



# Curriculum Overview

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## Temple Israel Early Childhood Center is a NAEYC accredited, Reggio-Inspired, diverse Jewish preschool.

At Temple Israel Early Childhood Center, our classrooms are full of music and play, exploring and trying, laughing and dancing, building and creating. Our student-centered approach utilizes self-directed, experiential learning to help children form an understanding of themselves and their place in the world through their interactions with others. The rhythms and values of Jewish life are woven into the everyday experiences and spaces.

Our Curriculum incorporates four main components: **Everyday Structure, Judaism, Anti-Bias Education and Reggio Emilia Inspired Education**, each explained briefly below.

Throughout these aspects of our learning and exploration we incorporate objectives drawn from **Teaching Strategies Gold: Objectives for Development and Learning**. These goals align with the Minnesota Standards for Early Childhood and are the objectives for birth through age 5. The goal is for children to have exposure to and a level of proficiency with these standards by the time they go to kindergarten. There is a progression in how children experience, interact with and learn about these important ideas.

For instance, objective 22 is that children compare and measure. Our youngest toddlers may pour sand from one container to another or identify the larger of two balls and our pre-kindergarten learners may measure ingredients carefully while following a recipe or use a balance to compare the weights of objects. Along the way learners may sequence objects according to size, measure objects using standard and non-standard measurements, and compare the size of similar objects. All learners will gain experience with comparing and measuring but exactly how that looks will vary from age to age and child to child.

### **Everyday Structure**

Our classrooms are organized into Interest Areas to facilitate learning: Blocks, Pretend, Library, Art & Writing, Discovery (Math and Science materials) and Toys & Games. Each classroom has a sensory table for tactile exploration and a light table to use with translucent materials.

We use visual supports such as picture schedules and Time Timers. These important tools give children information, leading to less anxiety and better confidence and self-regulation.

We believe in long blocks of time for exploration, so each class has a long Choice Time daily in which children explore interest areas, as well as participate in one on one or small group experiences. Transitions are handled calmly and with planning, so that when children do need to stop what they are doing and move on to something else, it happens comfortably and calmly.

Our classrooms are places of balance: balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated tasks, between sitting and moving, between time inside and time outside, between working individually, in small groups and in larger groups.

## **Judaism**

Woven into our secular goals are Jewish concepts drawn from *Jewish Every Day* by Maxine Segal Handelman. Each holiday is presented through a mix of discussion, stories, songs and hands-on experiences. Children participate in rituals such as visiting a Sukkah and shaking a Lulav, a Tu B'Shvat Seder, and a Purim costume parade.

Children experience Judaism through weekly rituals as well. We all join together for Havdalah on Mondays and Shabbat on Fridays, beginning and ending our week together. Clergy join us on Fridays in the sanctuary, to sing songs and tell stories to the children, in addition to the Shabbat prayers. Ritual objects become familiar to the children as do Hebrew words and songs.

We also have identified 5 specific ethical concepts, which we call Mitzvot and Midot (Jewish ethics and manners), that all classes learn and practice. Our classrooms are rich with Jewish stories and those stories, as well as teachable moments, are used to teach these Mitzvot and Midot.

## **Anti-Bias Education**

We incorporate the four core goals of Anti-Bias Education, as drawn from the work of Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards, into our learning communities. The goals of anti-bias education include that children learn about their own identity as well as the identities of others and build on that knowledge and experience to stand up for themselves and others in the face of unfairness or prejudice. To that end we incorporate equity and anti-bias work into our explorations with our learners, discussing topics such as race and gender, fairness and unfairness.

## **Reggio Emilia Inspired Education**

Our teachers are inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia, and you will notice that our classrooms look and feel like a home. You will see softness in lighting and in our furniture and materials. There is a lot of wood and cloth and less plastic. You will notice the work of the children evident all around you, and a focus on the process of learning and of documenting children's thoughts and experiences, rather than in a proscribed standardized product. Time and space for play and for children's exploration is a priority, so we keep transitions to a minimum and make sure children are not hurried from place to place.

Since our objectives can be taught through any topic, we launch studies responsive to the children's interests. Children then participate in investigation of these topics and experiences and learning are documented and shared with parents.



**Would you like to learn more? Please contact us for more information:**

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