education, with relationships as the foundation of a nurturing, joyful, and stimulating environment that supports children's unique abilities to explore through play in order to build positive self-esteem and successful patterns of learning and problem-solving, and to develop empathy and appreciation for others. By responding to diverse backgrounds and interests, the JRC Early Childhood Center gives children and families the opportunity to explore Jewish identity and ritual, and to build life-long foundations for learning.

## Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation

### Reconstructionist Judaism

Reconstructionists define Judaism as more than a religion. For us, it is an ever-evolving way of life, encompassing history, literature, art and music, land, and language.

Reconstructionist Judaism is a progressive, contemporary approach to Jewish life that integrates a deep respect for traditional Judaism with the insights and ideas of contemporary social, intellectual, and spiritual life.

We believe that we are involved in active Judaism. We cherish the traditional spiritual foundation bequeathed to us, and we are open to new interpretations and forms of religious expression. We are responsible for shaping the spiritual legacy we will leave to future generations.

### JRC Clergy and Staff

(all extensions are reached by dialing 847-328-7678)

#### Rabbi Rachel Weiss

ext. 2223, [rabbi@jrc-ewanston.org](mailto:rabbi@jrc-ewanston.org)

#### Cantor Howard Friedland

ext. 2232, [cantor@jrc-ewanston.org](mailto:cantor@jrc-ewanston.org)

#### Assistant Rabbi / Religious School Director

##### Rabbi David Eber

ext. 2225, [assistantrabbi@jrc-ewanston.org](mailto:assistantrabbi@jrc-ewanston.org)

#### Administrative Staff

Executive Director, Micky Baer

ext. 2224, [mbaer@jrc-ewanston.org](mailto:mbaer@jrc-ewanston.org)

Communications & Events Coordinator, Max Sender

ext. 2229, [mseparator@jrc-ewanston.org](mailto:mseparator@jrc-ewanston.org)

Clergy Assistant and Ritual Events Coordinator,

ext. 2222, [rsherman@jrc-ewanston.org](mailto:rsherman@jrc-ewanston.org)

Rachel Sherman

Administrative Assistant, Layhao Diep

ext. 2220, [ldiep@jrc-ewanston.org](mailto:ldiep@jrc-ewanston.org)

### Early Childhood Center Relationship to Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation

The concept of *belonging* is central to Reconstructionism. This year we are excited to welcome all Early Childhood Center families fully into the JRC Community. Therefore, your synagogue membership for the coming year is considered part and parcel with your Early Childhood Center registration. With membership comes responsibility and each family is asked to make a financial commitment in an amount that is comfortable and meaningful for them. It is not necessary to negotiate an amount. Simply complete your membership forms and return them to the JRC office.

The synagogue board offers us considerable support, financial and otherwise. We depend on this team approach to meet our operating expenses and to keep our school at the forefront of early childhood education.

As a member of JRC, you will receive the congregation newsletter and other communications from the synagogue. The Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation welcomes your participation in its many programs and services.

### Our Environment—JRC's Decision to Build Green

By studying the Jewish principle of *bal tashchit*, which appears in biblical text as well as in later rabbinic interpretation, we can learn about a Jewish environmental ethic that teaches “do not destroy or waste.” The preschool incorporates this value into its practices. Our curriculum and daily activities guide children in developing the Earth-friendly habits of reducing, reusing, and recycling. JRC's new building was awarded LEED Certification at the Platinum Level by the U.S. Green Building Council—the highest level of certification for green architecture. JRC was the first house of worship in the world to receive this designation! The LEED rating system judges five environmental categories: sustainable sites, water

efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. Features that support a healthy environment for our children include:

- Entry foyer floor mat: Designed for maximum collection of dirt at door to help with maintenance and indoor air quality.
- Polished concrete floors: Eliminate the need for adhesives to glue them in place and are easy to clean with green cleaners.
- Carpeting: Made with non-VOC, non-formaldehyde fibers that include recycled content and rapidly renewable corn content.
- Cabinets and shelving: Made with Environ Biocomposites's Dakota Burl cabinetry, emitting no VOCs and manufactured from waste sunflower husks, a rapidly renewable agricultural fiber product.

### **Accessibility**

The JRC Early Childhood Center follows the guidelines of the congregation: In keeping with the principles of Torah and in light of our understanding of Reconstructionist values, JRC will make every reasonable effort to make services, meetings, programs, activities, and ritual observances accessible to everyone.

## **Early Childhood Center**

### **Important Phone Numbers**

**847-328-7678**

Director: Shelli Patt ext. 2227, or cell phone: 847-636-7872  
Room 105: Preschool Classroom ext. 2237

### **About Our Staff**

Your child's classroom teachers will be the people you have the most contact and communication with during the school year. Our teachers are dedicated and committed to the principles of relationship, play-based learning for young children. We hire and retain teachers who meet or are working toward the credentials recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Our staff members work as a team to integrate our philosophies into all our early childhood experiences. Our program strives to hire staff members with coursework and training that prepare them to work with families of diverse races, cultures, languages, religious affiliations, and levels of observance. Our teaching staff must commit to completing all necessary training and staff development, including diversity training, training in working with children with special needs, health and safety training, CPR, infant and child resuscitation, infant and child first aid, knowledge of child development, training in observation and assessment of young children's growth and development, and education guidance in integrating Judaic concepts into early childhood classrooms. If an individual does not have this training as part of his or her formal education, JRC is committed to providing support for additional training. We also provide workshops and training for all staff to keep them informed on current early childhood knowledge.

Teachers' practices and behavior are guided by the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct (<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSETH05.pdf>), which includes diverse areas of relationships with each other, with parents, and with children. In order to maintain our professional standards, staff members are not allowed to be hired by families in the preschool.

## Consultant/Social Worker

The preschool has a consultant who is available to work with staff and families at our school on a part-time basis during the year. The consultant's role includes:

- Regular meetings with director and staff.
- Consultation as requested with parents and staff.
- Classroom observations (*will resume when Covid restrictions allow*)
- Facilitation and integration of information received from service providers—i.e., physicians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, and others—in planning for the children enrolled in our program.

## Family Participation

*Note for 2020-2021: Due to Covid related restrictions, family participation in classroom events, as well as family programming will be limited, and some forms of JRC's typical family participation will not be able to take place. As the year progresses, we hope to plan events that will bring our families and teachers together while maintaining health and safety. All parents are encouraged to share their ideas as we work together to build our school community in new ways!*

## Getting Involved

Participating in our Early Childhood Committee activities is a great way to get involved in your child's education. You can plan and participate in classroom and school wide activities and meet other parents. It is a great place to contribute your ideas that affect all areas of our school. Every family is a member of the Early Childhood Committee by virtue of its enrollment in our school, and we depend on your talents, energy, creativity, and support. Please contact Early Childhood Committee Chair Brooke Heinzmann for more information.

## Fundraising

The Early Childhood Committee leads our fundraising efforts to provide scholarships for preschool tuition and funds for general operating expenses and special projects. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact our current committee chairs or the preschool director.

## Ways to Donate

- **Annual Fall Social Fundraiser:** Donate goods or services to be used as silent-auction or raffle items. (*postponed for Fall 2020*)
- **Wish List:** Classrooms often ask for items to help with a project or learning activity.
- **Tzedakah Contribution:** Make a contribution to the JRC Early Childhood Fund to honor a life-cycle event, in memory of a loved one, or to mark an occasion or *simcha*. These funds are used for scholarships and/or to support special projects.
- **Your Talents and Time:** We always need your leadership and special talents.

## Parent Volunteer Program

In keeping with the Jewish tradition of strong commitment to community, our parents, families, and teachers work together to enrich our school and contribute to its fine reputation. Families' active involvement keeps our school flourishing with new ideas and new friendships. Our Early Childhood Committee will contact parents regarding opportunities for participation. (*Volunteer opportunities will be available once Covid restrictions allow*)

## Parent Visits to Classroom

Due to Covid-19, current DCFS regulations do not allow parents and family members to enter the classrooms. We look forward to when these restrictions will be lifted, and the preschool can once again be open for families to spend time visiting in our classrooms and sharing time, talents, and culture with us.

## Room Parents

Each class can have two or more room parents who volunteer to assist the teachers in organizing class celebrations and gifts. They may be asked to help deliver important information to families regarding school closings and events, act as liaisons between parents and the Early Childhood Committee, and assist in fundraising activities. *We will not be asking for volunteers to be Room Parents in 2020, but hope to have parents participate in planning events for the school.*

## Parent Coffees

Our parent committee works with a parent volunteer and arranges parent coffees—informal get-togethers at JRC that are usually held in the atrium right after drop-off in the morning. We publish the dates on the calendar, and we hope you can join us for coffee and tea, a snack donated by the hosting family, and some good conversation. These coffees are a great way to meet other parents and keep up to date on preschool activities. We sometimes use these coffees for informal discussions on topics that are of interest to parents or about issues particular to our school. *(Due to Covid restrictions, in-person parent coffees will not be held, but we look forward to parent get-togethers on Zoom!)*

## The Preschool Day

The children's preschool day includes many activities planned to support developmental growth in all areas of their lives. Teachers assist with morning separations and help facilitate transitions from one activity to another. **Free play:** The largest part of the children's morning will be spent choosing their own activities and interacting with playmates. Activity centers—science, manipulative, art, blocks, dramatic play, library, music, writing—and curricula are developed to reflect children's interests and to encourage their imagination, language skills, self-esteem, physical and cognitive development, and emotional growth. Following free-play time, children work cooperatively and develop the ability to clean up and put away toys. **Circle time:** Children sit together as a group, offering the opportunity to discuss concepts, listen to stories, plan for the day's activities, and contribute to the classroom as a whole. Children enjoy puppets, felt-board stories, songs, finger play, storytelling, and organized games during this time. **Large-motor activities:** Running, climbing, bike riding, and similar activities take place in the central play area outside of the classrooms and in the outdoor playground. **Walking trips:** We go outside every day, weather permitting. Once the children are comfortable in school, we begin to take short walks to local parks within a five-block radius. Emergency phone numbers and a first-aid kit are brought on all walks and field trips outside the building. We keep in cell-phone communication with the school director at all times. Staff ratios are maintained at a level to keep all children comfortable and safe. **Field trips:** Field trips are scheduled a few times during the year. Advance notice is given, and signed permission slips are required for any bus trips. Only seat-belted school buses are used. *(Walking trips to parks and field trips will be dependent on Covid restrictions and health and safety considerations).*

## Educational Philosophy and Practices

### Learning Environment and Teaching Practice

At JRC, our classroom practice is based on strong relationships with our students and families, developmental curriculum, emergent curriculum, thoughtful teacher reflection, and the community values of Reconstructionist Judaism.

Everything that happens in the classrooms springs from our relationships. We rely on our relationships with students and families to guide our planning. We rely on our relationship with the larger JRC community to integrate traditions that promote kindness, giving, and justice. We rely on our relationships with each other as education professionals to create a compassionate, safe, respectful environment in which children can thrive and learn through what comes most naturally to them: play.

Our first priority is to establish trust with our students and families, as careful attention is paid to nurturing the connections among children, parents, and teachers, thus enabling a comfortable separation that feels safe for everyone. Each child comes into the program with their own unique approach to learning. As the children grow and move through the program, they may have periods where they need help with separation again. We remain sensitive to separation issues throughout the program and employ the same strategies to help students who are new to JRC in the 3s and 4s classes. Every family has imparted the attitudes and traditions it values in the care of its children. With respect to these unique qualities of each family, we join with parents as part of a team of caring, nurturing teachers.

While many of our activities are centered on events in the Jewish calendar, children learn in an environment that is designed to foster exploration, inquiries, and curiosity using an emergent curriculum based on ideas and inspiration from the schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy. This curriculum focuses on providing active learning opportunities based on interest. Rather than planning lessons to be taught, we provide engaging, constructive activities reflecting interests that have emerged from the children. Choice in their play is another key element. Children always have several options to choose from. Every classroom has defined areas of interest, such as blocks or dramatic play. Throughout the year, some areas will be temporarily transformed into different types of play to explore child-inspired themes. In projects and use of materials, we focus on the process rather than the end product. We encourage children to try different approaches, ask questions, and follow their own curiosity.

The final part of our teaching practice is reflection. Only through observing and reflecting on how students participate do we recognize and integrate individualized learning needs. One student may need more or less stimulus. Another may need more or less support to participate comfortably. We consistently watch how the children engage themselves and reflect on how we can support them in exploring their learning environment.

### **Learning through Play & Developmental Curriculum**

We believe that children learn through constructive play. Play in a stimulating, nurturing environment is the way a child explores the world. Through this exploration in our program—in activity centers, with art materials, songs, movement, playmates, teachers, parents, nature, and more—your children construct the knowledge to interpret new experiences, develop Jewish identity, and, with their families, build a foundation for lifelong learning.

At JRC we understand and appreciate that children at the same age can represent a broad spectrum of developmental abilities and maturity. Our developmental curriculum meets the needs of children at a variety of developmental levels. Because our curriculum is developmental, it allows for adaptation and modification to ensure access to the curriculum for all children. Professional consultations are also made to help ensure a child's successful experience at preschool. Parents are welcome to bring any concerns or questions about their child's development to the attention of the teacher or director in order to create an appropriate learning environment for their child.

### **Judaic Curriculum**

JRC preschool integrates your child's Judaic learning into this rich fabric of daily activities. We have over 20 years of experience in developing preschool curriculum. Outstanding early childhood educators bring the joy, beauty, and excitement of Judaism into the classroom. We feel fortunate that Reconstructionist Judaism mirrors the same approach to learning that we support in our developmental program; through exploration and discovery we find ways to take in thousands of years of tradition and make them our own. Your child will share in the tastes, touch, sounds, sights, and smells of the holiday celebrations. The values

of Judaism such as *tikkun olam* (healing the world), *gemilut hasadim* (acts of loving kindness), and *tzedakah* (bringing justice to people through giving) are practiced in our themes and activities. We join the rabbi and the cantor for Shabbat celebrations and other opportunities to learn together.

### **Establishing a Peaceful Classroom**

Age-appropriate games, books, and themes are presented to encourage teamwork, cooperation, empathy, kindness, respect, and concern for the children's playmates and their environment. Teachers guide children and model positive conflict resolution and respect for each other in the way we talk and behave. Dramatic play is encouraged. Creating their own stories, drawings, and play situations are ways for children to express their feelings and make sense of their world. Teachers help facilitate cooperative and inclusive play. Gun and weapon toys are not allowed at school.

### **Learning Goals**

Through a creative, nurturing, joyful, and stimulating environment that is responsive to children's exploration, children can develop their individual and unique strengths and talents. Within the framework of the above practices, we strive to help children:

- Build positive self-image and self-esteem, and we partner with parents in helping children build Jewish identity and connections to the larger Jewish community.
- Develop strategies for learning and problem-solving.
- Develop self-confidence and self-reliance.
- Develop empathy and concern for others.
- Develop the skills needed for successful relationships: communicating and cooperating with, and appreciating, others
- Develop an appreciation of nature.

### **Assessment Process**

Assessment in early childhood education is the process of gathering and analyzing information about children in order to make decisions about future learning goals or experiences. Teachers at JRC observe children naturally during play and document their observations on paper. Sometimes photographs or pieces of the children's work are attached to the observations as part of the documentation. Teachers record what children are doing, saying, and asking about while they are at school. Documentation of children's learning is shared regularly with parents. We always invite you to share any information about your observations from home that may help us assess the whole picture of your child, and we include your input in our conference reports. Assessments include observations from all learning domains: cognitive, physical motor, language, and social/emotional development.

### **Conferences**

We schedule parent-teacher conferences twice a year. The dates will be announced in advance and are usually in the early fall and spring. These conferences provide an opportunity to discuss your child's growth and development based on our observations of your child in our program, as well as any questions or concerns you may have. If you want to meet at any other time with your child's teacher or the director, please call or email to schedule a time. If there is a problem or concern, parents should not wait until the formal conference. The director and teachers are always willing to schedule a time to discuss any issue that concerns our children and families.

### **Separation Philosophy**

Separation is a lifelong process. Parents and children have been developing the foundations for future separations by building close, warm, trusting, and dependable relationships with each other from the moment they meet. Children will use their experience with these relationships to establish new ones as their worlds

slowly enlarge to extended family and to places outside the home like preschool or day care. By taking the time needed to build our relationships with families and children, we get to know each other. Children use their experiences—each child in his or her own way—to develop comfort in their surroundings and trust of their teachers, and are able to interact using the materials and the environment in ways they enjoy and find familiar.

Children begin this process with us when they first come by for a visit and we meet each other. We will also give you a form to fill out that helps us get to know your family and child. Having favorite books or other materials in our classroom is just one way we would try to individualize and personalize your child's classroom so they will feel comfortable.

### **Our First Few Weeks**

Our priority during the first few weeks of school is to build strong relationships with each child and family. We talk to the children, engage them in play, watch what they do, listen to their words and ideas, and help them adjust to their new school experience. Familiar and favorite materials will be available for the children, and getting to know each other through songs and activities will be the focus of much of the curriculum for the first few weeks. Children will participate in establishing classroom rules. Throughout the year, we will talk about what makes a safe, fair, and fun environment where the children know the expectations and their ideas can be integrated into our curriculum planning and room setup.

The first few weeks of school may be a little different for each child and his or her parents. Parents and children will be developing goodbye rituals and routines. As we all get used to the routine of saying goodbye at the building door instead of in the classroom, the teachers and director will work together with you to help create a goodbye routine that helps your child and family. We ask parents and caregivers to return to school on time at the end of the day to reconnect with their children and end our school together as we began.

## **JRC Early Childhood Center Guidance and Discipline Policy**

### **Statement of Philosophy**

The JRC Early Childhood Center believes that the goals of setting limits (discipline) are to help children gain self-control, assume responsibility for their actions, become aware of the rights of others, and to protect the safety of the group and individuals.

### **Staff Implementation**

Discipline in our classrooms is the action taken by the staff to guide and encourage respectful, cooperative, and safe behavior. Modeling behavior, using books and stories to demonstrate situations, creating understandable guidelines and rules in the classroom with the children's involvement, and helping children to be aware of and understand consequences of certain behaviors are examples of discipline in the classrooms. Staff members will help individual children develop self-control and assume responsibility for their actions. Discipline will be proportionate and logically related to a child's action, developmentally appropriate, designed for different ages, and responsive to the learning styles and needs of individual children. The staff will make the child aware of the relationship between the action and its consequences. Limits and consequences will be made clear and understandable to the child before and as part of any disciplinary action, and those limits and consequences will be consistently enforced. Discipline may include redirection into another activity, loss of privilege or activity in the area or activity where misbehavior occurs, and firm, positive statements about acceptable and unacceptable behavior. When there is a specific plan for responding to a child's pattern of unacceptable behavior, all staff members who interact with the child will be aware of the plan and cooperate in its implementation. All staff members will have read and signed a copy of this Guidance and Discipline Policy at the time of employment.

## **Parents' Involvement**

Discipline is the responsibility of adults who have an ongoing relationship with a child. When there is a specific discipline plan for responding to a child's pattern of unacceptable behavior, then the child's parents or guardians, and all staff members who have a relationship with and interact with the child, will be aware of the plan and cooperate in its implementation. All parents will read and sign a copy of this Guidance and Discipline Policy at the time of their child's enrollment. Written rules that set the limits of behavior for the protection of the group and individuals will be available to parents, staff, and children. They will be stated in the positive whenever possible, pertain to important situations, and be understandable and enforceable. Clinical behavior-management plans may be developed to meet the needs of a child if developed with the parent and a professional clinician. When a clinical plan is recommended, the director will meet with our social worker/consultant and the child's parents/guardians on a regular basis to stay informed and to be able to respond to the outcomes of any intervention and the changes in the child's behavior or area of development seen in the classroom.

## **Children's Involvement**

Rules that set the limits of behavior for the protection of the group and individuals will be explained in an understandable manner to the children and will be stated in the positive whenever possible. Limits and consequences will be made clear and understandable to the child before and as part of any disciplinary action, and those limits and consequences will be consistently enforced. When age-appropriate, children will have reasonable opportunity to resolve their own conflicts, and staff will encourage and facilitate this type of conflict resolution. The curriculum includes stories and other examples to model conflict resolution and other appropriate means of solving disagreements. Children have opportunities to explore, reflect on, and express their feelings about these situations.

## **Prohibited Behavior in All Child Care Settings by All Present on School Premises**

The following are prohibited: corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching, and other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear; threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest, or use of the bathroom; abusive or profane language; any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment; and any form of emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child.

## **General Conduct on School Premises**

To ensure that our school environment remains safe and comfortable for families, children, and staff, we ask that everyone adhere to these policies. No verbal or physical abuse is to be displayed toward any child or adult within the center or surrounding property. Any display of inappropriate behavior will be addressed immediately. All members of the center staff are mandated reporters, and any sign of physical or mental abuse of a child must, by law, be reported to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Weapons of any kind are prohibited. DCFS screens all staff for criminal background.

## **Procedures for Termination of Enrollment Because of Disciplinary Issues**

If a child continues to have difficulty adjusting to the group setting, and difficult behavior persists, the teachers, school director, and consultant will work with the child's family to problem-solve. The Early Childhood Center reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of any child based on the following DCFS regulation: "Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the facility, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be discharged from the facility." In all instances, if the JRC Early Childhood Center decides it is necessary to terminate enrollment, the director will work with parents to try to meet the child's and parents' needs when the child leaves the facility, including referrals to other agencies or facilities.

## **Confidentiality**

In order to participate in our program, parents/guardians will be asked to share private and confidential information with us. The information on all forms, including screenings, assessments, and therapeutic reports, is considered confidential, and only JRC Early Childhood teachers, the school director, and consultant, will have access to it on a need-to-know basis. Others will not be given access to this information without parent's/guardian's written consent, unless it becomes necessary to ensure you or your child's immediate safety or welfare. All confidential information is kept in each child's file in a locked drawer. Information such as family history, professional reports, assessments, and medical reports will be used to create and develop a curriculum and an environment that meet the needs of each child. Parents may request access to their child's file. Information is not released outside the school without parent/guardian request and signed permission.

Written observations of children and their work samples as well as photos are put in a hanging file folder designated for that child, and kept in the classroom's locked file cabinet. The Director also has a file about the child which is kept locked in the school office. We provide a full explanation of our confidentiality policies to parents at the beginning of the year and again at conferences each year. These policies are also discussed whenever there is a situation where information needs to be shared. We inform parents of individuals in our school who would have access to children's screenings and assessments, and the reason for this access. Sharing these policies with parents at relevant times ensures that they understand that they decide who gets information about their children.

## **Children with Special Needs**

It is not unusual for preschool-age children to receive supportive services outside the school, including speech and language therapy, physical therapy, and social/emotional therapy. We are committed to providing services that meet the needs of all children. It is important that the JRC Early Childhood Center be considered part of the team of professionals working to enrich each child's preschool experience. Reports from agencies and therapists providing services should be sent to the director before enrollment. We will need access to such reports that could help facilitate each child's adjustment to preschool. All information will be treated confidentially. We do not send any information from our files to agencies or other schools without parent's/guardian's written authorization.

We are committed to providing individualized instruction that addresses the needs of each child in the program. Classroom observations and documentation of the child's skills and developmental growth are monitored during the year. Our consultant provides support for teachers' observations, and with input from teachers, the director, and parents, may identify children who might benefit from additional services. When necessary, with parents'/guardians' consent, we will help with the transfer of information to a new school to assist in planning for the classroom change.

## **Outside Services**

Because early intervention with special needs is so critical, many times children in our program receive support services from outside agencies and/or practitioners, such as occupational therapists, speech therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, and physicians. It is important that the preschool have access to any information from these outside providers that would help facilitate the child's adjustment to preschool and maximize his or her educational and social experiences. In order to facilitate a child's success in preschool, the JRC Early Childhood Center may ask that a parent sign a release to allow the director, teachers, and developmental consultant to receive reports from professional service providers and communicate directly with them. This exchange would enable the center to:

- Understand the child's need and help the child.
- Be consistent with the approach taken by the family and outside consultants/professionals.
- Focus on those developmental areas that require the most attention.

All information exchanged will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be shared with JRC staff on a need-to-know basis. No information will be sent to any other school, agency, consultant, or therapist without the parents'/guardians' written permission.

### **Communication**

Open communication between families and the staff is valued and encouraged. We are always interested in knowing how you and your child feel about our program. Please let us know about any changes in your child's home life, such as expecting a new sibling, parents' travel, a death in the family, etc. If we are informed about these significant events, we can better understand certain behavior and help a child deal with the issues that may arise.

Communication with families will be through the email address provided by families at the time of enrollment. Important information, newsletters, special events and pictures will be shared so families can be involved in their child's JRC experience. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher through email. For Fall 2020, teachers will use the email address [jrcnitzanim@gmail.com](mailto:jrcnitzanim@gmail.com).

Teachers will keep parents informed of their child's progress by describing and documenting school participation and behaviors and sharing this information to the parent on a timely basis through emails or phone calls. Teachers will also keep parents advised of classroom activities and events through newsletters, notes, etc. Classroom newsletters are distributed each week. In addition, communication from the director or the congregation is sent home as needed, and group email bulletins are sent.

### **Effective Ways for Parents to Negotiate Difficulties, Differences, and Grievances**

Should you have a concern about your child at school, bring your concern immediately to the attention of your child's teachers. If you feel the issue has not been resolved, please bring it to the attention of the Early Childhood Director. She will work with you and your child's teacher to address your concern. You may always address administrative or personal concerns to the JRC executive director.

### **Calling the Preschool**

In case of absences, late arrival, last-minute changes in pickup plans, or for emergencies during the day, please make call the JRC office at 847-328-7678. You can leave a message in the office, or ask to speak to the child's teacher or the director (x2227). You can also text the director at 847-636-7872. Please be aware that while center staff are in the classroom with children, we may not be able to answer your call or immediately reply to your text. If you need to leave a message about an urgent or timely matter, please call the JRC office.

### **School Closing for Severe Weather**

In the event of an emergency or severe weather, the preschool may decide to close school. The decision will be made by 8 a.m., and parents will be notified via email.

### **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

Children need to be dressed for play with comfortable clothing that can get dirty and that is easy for young hands to fasten and take on and off. Many school activities are messy. We use washable art materials and encourage children to wear smocks, however clothes may still become stained. All clothing should be clearly labeled with child's name. We go outside every day, weather permitting, so children should be dressed for the weather. During winter months, children should wear snowpants, waterproof boots, hats, scarves and waterproof mittens each day.

Please send an extra complete set of labeled clothing (diapers, underwear, pants, shirt, and socks). A labeled zip-lock bag will be kept at school for emergency changing. Teachers will change diapers and clothes

as needed, and send home soiled clothes. Please replace this set of clothes as needed. Children who are new to toilet learning may need additional extra clothes and shoes kept at school.

Due to Covid-19 precautions **all children should wear masks while at school.** Please provide 2 extra masks (labeled with your child's name) to keep at school.

Toys and other personal belongings from home may be lost or broken at school, so we encourage that these items be kept at home. In addition, due to current Covid-19 sanitation rules, soft toys may not be brought into the classroom, and any toys from home may be difficult to sanitize. If your child uses a "lovey" or other comfort object, please let your child's teacher know before school starts so we can make a plan for it.

### **Toileting**

Toilet learning is an individual process and is not required for enrollment in our program. Teachers work with families to support each child's toilet learning process, and partner with parents to create a consistent approach between home and school. For younger children, teachers check diapers for changing and/or take the children to the bathroom at least once during the morning. If your child is in the process of toilet learning and needs more frequent reminders, please let us know. Older children are to use the bathroom before snack time and before outdoor play.

In accordance with NAEYC health guidelines, we ask that parents provide only commercially available disposable diapers or pull-ups, unless the child has a medical reason that does not permit their use (a health provider must document the medical reason). If a child requires a cloth diaper, it must have an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit. Health department regulations require that cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces be immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are very special events for children and their families, and we enjoy celebrating them in school. Please make arrangements with the teacher for the date and time. To ensure the safety of our food-allergic children and to contribute to the celebration, if you would like to bring a snack, we ask you to provide a fresh fruits snack or 100% fruit frozen bar for birthdays. Please talk with your child's teacher for other ideas of how to honor your child's birthday at school.

### **Policies and Procedures**

***This section reflects policies and procedures that are in place due to Covid-19 related regulations from DCFS, the Illinois Department of Health, and the CDC. As these regulations change, our policies and procedures will be updated and a revised section of this handbook will be shared with families.***

### **Health Screening**

Before you come to school in the morning, please review your child's health, and the health of the adult who is bringing your child to school. Common symptoms of Covid-19 include: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, vomiting and/or diarrhea, chills and/or repeated shaking, muscle pain, headache, congestion or runny nose, loss of taste or smell. Anyone exhibiting these symptoms should not enter the JRC building. If your child has had any of these symptoms within the past 24 hours, please keep your child at home, notify the school, and call your physician. We also ask that only symptom-free adults bring your child to school. Even if the adult is not entering the building, we want to avoid exposure to the staff greeting families at the door, and to any other families they may inadvertently be near during arrival time.

More detailed explanation of our health policies and exclusion for symptoms of illness is in the “Health Policy” section of this handbook.

## Arrival

Our arrival procedure is designed to encourage social distancing so that only one child receives a health screening and enters the building at a time. If you are driving to school, you may park in the loading zone or in the parking lot on the south side of Mulford St. If you are walking or biking, or walking from your parked car, we ask that you wait with your child in a spot on the sidewalk that allows you to keep a 6-foot distance from other families. Distancing spots will be marked on the sidewalk.

- Arrival will start at 9:10AM, through the door that enters directly into the lobby.
- Please wait your turn to enter. The director will wave to you when it’s your turn.
- When you arrive, your child’s temperature will be checked using a contact-free thermometer and will be recorded. You will be asked if your child has fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, vomiting and/or diarrhea, chills and/or repeated shaking, muscle pain, headache, congestion or runny nose, loss of taste or smell. If your child has a fever of 100.4F or above, or any of the symptoms listed, they cannot attend school, and must follow the Exclusion Policy for Suspected or Diagnosed COVID-19 cases.
- Your child should come to school wearing a mask. We will have extras if needed.
- Please sign-in your child on the clipboard. Hand sanitizer and clean pens will be provided.
- We encourage you to say goodbye to your child at the door. If your child is having a difficult transition, one parent or caregiver can accompany the child into the building and wait with them in designated area to give more time for goodbyes. Before entering the building, the parent or caregiver’s temperature will be checked and they will be asked the symptom screening questions.
- A teacher will be in the hallway to greet your child once you have said goodbye, and to walk your child to the classroom or playground.. Children will wash their hands before entering the classroom or playground.

In case of rain, please bring an umbrella. If the weather is too inclement for screening at the lobby door, the health screening will take place at the vestibule entry. There will always be signage or school staff indicating which door to use.

## Dismissal

Dismissal is at 12PM. At dismissal time, children will be walked to the lobby door, and released individually to their parent or other pick up person. Please sign out your child and any other children you are taking home. **No child can be released until signed out by the child’s parent/guardian or someone with written authorization from the child’s parent/guardian.** Anyone picking up must be authorized on your pickup list, or otherwise authorized in writing to pick up your child. If we have not met or do not recognize the person picking up, we will ask for photo identification, so please remind anyone picking up to bring their ID.

## Late Policy

Please come on time to pick up your child. Your child expects and anticipates your arrival. If an emergency arises, please call or text the director so that we are aware of the pick-up plan and can reassure your child that you will be arriving soon.

## Health Policy

To protect the health and safety of children and staff, and in accordance with DCFS regulations, children who experience any of these symptoms may not attend school. If any of these symptoms become present during the school day, parents will be called to pick up their child from school.

- Fever of 100.4 F or higher
- Illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities
- Illness that calls for greater care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children
- Fever with behavior change or symptoms of illness
- Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing or other signs of possible severe illness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting in the previous 24 hours, unless the vomiting is determined to be due to a noncommunicable condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration
- Mouth sores associated with the child's inability to control his or her saliva, until the child's physician or the local health department states that the child is noninfectious
- Rash with fever or behavior change, unless a physician has determined the illness to be noncommunicable
- Purulent conjunctivitis, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Strep throat (streptococcal pharyngitis), until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated and until the child has been without fever for 24 hours without fever reducing medication
- Head lice, until the morning after the first treatment
- Scabies, until the morning after the first treatment
- Chicken pox (varicella), until at least 6 days after onset of rash
- Whooping cough (pertussis), until 5 days of antibiotic treatment have been completed
- Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling
- Measles, until 4 days after disappearance of the rash
- Symptoms that may be indicative of one of the serious, communicable diseases identified in the Illinois Department of Public Health Control of Communicable Diseases Code (77 Ill. Adm. Code 690).

Returning to school after a contagious disease must be cleared with the director and may require a physician's note.

## Suspected or Diagnosed COVID-19 Cases

Due to current conditions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with guidance from DCFS and the Illinois Department of Public Health, any child exhibiting common symptoms of Covid-19 will be excluded from school. These symptoms include: Fever of 100.4F or higher, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, vomiting and/or diarrhea, chills and/or repeated shaking, muscle pain, headache, congestion or runny nose, loss of taste or smell. **If any of these symptoms become present during the school day, parents will be called to pick up their child from school.**

Any child or staff member suspected of having COVID-19 or any other contagious or reportable disease, or having been in contact with a person suspected or diagnosed with COVID-19, shall be excluded from JRC Early Childhood Center until written documentation is provided by a physician that the child or staff member is no longer communicable and may return to JRC Early Childhood Center.

**In accordance with guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), any child or staff member who:**

A. Tests positive for COVID-19 **or** had COVID-like symptoms without COVID-10 testing and was exposed to a confirmed case:

- Must stay home at least 10 calendar days from onset of symptoms **AND** for 24 hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication) **AND** improvement of symptoms.
- Provide a Release from Isolation Letter or other documentation issued by their local health department to return to school.

B. Has symptoms of COVID-19 with a negative COVID-19 diagnostic test:

- Must stay home until symptoms have improved/resolved per return-to school criteria for diagnosed condition, and treatment has been provided per school policies.
- If the individual has been a close contact to a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case, the 14 calendar-day quarantine must be completed.
- If the individual is a close contact to a confirmed case, the school is experiencing an outbreak, or the local health department requires validation, documentation of a negative RT-PCR COVID-19 test is needed. In other situations, rapid PCR or negative antigen test is also acceptable.

C. Has symptoms of an alternative diagnosis without negative COVID-19 test:

- Must stay home until symptoms have improved/resolved per return-to school criteria for diagnosed condition, and treatment has been provided per school policies.
- Provide a medical note documenting that there is no clinical suspicion for COVID-19 infection and that indicates an alternative diagnosis.

D. Has symptoms without diagnostic testing or clinical evaluation:

- Must stay home at least 10 calendar days from onset of symptoms **AND** for 24 hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication) **AND** improvement of symptoms.
- Provide a medical note documenting that the individual and household contacts are afebrile without fever-reducing medication and symptoms have improved.

E. Is an asymptomatic close contact to a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case:

- Must stay home for 14 calendar days after last exposure to the COVID-19 case.
- If COVID-19 illness develops, must then stay home for at least 10-days from the onset of symptoms or a positive COVID-10 test.
- Provide a Release from Quarantine Letter or other documentation issued by their local health department to return to school.

For any of these health situations, in the case that a longer exclusion period or additional requirements are mandated by the Evanston Department of Public Health (EDPH), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), DCFS, the CDC, or any other governmental authority, the requirements and mandates of that agency will be followed in determining when the child can return to JRC Early Childhood Center.

If a child or staff member is diagnosed with Covid-19, the Early Childhood Director will immediately notify the Evanston Department of Health, Illinois Department of Public Health, and DCFS. JRC Early Childhood Center will follow the recommendations of these regulatory agencies regarding any full or partial closure of the preschool. Families and all staff will be notified in writing immediately when any communicable disease or condition (including Covid-19) has been introduced into the program. The child or staff member will not be identified by name to families or other staff to preserve the confidentiality of all individuals.

### **Illness at School**

If a child becomes ill at school, we will first attempt to contact the parents, and then the names on the Emergency Notification Form, to immediately come and pick up the child. The ill child will be separated from other children and made comfortable in a location that is supervised by the director or a staff member familiar to the child.

### **Child Health Emergency Policy**

In case of an emergency, we will call 911 first, and then we will try to notify parents. If parents cannot be reached, we will go down the names of people on the child's Emergency Notification Form. Please let us know of any changes in work or home phone numbers for you and for those on your emergency list. You will be asked to check and re-sign your form at intervals during the school year.

### **Medicine**

A current and specific signed medical release form must be on file for our staff to administer any medication to your child. Please advise the teacher if your child is currently on medication or has recently recovered from an illness. All medicine that is administered to a child during preschool must be given to the director. Prescription medication, including EpiPens, must have child's name, expiration date, and dosage on the label. Over-the-counter medication require a doctor's note with instructions for proper dosage. Parents must provide and replace any medications kept at school before their expiration date. We cannot administer medicine that has passed its expiration date.

### **Children with Allergies**

If your child has an allergy or health condition that requires special foods, medications, or treatments/accommodations, your physician or health-care provider must complete and sign a treatment plan. That plan must be on file at JRC with health and immunization forms at the time of enrollment. We may require a planning meeting with parents/guardians, the preschool director, and your child's teacher to go over the plan to determine if we have the capacity to administer it and, if we do, to determine what will be needed. In order to administer the treatment plan, parents/guardians must provide all medications and replace any expired medications. They may be asked to pay for any additional staffing or other expenses incurred, and to provide special food or pay for its cost. The plan is reviewed at least every six months to keep it up-to-date

and relevant. With your signed permission, the plan can be shared with other staff and posted in the classroom.

### **Medical Forms and Immunizations**

In order to enroll in preschool, children must have a health examination within six months of initial enrollment and a completed health form, which must be updated every two years. We maintain a calendar file and will notify you ahead of time when we will need an updated health form. We recommend that you update your child's health form at each annual physical and give us a copy so that your child's file is always complete and your child's enrollment is not jeopardized. The health form must be signed by a physician or medical practitioner, and the parent section must be completed and signed. The immunizations due by the child's second birthday must be up to date based on the schedule recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics in order for us to accept your enrollment forms. **To be in compliance with regulations of the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), children entering our preschool must show vaccination proof (signed and dated by a physician or medical practitioner. No exemptions will be granted unless approved by IDPH, and DCFS, and the JRC Early Childhood Center director.**

### **Building Security**

During preschool hours, families must use the main entrance, on Mulford at the corner of Mulford and Dodge. Please press the doorbell button on the post to the left of the door to be admitted. Staff members inside the building use a security camera and/or voice communication to decide whether to admit visitors. Anyone who is not recognized will be asked to identify themselves and, if admitted, will need to sign in at the JRC office. You may exit at any of the doors on Mulford. **Please be sure that when you enter and exit the building, your children are close to you and you can see them.**

No one other than staff members, parents/guardians, and those authorized by parents/guardians are allowed in the Early Childhood Center when preschool is in session. *Due to current Covid-19 regulations, no one except children and Early Childhood Center staff may enter the classrooms.* If someone is not recognized, or there is a question about someone's reason for being in the center, a staff member will ask that person to identify himself or herself, including requesting an ID, in order to determine whether that person may stay. We follow our risk-management plan for maintaining the physical safety and security of the building, including updating staff members on evacuation plans for fires, tornados, and other emergencies.

### **Fire/Tornado and Evacuation Drills**

Every class participates in monthly fire drills, seasonal tornado drills, and evacuation drills. These are unannounced, and children and teachers leave the building immediately without taking personal items. Teachers take emergency contact numbers and attendance sheets with them. Classes meet at a designated area outside the building, attendance is taken, and classes return to the building. JRC staff is designated during these drills to assist teachers with this process so that there is always enough staff to keep the children safe and calm. If we ever need to evacuate the building and are unable to return due to unsafe conditions, you will be called and asked to come as quickly as possible to pick up your child at our designated location: The Levy Center.

### **Integrated Pest Management**

Structural and landscape pests can pose significant hazards to people, property, and the environment. JRC incorporates integrated pest management procedures for control of pests to ensure the health and safety of children, staff, and all others using our buildings and grounds. Integrated pest management addresses the prevention of pest problems through natural, nontoxic measures. These measures include improved sanitation, the addition of physical barriers, and the modification of habitats that attract or harbor pests. Integrated pest management relies primarily on nontoxic cultural and natural agents and only uses chemical

pesticides when necessary. When it is determined that a pesticide must be used, the least hazardous material and method of application will be chosen, and parents will be notified if this is necessary.

## **Financial Policies**

### **Tuition**

Early Childhood Tuition payments are made online through Shulcloud, JRC's online membership portal, or paid by check. Please make checks payable to JRC.

If you are a returning family, all tuition payments and school fees from the previous school year must be paid in full before a child can begin school.

Payment options for the Early Childhood Program tuition are:

1. Pay your tuition in full by December 1, 2020.
2. Monthly payments charged to the payment method entered into Shulcloud, (credit card or automatic bank withdrawal). All payments must be scheduled to be completed by May 1, 2021. A 3% processing fee is added to payments by credit card.

### **Financial Aid**

Limited scholarship funds may be available upon request. Please send a letter at the time of registration and include the reason, and the amount of scholarship assistance requested to the Shelli Patt, Early Childhood Director, at [spatt@jrc-evanston.org](mailto:spatt@jrc-evanston.org).

If you are enrolling your child in a Jewish preschool, you may qualify for a tuition gift voucher from \$500-\$2,000, depending on how many days your child attends. For more information and an application, go to <http://www.juf.org/rightstart>

### **Tuition Refund Policy**

JRC offers an exceptional Early Childhood Center and a great deal of care and expense goes into ensuring that your child has an enriching experience in our program. Should a family decide to withdraw their child from school, JRC will retain the prorated tuition for the length of time that the child attended, plus one additional month.

Classes will run only if there is sufficient registration. If a class is canceled by JRC due to low enrollment, any payments made toward tuition will be refunded.

In the case of a long-term classroom or preschool closure that is more than 14 days, a prorated refund for tuition during the closure will be issued. No refunds will be issued for a closure shorter than 14 days, or for children's absences due to illness, vacation, or parental choice to not attend. Refunds will not be issued in the case of weather-related closures or other non-Covid related unavoidable circumstances.

**We look forward to a wonderful school experience for you as well as your child. We appreciate the opportunity to share this precious time in your child's life with you. You can be sure that we will do everything possible to make this a happy and successful experience.**

**Parent/Guardian Receipt of Parent Handbook**

I have received and read the JRC Early Childhood Center Parent Handbook, and I agree to adhere to the policies within.

Signed by Parent/Guardian\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Child's name\_\_\_\_\_