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# Where it's GREAT to be a kid!

## Welcome

### Our Philosophy and Goals

The philosophy of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program at the JCC is that young children learn best by doing. Learning isn't just repeating what someone else says; it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn firsthand about the world we live in. Our curriculum engages students in active and creative exploration so that they feel confident in trying their own ideas and thinking their own thoughts. In this way we teach them how to learn, a skill they will use all their lives far beyond preschool.

**The ECE program follows the Creative Curriculum method based on the view that children learn best when they are actively exploring a carefully constructed environment in the company of loving, professionally prepared teachers.** Creative curriculum goes beyond rote learning and focuses on big ideas, interesting projects and individual students' passions and needs.

**We also incorporate the national JCC's Sheva Center framework for early childhood education based on the culture and teachings of Judaism, its values and principles as applied in everyday life.** The fundamental concepts are deeply rooted in the latest research on child development:

- Children as Constructivist Learners
- Early Childhood Directors as Visionaries
- Families as Engaged Partners
- Early Childhood Educators as Professionals
- Environments as Inspiration for Inquiry
- Taking Care of Our Bodies (a program we call Discover CATCH)
- Israel as a Source and Resource

**In addition, our program is consistent with the Indiana Department of Education's Foundations for Young Children, which supports the use of hands on learning. Goals are identified in all areas of development:**

- **Social:** To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends and feel they are a part of the group.
- **Emotional:** To cultivate in our children self-confidence, independence, self-control and a positive attitude toward life.
- **Physical:** To help children increase their muscle skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do.
- **Cognitive:** To encourage children to become independent learners by testing their own ideas and experiencing success and by helping them develop learning skills, such as problem-solving, asking questions and using descriptive words to express their ideas, observations and feelings.

The JCC embraces a learning-through-play teaching method to engage children in activities that promote creativity, accelerate learning and stimulate social interaction, all at each child's individual pace. Not only does our active teaching method apply to our sequential curriculum, we also incorporate it in all of the sports and play activities that children participate in throughout the entire JCC facility: in our gymnasiums, swimming pools, outdoor playgrounds and indoor play areas. Everything we do at the JCC is focused on developing skills for life so that each child in our program will be well-prepared academically and socially for the years ahead.

We invite parents to be actively involved in their child's education and care at the JCC. Parents may volunteer in the classroom and join us on field trips. We believe that the more active a role parents play in their child's education and care, the more the child is sure to benefit.





## Our Staff

We carefully screen and select our nurturing ECE teachers and caregivers. Take a walk through our corridors, and you will see our staff hugging children, gently working with them on projects and participating in fun activities. Our teachers are well-trained (and retrained each year) in the areas of child development, health and safety standards and emergency preparedness. We recognize how critical a partnership between educators and parents is during these formative years. Our teachers engage parents in their children's learning by communicating regularly about each child's educational, emotional and behavioral development. Our teachers are always available to parents with the child's best interests in mind.

## Our Facility: Pools, Gymnasiums and More!

Our entire facility is the children's playground at the JCC. We play sports and games in our gymnasiums, and all children play outdoors daily in our enclosed playgrounds except when raining or during extreme temperatures. Not only do children benefit from the fresh air, but running, jumping, climbing and playing help develop their motor skills. We have a garden where the children grow their own vegetables and flowers. Our auditorium becomes a huge play area and is also our theater when we're singing and dancing on the stage. Music education and arts activities with specialists and artists-in-residence ensure that children in the ECE are provided with a well-rounded educational experience. With such terrific, fully-equipped facilities, the JCC's ECE program offers so many opportunities to stimulate children's physical growth and cultivate their socialization skills.

Our pools allow us to provide a unique aspect of our curriculum. All children at the JCC learn to swim under the instruction of a certified lifeguard and/or certified water safety instructor in our indoor and outdoor pools. They learn to love water because of the lessons and play time we provide in our "magic pool"—the Shirley & Herbert Backer Therapy Pool. The therapy pool's water and room are maintained at a constant 89 degrees Fahrenheit so children are comfortably warm. The pool is equipped with a hydraulic floor that "magically" adjusts from 0 to 6 feet, making it great fun to splash in the water as it slowly becomes deeper. The excitement of the magical floor helps remove fear of water and opens a child's mind to swimming.

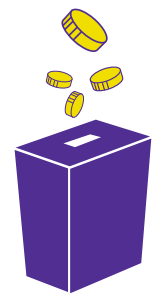
Your child will need a swimsuit, shoes to wear to the pool, a towel and appropriate outdoor clothing for every season. Also, tennis shoes and socks are much safer than open-toed shoes and sandals on the playground and at school. Please label all of your child's items with his/her name. If your child has a medical exception for participation in any of the activities we offer, please provide a doctor's note of explanation.

## Jewish Learning & Culture

While we recognize that many children in our program are not Jewish, the values we teach apply to all equally. In addition to kindness, respect and responsibility, we focus on "tzedakah," the Hebrew word for doing good deeds and sharing with those less fortunate. Our children participate all year long in activities to perform acts of kindness not only for their classmates and teachers but for others in the community through partnerships with other not-for-profit agencies (Gleaners Food Bank, United Way of Central Indiana and more).

The JCC inspires children to explore traditions by participating in Jewish holiday celebrations. We celebrate Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath) every Friday and learn about Jewish holidays by discussing stories and observing the traditions of each one. The Jewish holidays provide rich opportunities for learning and different sorts of activities (dressing in costumes, parades, food preparation, candle-lighting and more) that are planned by our staff.

**The Jewish holiday guide starts on page 12.**



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## Enrichment Opportunities

Our ECE families are welcome to participate in any number of classes and sports activities that the JCC offers after preschool and pre-kindergarten hours. For a nominal fee, your child may participate in enrichment activities, including dance classes, soccer and basketball leagues, swimming, tennis lessons and karate. Our staff escorts children to their enrichment activities, any program or class that starts or ends at 4:45 pm is the parent's responsibility to drop-off or pick-up. Class offerings can be found on the JCC website (JCCindy.org), in the monthly *J eZine*, and on the display walls in the building.



## Policies & Procedures

*The Jewish Community Center is legally responsible for the Early Childhood Education department.*

### Arrival and Departure

ECE hours are from 8 am to 5 pm. ECE staff is not in place to accept children prior to 8 am or to care for them after 5 pm. Parents and guardians must sign their child in and out every day per Indiana State Child Care Regulations. Please check in with teachers each morning at drop-off; teachers will then count attendance through the Remini app.

Please park in a designated parking space in the East lot, entering door 5 when picking up and dropping off your child. Due to traffic and fire regulations, no parking is allowed along the curb. Parents and guardians are responsible for escorting their child to and from the classroom.

Most children require a few days or weeks at the beginning of the school year to adjust to their new environment. Please help our teachers work through this adjustment period with the children by not lingering in the classroom.

Children will be released only to those individuals listed on your emergency card. Our staff is trained to verify the identification of anyone they do not recognize. If you need to add or remove names or make any other changes to your emergency card, please call the ECE office.

### Travel Between Licensed Spaces Policy

The JCC's Early Childhood Education program includes one hallway of classrooms. At times children will leave licensed spaces, while accompanied by their ECE teachers and staff members, to travel to other parts of the JCC building not regulated by licensing. Please note the children are kept safe during these transitions when they journey to enjoy other areas in our facility and on campus.

### Late Pick-up Fees

Please be prompt when picking up your child from school as it may be upsetting to your child to wait for you. Our late fee policy is as follows:

- 1st occurrence, parent will receive a verbal warning
- 2nd occurrence and after, you will be charged \$5 per minute per child for each minute of tardiness after 5 pm.
- Three (3) late pick-ups may result in a two-day suspension from the ECE program.

## Nap Time

The Indiana Family & Social Services Administration mandates that children under the age of 5 have a rest period (nap time) every day. The JCC ECE program follows all safe sleep requirements. All items provided by families should be labeled with your child's name and taken home weekly for laundering.

Infants rest on their own individual schedules.

Ones through Prekindergarten children rest on a group schedule. Please see your child's classroom daily schedule to check the designated group nap time. During this quiet period, the children nap on individual cots in a darkened room with soft music. We encourage each child to have a fitted crib sheet which covers the cot nicely, a small blanket, a small pillow and a stuffed animal or lovey.

## Clothing

Children are busy every day with arts and crafts, outdoor play and simply being kids. Please dress your child daily in washable play clothes appropriate for the day's weather, including hats, coats, mittens and boots when necessary. Children should wear socks and tennis shoes daily. Sandals and open-toed shoes are not safe on the playground.

Your child will need a complete change of labeled clothing. These items will be kept in your child's cubby. We recommend changing your child's spare clothing as the seasons change and as your child grows. Children ages 3–5 will participate in weekly swim lessons, and children ages 1–2 will also swim weekly with their teachers. They will need a labeled swimsuit (swim diapers for ages 1–2) and a labeled towel. We recommend that water shoes be worn to the pool.

## Toys from Home

If your child would like to share a special item at school, please encourage him or her to bring items such as books, CDs or things relating to science or nature (a leaf, rock, bird's nest, etc.). Videotapes/DVDs may be brought to school on a limited basis when approved by your child's teacher. All videos must have a "G" rating and be no more than 30 minutes in length. We strongly discourage children from bringing toys and fragile items that cannot be easily shared at school. Some classes may have a special time allotted for "Show and Share." Please note that this is up to individual classrooms and that those teachers will notify you. TOY GUNS, SWORDS or WEAPONS are not allowed at the JCC!

## Personal Items

Please be sure that all clothing and personal items are clearly labeled with your child's name.

## Data Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality of information about child and family will be maintained. Enrollment forms and all other information concerning the child and family will be accessible to the parent/guardian, center director, staff and licensing agent. Information concerning the child will not be made available to anyone, by any means, without written consent of the parent/guardian.

It is the policy of this program not to disclose the names of the children who may have caused injury to another child or children while attending the center. This ensures each family's data privacy.

## Behavior

When dealing with conflict, we always try to keep the child's developmental characteristics in mind. Preschoolers are still primarily focused on their own



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needs and are not fully aware of the needs of others. They are also struggling for independence and control. We acknowledge and talk about what each child is feeling and engage the children as active participants in the problem-solving process. The limits we set and expectations we have for our children respect the ages and abilities of the children.

However, there are occasions when our best efforts are not successful in resolving an issue. When this occurs, we will work in partnership with parents to find a solution. If necessary, a progressive discipline routine will be instituted. Usually parents will understand a situation and offer alternatives which may help in the successful resolution of the issue.

Sometimes a formal parent-teacher conference will be necessary. Any discussions with staff will be strictly confidential.



## Observation

Our program incorporates an observation component which may or may not apply to your child or child's classroom. The School Psychologist is employed by the JCC's ECE department as we find value in meeting the child's and their family's needs. Informal observations of a child or classroom by an Early Childhood staff member, including the School Psychologist, may occur at any time without parental notification. Should any further steps be taken, the parent will first be notified by their child's teacher, with the possibility of a follow-up meeting with the ECE leadership team and Psychologist.

## Biting

Biting is a behavior that is prevalent with 1- or 2-year-old children. Because children of this age have very limited language ability, biting can become a way of expressing their feelings. We will confer with parents about ways to discourage this behavior if it occurs.

## Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Responsibilities

In the event there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect of any enrolled children, staff members are required to report this to the Director. The Director or staff member will, in turn, report the findings to Child Protective Services.

If an intoxicated or impaired person insists on removing children from the center, the center shall immediately report the incident to the local police agency.

## Discipline Policy

The ECE is dedicated to working with children and parents to create a successful experience and to promote the educational, social and personal development of all our children. When situations of inappropriate behavior arise that undermine an environment conducive to building important skills, intervention is required. While we recognize that children develop at different paces, we expect children's behavior to be consistent with age-appropriate actions and responses. In order to address and correct inappropriate behavior, the ECE will use the following progressive disciplinary steps as a supplement to the routine, ongoing communications that should occur between parents, teachers and students:

- Step 1:** When guiding and correcting young children, the teacher will provide instructive guidance to the child. The teacher will discuss the behavior with the child, explain what behavior the child needs to change and offer acceptable alternatives. The child will be given an opportunity to correct his/her behavior. The teacher will reinforce the appropriate behavior.

**Step 2:** If the unacceptable behavior continues, the child may be separated from the class. This will provide the child with the opportunity to think about his/her inappropriate behavior. The teacher will inform the director of the program about the incident, and a written note will be sent home to the parents explaining the behaviors observed and the consequences of those behaviors. A copy will be retained in the child's file as well.

**Step 3:** If the behavior does not improve, the teacher or program director will contact the parents by telephone to discuss the inappropriate behavior. Note: It is recommended that pre-K children be present when their parents are called. If applicable, the use of behavior modification techniques, including intervention by a professional, also will be discussed at that time. The parents will be advised of potential consequences if the behavior does not change.

**Step 4:** If the inappropriate behavior continues, a conference between the teacher, program director and parents will be arranged to determine whether or not the child can further benefit from the ECE program. If behavior modification techniques are being used and some improvement has been noted, an additional conference may be scheduled to keep communication channels open. Depending on the severity of the issue, the child may be removed from school for up to three days at the discretion of the ECE director.

**Step 5:** If inappropriate behavior persists and behavior modification techniques are ineffective or not used, permanent dismissal from the school may be necessary, at the discretion of the ECE director.

*Inappropriate behavior may include but is not limited to such acts of aggression as biting, hitting, pinching, kicking, spitting, bullying, verbal barrages such as vulgarities and racist remarks, refusal to follow the direction of an ECE teacher or ECE director, or generally disruptive behavior.*

## Transition Policy

We understand that transitions can be difficult for children. Effective communication between teachers, parents and ECE administration has proven to be key in ensuring smooth transitions to new classrooms for our children. We work closely with our teachers to help our children adapt to their new environment. In turn, your child's teacher will communicate with you to keep you informed about your child's progress during the first couple of weeks of transition.

In an effort to promote "continuity of care," we arrange for group transitions to occur seasonally based on the child's classroom enrollment.

## Enrollment Procedures

### JCC Membership

Participation in our Early Childhood Education program is reserved for JCC members only.

A child's immediate family must maintain an active JCC family or single-parent membership in good standing throughout the entire time the child is in our program.

### Forms

In order to comply with Indiana State Child Care Regulations, the following forms must be completed and returned on or before the first day your child attends our ECE program. For your convenience, these forms are available on the JCC website (JCCindy.org) or may be picked up in the ECE administration offices.

The following forms need to be completed annually:

- **Registration**
- **Emergency Information:** Please make the contacts on your emergency form aware they might be called. Only those individuals listed on your form may pick up your child from the program. Please notify the ECE office in



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writing if phone numbers or any other information on the emergency form changes.

- **Childhood History**
- **Permissions & Releases**
- **Health Record**
- **Medication Record**
- **Feeding Plan (if applicable)**
- **Child and Adult Food Program Form**
- **Birth Certificate:** Indiana State Child Care Regulations require that all children must have a copy of their birth certificate on file.

## Physical Exam

Indiana code requires that we maintain documentation of a current annual exam provided by the physician of each child in our care. Please have your doctor complete the Health Record and return it to our office prior to the beginning of the school year. All physicals must be current within one year of the exam date. Faxed forms are acceptable: 317-251-9493.

## Fee Payment

For your convenience, the JCC offers an EZ payment plan for ECE and membership fees. Payments will be deducted from your checking account or charged to your credit card on the 1st of each month.\* If you participate in a cafeteria plan for childcare and require a receipt for reimbursement, please contact Accounting (ext. 2210) to arrange for a monthly receipt. You will receive written notice in advance if there is a change in the monthly fee.

If a child leaves or begins in the middle of the month, the tuition will be prorated based on a 4-week billing cycle. For example: \$1550 is equivalent to \$387.50/week.

The JCC does not grant tuition waivers for vacations or other absences beyond the ECE's regularly-scheduled days off. For extenuating circumstances, tuition prorating may be granted at the discretion of the ECE director. Please submit these requests in writing. We also require notification in writing a minimum of two weeks in advance if a child is being removed from the ECE program.

\*The primary member is responsible for all childcare charges. Insufficient funds and/or denial of payment to the JCC will result in a \$25 service charge for each occurrence. Two insufficient funds notices and/or credit denials will result in termination of childcare services.

CCDF families are responsible for covering any costs that exceed the value of their vouchers. These additional expenses may include, but are not limited to: fees, materials, or activities not covered by the voucher. The JCC and ECE does not wish tuition to be a barrier for families when seeking quality care. Therefore, as part of the application process, CCDF families are required to apply for financial assistance through the JCC to help offset any potential overages. Families agree to promptly pay any outstanding balances.

The Accounting Department will issue an invoice for any outstanding overages upon graduating from or leaving the ECE program. Families will have 15 days to pay the balance in full unless alternative payment arrangements have been made with the Accounting Department. If unable to pay any overages in full, families must contact the Accounting Department to discuss payment plans or alternative arrangements.

## Health

The health of all of the children in our care is a primary concern. If your child is not feeling well or is displaying signs of illness, your child should be kept at home for his/her own well-being as well as for the health of the other ECE children. Children with minor common cold symptoms or not feeling well enough to participate in activities will be observed carefully for signs and symptoms of a worsening condition. Parents will be informed about their child's health.

Should a child become ill during the school day, he/she will be isolated from the other children and a parent or guardian will be contacted. We request that all parents and guardians act on these calls immediately.

### Communicable Disease Management

Should any of the children in our care be exposed to a communicable disease, all parents will be notified. As dictated by the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration, a child with any of the following signs or symptoms of illness shall be isolated and discharged immediately to a parent or guardian:

- Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool within a twenty-four-hour period)
- Severe coughing causing the child to become red or blue in the face or to make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Potential ear infection
- Temperature of 100° Fahrenheit (mandated by the State of Indiana)
- Untreated infected skin patch(es)
- Stiff neck
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
- Green mucus running from nose (sign of infection) other than allergy

A child with any of the following signs or symptoms of illness shall be immediately isolated from other children:

- Unusual spots or rashes
- Sore throat or difficulty in swallowing
- Elevated temperature (over 100° Fahrenheit)
- Vomiting
- Evidence of lice, scabies or other parasitic infestation

If your child is sent home with a temperature, vomiting or diarrhea during any part of the day, she or he WILL NOT be able to return to school the next day. After that period has passed, your child may return if she/he has been symptom-free for 24 hours. Upon pick-up, parents are required to sign and return the "Under the Weather" report. The JCC may request a physician's note of readmittance before the child's return.



### Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a viral infection that causes a blister-like rash typically involving the hands, feet, and mouth and is highly contagious. If your child is suspected of having HFMD, we highly encourage them to be seen by your doctor. If a doctor has determined it is NOT a case of HFMD, they may return with a required doctor's note stating the same. If the doctor determines the child does have HFMD, you are required to notify the ECE so leadership can notify others, and they may return to school when **all of the following are true:**

- They have not had a fever for **24 hours** (including without use of fever reducing medications) **and**
- No new blisters have developed for 24 hours, **and**
- All blisters have scabbed over.

Because HFMD is something we often see in a group care setting, your doctor may elect to not provide a medical diagnosis; in such cases, we will treat it as hand, foot, mouth, and all of the above criteria must be met. You can expect when they return to school, a staff member will do a thorough check to be sure they are healed enough to attend.

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## Head Lice

While head lice do not pose a health hazard, they are highly contagious. Children who have head lice will be temporarily excluded from school until treated with a pediculicide (see your pharmacist) and all nits are removed.

## Medication, Vitamins, Special Diet

JCC staff will administer prescription and non-prescription medications to your child by doctor's order only. Your physician should complete and sign a medicine form (to be obtained from the ECE office or online and faxed to 317-251-9493). These forms remain current for one year. Prescription medicine should be brought to the ECE in a properly-labeled pharmacy bottle. All medications are stored out of reach of children and are checked monthly for expiration dates. Expired medication will be sent home.

## Food

The JCC provides children with a nutritious, balanced diet of entirely kosher foods. Because of our commitment to creating an environment of inclusiveness so that children coming from kosher homes will be able to partake in meals with classmates, all of our food is kosher. For your convenience, weekly menus are posted in the ECE corridor. Please note that only JCC staff members are allowed in the kitchen.

All food brought to the JCC for birthdays and special occasions must be kosher and peanut-free, as we are a peanut-free facility. It must come in the original store packaging and should bear the kosher symbol. Food should be brought directly to the classroom, not to the ECE kitchen.

If your child has a food allergy or dietary restriction, please be sure to note it on your Childhood History form. Additional paperwork may be required should you need to provide necessary meals. Since we are a peanut-free facility, all items brought in for your child's meals must be peanut-free.

If you are planning a party at home, we ask that invitations be mailed to your child's classmates unless the entire class is invited. We would appreciate your cooperation with this request so that no one feels excluded.



## Communications

The JCC Early Childhood staff is committed to establishing relationships with parents and guardians to bridge the gap between “life at home” and “life at school.” We encourage families to call their teacher and/or the ECE director with any questions or concerns and to keep their teacher informed of any variations in sleep or appetite, special concerns, irritability or unusual situations at home. In the event of a divorce or any other changes affecting the family, please notify your child’s teacher. Our staff is always available to meet with you privately to discuss any concerns you have regarding the welfare of your child.

ECE administrators and teachers will communicate with parents via JCC email and telephone. Unless a situation of an emergent nature occurs, our teachers have been directed not to use their personal cell phones, including text/picture messaging, for school communications. Periodic conferences and phone calls between parents and teachers and/or the ECE director may be initiated by either parents or staff. Frequently we will send materials home with your child. Please check your child’s cubby and backpack daily for artwork, notes, fliers and regular communications from the Early Childhood Education department.

## School Closings

### Inclement Weather

If a determination is made that the school will not open or will have a delayed opening due to inclement weather or for any other reason, an announcement will be posted on the JCC website ([JCCindy.org](http://JCCindy.org)), the Remini school app and through a text message.

You may always call the JCC at 317-251-9467 for confirmation that we are operating under normal hours.

The JCC closes in observation of Jewish and secular holidays and for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s days. In some cases, special hours apply. Please check the JCC website, *J eZine* or building signage for holiday hours and updates.

## Guide to Jewish Holidays

All Jewish holidays begin at sundown the day before and conclude at sundown on the day of the holiday.

### Shabbat

Celebrated weekly Friday sundown–Saturday sundown. Shabbat is the celebration of the creation of the world and of human dignity and freedom. The holiest day of the week is a day of rest, worship, study and fellowship.



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## **Rosh Hashana: The New Year**

“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion proclaimed with loud blasts [of the shofar]” Leviticus 23:24–25. The blast of the ram’s horn is a call to attention to examine our behavior over the past year and to repent for our transgressions. On Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, everyone is judged by God based on his or her actions during the previous year. The resulting judgment is inscribed in the Book of Life, and a person’s future is determined for the following year. Though that judgment is inscribed, it is not yet sealed and can still be changed for at least another ten days, when, on Yom Kippur, God seals the book for the next year.

## **Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement**

Yom Kippur is the holy day that brings Jews closer to God through the process of prayer and repentance. On this day of atonement, Jews all over the world fast for 24 hours to help us transcend our physical natures and to completely focus on our prayers. Individually and collectively, we seek forgiveness for our transgressions against God and our acquaintances. By so doing, we in effect wipe the slate clean for the upcoming year. On Yom Kippur, God judges all Jews and inscribes those who have atoned for their sins in the Book of Life for the next year.

## **Sukkot: Celebration of Safely Wandering in the Desert for 40 Years**

This joyous holiday comes just five days after Yom Kippur. It is only after achieving a new level of purity through atonement on Yom Kippur that we can be truly joyous on this holiday that celebrates the Jews’ exodus from Egypt. For 40 years the Jews lived in the desert in temporary dwellings called “sukkot.” During the seven days of this festival, we celebrate by building, eating, entertaining and sleeping in a “sukkah,” the temporary shelter constructed with a view of the sky and decorated with produce, branches and all things natural and beautiful.

## **Shmini Atzeret: Close of Sukkot**

Shmini Atzeret is celebrated on the eighth day following the first day of Sukkot. Not only does it officially mark the close of the seven days of Sukkot, it is significant in that the number eight recalls the eighth day upon which a newborn boy’s covenant with God is sealed with the “brit milah,” circumcision.

## **Simchat Torah: Rejoicing of the Torah**

The holiday of Simchat Torah celebrates the completion and the beginning of the reading of the Torah. In so doing, it celebrates the relationship between God and Israel when God was revealed on Mount Sinai and handed down the Torah to Moses. It is a holiday of much joy and dancing with the Torah scrolls. The scrolls are laid out for all to see and rerolled so as to begin reading anew from the first chapter, first verse of Genesis.

## **Chanukah: Festival of Lights**

When Judah Maccabee and his band of freedom fighters entered the Temple in Jerusalem after a hard-fought war, they were distraught to find that three years of Syrian occupation had turned the holy place into a pagan site. They cleansed the Temple and rededicated it (in Hebrew, “Chanukat Habayit”) on the 25th day of the month of Kislev, 165 BCE. Although the war to free the land of Judea from Syrian/Greek rule lasted many more years, we joyously commemorate Chanukah based on the regaining of our Temple. Years later, the Rabbis of the Talmud revealed the famous miracle story about the small jug of oil that provided the Temple with enough fuel for eight days. Chanukah is celebrated by lighting the hanukkiyah (Chanukah menorah), playing dreidel (a top), eating latkes (potato pancakes) and giving children gelt (money).

## **Tu B’Shevat: Festival of Trees**

Tu B’Shevat (the 15th of Shevat) is also known as the New Year for Trees. It is customary on this day to eat fruit and nuts from trees and to plant trees in Israel.

### **Purim: Day of Rejoicing**

The revelry and rejoicing of Purim celebrate the defeat by Mordechai and Queen Esther of the wicked Haman, who had attempted to destroy all the Jews in Persia. The name “Purim” means “lots” or “dice,” the device Haman used to choose the date for the Jews’ destruction. Traditionally, children and adults dress in costume, and a carnival atmosphere prevails. The book of Esther is read out loud, and children twirl noisemakers known as groggers to “blot out” Haman’s name each time it is read. The holiday reminds us that Esther’s privileged status as queen did not lessen her responsibility to her people, and neither should privilege in our life lessen our sense of responsibility toward others.

### **Passover (Pesach): Exodus from Egypt**

Passover recalls the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery. The name refers to God’s “passing over” or protecting the homes of the Israelites from the ten plagues levied against the Egyptians. At the “seder” or “ordered meal,” the story of Exodus is read from the Haggadah narrative and shared with family and friends. Through this ritual, we symbolically recreate the experience and hardships of our ancestors and celebrate God’s gifts of freedom and redemption. During the holiday period Jews eat flat, unleavened bread—matzah—in remembrance of the haste in which the Jewish slaves left Egypt without enough time to allow the bread to rise.

### **Yom Hashoah: Holocaust Memorial Day**

On this solemn occasion, we remember the six million who perished during the Holocaust. In the period of a relatively few years, approximately one-third of all European Jewry, including nearly 90% of Jews in Poland, Germany, Austria and the Baltic nations, perished under the Nazi regime. Rituals, liturgy and customs for this day are still developing. Communities gather to read memorial prayers as well as testimonies of victims and survivors.

### **Yom Haatzma’ut: Israel Independence Day**

Yom Haatzma’ut (Israel Independence Day) celebrates the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. Over six decades later, Israel still stands as the cultural and spiritual center of the Jewish people as well as the refuge for oppressed Jews worldwide.

### **Lag B’omer: Day of Celebration**

Lag B’omer is a students’ or scholars’ holiday associated with the great Rabbi Akiva and other rabbis and disciples during the revolt against the Romans. It is a day of rejoicing celebrated with picnics and bonfires.

### **Shavuot: Harvest of First Fruits**

Known as the Harvest of First Fruits, Shavuot marks the end of the grain harvest, which began on Passover. Shavuot also commemorates the revelation of Torah with its Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai during the forty years of wandering in the desert. The Torah mentions that it took 49 days, or seven weeks, to reach Mount Sinai from Egypt. Shavuot (which means “weeks”) comes at the conclusion of this “week of weeks.”

### **Tisha B’Av: Day of Mourning**

Many tragic events happened to the Jewish people on the ninth day of the month of Av: the fall of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and the beginning of World War I, ultimately culminating in the Holocaust, as well as other events throughout history. This is one of the saddest days in Jewish history.

# Where it's GREAT to be a kid!

We encourage parents to communicate directly with their child's teacher.

## ECE Hallway

### Classroom      Direct Dial Number

Young Infants.....	317-715-9229
Older Infants.....	317-715-9216
Chesed Infants.....	317-715-6984
Tikvah Ones .....	317-715-9227
Chesed Ones.....	317-715-6979
Tikvah Toddlers.....	317-715-9225
Tikvah Twos .....	317-715-9226
Early Preschool .....	317-715-9218
Preschool.....	317-715-9214
Older Preschool.....	317-715-9213
Pre-K 1.....	317-715-9211
Pre-K 2.....	317-715-9217

## Administration

Directors	Direct Dial Number
ECE Director .....	317-715-6987
ECE Assistant/Associate Director .....	317-715-6988
Senior Director of Family and Community Engagement. ....	317-715-9235
JCC CEO.....	317-475-4440

Arthur M. Glick JCC  
6701 Hoover Road, Indianapolis, IN 46260  
317-251-9467 | Fax 317-251-9493 | JCCindy.org



# Parent Handbook