

Early Childhood Handbook 2017-18



Philosophy

Our play-based philosophy allows us to provide the highest quality early years program within a nurturing Jewish environment. We use developmentally appropriate practice to ensure children's spiritual, emotional, physical, cognitive, creative and social growth.



EXPLORE, DISCOVER, CREATE, LEARN



Welcome to our Early Years Program. We are delighted that you are part of our VTT family and we look forward to a wonderful year together. Please use this handbook to familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures of our preschool and junior kindergarten. We want to be certain that your child has the very best early childhood education experience possible, and we thank you for entrusting us with that privilege and responsibility.

Program Goals

We are dedicated to providing the highest quality early childhood education program within a secure, nurturing, and stimulating Jewish environment.

The goal of our department is to nurture each child in a warm, loving and safe atmosphere. By nurturing and respecting the individuality of each child we encourage the child's sense of well-being. Our child-centered environment fosters children's feelings of competency in their own abilities and

allows them to become valued members of our early years program and school community.

We want each child to develop a strong Jewish identity based on joyful experiences and to immerse the students in the warmth and beauty of a traditional Jewish life. We strive to embrace Judaism in such a manner that all families feel comfortable regardless of home religious observance.

Hours

Our half day program runs Monday to Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Our full day program runs Monday to Friday from 8:20 a.m. to 3:20 p.m. with the option to pick up **no later than 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday.** Our Preschool and Junior Kindergarten follow the same Shabbat and holiday dismissal schedule as the rest of the school. Thus, students must be picked up by 3:20 p.m. on Fridays and by 2:20 p.m. on early dismissal Fridays (November through March). When there is an early dismissal for a Jewish holiday, all classes in the early years program will also

dismiss at 11:25 a.m. **Parents are expected to pick up their children on time. Failure to do so will result in late charges of \$1 per minute.**

Parent/Teacher Conferences occur twice a year (in November and March). Dismissal for the full-day programs on those days is at 3:20 p.m. (Wednesday and Thursday in March & November).

For safety reasons and to meet licensing regulations, an adult must accompany preschoolers/JK students to the classroom. Early years students may not wait in the hallways unaccompanied.

Gradual Entry

This process provides an opportunity for separation between parent/s and children to occur in a positive and gradual manner. It gives children time to adjust to one another, their teachers and the classroom in smaller groups before the children meet together as a class, and allows teachers to spend time with each child in a high adult to child ratio. This facilitates the relationship between the teachers and your child, as well as a sense of belonging.

Some strategies that will help cope with your child's separation anxiety:

- ✓ Always say goodbye and keep goodbyes short and sweet;
- ✓ Don't hover around or ask for permission to leave;

Using the Underground Parkade

Parents and caregivers are welcome to park in our underground parkade for noon pickup. The monitored gate to enter the school playground is open from **11:55 a.m. to 12:10 p.m.** Our security team has other responsibilities from 12:10 p.m onwards so please return to your vehicle during this window. Failure to leave the school premises on time will result in a circuitous journey to access your car in the parkade.

Separation Anxiety

Many preschoolers experience separation anxiety at some point in their early school years. It is most often simply because it is really hard for them to say goodbye, and once resolved can recur after children have been away from school.

Separation anxiety is a normal process for both children and parents and our teachers are well prepared and equipped to deal with it.

Curriculum

While some early childhood programs focus on early academics, we support the overwhelming amount of research that proves that children learn best through play.

Our curriculum follows developmentally appropriate practices evolving from credible research into child development. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs and strengths of each child and foster growth in all developmental domains. It allows children to make choices, encourages independence and integrates Judaism throughout the day.

The enriched environment maximizes each child's opportunities to explore, discover, create and learn through play with materials that are stimulating, challenging and creative.

We plan our curriculum around Judaic and general themes as well as from ideas that emerge from the children's interests and passions.

Shabbat and Jewish Holidays

We celebrate Shabbat every Friday. On the last Friday of each month, the whole preschool celebrates Shabbat together.

All Jewish holidays are explored through stories, drama, art, music, math and science activities, baking and eating. We also introduce simple Hebrew vocabulary related to each holiday. We have special celebrations for Hanukkah, Purim, a mock seder for Pesach and a big birthday celebration for Israel on Yom Ha'atzma'ut.

Communication

It is very important that the lines of communication between the school and parents are always open. If you are concerned about your child in the classroom, please talk to the teachers. If this is not satisfactory, or if you have a question about any other aspects of the overall program, please contact the Preschool Director.

Newsletters containing pertinent information are sent by email and/or posted outside the classroom.

Each classroom has a sign in/out communication book at the entrance. Please check in upon arrival and check out upon dismissal. If your child is leaving with anyone else, please indicate those plans in the book. If your regular schedule or contact numbers change on a particular day, please record that information in the communications book.

Please let us know if you are going to be away, if your child is sick, or if there are any significant changes that occur in your child's life, for example, moving to a new home, birth of a sibling, etc. In the case of absence from school, please email our school office at office@talmudtorah.com as well as your classroom teachers for official notification of your child's absence.

Parent-teacher conferences take place twice a year. You do not have to wait for a conference – teachers are available to talk with you throughout the year. We ask that you do not approach teachers with specific problems at the beginning or end of the school day as teachers' focus is on the children.

Clothing

Please dress children in clothing that can be worn **without worry**. **Although we try to use washable paints and markers, some colours and materials do stain.** Our faculty cannot be responsible for stained or messy clothing.

The students play outside every day; please send appropriate outdoor clothing such as rain boots, sun hats and sunscreen etc. You are welcome to leave these in your child's cubby. Students in the full day program should have full body coverage (e.g., "muddy buddy" or waterproof gear) to be prepared for wet weather.

Children must wear socks and closed shoes every day. Sandals or flip-flops are unsafe and uncomfortable--**and are not permitted on the playground.**

We ask that each child have a complete change of clothes kept in their cubby for the entire year. Accidents happen and we want students to be dry and comfortable at all times. If children change into their extra clothes, please replace them the next day. Full day students should have at least two sets of clothes in their cubby.

Please help foster toileting independence by avoiding belts, buckles, tights and overalls.

Please label everything.



Toileting

Children must be toilet trained to attend our program. Diapers or pull-ups are not permitted. Accidents happen and are expected--please always have a change of clothes in your child's cubby. Please contact the Preschool Director if you have any concerns in this regard.

Behaviour and Discipline

We always try to give children in our program the tools and language they need to resolve their problems peacefully while being available to guide them. Children aged 3 or 4 are not developmentally equipped to "share." We give students choices within carefully defined boundaries. We take turns. We use language. If a child is behaving in an unacceptable or unsafe manner, he/she will be asked to choose another activity or another area to play. If a student demonstrates ongoing unacceptable or unsafe behaviour we will work with parents to try to resolve this. For additional behaviour resources, visit www.healthplanning.gov.vc.ca/ccf/child.

Toys from home

Our classrooms are equipped with an abundance of toys and materials. **Please do not allow children to bring toys from home as they will invariably get lost or broken, and are a distraction.** If your child has a comfort item such as a special blanket or stuffed animal that has to be brought to school, this will remain in the child's cubby box for the duration of the class.

Food & Snacks

Children are given a snack and drink every day. (Full day students will receive two snacks.) Please notify the school and teachers of any allergies. If your child is in the full day program, please send a labelled water bottle and a vegetarian or dairy lunch from home or order a hot, kosher meal online through our caterer, MKG.

Please do not allow your children to come into the school with any nut products as we have several children with severe allergies. We ask that if your children eat peanut butter before coming to school that you thoroughly wash their hands and faces.

Food items brought into the school for celebrations or activities must bear a certified kosher label or must have been prepared in the school's kitchen. **Unfortunately, we do not permit home-baked goods (even from kosher homes) to be brought into the school for such events.**

Birthdays

All children's birthdays are celebrated with a cake baked by the class that is eaten at snack time. Please do not hand out birthday party invitations at school, even if the whole class is invited. Class lists with email addresses are available from the communications office. **Please consider the diversity of Jewish practice and observance in our school community. By scheduling birthday parties/gatherings on Shabbat or Jewish holidays some of our students will naturally be left out. Our goal is to be an inclusive community. Please refrain from excluding some of our students from your celebrations that fall on religious holidays.**



Sneezes and Diseases (Vancouver Coastal Health (www.vch.ca) is an excellent source of information for common childhood illnesses; however, always check with your classroom teachers regarding returning to school after an illness.)

- Any child too ill to participate in normal school activities should stay at home. Please do not send a sick child to school, even if it's considered "minor." There are students and faculty with compromised immune systems. Help keep everyone healthy.
- Children must be on antibiotic treatment for at least 24 hours before returning to school;
- Children must be fever-free (without drugs) for at least 24 hours before returning to school;
- Children who have been vomiting or have had diarrhea should be symptom free for at least 48 hours before returning to school;
- In the case of diagnosed communicable diseases, parents must notify the Preschool/Early Years Director and the Public Health Nurse at Vancouver Coastal Health will be informed;
- If a child becomes ill or develops a fever while at school, parents will be called to take the child home. When called, parents are expected to pick up their child immediately;
- In the case of head lice, a child must be completely clear of nits or eggs before returning to school to avoid the easy spread of this common nuisance. Parents are asked to inform the school as well.
- As a licensed facility of Vancouver Coastal Health, VCH may request to review our students' records.

Your child's safety and well-being are of primary importance to us and we endeavour to make the environment as safe as possible. In the event of any minor accidents or injuries, all our teachers are certified in first aid. In more serious cases, an ambulance will be called and we will contact you as soon as possible. Please make sure all contact information is always up to date.

Field Trips

Our department goes on a few field trips during the year. Teachers will advise you in advance. Children travel on a hired school bus. Some volunteers are required for some of the field trips. Taking the children out of the school is a huge responsibility and we ask that if you do volunteer on one of the field trips that your attention is on the children at all times. Should you accompany our students, we ask that **you do NOT use your cell phone while chaperoning. It is not only distracting for the students, but diverts your attention from your responsibility to ensure their safety.** As well, do not bring food on the outing for yourself, your child, or all the students. Teachers will have snacks ready for the children. Beverages are not permitted on the bus.

Our early childhood educators are devoted to supporting your children develop into healthy, confident, sensitive and aware young people with strong Jewish identities. We look forward to spending the year getting to know your family.



Vancouver Talmud Torah, 998 West 26th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 2G1, 604.736.7307
info@talmudtorah.com, www.talmudtorah.com