



2009-2010

Parent Handbook



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Welcome to Gan Ami

Welcome to Gan Ami, the Early Childhood Education Program of Congregation Beth Am. Lifelong learning is an important part of the Beth Am community, and we believe that it starts with our youngest congregants – the children.

Our Philosophy

At Gan Ami, we hope each child will feel that s/he belongs and will have a sense of Jewish community. Teachers provide children with opportunities for independence and they develop their individual personalities in a comfortable environment. Each child has chances for success provided by a variety of activities geared toward children's interests and abilities. Learning is play-based and emergent, building on children's growing knowledge throughout the year. Our hope is that children will care for each other, learning to label their own feelings with words as well as recognize others' feelings. We celebrate Jewish holidays together in a positive and relaxed way and children have opportunities for direct contact with Jewish ritual objects. Families will join children and their teachers everyday and are always welcome to participate in daily activities.

Families who enroll at Gan Ami do so because they desire a Jewish education for their children within an intimate Jewish setting. Classrooms are small (12 children to 2 teachers), providing chances for one-on-one time with teachers and opportunities to make close friendships with their peers. The Gan Ami environment has a unique and Jewish feel. Children learn to handle Jewish ritual objects. Classroom objects are made from natural materials whenever possible. Classroom set-up is flexible and will change in order to meet the needs of the children. The classrooms include areas for easel painting, free art, art projects pertaining to current discussion topics, sensory materials, blocks, housekeeping, and stories.

Teachers at Gan Ami are loving, caring models for the children. Staff members have a great amount of experience in Jewish Early Childhood Education. Staff members work together as a team to create goals and prepare classrooms for the children. Teachers meet each day during the week before the year begins and then meet weekly during the program year to discuss curriculum planning, documentation, and Jewish learning.

Jewish Curriculum. Staff create a child-centered Jewish curriculum. Teachers base all curriculum plans on the Jewish context of the classroom. Curriculum concentrates on current Jewish holidays, Shabbat, and important Jewish values. Highlighted values include Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) and caring for others the way you want them to care for you. In addition, staff uses the research and books written by Early Childhood Education guru Bev Bos as a guide to create an environment focused on the children within it. Bos promotes classroom settings that teachers can easily modify according to children's needs and desires. She also concentrates on process-oriented group projects that children enjoy and learn from.

Our Staff



Sherrie Rose Maleson - Gan Ami Director and Perachim Teacher

Sherrie Rose Maleson grew up in the Beth Am community and is very glad to be on the Beth Am staff as Gan Ami Director and Perachim Teacher. She has worked at the Palo Alto Jewish Community Center's T'enna Preschool (where she attended as a young child) as Afternoon Program Coordinator and Early Childhood Teacher from 2002 through 2008. She received a BA in Psychology in 2002 from Scripps College where she was very active in student life. In 2005, she earned an MA in Human Development, specializing in Early Childhood Education, from Pacific Oaks College. Sherrie Rose loves spending time with her dog, taking yoga classes, and working for the benefit of young children!



Uriela Ben-Yaacov - Garinim and Shorashim Teacher

Uriela Ben-Yaacov grew up in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), studied for a Bachelor's Degree in Hebrew University, Jerusalem, spent 10 years in South Africa and moved to California in 1980 with her husband and 2 children. Her third child was born in California (the only one born in the USA). She is also the grandmother of three young ones. She is a certified teacher in Early Childhood Education, and has previously taught in the T'enna preschool and in Thacher Preschool, and has just completed her first year of teaching in the Gan Ami program. She plays the guitar and the piano and enjoys teaching Jewish curriculum and Hebrew through music, dance and rhythm. She is also a parent leader in a non-profit organization that supports parents in the important job of parenting. Uriela enjoys swimming, walking, participating in Torah Study at Beth Am, and spending special time with her children and grandchildren.



Leah Strauss - Garinim and Shorashim Teacher

Leah Strauss, a California certified master teacher of early childhood education, loves engaging very young children in Jewish tradition, practices and values. She began teaching parent-toddler classes at the Palo Alto Jewish Community Center's T'enna Preschool when her children enrolled in 1998, and most recently taught in the programs for two- and three-year-olds. She has interests in supporting young children with special needs and their families. Before she began teaching, Leah was an editorial and public relations executive at Silicon Valley technology companies. She has a BA in political science (UC Davis) and an MA in journalism (University of Wisconsin). She is a recent graduate of the Florence Melton Jewish Adult School, and participates in Beth Am's Torah and Talmud study groups. Leah also tries to find time to paint, write and read, and spend time with her husband, two teenage boys and the family's dog, Jupiter.



Janie Taylor - Perachim Teacher

Janie Taylor is entering her third year at Gan Ami this school year and will be teaching in the Perachim classroom. She started teaching in Early Childhood in 1996 and since that time has worked with children from ages 12 months to Young Fives. She holds a B.S. in Education from the University of Memphis. Janie completed her California Early Childhood Site Supervisor courses at DeAnza College and is pursuing a Masters degree in Developmental Education at Pacific Oaks College. She is a certified Red Cross Instructor, is trained in advanced First Aid, and is a Disaster Service Worker. Janie has lived in the mid-Peninsula area for the last twenty years, currently residing in Mountain View with her husband, Andy Rose, her two children, Laurel and Jacob Detkin, and her two dogs.

Congregation Beth Am Mission Statement

The core mission of Congregation Beth Am is to create a vibrant Reform Jewish community committed to:

- Meaningful worship and spiritual growth
- Lifelong study of Jewish texts, traditions and values, including the philosophy and practice of Reform Judaism
- Individual and communal acts of gemilut chasadim (loving-kindness), tzedaka (righteous giving) and tikkun olam (repairing the world)
- Integrating Jewish practice into home and family life
- Communal support and pastoral guidance for individuals throughout the life cycle, and for families in all their diversity
- Leadership in the Jewish and general communities
- A strong partnership of lay and professional leaders, and active participation of members

In pursuit of these goals, we commit ourselves to ongoing innovation, risk-taking and seeking new challenges, as well as continuous evaluation of our progress and results. We commit ourselves, as well, to building and sustaining the infrastructure necessary to realize our mission.

Ten Goals of Reform Judaism

The Union for Reform Judaism Department of Lifelong Jewish Learning has set forth the goals listed below. These guidelines foster the deepening of the Jewish experience and knowledge for all Jews in order to strengthen faith in God, love of Torah, and identification with the Jewish people through involvement in the synagogue and participation in Jewish life. We believe that Judaism contains answers to the challenges and questions confronting us daily and that only a knowledgeable Jew can successfully discover these answers. Linked to these goals, the programs of our schools embrace experience and learning activities, encouraging children, young people and adults to become...

- Jews who affirm their Jewish identity and bind themselves inseparably to their people by word and deed
- Jews who bear witness to the *b'rit*, the “covenant” between God and the Jewish people through the practice of mitzvot (commandments) as studied in the Torah and the classic Jewish literature it has generated and as interpreted in light of historic development and contemporary liberal thought
- Jews who affirm their Jewish identity and bind themselves inseparably to their people by word and deed
- Jews who affirm their historic bond to Eretz Yisrael, the “Land of Israel”
- Jews who cherish and study Hebrew, the language of the Jewish people
- Jews who value and practice *t'filah* (prayer)
- Jews who further the cause of justice, freedom and peace by pursuing *tzedek* (righteousness), *mishpat* (justice) and *chesed* (loving deeds)
- Jews who celebrate Shabbat and the festivals and observe the Jewish ceremonies that mark the significant occasions in their lives
- Jews who esteem their own person and the person of others, their own family and the family of others, their own community and the community of others
- Jews who express kinship with *K'lal Yisrael* by actively seeking the welfare of Jews throughout the world
- Jews who support and participate in the life of the synagogue

Days and Hours of Operation

Gan Ami serves children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old. A typical day at Gan Ami proceeds as follows:

Garinim (Seeds) - Parent Participation

10:00-10:20 Learning Center Free Play

10:20-10:35 Shirah

10:35-10:50 Parent Discussion/Snack

10:50-11:15 Outdoor Project/Yard Time (Weather Permitting)

11:15-11:30 Chavurah

Shorashim (Roots) - 2 year olds

9:30-10:00 Learning Center Free Play

10:00-10:15 Chavurah

10:15-10:45 Morning Snack, Diaper Check/Potty Visit, Sunscreen Application

10:45-11:30 Outside Play (Weather Permitting)

11:30-11:45 Finish Inside Projects and Clean Up

11:45-12:00 Chavurah with Families

Perachim/Etzim (Flowers/Trees) – 3 year olds and 4 year olds

9:30-10:10 Learning Center Free Play

10:10-10:25 Chavurah

10:25-10:55 Morning Snack, Diaper Check/Potty Visit, Sunscreen Application

10:55-11:50 (10:55-11:40 on Fri) Outside Play (Weather Permitting)

11:50-12:15 (11:40-12:00 on Fri) Small Group Time

12:15-12:45 (12:00-12:30 on Fri) Lunch Time

12:45-1:00 (12:30-1:00 on Fri for Shabbat) Chavurah with Families

Gan Ami provides contracted and drop in Early AM Care from 8am-9:30am for Shorashim, Perachim, and Etzim students only.

Currently there is no afternoon extended care available at Gan Ami.

Polices and Procedures

Enrollment and Assistance

Admission to Gan Ami is open to all children who meet the appropriate age criteria. Enrollment is prioritized as follows:

1. Children of families who are members of Beth Am, other synagogues or JCC's
2. Grandchildren of Beth Am Members
3. Children being raised as Jews
4. Children of non-Jewish families

Limited scholarship funds are available to Congregation Beth Am members only.

Admission Requirements

Families who want to enroll in Gan Ami arrange for a tour of the program and a conversation with the Director. This is an important first step to determine if our program meets the needs of the child and family.

Under California State Law you must complete and return the following forms to the Education Office before your child's first day of attendance:

1. Physician's Report. Must be completed by your child's doctor. Must include proof of TB test, immunizations, DPT: 4 doses, Hib: 4 doses, HepB: 3 doses, Polio: 3 doses, MMR: 1 dose.
2. Identification and Emergency Information
3. Health History
4. Consent for emergency medical treatment
5. Sexual abuse pamphlet receipt
6. Permission form for photographs
7. Admission agreement
8. Personal Rights
9. Parent's Rights
10. Needs and Services Plan (Toddlers and children with special needs)

Sign In/Out

California State Law requires that each child in our care must be signed-in and signed-out daily on the attendance sheet. **You must use a full hand-written signature on the attendance sheet.**

When someone else picks up your child. You may designate someone else to pick up your child on a particular day by notifying the teacher beforehand. **Your permission must be in writing and signed and dated by you.**

Only persons identified in your child's file or given specific permission may pick up your child. At the beginning of the program year you will be asked to submit a list of people routinely authorized to pick up your child from Gan Ami. **If the person picking up your child is unknown to the staff, they must be ready to show photo I.D.**

Health Policy

Medical and emergency information forms must be on file before your child can enter Gan Ami. All immunizations must be current.

We are concerned about the health of every child in our program. To keep all children as healthy as possible, we ask you to keep children at home for at least 24 hours after any signs of:

- fever
- frequent coughing
- vomiting
- excessive nasal discharge
- pain
- conjunctivitis
- diarrhea

If a child exhibits any of these symptoms at Gan Ami we will call you to pick the child up. When called, you (or an alternate emergency person) are expected to pick your child up IMMEDIATELY. Our “Sick Child Isolation Area” is located in the Education Office. The aim is to protect the health of your child, his/her classmates, and staff, and so there are no exceptions to this policy.

Note: Staff wears disposable latex gloves when cleaning any wound, or dealing with any bodily fluids or waste.

Contagious Disease Reporting: *Contagious diseases must be reported to the Education Office by the parent as soon as the illness has been diagnosed so that other parents may be notified of the exposure.*

When a potentially contagious illness occurs, notes will be sent home to parents of children who may have been exposed. We would also like to know if your child is going to be absent for several days.

Post-illness return-to-program: After your child has been ill, we ask you to evaluate your child according to the following guidelines to determine if your child is ready to return to Gan Ami.

1. Mood, appetite, behavior and activity are again normal
2. No fever for 24 hours or more
3. Antibiotics (if prescribed) have been used for at least 24 hrs (48 hrs. for strep)
4. Vomiting, diarrhea absent for 24 hours
5. Frequent coughing, excessive nasal discharge is resolved
6. Pain (earache, cramps, headache, etc.) resolved

If you have any doubts, please telephone the Education Office in advance of returning your child to Gan Ami.

Minor Injuries

Minor injuries will be treated with soap and water, ice, and band-aids. Should there be a serious accident, 911 will be called immediately, and then parents or other persons listed on emergency forms will be contacted.

Medication Policy

If it is necessary for your child to receive medication during the day, the medicine must be in the original container with the pharmacy label. A “Request to Give Medicine” form (available in the Gan Ami Office) must be given to your child’s teacher. *We do not administer over-the-counter medications such as Motrin or Tylenol, nor do we administer antibiotics.*

Sunscreen

Sunscreen authorization forms are available in your child’s classroom. If you would like us to apply sunscreen, please leave a bottle (labeled with your child’s name) with the teacher. *We can only apply sunscreen with written permission.* No child can share the sunscreen brought in by another child.

Diaper Changes and Toilet-Learning Policy

If your child wears diapers, please make sure that there are at least three in his/her cubby each day. Diaper changing will be done when the child requests it, when an adult notices that a change is needed, or when it is official diaper check time and a change is needed. Teachers wear gloves during diaper changes. New gloves are worn with each child. Children and teachers wash hands after each diaper change. The time at which a child begins to use the toilet is very individual. Staff will help the child learn to use the toilet when the child is ready.

Discipline Policy

Fostering Positive Behavior. We believe that by fostering positive behavior children will grow and develop skills that will enhance not only their childhood but their entire lives. We do this by:

- Providing an environment and schedule to meet children's needs
- Having individual and group discussions on ways to relate to other people
- Having discussions of rules and providing guidance towards positive interaction
- Encouraging conflict resolution rather than physical force in conflict
- Modeling desired behavior
- Allowing time to practice social skills
- Practicing patience and using a sense of humor!
- Giving children an opportunity to gain self-control with the teachers’ guidance
- Intervening when necessary to avoid serious conflicts

By implementing the above-mentioned steps to foster positive behavior, we strive to provide a consistent and developmentally appropriate approach to redirect negative behavior so that children will know what is and isn't acceptable.

If a child cannot maintain control of his or her behavior, he/she will be given time and space, with a teacher present, to calm down and begin again. A teacher will explain to the child what behavior was not acceptable and help the child rejoin the group when he/she feels ready.

We do not use any corporal punishment, defined as the use of negative physical touching such as spanking or slapping.

It is our goal that children not feel punished or shamed, but to recognize and understand the consequences of negative behavior and to learn more positive ways to deal with conflicts when they arise again. We will work together with parents and/or guardians conducting conferences as needed. If a child's behavior requires frequent redirection, or endangers the other children, teachers will communicate with the child's parents and the child may be sent home.

Grounds for Dismissal

Children exhibiting behavior that threatens the mental and/or physical health and safety of him/herself or others whose needs cannot be met may be dismissed from Gan Ami at the discretion of the Director.

Failure to pay tuition as due is grounds for dismissal. Member families having difficulties paying tuition are invited apply for a scholarship through Executive Director, Debbie Coutant at dcoutant@betham.org. Non-member families having difficulties paying tuition are invited to apply for scholarship through Gan Ami Director, Sherrie Rose Maleson at srmaleon@betham.org.

Biting Policy

Many pre-verbal children go through a time of biting. They bite for several reasons: One, they find the impulse to bite is a natural defense when cornered, not having yet mastered more refined ways of defending and protecting themselves and their wants. Two, the immediate effect of the bite may be so gratifying to the biter, both sensually and dramatically that, for a time, the biter may be inspired to go on a rampage of biting.

We recognize that biting, while it may not be acceptable, is normal and natural for toddlers and not unusual for two year olds and young children in general. It frequently occurs in groups of children just on the verge of fluent language.

Our policies concerning biting:

1. Staff will carefully monitor children.
2. Staff will model appropriate gentle behavior and pre-social play, encouraging children to use words.

3. When a biting incident occurs:

- Staff will quickly respond with a clear message to the biter: *"No! I won't let you bite. Biting hurts!"* Tone of voice, body language, and facial expression all will clearly express disapproval. Staff will recognize the biter's feelings: *"I know you are angry but I can't let you bite."*
- Staff will comfort the "bitee" with a bump bottle, band aid (if necessary), and TLC until the child is ready to return to play.
- Staff will suggest alternatives to biting behavior as appropriate for the age of the children. *"Next time, say MOVE!"* The seriousness of the incident may need reinforcement: *"No! It's not funny. Biting hurts. No biting."*
- Parents of both children involved in the incident will be notified.

Biting is a part of the young child's normal developmental process. We take a proactive, rather than a reactive approach. Each biting situation will be handled in the manner outlined above. We will not discuss personal information with any parent about a child other than his or her own. Biting is a frightening but normal part of most children's development, and we ask you to trust that each biting incident will be handled in a developmentally appropriate and professional manner.

Field Trips

We do not offer off-site field trips at Gan Ami. When visiting other areas of Beth Am, children will be accompanied by a teacher.

Transportation Arrangements

We do not provide any types of transportation arrangements at Gan Ami. Parents are responsible for providing transportation to and from Gan Ami.

Security

Beth Am is committed to ensuring a safe and secure environment for your children. There are security alarms installed and all visitors must wear visitor ID badges available from the Education Office.

Cell phone Policy

In order to maximize our focus on our children, we encourage you to not use your cell phones while on site.

Classroom Routine

Dressing for fun at Gan Ami

Busy children get messy! Children should wear comfortable clothes, which are suitable for the weather and are able to get messy. As children become more independent in their personal care, their clothes should not hinder their success! Please dress your children accordingly. Closed-toed shoes are highly recommended but not required.

We do engage in messy projects, enjoy the water in warm weather, and like to stay warm when it is chilly outside. It is always a good idea to have a few extra changes of clothes available for your child. Please remember to **LABEL ALL YOUR CHILDREN'S CLOTHES**.

Snack

Gan Ami provides a nutritious mid-morning snack. At Gan Ami we maintain a “kosher-style” environment. Beverages are milk or water. Snacks are posted weekly in the classroom. The following is a list of the type of foods your child will be offered. These are rotated for variety:

Grains: bread, crackers, cereal, pasta, muffins, pretzels, oatmeal, rice
 Fruits: apples, oranges, bananas, dried fruits, pears, strawberries
 Vegetables: baked potatoes, veggie soup, cucumber,
 Dairy/Protein: milk, cheese, yogurt, cream cheese

- No nuts
- No forbidden foods
- No mixing of meat and milk
- No candy or gum

If your child has allergies to any food, please notify the teachers directly.

Lunch

Children in the Perachim / Etzim 3-year-old and 4-year-old class eat lunch together. Children should bring lunch (including a drink) in a lunch box with their name clearly visible on the outside by the handle. The Gan Ami policy is that children may bring either a meat or a dairy lunch. No lunch may contain meat and dairy items in the same meal.

Some ideas for healthy lunches and serving sizes include:

GRAINS	FRUITS/VEGGIES	MEATS/PROTEIN	DAIRY
Rice (2-6 Tbs)	Apple slices (1/4 cup)	Beans (1-3 Tbs)	Milk (1/2 cup)
Crackers	Celery (few pieces)	Meat (1-3 Tbs)	Cheese (1/2 oz)
Dry cereal (2-6 Tbs)	Orange (1/4 cup)	Poultry (1-3 Tbs)	Cottage cheese
Pasta (2-6 Tbs)	Banana (1/4 cup)	Fish (1-3 Tbs)	Yogurt (1/2 cup)

NO PEANUT OR OTHER NUT PRODUCTS WILL BE ALLOWED IN THE PROGRAM FOR HEALTH REASONS. (See Nut and Peanut Policy)

NO PORK OR SHELLFISH WILL BE ALLOWED IN THE PROGRAM.

CHILDREN ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BRING CANDY TO SCHOOL.

Choking foods (whole grapes, whole cherry tomatoes, popcorn, etc.) will be taken from the child and returned to you in the child's lunch box.

If Gan Ami staff find nuts, nut products, pork, shellfish, or a lunch which contains both meat and dairy items, you will receive a warning note. Upon the second offense, you will receive a second warning note. Upon the third offense, you will be asked to have a meeting with the Gan Ami Director to discuss food policies and create a plan together to avoid violations of policy in the future.

Please be aware that Gan Ami teachers allow children to eat the foods in their lunch box in the order the child chooses. If you include a dessert item such as a sweet muffin or cookie, staff members will allow your child to eat that item first if your child chooses. When your child says that s/he is full, we will allow him/her to be done. We will keep the uneaten food in the lunch box so that you will see how much your child ate.

Nut and Peanut Policy

The Gan Ami program is a nut and peanut free program. We have decided on this policy because nut and peanut allergies can be fatal and are airborne. As a nut and peanut free program, we have a firm NO NUTS AND PEANUTS ALLOWED rule that pertains to all foods brought into the classrooms. This includes all forms of nuts, peanut butter, peanut oils, and candy or foods containing such.

The latest research indicates peanut and nut allergies are becoming more and more prevalent, and the Jewish people tend to have a higher rate of allergies as a population. The severity of the reaction increases with each nut exposure.

Birthdays

Children are invited to celebrate their birthdays at Gan Ami. In an effort to get away from food as a requirement for celebration and in reaction to the current obesity epidemic in this country, we will not have special birthday treats served at Gan Ami. Instead, we plan to make your child a birthday crown and we invite you to lead Chavurah time and join us for the entire day if you can. For Chavurah, you may want to bring a favorite story and read it, bring a favorite CD and dance, or share a special talent of yours with the children. Gan Ami teachers can help you find an appropriate activity and will assist you with putting it in action.

Birthdays also give us an opportunity to donate a book, puzzle, or game to the classroom. The birthday child has the honor of giving, not just receiving, on his/her special day. If you wish to donate an item, the classroom teacher can give you ideas of what the class would enjoy.

Toys from home

Your child may bring a toy to Gan Ami only if s/he is willing to share it with everyone and understands that it may be lost or broken. Children should leave candy, gum, and war toys at home.

Family – Gan Ami – Community

Parent/Family Involvement

Our program is a family experience in which parents are invited to participate. There will be opportunities for parents to sign up for special activities. Family activities are scheduled and families are invited to 2nd circle/Chavurah everyday.

Every family is encouraged to participate in the wider Beth Am programs along with the scheduled activities that are specific to Gan Ami. Those programs include discussions for adults on parenting, Torah study with Beth Am staff, Shabbat picnics, Tot Shabbat, and evening programs for parents and children together.

Each Gan Ami family will be given a Directory that will list each family's address, phone number, and email address. There will also be an UpToUs online community available for families.

Room Parents / Volunteers

Room parents are key to building community at Gan Ami. Each classroom will need at least one room parent to help during the year, mainly at holiday times. Room parents are called upon to help with planning class parties, organizing afternoon playdates, telephoning parents at various times during the year, gathering funds for teacher gifts and classroom donations, and encouraging participation in Beth Am events for young children. We are also looking for volunteers to host families on Sukkot by building a Sukkah in your yard and participating in Beth Am's annual Sukkot Open Homes event on Sunday, October 4th. In addition, we are looking for volunteers to help coordinate Beth Am's annual Purim Carnival on Sunday, February 28th. If you are interested in becoming a room parent or volunteering, talk to one of the teachers in your classroom.

Gan Ami/Family Communication

It is important to maintain open and frequent communication between parents and teachers. Working together, we can best come to know your child, and provide the most consistent environment for growth. We want to share with you as much information about your child's day as possible.

For this reason, we have many different procedures to give information to you as well as get information from you. In addition to the Gan Ami Gazette, information for parents and families can be found in the eBuilder (Beth Am's General Newsletter) and <http://www.betham.org> (Beth Am website).

Please let us know when something is happening which may affect your child's emotions and behavior: a projected move, separation, birth, death, etc. If we have the information, we can help.

If you need to speak to a teacher, please email, send a note, or phone the Gan Ami Office and leave a message. Your child's teacher will contact you at the first opportunity.

Parent Visits

There are many opportunities during the year for parent help in projects and celebrations. Parent visits during program hours are welcomed. You are welcome for such a visit any time you wish, but please try to plan your classroom visits with the teachers in advance.

To prepare your child, tell your child that you will be in his/her classroom and may leave before he/she does.

Parent Mailboxes

Mailboxes are provided in each classroom for each family. Any messages, flyers, classroom information sheets, etc. that are to go home will be placed in your mailbox. It is your responsibility to check these mailboxes each day for messages.

Messages from Gan Ami

You will receive a Gan Ami Gazette every month.

Teachers will post a list of planned activities for the day before the morning begins. At the end of the day, there will be an additional list of what actually happened so that you may talk with your child more easily about their day.

In addition, teachers will report unusual events to you with either a phone call or note. An "Ouch Report" will be sent home if a minor bump or scrape has occurred during the day.

Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences are a key part of the teachers' communications with you. Conferences are a time when information concerning the child's abilities, needs and progress can be exchanged.

Parent-Teacher conferences for children in the Perachim / Etzim class are held once in the Fall and once in the Spring and at other times if requested by parents or teachers. Parent-Teacher conferences for children in the Shorashim class are held once in the Spring and at other times if requested by parents or teachers.

Jewish Curriculum

Our emphasis is on joyful and meaningful Jewish experiences. Jewish values, ethics, and culture are interwoven into our curriculum on a developmentally appropriate basis.

Our rooms contain Jewish objects and symbols. Simple Hebrew words and songs are used daily. We recite a blessing before meals.

Shabbat

Shabbat is a joyous occasion beginning every Friday at sundown, and ending on Saturday evening when three stars appear in the sky. The observance of Shabbat is a traditional ritual that includes lighting candles, saying a blessing over the wine, and eating challah bread.

Shabbat is a special time for people to come together each week to be with family and friends, to rest, to think, to share, to sing and to have a good time.

Each class celebrates Shabbat each week. For children attending Shorashim, Shabbat will be celebrated on Thursday. For children attending Perachim / Etzim, Shabbat will be celebrated on Friday. Parents are always invited. Jewish books, stories, songs and games are used throughout the year and all holidays are celebrated with music, stories, and food and often with a visit from a rabbi or cantor.

Holidays

Holidays with roots in faiths other than Judaism will not be celebrated at Gan Ami.

Overview of Jewish Holidays

The following Jewish Holidays are emphasized in the curriculum at Gan Ami. These are listed in chronological order as they occur during the program year:

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, begins the ten-day period known as the High Holidays. Rosh Hashanah is also known as the "birthday of the world". Rosh Hashanah celebrates our ability to change and grow, as it is a time for deep thought, self-examination, and prayer.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the holiday in which Jewish people ask for forgiveness and forgive others. Yom Kippur is the most solemn and holy day of the Jewish year. It marks the end of the ten-day period of the High Holy Days.

Sukkot is a fall harvest festival. It commemorates the time the Jewish people lived in temporary huts during their wandering from Egypt to Canaan and also their time of harvest. Sukkot is a time of feasting and of giving thanks for the bountiful harvest.

Simchat Torah, meaning "rejoicing with the Torah", is a happy holiday. On Simchat Torah, the last portion of the Torah in the book of Deuteronomy and the first verses of the book of Genesis are read. This holiday is celebrated in the sanctuary by parading and dancing with the Torah.

Chanukah, a joyous holiday celebrated for eight days, commemorating the victory of the Maccabees over the reigning Greeks, regaining of Jewish independence, and the right to practice the Jewish religion. Chanukah also celebrates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. Chanukah is called the Festival of Lights in remembrance of the miraculous oil that burned in the Temple menorah for eight days.

Tu B'Shevat celebrates the Birthday of the Trees. This holiday teaches the importance of nature and the significance of trees. It is customary to plant trees in Israel on Tu B'Shevat.

Purim, a time of merriment and great fun, is one of the happiest of holidays. The festival of Purim derives from the biblical story of Esther and commemorates the Jewish people's success over people who tried to destroy them. Children enjoy wearing costumes and baking Hamantashen.

Pesach (Passover) celebrates one of the most important events in Jewish history, the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. This festival recalls the liberation from slavery in Egypt, and eventual freedom and arrival in the Promised Land of Canaan. Pesach is celebrated for eight days beginning with a Seder.

Yom Ha'atzmaot, "day of independence" celebrates Israel's attainment of statehood in 1948. Israel's Independence Day commemorates its establishment once again as the homeland for Jewish people.

Lag B'Omer is a holiday that focuses on the importance of study and learning. Lag B'Omer is celebrated on the 33rd day of the 50 days of counting of the omer, which is a somber period of time. This day is a popular day for weddings in Israel and among Orthodox Jews.

Shavuot celebrates the day Moses was given the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. It is also a celebration of the time of harvest and the offering of the first fruits of the new harvest. On Shavuot the synagogue is decorated with flowers. It is traditional to wear white clothing, and to eat dairy foods.

General Curriculum

As Early Childhood Educators, we know that growth and development happen best in a supportive, safe, orderly environment where rules, limits, and expectations are known.

To this end, each teacher plans classroom activities based on knowledge of child development and assessment of individual needs and interests, keeping in mind our goals of diversity and anti-bias.

The Gan Ami Director is always available for consultation as well as guidance in obtaining more in depth information.

Specific Curriculum areas

- Puzzles, beads, pegs, small table toys

These activities support eye-hand coordination, small muscle development, learning colors and sizes, space relationships.

- Clay, finger paint, play dough

These activities support sensory experience, small muscle manipulation, an outlet for tension, and are an opportunity for self-expression.

- Cutting, pasting, collage, crayoning, easel painting, wet chalk, etc.

These support small muscle activity, self-expression, and experience with color, shape and texture.

- Blocks and accessory toys, wooden trucks, trains, etc.

Offer creative construction, eye-hand and muscle coordination experience, balance, recognition of basic 3-dimensional shapes, arithmetical concepts, stimulates imagination, dramatic play.

- Housekeeping corner

Dramatic, imaginative play, emotional outlet, social contacts, opportunity to act out life experiences, feelings.

- Storytelling, looking at books

Opportunity for quiet, restful activity, learning to listen, appreciation of books, vocabulary and speech development, discussion of concepts and practice of problem solving.

- Music, dancing, singing, rhythms

Awareness of different sounds and rhythms, appreciation of songs, vocabulary and speech development, body awareness and large muscle development.

- Observing nature, animals, planting seeds, other science experiences

Development of natural curiosity of living things and the world around us.

- Classroom Cleanup

Promotes sense of orderliness and cooperation, self-satisfaction in helping and completing a job, and personal responsibility for actions.

- Toileting, hand washing

Experience in good health habits, experience in self-direction.

- Sandbox

Sensory experience, opportunity for solitary, parallel, and cooperative play.

- Jungle gym, other climbing equipment

Large muscle activity, developing balance, coordination.

- Tricycles, wagons

Large muscle activity, opportunity for social growth, motor coordination, early safety education.

Emergency Procedures

We have monthly disaster drills at Gan Ami. We urge each family to plan what you will do if a disaster strikes during the day. You will find helpful disaster planning information in your phone book.

Fire

At the sound of alarm, whistle, or knowledge of fire, children will be gathered together. Gan Ami will be evacuated through designated routes.

Earthquake

Children will be directed to DUCK & COVER. If necessary, we will evacuate to a safer location.

Post Event

Children will be cared for by our staff until released to persons listed on emergency information forms. Sign out sheets need to be signed by the person picking up the child. Please do not call the Education Office after an earthquake as all staff will be busy caring for children and phone lines may be needed for emergency contact.

Reporting to Child Protective Services

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures

According to Section 11166 of the Penal Code, all staff at Gan Ami and all of Beth Am are mandated reporters of Child Abuse because our duties require direct contact and supervision of children.

Section 11166 requires any child care custodian, medical practitioner, non medical practitioner, or employee of a child protective agency who has knowledge of or observes a child in his or her professional capacity or within the scope of his or her employment who he or she knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse to report the known or suspected instance of child abuse to a child protective agency immediately or as soon as practically possible by telephone and to prepare and send a written report thereof within 36 hours of receiving information concerning the incident.

This is a responsibility that we take very seriously.

Communicating with Gan Ami

Use written messages to communicate all schedule changes or pick-up arrangements. Give these messages to a teacher in your child's classroom. *All changes in schedule or pick-up arrangements must be in writing, dated and signed by a parent or guardian.*

How to Contact the Gan Ami Staff

Gan Ami staff can be reached by phone in the Education office, or by email.

Education Office: 650-493-4665

Sherrie Rose Maleson, Gan Ami Director:

650-493-4665 x256

srmaleson@betham.org