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GAN CHAYA PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024

5783/5784



**Gan Chaya Preschool • Young Israel-Chabad
3696 Fisher Road • Palm Harbor, FL 34683
727-789-0408**

Gan Chaya's Parent Handbook 2023-2024

Welcome!

Gan Chaya is a Jewish preschool inspired by the principles of the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Central to the philosophy is a deep respect for the potential in young individuals.

Our professionally trained staff is dedicated to helping each child develop while tending to their emotional growth and well-being.

Gan Chaya sees each child as a unique and precious gift entrusted into its care. We welcome every child regardless of background or affiliation and appreciate their differences.

The school is devoted to helping children learn social skills, building their self-confidence, and teaching them the preliminary skills to explore and experience the world around them.

Our curriculum is woven with the timeless values and morals of our heritage. Children are introduced to Jewish traditions and holidays, which are integrated into our daily routine and interactive play.

Our program is specifically designed to create a warm and supportive environment that will nurture your child's unique style of learning and discovery.

We ask you to please review this handbook carefully.

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Non-Discrimination/ Inclusion Policy

Gan Chaya Jewish Preschool admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, or national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational or admissions policies, hiring, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

COMMUNICATION

A. Open communication between staff and parents is very important. During the orientation process, please share with us your child's likes, dislikes, and personality traits. As the year progresses, please inform the school of any changes in your child's attitude toward school. In turn, the staff will share with you your child's experiences and activities. For weekly updates and pictures, check our Facebook Group page.

B. There are two parent-teacher conferences during the year. These conferences are an opportunity for the parents and staff to discuss their child's progress. Of course, any time you wish to speak to a teacher, please call the school and leave a message for that teacher. Your call will be returned at the earliest convenient time. We also have an open-door policy, and parents are welcome to enter at any time if it is not disrupting the students' learning time.

THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF YOUR CHILD

A. Your child's health is important to us. Each student's **Health Exam and Certificate of Immunization must be completed and submitted to the office before the first day of school. Your child may not attend school without updated forms. Some children may not be fully immunized.** Your pediatrician will have the appropriate forms.

B. We count on you to recognize the following symptoms of ill health such as **fever, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, or other illness**, and we trust that you will not bring your child to school sick (Your child must be free of fever for at least **24 hours** before returning to school). If your child has developed a communicable illness, please let us know so we can inform other parents. **Regarding COVID-19, please keep us informed if anyone in your family or your child has been exposed, and we will be following the guidance of our local Health Department.**

C. If your child is ever hurt or becomes ill at school, we will take whatever initial steps are necessary and appropriate and will contact you immediately. If your child is ill, we will ask you or the authorized person listed on the emergency form, to come and pick up your child **within one hour** of being notified.

D. If your child receives a minor injury or bruise at school, appropriate first aid will be administered. An Incident Report will be filled out by the teacher and signed by the director, indicating the time and description of what occurred. A copy will be sent home to the parent that day.

E. We are not permitted to administer any medication without written permission from a parent. This policy applies to both prescribed and “over-the-counter” medication. **Please contact the office to obtain the appropriate forms.**

F. Head Lice: All children will be checked periodically for lice or nits. Any child found with lice or nits in their hair will be sent home and can only return to school with a Doctor’s letter stating that they are free of lice and nits.

WHAT TO SEND WITH YOUR CHILD

A. Two full sets of change of clothing in a large Ziploc bag marked with your child’s name.

B. If your child is not trained, please send a package of diapers and a box of wipes. We will notify you when a new box is needed.

C. For children who stay for the afternoon, please send a small labeled blanket for rest time. If sending a pillow, please be sure it is a travel-size pillow. (They will be sent home each Friday for washing. Please return them on Monday.)

D. Children should wear washable, comfortable, and easy-to-put-on clothes. **Children must wear sturdy shoes such as sneakers or tennis shoes. Sandals and thongs are not permitted.**

E. The school provides age-appropriate toys. Children should **not bring toys** from home, except on your child’s “sharing day.” If you have a book or special CD that may be of interest to all of the children, we would enjoy sharing this with the class, but please consult the teacher.

SNACKS AND LUNCHES

Please provide a Kosher and nutritious snack for your child. Children who stay for lunch should bring a **Dairy** or **Pareve** lunch in a **labeled lunch box**, with an ice pack to keep food fresh with the appropriate cooling or thermal containers. **Candy should not be sent.** Please see our Nutrition Policy for detailed information.

Food and Nutrition Policy

Good nutrition is vital to children's learning and physical development. These child care nutrition policies have been designed to encourage the development of good eating habits that will last a lifetime.

In order to promote healthy eating habits, food is available only at scheduled times. Children who choose not to eat will be offered food again at the next scheduled meal or snack. Meal and snack times are planned so that no child will go more than three hours without being offered food.

Children at our preschool:

- have fresh, clean water available at all times and are encouraged to drink water regularly throughout the day.
- will eat routinely at scheduled break times.
- eat in a positive, social environment with staff who model healthy eating behaviors.

Our Preschool Teachers:

- provide encouragement that is not related to food or drink.
- understand and promote the importance of a balanced breakfast and regular meals for children.
- teach the importance of healthy meals and snacks as part of the curriculum.

Our Preschool Parents:

- Provide a choice of at least 2 food groups for each snack and meal (for example- yogurt and grapes for morning snacks; pasta, cucumbers with hummus, and string cheese for lunch - all in a labeled lunchbox with proper cooling or heating packs.)
- **DO NOT send in candy, sugary foods, and food with little to no nutritional value.**
- understand that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Please make sure your child eats before school time.
- understand that this is a Kosher preschool and only send in Dairy or Parve foods.

Food Allergy Statement: Accommodations for food allergies will be made on a case-by-case basis. If the allergy is severe and life-threatening, the specified foods will not be served. In the case of an allergy so severe that it is dangerous for the child to come into contact with small amounts of the food or breathe in its odor, we will take all reasonable precautions to prevent an allergic reaction, with the understanding that complete protection is not possible.

KOSHER POLICY

Kosher means different things to different people. At Gan Chaya, we honor and respect each family's level of practice, but at the school, we keep a very strict standard. It is very important that staff and family members follow the kosher policies and help keep the facility completely kosher according to the standards that are set.

- Staff cannot share any of their personal food products with students.
- Staff will not allow children to share food products from home with other children in school.
- Staff or Parents cannot use the school oven or microwave to warm up any personal food.

All food products must be approved by the director before they can be shared in school. If parents have any questions or concerns regarding the kosher food policy, please contact the director, who will clarify and resolve any concerns parents bring forth.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthday parties may be celebrated at the Shabbos Party on Friday. Please make arrangements with the director. The school provides healthy homemade muffins or a special ice cream treat for a fee of \$20. To facilitate the growth of our Preschool, we ask each family to donate a **special item** to your classroom in honor of your child's birthday. Please ask to see our ***Class Wish List*** before your child's birthday.

MITZVAH NOTES

Children are encouraged to bring Mitzvah notes from their parents, describing the ***Mitzvot*** (good deeds) they have done at home. There will be Mitzvah notes provided on the front table in the lobby to fill out.

TZEDAKAH

One of the most beautiful Mitzvot is Tzedakah (Charity). **Please send a bag of coins or \$4 cash for us to make change at the beginning of the school year to last the entire school year.** We find that children derive much joy from giving Tzedakah each day while learning the act of kindness and giving.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

A. Our Early Arrival Program begins at **8:00 am**, which is available for all students. School begins at **9:00 am**.

B. Arrival: Punctuality is important. Please arrive **on time** with your child. It is best for your child's adjustment to school to begin the day together with the rest of the class. Please let the director know if you will be bringing your child in late. Please **try not to linger** in the classroom when dropping off your child.

C. Dismissal: It is important to pick up your child at the scheduled dismissal time. Our half-day and VPK non-wrap-around program dismissal are at **12:30 pm**. When picking up your child at this time, please wait by the door for the teacher to bring your child to you (walking into the classroom disrupts our classroom routine). For those who stay for our full-day program, dismissal will begin at **4:40 pm** until **4:55 pm**. The teacher **will bring your child to you** at the circular driveway.

D. All students must be **picked up no later than 4:55 pm**. **The Preschool doors are closed at 5:00 pm**. A **late fee of \$15, plus \$1 per minute**, will be added to your next tuition payment for any child in school at **5:01 pm**. If you need to pick up your child earlier than dismissal time, please contact us so we can bring your child to your car without disrupting learning time.

E. If **someone other than the parent** is picking up your child, please inform us in writing that morning. We **will not release** a child to any other person without written permission. Please ensure we have all emergency release names on your child's Enrollment Form. In cases of emergency, you may email or text us with the person's name and send them with a valid ID to be verified.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

The Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) offers interested parents a chance to provide input to our program. This includes Fundraising, Holiday Planning, Special Speaker Presentations, or any other activities this committee may facilitate.

Behavior and Discipline Policy

Discipline is learned by creating an environment that fosters cooperation and consideration for others. Learning is greatly facilitated when children feel safe, secure, and self-confident. Our goal, therefore, is to establish a warm and loving environment in which we can teach children the right way to handle a situation.

Guidance in the Toddler Classrooms

Toddlers are imaginative explorers with seemingly endless energy, and they like to imitate everything and do everything themselves. To support these intense feelings and the mood changes that accompany them, their environment must offer a high level of interaction and emotional security. When conflicts arise while trying to guide a child's negative behavior, it is important to provide alternative toys and activities. Encouraging children to

use words and to express what they want, as well as consistency in scheduling and planning, helps to reduce a toddler's frustration.

Guidance in the Preschool Classroom

From time to time, it becomes necessary to redirect the actions or energies of a child in a positive manner to more appropriate behavior. A teacher creates an age-appropriate and comfortable environment conducive to focusing and learning. Children may sometimes need to be removed from the situation for a "cooling down time" within the teacher's sight. This time should not be viewed as a punishment, just as a cooling-off period until he/she is capable of returning to the group.

In some situations, they may need a consequence for their actions. Humiliating and frightening techniques are never to be used. Consequences must not be associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking, or any other form of physical punishment by any staff member is prohibited.

If discipline continues to be a problem, the parent should be called for a conference to discuss the possible solutions.

It is important that we remain realistic in the expectation of the behavior of each child, considering the developmental stage of his age.

The following are some techniques that are encouraged and incorporated by our teachers and faculty:

- Stop the action
- Look for the positive intent
- Educate the child
- Set clear verbal limits
- Set physical limits
- Provide choices
- Natural consequences
- Use active listening and the "sportscasting" technique
- Time-out techniques
- Redirecting the action

Expulsion Policy

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we must expel a child from our program either on a short-term or permanent basis. We want you to know

that we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) to prevent this policy from being enforced. At times, if a child is observed to be having trouble behaving or is behaving in the classroom in a way that puts themselves or other children at risk, the teaching faculty and administrative team, along with the teachers, may consult and recommend that he or she be tested or observed by an independent professional diagnostician who can help clarify the nature and source of the difficulty. Such testing may be a prerequisite for the child's continued enrollment in the program. The following are reasons we may have to expel or suspend a child from this center:

IMMEDIATE CAUSES FOR EXPULSION

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or him/herself.
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions towards staff members.
- Parents exhibit verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S EXPULSION

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.
- Failure to complete required forms, including the child's immunization records.
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child. Verbal abuse to staff.

CHILD'S ACTIONS FOR EXPULSION

- Failure of the child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts.
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children.
- Excessive biting.

Prior to expulsion, a parent will be called, and correspondence will be sent home indicating what the problem is, and every effort will be made by both the center and the parent to correct the problem. If, after one or two weeks, depending on the risk to other children's welfare or safety, behavior does not

improve, and the center finds that they can no longer accommodate the child, the parent will be asked to remove him/her. The family will be given one week's notice to find another center to provide care for this child.

You are welcome to come and visit your child's class at any time. We just ask that you inform the office of your presence.

We look forward to a wonderful year with your child!!

Parent Handbook and Food Policy **Acknowledgement**

____ I have read and agree to abide by the rules and guidelines in the Parent Handbook.

Signed - _____

Date - _____

Printed Name - _____

Child(ren) - _____