

Keshet Preschool
at Temple Beth El



Parent Handbook

2024-2025 | 5784-5785

www.tberochester.org

Unity

I dreamt I stood in a studio,
And watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child's
Mind, and they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher, the tools he
Used were books, music, and art.
One a parent with a guiding hand
And a gentle loving heart.

Day after day, the teacher toiled,
With a touch that was deft and
Sure. While the parent labored by
Their side, and polished and
smoothed it o'er.

And when at last, their work was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought.
For the things they had molded into the
Child, could neither be sold nor bought.

And each agreed they would have
Failed if each had worked alone,
For behind the parent stood the
School and behind the teacher the
Home.

-Author Unknown

We warmly welcome you and your family to Keshet Preschool! I am thrilled that you chose our Judaically enriched, play-based school for your child's early education! Our day to day learning will keep your child's curiosity growing, and your child's secular and Jewish education paths expanding. Preschool is one of the most important times in a child's life; new friendships are formed, social skills are growing, your child's body is changing at a drastic pace, and knowledge is being obtained. Jewish education at the preschool level is incredibly important in helping your child understand his/her Jewish identity, as well as shape his/ her attitude towards Judaism for the future. According to Mark I. Rosen, Ph.D. of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, "Exposure to Judaism at home and in childcare can help children to grow up with a strong Jewish identity."

Keshet Preschool is truly a family, and we are partners. Please know that our doors are always open. Our goal is not only to create a positive learning experience for all, but also to have everyone entering and leaving Keshet feeling good about themselves!

We look forward to making this the best possible preschool experience for your family.

L'Shalom,



Mandi Warner

Youth & Families Director

mwarner@tberochester.org

(585)473-1770 x 121

Parents Rights and Responsibilities

It is a parent's right:

- To know about all aspects of the program
- To come to the Directors and have their concerns heard
- To know all about their child's experience in the program
- To feel welcome calling to check in on your child
- To feel free to ask questions of the faculty (when they can respond without interrupting the program)
- To feel assured that their beliefs, concerns, and values are sought and respected
- To have your children and family feel an assurance of complete confidentiality (where appropriate) on all matters involving the welfare of your children and family
- To have a strong partnership and communication between home and school

It is a parent's responsibility:

- To read the Parent Handbook and follow all policies and procedures
- To keep all important information current, including contact information, medical exams, etc., and to respond to requests for information from staff
- To respect school staff as professionals who work with families to provide quality care.
- To speak respectfully to staff both verbally and in writing
- To keep matters confidential in regards to anything related to another child or staff member
- To respect staff boundaries by not calling or texting them after work hours, on the weekends, and during Shabbat and holidays unless it is a true emergency

- To respect staff boundaries by understanding they will respond to you 24 hours after the next business day on emails
- To be honest and truthful when it comes to all health and safety measures including but not limited to COVID rules and contagious illnesses within the home

Contacting the Director

Please feel free to email us at any time with questions or concerns. We are very open to communication, and strive to create an environment where you can be at ease with your child(ren) being away from you. Please remember that we do not answer calls or emails on Shabbat or holidays unless it is an emergency.

Mandi Warner, Youth and Families Director

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(585) 473-1770, Ext. 125

Hours of Operation

Keshet Preschool is in session from 9:00 am until 12:00 noon for all children. School is in session until 1:00 pm for our optional lunch program (lunch bunch). Lunch is offered on Monday through Friday. The number of children who sign up will determine the availability of lunch days. Lunch Bunch and Enrichment Classes (1:00 - 2:00pm) information is enclosed and is available online.

Children must be picked up on time. It is disconcerting for children to be left waiting. Your consideration is greatly appreciated. Please note that for every fifteen minutes you are late, there will be a \$15 charge.

Arrival & Departure

All parents should park in the main lot in the handicapped spots and bring their children up to the directors and teachers. We will check your child off to make sure we have any daily pertinent information as well as answer any questions you may have.

Please note that this is not the time to have lengthy discussions with the director or other staff. Please drop the director or our staff an email if you would like to find a time to chat.

School Closings

Keshet Preschool will be closed for inclement weather if the Brighton school district closes its schools. Please check local television stations, as well as Facebook and your email to get school closing information. In the event that Keshet needs to close, due to any type of emergency, you will receive a telephone call. We will also close for pandemics if the state or local government mandates it.

General Health Guidelines/ Immunization Forms

In your parent information packet, you will receive an immunization form which must be completed by a physician and returned to Keshet Preschool before a child can begin school. We are not, at this current time, requiring COVID immunizations. We will keep you up to speed if it does become a policy. We are asking for copies of vaccination cards if your child has been vaccinated. It is our policy that all children, who are enrolled in Keshet, be immunized for the well-being of all. Please be sure to highlight any allergy information.

Children have colds, on average, 100 days out of the year, so we do not expect you to keep your child home for every sniffle.

We do ask you to please consider the following when determining whether to send a child to school:

- If your child complains of a sore throat, stomach or earache, has fever, diarrhea, vomiting, pink or red inner eyes, a facial flush, or any extraordinary conditions, take these seriously.
- If your child contracts COVID, they will be required to stay home for five days and come back masked for five days.
- A physician must check unusual rashes and skin aberrations before a child comes into contact with other children. A physician's note must be presented to assure others that the child is not contagious.
- If you feel a need to medicate your child for anything but known allergies, please keep them at home.
- After an illness, children should be kept home until they are fever free for 24 hours. A lower morning fever can easily spike later in the day.

There is a great article on WebMD (<https://www.webmd.com/children/guide/too-sick-for-school#2>) that we use as our general guidelines, and we kindly ask you to use, to indicate when children should not be in school due to illness. If your child does become ill at school, we will call you and ask that you pick your child up immediately. Please ensure that a parent/emergency contact is available during school hours.

Our thanks in advance for adhering to these policies. This will help to ensure the good health of everyone at Keshet Preschool. Please be considerate of the other children and our staff and keep sick children at home. A sick child is not a happy child!

Sick children will be sent home at the discretion of the Director.

Food Allergies

If your child has any food allergies, a “Food Allergy Action Plan” must be filled out. Parents may provide a labeled box with non-allergenic snacks for their child if they choose to do so. Keshet is a designated “nut-aware” facility, and will do everything to accommodate your child’s allergies.

Please note that due to allergies, we ask that you run all birthday or special treats by the Director.

Epi-Pen Required Allergies

Please see Mandi prior to the beginning of school.

Medical Emergencies

If a child becomes ill or is hurt during school time, our CPR/First-aid trained staff will use reasonable judgment in determining how the children will be cared for. Please see the previous page for our guidelines about when we send children home for illnesses. Every effort will be made to contact the parents first. It is up to you to be sure that you update your child's information forms with changing home/job/cell phone number changes. Please note that if one child in the family gets sent home due to illness, the entire family will be asked to be picked up. Please also note that sick children will be taken to an isolated room that will be supervised by the director. You will be requested to pick up your child as soon as possible.

- **The staff of Keshet Preschool will not be able to administer any medications to children with the exception of approved emergency medications.**
- **Please apply sunscreen to children before school, on outside days. If you would like sunscreen reapplied, please see Mandi for a form. You must provide your own labeled bottle of non-aerosol sunscreen.**

If your child is out for any reason, please let us know that he/she will not be coming. Call 473-1190 ext. 121 and leave a message, or email Mandi mwarner@tberochester.org. We miss them when they are out!

Head Lice

Students diagnosed with head lice will be sent home to be treated, and may return to class after appropriate treatment has begun. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice. Head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Both the American Association of Pediatrics & the National Association of School Nurses advocate that “no-nit” policies should be discontinued. “No-nit” policies that require a child to be free of nits before they can return to schools should be discontinued for the following reasons:

- Many nits are more than 1/2” from the scalp. Such nits are usually not viable and very unlikely to hatch to become crawling lice, or may in fact be empty shells, also known as casings.
- Nits are cemented to hair shafts and are very unlikely to be transferred successfully to other people.

Diapers

- Please leave sufficient diapers and wipes in your child’s cubby for changes. We suggest checking periodically to be sure your child is well supplied!
- We also ask you to keep the teacher up to date on your progress toward independent toileting. We are happy to work with you.

Note: Baby bottles and pacifiers are not permitted in school for health reasons.

Snacks

Keshet will provide a snack for the children each day, which may include crackers, fruits, vegetables, pretzels, etc. Please note that no outside food with the exception of lunches may be brought in at any time without prior permission from the Directors.

Lunch

Temple Beth El observes kosher dietary laws. Children staying for lunch will bring their own dairy lunches [no meat please]. Please put your child's first and last name on his/her lunch box. We do have a refrigerator available or you may use freezer packs in their lunches. Please remember a drink [thermos], a napkin and appropriate utensils. We can warm lunches but please do not send lunches that require assembly. Please send food in microwave safe plastic containers if warming is necessary (no glass, please). As developmentally appropriate, we are always encouraging a level of independence. Please provide your child with some items they are able to open independently. We will, of course, provide assistance as needed. The option for lunch bunch is available to all children. Please see the Rainbow Connections registration form for information on our website. Lunch bunch takes place from Noon-1 pm daily.

Due to the increase in allergies, we are nut-aware. Please feel free to see Mandi for any vegetarian, nut-free lunch ideas.

We would also like to request that you use reusable containers for the children's lunches. We often have children opening a disposable cup of applesauce, for example, and eating one bite. We cannot send it home without a container with a top. If you would like to use the disposable containers, please send along a reusable container and we will be happy to transfer leftover foods into the cup.

School/Parent Partnership

Parents/families are our valued partners in the education of their children. A successful partnership relies on excellent communication. We will be offering parent-teacher conferences during the months of November and March. If a parent feels a need to conference with a teacher before or after these formal conference days, we suggest that they contact the teacher and plan another conference time. Our staff is easily accessible. A list of staff email addresses will be made available to communicate with them as the need arises.

DURING SCHOOL HOURS, YOU MUST KEEP A CELL PHONE ON FOR EMERGENCY CALLS. PLEASE NOTIFY US IF YOUR CELL NUMBER CHANGES.

We communicate via email daily, and we ask you to please read them in a timely manner.

Parent Participation

Our partnership with our families is of the utmost importance to Keshet Preschool.

We hope that the preschool will become a “home away from home” where you are welcome as a part of our family. We are looking for ways to incorporate parents into our programming as much as possible.

Please be on the lookout for opportunities throughout the school year and are always looking for parents to be involved in our Parent Council. Stay tuned for more information about this.

Contacting Our Staff

Just like you, our staff have families and other commitments outside of their workday. Please give all of our staff a 24 hour or complete business day turnaround for emails. If there is an emergency after 5pm, please message us through the Keshet Facebook page, and someone will respond to you. The directors are typically on site from 7am-4:15pm daily. Please note that we do not respond to emails or phone calls on Shabbat or Jewish holidays.

Secular Holidays

The preschool does not celebrate the secular holidays of Halloween, Christmas, or Valentine's Day. We appreciate you not sending your child to school with Halloween costumes or sending Valentine cards through the school. Purim will be our costume wearing holiday and we always stress the importance of love and caring throughout the year.

Toys in School

Children are not encouraged to bring personal items and toys to school where they can be easily lost, damaged, or create issues of ownership among the children. Teachers are not responsible for lost or broken toys from home. You might want to encourage your child to leave their "loveys" in the car [if they can't leave them home], so that the toy or blankie will be safe until you pick your child up from school. Please note that your child's teachers may have special days where these items can be brought into the classroom. Please remember to check your emails for these special days.

Only non-porous objects may be brought into the school. Please note that pacifiers are not allowed.

Clothing

Please bring a LABELED box of replacement clothing for your child that will remain in his/her cubby throughout the year. This should include labeled underwear, socks, shirt, pants and even a spare pair of inexpensive sneakers. Aside from bathroom accidents, we sometimes have extensive spills of juice, paint, water, etc. Please note that it is common for us to do projects where children may get messy. It is advisable to send your child in clothing that can easily be laundered. Most children are happy to change into their own spare set of clothing but balk at wearing unknown articles of clothing. Please make sure that clothing is seasonal and check their boxes for outgrown clothing over the course of the school year! Please label outside clothing such as jackets, sweaters, and boots.

**** Suggestion:** In preparation for the school year, you may find a shoebox or plastic tub, and sit and decorate it with your child, using stickers and markers, etc. Remind them that this will be staying at school so it can be there each day they come to school.

Behavioral Policy

The following policy is a set of guidelines that pertains to physical violence and harmful language that is outside the range of developmentally appropriate behavior for the age groups in Keshet. Proactive and preventative approaches will be taken in all classrooms, and character education will be implemented into daily lesson planning.

In each event, The children involved will be given guidance on conflict resolution or developmentally appropriate remorse if applicable, the Director will be immediately notified, and the parent(s) of all children involved will be called by the Director.

1. First offense... The child will be removed from the classroom for an appropriate period of time and spoken with by the Director. The child will be reminded about safe behaviors and given alternatives to their behavior. Strategies will be given to the classroom teacher, and the child will be monitored for progress.
2. Second offense... The previous step will be taken, and the Keshet Special Needs Coordinator and/or Jewish Family Services provider will be brought in for support of the classroom and child.
3. Third offense... The previous step will be taken, and the child will be removed from the classroom for the day, and parents will be required to sign off on consent for Jewish Family Services to be able to work with the child during school. Alternative supervision will be provided at Keshet if possible. If not, the child will need to go home.
4. Fourth offense... The previous step will be taken, and the child will be required to receive behavioral support either from Jewish Family Services or from a family's provider. Proof of support must be provided to return to class.
5. Fifth offense... The previous step will be taken, and the child will be required to have one on one support, the cost for which will be paid by the child's family.

Caveat... If a child cannot be consoled or if the behavior causes extreme harm to themselves or another individual, then the required action will be at the discretion of the Director and may not follow the policy as outlined above. This may include removal from the program at the family's expense.

Created by Mandi Warner, Youth and Families Director

Approved by Debbie Zeger, Executive Director

Staff as Baby-Sitters

Keshet Preschool hires only the highest quality of staff that have excellent credentials involving Early Childhood. All of our staff have gone through background checks and have had references checked. With that being said, we understand that your children bond with, and you trust our staff. We do not encourage you to use our staff as baby-sitters for your own personal time, but we do not forbid it either. Please note that if you do choose to use our staff, we are not responsible for their actions when they are not on our time. **Please respect and understand that our staff adhere to strict confidentiality policies when it comes to being a representative of Temple Beth El and Keshet. Please refrain from asking our staff information about other families, staff members, or policies.**

Social Media

We have several children in Keshet whose parents choose not to have their children on social media. If you chose to take pictures of your child while you are here, please either make sure there are no other children in the photo or speak to the director to find out if the photo taken is allowed on social media. Please feel free to tag Keshet Preschool! Thank you for respecting our policies.

Monetary Donations

Monetary donations are gratefully accepted in the main office of Temple Beth El. Please be sure to note Keshet Preschool in the memo line.

Thank you for your support!

Parent Confidentiality

As mentioned a few times, our personal philosophy of Keshet is that everyone, including staff, families, and children, walk away feeling good about themselves. We also understand that conflicts may arise between other children and families or a misunderstanding may happen between a staff member and a family. The Jewish terms of lashon hora (evil tongue) and rechilut (gossip), are considered sins. They are referred to people speaking poorly of each other, and potentially damaging reputations. We ask that if there is an issue with another family, child, or staff that you please bring it directly to the director's attention. We work together to create a community that values kavod (respect) and it is taught throughout the whole school. Please help us to spread kavod by refraining from gossip about other families, children, and staff.

Tzedakah

Tzedakah is a central value in Jewish life, and children are never too young to begin to understand the concept of giving. Each child will have a special Tzedakah box that they will place change in every Shabbat, and it is our hope that each child will learn to feel wonderful doing this weekly "mitzvah". You can send in change for your child for a week or more at a time. Please check to see if it needs replenishment periodically. We will decide on a charity to donate the tzedakah funds to at the end of the school year. If there is a charity near and dear to your family, please let us know!

The children also donate a food item each week. Please do not bring glass items, and please check to make sure the items are not expired. All donations go to the Brighton Food Cupboard. We encourage families to bring items over to the Brighton Food Cupboard, which is located on 220 Idlewood Drive in Brighton. We will be looking for at least one family a month to do so. Please see Mandi if you are interested.

Separation

No child is the same nor can we expect them to be the same. Some children have no problem being left at school and others just need some time to decide that this is a great place to be, and feel assured that their parents will really be back. Once they are able to feel secure and at peace, separations will become easier.

Remember that there is a significant difference between attachment and dependence. We want to encourage attachment to family and significant others throughout their lives. As children grow and mature, they need to become less dependent. This is a process and each child owns their own timetable.

We want the children to come to school and to feel that they are safe and cared for. You may understand that the teachers will take good care of your children, but your children may need some time to be assured of this. If we are patient, the process will be more successful.

For the two-year-olds, Pitzels, or any of the children who have never been apart from their immediate family for any length of time, this may be a challenge. We will work together to be sure that your children become adjusted.

Suggestions for Parents

Both parents and children may experience anxiety about starting Preschool. Here is some advice taken from various sources on Separation:

- **Recognize your own feelings** - Children are sensitive to the emotions of their parents. They may sense your apprehensive feelings about going to school. If you feel that your choice for a preschool experience is a good one [which you should feel], then these will be minimized.

- **Always convey good feelings when you talk about going to school.** “I wonder what fun things you are going to do in school today?” “Morah[teacher] is so nice. I bet she will smile and say hi to us when we come to school”.
- **Evaluate your child’s temperament** - some children just adapt easily to new situations. Others need time to adjust to a new transition. Either is normal.
- **At the end of the day, ask your child for three things they did that made them smile.** If your child is having trouble answering this question, please refer to the daily email as conversation starters.

Patience is a Virtue

Although many children can cope with extended separations, some cannot. As is true of all issues, we will partner together for the best possible result and will respect each individual child’s timetable.

Please send in a family picture to put in their cubby.

Seeing this will make them feel like school is a little bit like home and will help them to identify their own cubby.

Birthday Celebration

Everybody loves a birthday party! In school, celebration foods must be from a kosher bakery or a packaged good with a recognized kosher symbol on the box. They must also meet the allergen needs of the classroom. We will be happy to provide you with a list of approved Kashrut symbols. Please check with the teachers to schedule an in-school birthday celebration. If you would like to bring something else, please check with the directors first to be sure that any children with allergies can be a part of the celebration. Please make sure that snacks are nut-free, as well as not processed in a facility with nuts.

Birthday celebration suggestions: Hunt's Snack Pack pudding, Fig Newtons, Nutri-Grain bars (as well as Wegmans brand), Teddy Grahams, Snyder's pretzels, Barnum's animal crackers, Honey Maid Graham crackers, string cheese, Chips Ahoy, and Oreos . Trader Joes is an excellent resource for accommodating allergies and Kashrut policies, as is Malek's Bakery.

Please be very aware of our children's feelings when planning out-of-school parties. **If possible, please try to invite the entire class and remember to be sensitive to those families who observe Shabbat on Saturday.** Children feel very sad and excluded when they realize that they have been left out of a party others have been invited to.

Kippot (Head Covering)

Temple Beth El is an egalitarian synagogue, yet we respect the beliefs of everyone. If you would prefer your child not to wear a kippah, please let us know. If your child has a special kippah they would like to wear, please send it in daily with their first and last name. Children are not permitted to share kippot.

Shabbat

Celebrating Shabbat is very important to us, as a Jewish community. At Keshet Preschool, Shabbat will also be a special day, anticipated throughout the week and different from all other days. Here are some Shabbat programs I anticipate:

- On Friday mornings, we will have our own little pre-Shabbat in the classroom, as well as a schoolwide "Shabbat Sing-aLong". This year we will be asking parents to come in and be Shabbat guests. More information will follow.

- The children who are here on Fridays will have their in-class Shabbat snack consisting of challah, grape juice, and fruit.
- We will learn about the Parsha of the week, as well as Shabbat customs and traditions. If your family has any special Shabbat rituals, please let us know! We will include them within our celebrations at various times throughout the year.

People to Know at Temple Beth El

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Temple Beth El Main Office: 473-1770

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