

Tree of Life Preschool



Educational Philosophy

The work of the young child is great work – it is important work and we are able to serve the child through offering an environment that inspires exploration, engages curiosity, and nurtures spiritual growth based on the teachings of Judaism. Nature is the platform we have chosen to guide your child into the world of today. Everything we do and we learn connects back to nature, whether it is on the surface of our planet, in the air around us, or beyond the stars we can see. As adults it is our mission to open doors through language, experience, prayers, and traditions to further strengthen the bonds to nature, humanity, and G-d. Learning to be in nature, to work in nature, to care for nature, and to respect nature all directly link our children to the relationships we want for them to have with each other and with G-d. Our days will be spent outside as much as possible either in our playspace or in our outdoor classrooms, both allowing discovery and focused exploration.

Child-Centered Learning

Our educational philosophy underscores our commitment to child centered learning. Educators guide students to new learning as children ask questions, express curiosity or concern, and show enthusiasm toward discoveries. Students experiment, problem solve and explore with their senses. Students voice opinions and express ideas through language and the arts. Students develop friendships and learn from one another through cooperative play. In other words, students actively participate in all aspects of learning.

We integrate many approaches to support each child's learning path by:

- Developing a connection to G-d through the traditions of Judaism;
- Providing a supportive, safe learning environment to encourage discovery, questioning and experimentation;
- Offering sensory opportunities with natural objects, artifacts, outdoor interpretation and creative arts activities
- Engaging cognitive growth and problem-solving skills through hands-on games and activities;
- Developing physical motor skills through active learning and play;
- Promoting social skills and positive self-image through group play and cooperative learning;
- Cultivating emotional literacy and empathy to develop self-esteem;
- Nurturing self-expression, creativity, and reflection;
- Encouraging family involvement to help students appreciate the wisdom of their first teachers – their families;
- Celebrating diversity of all living things and the individuality of children and families;
- Instilling respect and appreciation for the natural world.



About Tree of Life

In contrast to traditional preschool programs, at Tree of Life Preschool:

- Children learn directly from biofacts and artifacts.
- Children have daily trail and garden experiences.
- Children develop earth-friendly habits such as recycling and composting.
- Children eat, grow, and prepare healthy foods for snack while reciting appropriate Hebrew blessings.
- Children create and reflect on learning through a variety of expressive art forms using natural and recycled materials.

We develop a sense of spirituality and tradition by:

- Reinforcing the concept of Tikun Olam (Caring for the World) through activities both in the classroom and outside
- Reinforcing the concept of Mitzvot (G-d's Commandments) by teaching and modeling acts of kindness (Gemilut Chasadim), how to treat others (Derech Eretz), respecting our environment (Shemirat HaAdamah)
- Introducing Hebrew language through basic vocabulary, songs, and prayers
- Preparing for reading readiness with the Hebrew alphabet
- Welcoming Shabbat each week and learning about the holidays and celebrating the basic traditions of each

We develop English language and literacy skills by:

- Exposing students to letters, letter combinations, and words

- Modeling writing and offering writing opportunities each day
- Providing a print-rich classroom environment (e.g. magazines, books, field guides, poems)
- Storytelling, listening to and retelling stories
- Inviting students to dictate or imagine stories
- Encouraging dramatic play
- Singing, rhyming, and experimenting with sounds
- Generating lists or reading to perform a task (e.g. recipe or game instructions)
- Identifying characters and storylines to promote comprehension
- Introducing vocabulary rich materials and manipulatives (e.g. types of fish, types of water formations, types of land formations, names of leaf shapes)

We explore math ideas:

- Finding, following, and repeating patterns
- Counting within context
- Figuring out what is missing among groups
- Estimating
- Songs, stories, and games with counting
- Using number and time words
- Graphing and charting
- Grouping (e.g. dozen, pair, many)
- Naming shapes
- Classifying and grouping objects
- Sorting and matching objects
- Measuring and using of scales
- Tracking seasonal and time progressions
- Counting with one-to-one correspondence
- Examining a series of objects