



## Solomon Schechter Day School Early Childhood Parent Handbook



*"Our task regarding creativity is to help children climb  
their own mountains as high as possible.*

*No one can do more."*

Loris Malaguzzi, (Early Childhood Director)

Reggio Emilia, Italy

## Philosophy

The Early Childhood Program at Solomon Schechter Day School celebrates the uniqueness of each child. Through a multi-age model, we respect individual differences in learning styles and growth patterns. We understand that children thrive socially, emotionally and intellectually when provided with a developmentally appropriate environment. Teachers are available to support and facilitate children's interests and activities. We create an environment that is nurturing and teaches responsibility, respect, values and independence. The children see themselves as an integral part of a Jewish community and learn that Judaism is a way of life.

## Guided by The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards

The Solomon Schechter Day School Early Childhood program uses the CT Early Learning and Development Standards in curriculum planning. This is a curriculum designed for preschool-age children and is endorsed by The National Association for the Education of Young Children. The curriculum identifies goals in eight areas of development: Cognition, Social and Emotional, Physical, Language and Literacy, Creative Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. At SSDS, we add Jewish Identity Development as the ninth domain. Through planned activities, classroom organization, materials, daily schedules and interaction with the children, we seek to accomplish the goals of the curriculum and provide your child with a successful start in school.

## Inspired by The Reggio Emilia Approach

Our Early Childhood program is inspired by the Early Childhood philosophy of the town of Reggio Emilia, Italy. This approach focuses on fostering relationships among children, teachers, parents and community. An integral part of the approach is hands-and minds-on exploration. Children explore materials and media through an environment that inspires learning. Children also engage in long-term projects based on an **"emerging curriculum,"** of children's interests, which is a central feature. The values and philosophy of the Reggio Emilia Approach dovetail with Schechter's values and philosophy, enhancing the school's commitment to excellent Jewish and General Studies education.

## Rooted in Jewish Tradition

At Solomon Schechter Day School Jewish learning, identity development and values are a part of everyday life. Torah study, Jewish culture, holiday celebrations, Israel, and Hebrew language are incorporated throughout our curriculum. There are opportunities for the children to experience math, science, music, art, sensory, cooking and literacy activities whether we are learning about Purim or insects. For some of our families, this is a first exposure to customs and traditions associated with being Jewish. Throughout the year there are opportunities for parent involvement and participation in family education programs. We view families as our partners and an integral part of our school community.

## Our Staff

The Early Childhood staff attends professional development seminars throughout the year. Our highly qualified early childhood staff has, in addition, an incredible support system that includes:

Head of School

Early Childhood Coordinator  
Director of Student Services  
School Counselor  
School Nurse  
Visual Arts Educator  
Musician-in-Residence  
Physical Education Instructor

### Class News

Each class will email weekly updates. These updates will communicate important information about the “happenings” in the classrooms.

### The Environment

Each Early Childhood classroom typically includes the following interest areas:

- Blocks (large and small building activities)
- Dramatic Play
- Art
- Sensory/Science
- Cooking
- Library/Reading Center
- Writing Center
- Manipulatives/Math

The entire school is available for our use. In addition to housing the individual early childhood classrooms we have access to:

- *Beit Tefilah*
- Auditorium
- Music Room
- Gymnasium

### Class Size and Ratio

The Two-Year-Old class maintains a 1 to 4 teacher-child ratio.

The Three- and Four-Year-Old classrooms maintain a 1 to 10 teacher-child ratio.

### Morning Drop Off

Early Childhood begins at 8:30 a.m.

Teachers are available at 8:20 a.m. for early classroom drop off.

Please do not enter the classroom before 8:20 a.m. By waiting until then, you allow teachers time to prepare for the day. An early morning option is available at 7:00 a.m. Please contact the school office for information.

Arriving on time helps ensure a smooth entry into the classroom each day. Our daily routine often begins with free play which helps young children make a smooth transition into the school day. The open- ended start of the day is central to our play-based curriculum.

If you do arrive late, please go directly to the main office to sign in before bringing your child to class. Also, please exit through the office to sign out. This procedure ensures that we have an adequate count of who is in the building at all times.

### **Delays due to weather:**

#### **Regular Program /Early Morning program Arrival Times**

The arrival time for a one hour delay is 9:20 and 10:20 for a 2 hour delay.

The drop off time for the early morning program is 8:00 a.m. for a one hour delay and 9:00 a.m. for a 2 hour delay.

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**Note:** Only students who are signed up for the **Early morning program** for the year are eligible for early drop off.

### **Early Dismissal Days:**

There will be no enrichment classes (12:45-2:00) or late afternoon program (3:30-5:30) when Schechter closes for early dismissal due to professional development, holidays, or any weather related closings.

### **Parental Concerns**

Teachers will happily address parental concerns. It is best to schedule a meeting with the classroom teacher to discuss issues that need special attention. **Drop-off and pick-up times are very busy; please refrain from addressing concerns at these times unless it is something that needs immediate attention.** Teachers are available to meet either before or after school or by work phone. Parents should leave messages directly in the teacher's voice mailbox or by email (teacher's first initial, last name followed by @ssds-hartford.org) to arrange a convenient time to meet. Teachers will do their best to respond to emails within 24 hours. We thank you for not contacting teachers at their homes.

### **Absences/Add Ons**

If your child will be absent from school, please notify the office (860-561-0700). There are no make-up days in our Early Childhood program.

If you wish to add a day or enrichment program to your child's schedule, please notify KShakun @ssds-hartford. org at least 24 hours in advance. We will work to accommodate requests as long as teacher-student ratios are maintained.

### Illness

Please keep your child home for at least 24 hours after illness including vomiting, diarrhea, or fever. Children who become ill during school hours must be picked up within one hour of notification.

### Appropriate Clothing

Please dress your child appropriately for class; we encourage the children to participate in many messy, gooey and sticky activities, so play clothing is best to ensure that special clothing is not ruined. For safety, please send your child to school in closed-toe shoes only (no crocs please). Sneakers are to be worn on Physical Education days. **Please provide a full set of clothing including shoes for your child's cubby.**

Children are encouraged to wear a kippah on Shabbat and when we visit the Beit Tefillah.

### Snack and Lunch

The Early Childhood program provides a morning snack for the children. Please let us know if your child has any allergies, food or otherwise, of which we should be aware. Children registered for our extended day or full day program are asked to bring an afternoon snack. **Please provide your child with a filled labeled water bottle daily.**

The Early Childhood classes eat lunch at noon. Please send your child's lunch in a labeled "lunch box." All food containers should be labeled as well. Please provide a beverage, napkins, and utensils. We suggest investing in a hot/cold thermos as we are unable to heat or refrigerate lunches. Hot lunches will be available for children in Early Childhood daily. More information will be sent home when the program begins.

We are a kosher/dairy school. Meat is not allowed to be brought in to school.

Please do not send candy in your child's lunch. We want to encourage healthy and nutritious foods for healthy bodies.

Teachers assist the children with unpacking and packing up lunch boxes. We encourage the children to eat their "main course" first and eat other food items after. If we find that your child is not eating his/her sandwich at lunchtime because those cookies are too tempting, please save the cookies for an after-school snack. We want your child's lunch experience to be a positive one.

### Food-Free Birthday Celebrations at School

Your child's birthday is a joyous occasion and we look forward to celebrating with you and your child in our classroom.

Creating a safe school environment for your child is of the utmost importance. To ensure the well being of our students, we are requesting that birthday celebrations be "food free." Please do not distribute any food items to the children in the class.

There are many fun and celebratory ways to acknowledge your child's birthday. You may donate a book to the class in honor of your child. If you have a special talent, please come in to share it with us. If you would like specific suggestions, your child's teacher would be happy to help you.

Please arrange a date and time with the classroom teacher and join us for stories, special songs, birthday wishes.

### Birthday Celebrations Outside of School

When hosting a birthday celebration outside of school, please be sensitive to others. Party invitations should not be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited. Birthday parties should not be held on Shabbat or Jewish festivals.

### Specials

The Early Childhood students participate in P.E. and Music once a week in addition to their regular classroom activities.

### Field Trips

The Early Childhood classes take several field trips throughout the school year. Your child's teacher will notify you when a trip has been scheduled. Class parents chaperone and provide transportation.



### Toys and Items from Home

We ask that you not bring toys from home, as we encourage the children to use the toys and materials provided for them at school. Items of special significance or books that relate to the current topic exploration the children are learning about are always welcome. A "Lovie" for rest time are encouraged if your child is staying the full day.

### Allergies, Medications and Sunscreen

If your child has allergies and/or requires medication during school hours, please consult with the school nurse.

Apply sunscreen prior to arriving at school, and please do not leave sunscreen in your child's cubby. If your child requires an additional application during the school day, please contact the school nurse to fill out the appropriate forms.

## **Diapering and Toilet Training**

If your child is not toilet trained, please provide an ample supply of labeled disposable diapers and wipes. Diapers will be changed at scheduled times of the day as well as needed. The classroom teacher will inform you when your supply is running low. Please replenish diapers and wipes in a timely manner; we do not supply these items at school.

## **Toilet Training**

In the toilet training process we respect individual rates of growth and development. We do not believe in hurrying children in this process until they show clear signs of being ready for this important stage of growth.

If a child begins to show interest in toileting at home, the classroom teacher will partner with families in this very important milestone in your child's development.

### **Signs of readiness may include:**

- Having dry periods of at least 2 hours or waking up dry after a nap
- Disliking the feeling of a wet diaper
- Showing interest in other's bathroom habits
- Verbalizing that they are going in their diaper
- Showing interest and willingness to sit on the toilet or potty chair

Please speak with your child's teacher to set forth a plan to make sure your child's toilet-training experience is a positive one.

It is best to begin this process when the child is home for several days before he/she is expected to stay dry in a less familiar setting. Please allow at least 3 days of staying dry before sending your child into school wearing pull ups or training underwear. Also, once the process has begun please bring a large supply of pull-ups (ones with flaps) or training underwear. We ask for pull-ups or the thicker training underwear as it is more absorbent and thus more sanitary for the classroom setting.

## **Extra Clothing and Soiled Clothing**

Please provide a labeled change of clothing for your child to be stored in his/her cubby. Please include an extra pair of shoes and socks. We suggest periodically checking your child's extra clothing supply.

If a child has soiled his/her clothing the teachers will send it home in a plastic bag for laundering. We do not have laundering facilities at school.

### Conferences

The Early Childhood team holds formal parent-teacher conferences twice a year. Parents will be notified of the date and will need to sign up on line to schedule a conference. This year conferences will be held on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and March 19<sup>th</sup>. Although we hold formal conferences twice a year, we urge parents to communicate with teachers on a regular basis.

### Early Childhood Behavior Modification Procedures

#### **Early Childhood 2**

##### ***Use your words, sharing, and taking turns:***

When two or more children are having a conflict, the teacher intervenes and helps them verbalize what they want or explains the problem. We are continuously working on sharing and taking turns. With teacher support and supervision, one of the children will usually wait his/her turn. We try to have multiples of a toy that is a particular favorite among the group. If the conflict is physical (pushing or pulling) we still work on talking out the problem. We then talk about how sad or hurt the child looks, and ask the "offender" what he/she can do to make the other child feel better. Usually, the "offender" will either say "sorry" or hug the other child. Children are very forgiving at this age.

##### ***Redirection and "Take a Break"***

When a child is unwilling to share or wait for his/her turn, a teacher steps in and redirects the child to another toy or activity. Often this redirection involves time with the teacher, like reading together or playing a game or puzzle together. Many times a teacher takes an unhappy, sad, or angry child for a walk. We "run errands" together, which provides the child with a break from the routine, a distraction, and a fun way to have one-on-one time. A child may also be asked to sit down and take a break for a while to calm down before returning to an activity.

#### **Early Childhood 3 and Early Childhood 4 –Multi-age Classroom**

##### ***Discussion:***

When a child is behaving improperly, we will first discuss the situation with the child. We discuss feelings that the child may have that caused the behavior. If a friend was hurt, either



emotionally or physically, we also discuss how that person is now feeling. We help the child who was responsible communicate with that friend and "check to see that he/she is ok."

### ***Redirection or "Take a Break":***

If talking with the child is not enough, we will redirect the child to another activity in a different part of the room. A child may also be asked to sit down and "take a break" for a while to calm down before returning to an activity.

### **Parent Communication (EC 2, 3, and 4)**

If there is an incident in which a child has hurt another child, both sets of parents will be notified. Parents will also be notified if a child has repeated behavioral issues occurring on the same day. If inappropriate behavior continues on a consistent basis, parents will be called for a meeting to discuss an individual behavior plan for the child.

### **Afternoon Pick-Up/After-School Arrangements**

Early Childhood dismissal is at 12:45 p.m., 2:00 p.m, and 3:30. We encourage you to arrive for pick-up prior to the dismissal time. Please wait in the hallway by the double doors until they are opened by a teacher to begin the dismissal process. Children remaining at school after 12:45 p.m. dismissal, with or without written notice, will join the full day class; in that case, you will be charged for an extended day. If arriving after 12:50, please sign in at the office before picking up your child and exit through the office to sign out.

New families, or authorized pick- up persons that we do not recognize will be asked to show ID before entering the double doors and also in the classroom

If there is any change to your child's daily pick-up schedule, please notify the main office by 11:30 a.m. that day.

Please notify us via the authorized pick-up form whom is given permission to pick up your child from school. If a person whom the classroom teacher has never met will be picking up your child, that individual must present the classroom teacher with photo identification. Regular carpools only need written information once, to keep on file. If written permission is not received, the classroom teacher will attempt to contact the parent. In the event that the parent cannot be reached, your child will remain at school.

The Early morning program (beginning at 7:00 a.m.) and the Late Afternoon program (3:30-5:30) are available by contacting Karen Shakun at [kshakun@ssds-hartford.org](mailto:kshakun@ssds-hartford.org).

## **Early Childhood Information Check List**

Please sign and return this page to your child's mailbox at school.

I have completed the Child Questionnaire \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the SSDS Early Childhood Information Handbook \_\_\_\_\_

I have turned in the authorized pick up form to the teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



