



Parent-Child Program

Parent Handbook

Temple Shalom of Chicago, Gan Shalom Early Childhood Center
3480 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago, IL 60657
Telephone: 773/525-4867 or 773/525-4707, ext. 330

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Temple Shalom of Chicago's Gan Shalom Early Childhood Education Center. The Board of Directors of Temple Shalom, the Rabbis, Cantor and the staff of Gan Shalom are pleased to welcome you and your children to our school.

Gan Shalom Early Childhood Education Center is part of Temple Shalom of Chicago, a private not-for-profit Jewish organization. Temple Shalom is a member of the Union for Reform Judaism. Affiliation with the Temple offers a great financial advantage to Gan Shalom families but is not a pre-requisite of enrollment in our school.

Gan Shalom Early Childhood Education Center is accredited by the National Academy for Early Childhood Education. Gan Shalom Early Childhood Education Center is licensed by the State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and by the City of Chicago. We are also affiliated with the Community Foundation for Jewish Education.

This handbook is designed to introduce you to our school: its philosophy, programs, policies and procedures. Please use it as a reference guide throughout the year. Also, please feel free to contact the Gan Shalom office if you have any questions or concerns.

We look forward to an exciting year together!

Rimma Khodosh

**Rimma Khodosh
Director of Gan Shalom Early Childhood Center**

Temple Sholom Clergy and Senior Staff

Rabbis

Aaron Mark Petuchowski

773/525-4707 Ext. 313

Shoshanah Conover

773/525-4707 Ext. 349

Taron Tachman

773/525-4707 Ext. 336

Cantor

Aviva Katzman

773/525-4707 Ext. 340

Administrative Staff

Philip Ferkel, Executive Director

773/525-4707 Ext. 318

Jodi Morady, Financial Services Director

773/525-4707 Ext. 329

Lisa Kaplan, Chief Development Officer

773/525-4707 Ext. 334

Director of Lifelong Learning

Rabbi David Sandmel

773/525-4707 Ext. 347

Gan Shalom Director

Rimma Khodosh

773/525-4707 Ext. 330

773/525-4867 direct line

Philosophy

The philosophy of Temple Shalom of Chicago's Gan Shalom Early Childhood Education Center is to provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment that meets the needs of young children and parents. A positive self-image and a strong Jewish identity are the highlights of the program.

Gan Shalom's Extended Day Program is based on the idea that families can combine positive parenting with the outside demands of work or pursuit of higher education. For the child, a wholesome day care center helps promote a healthy self-image and independence. Parents can feel comfortable knowing their child is being cared for in a pleasant, nurturing and developmentally sound environment.

Our center's staff is dedicated to strengthening family life by teaching Jewish values and traditions, based on the tenets of Reform Judaism. It is important for parents to understand that children will be imbued with these concepts. We have created a caring environment that encourages your child to begin at his/her own level and develop emotionally, spiritually, socially, physically and cognitively.

Each family comes to school with a unique set of experiences, feelings, and characteristics. It is our sincere desire to be responsive and helpful and to actively assist you with your questions or concerns. We are here for you as well as for your child. Please remember that open communication between parents and staff is the real key to successful early childhood education. Visits to the classroom are an important way for parents to feel assured that their children's needs are being met in the best possible way.

The preschool years are the formative years, the time when behavior patterns, value systems and attitudes emerge. It is therefore essential to our philosophy to provide individualized attention for our students.

The framework for our program is:

- *A nurturing environment
- *Staff trained in child development
- *Age-appropriate curriculum
- *Safe, spacious and well-maintained physical environment
- *Developmentally appropriate, stimulating and ample materials and Equipment
- *Strong communication with parents
- *Flexibility
- *Excellent ratio of childcare providers to children

Within this framework, we can accomplish our goals by:

- *Building a positive self-image, high self-esteem and a strong Jewish identity in children
- *Developing patterns of learning and problem solving
- *Developing self-reliance
- *Developing empathy and concern for others
- *Developing an ability to cooperate with others
- *Providing a healthy, safe and pleasant child-oriented environment for optimum growth and development

Parent-Child Classes

Gan Shalom has a variety of parent-child classes for children 4 months through 30 months. These classes are held once or twice per week depending upon the age of the child for the school year. There are 60 classes per school year in the twice a week classes and 30 classes per year in the once a week classes.

We also offer a Summer Camp Program beginning mid-June for a four or eight week session. The emphasis is on the outdoor curriculum which includes playground activities, swimming in the wading pools along with many other fun outdoor activities.

Curriculum for Parent-Child Program

Gan Shalom Early Childhood Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Early Childhood Education. We use a developmentally appropriate approach for working with young children. Our goal is to help each child feel successful while mastering skills in their cognitive, social, emotional and physical areas of development. Learning centers and activities are set up to provide opportunities for the children to explore, discover and experiment. At Gan Shalom we also use a project approach to learning. This means that we organize all activities around these ideas. All materials are carefully selected to enhance the children's abilities to interact and participate in an exciting way of learning.

Teachers make plans for the school year's curriculum by providing developmentally appropriate projects. Because our students are so bright and capable, our job is to provide opportunities for them to do hands on learning. However, because of their young age there is a need to provide one on one child-adult interactions and guidance throughout the class's routine. Both parents and teachers need to interact with children as much as possible during the class. By following the adult's lead the children learn to focus and complete age appropriate tasks as well as to participate in group time.

We are requesting that all parents work with teachers together as a team. The sound of the children's voices should dominate in the classroom. Additionally, all adults must communicate with children on their eye level. Positive reinforcement helps the children feel good about experimenting with different materials. Children need to know that we respect their world and we are available to give them attention and to assist them at any time.

The newest research on brain development suggests that the first three years of life are a critical time for learning. It states that two very important aspects of the learning process are repetition and practice. While sometimes adults experience difficulty doing the same thing over and over again, the children require and enjoy this. They love listening to the same stories, singing the same songs and playing the same games. That is why in addition to introducing our children to new music, literature and activities throughout the year, we often integrate their favorites.

Typical routine for Gan Shalom Parent-Child classes:

- Free play time – exploration of the learning centers
- Clean up time – teaching sorting skills, cooperation and responsibility
- Circle time – teaching developmentally appropriate concepts by using visual materials to increase the children’s attention span
- Snack – developing healthy habits, teaching good manners and increasing social skills
- Gross motor time – providing gross motor development activities
- Music and movement – teaching age appropriate movements and practicing the ability to sing simple melodies as well as an ability to participate in a group activity

Parent/Caregiver’s Role in the Classroom:

- Please attend to your child at all times during the class, both physically and emotionally.
- Please refrain from conversations with other adults that keep your attention away from your child.
- Please model for your child enthusiastic participation in all activities.

Teacher’s Role in the Classroom:

- Provide a physically and emotionally safe, educational environment for both children and adults.
- Facilitate a routine that includes activities that allow opportunities for developmental growth.
- Enable the parent’s to openly communicate their ideas and concerns.
- Connect with each child individually and form a positive relationship.
- Provide the parents with information about child development.

Celebrations and Special Events

Birthday Parties

At Gan Shalom, children's birthdays are important and special occasions. We invite parents and families to join their child's celebration. Parents should consult the classroom teachers for a specific time and date when the birthday can be celebrated in class.

We encourage you to bring treats for the birthday celebration. State regulations do not allow us to serve home baked goods. **Accordingly, all treats must be purchased.** Also, any treats should be Kosher style, i.e. no mixing of meat and dairy.

Gan Shalom is a **NUT FREE** institution.

It is appropriate to reinforce the concept of tzedakah (charity) at this special time when the children themselves are receiving gifts from others. This is an important aspect of our Jewish celebration of life.

Tot Shabbat

On the third Saturday of every month, Temple Shalom holds a special Shabbat service for families with children ages 0 to 5 years old. The service begins at 9:30AM. This Shabbat experience is designed especially for preschool children and includes singing, stories, a Shabbat related activity and a snack of challah and juice. Tot Shabbat is a wonderful way to introduce your child to synagogue worship and ritual.

Family Shabbat Dinners

Gan Shalom families gather at the Temple on several Friday evenings to share a Shabbat dinner and special service. The warm Shabbat feeling and opportunity to share Shabbat with other Gan Shalom families makes this a memorable experience and a special favorite with children and parents alike.

Chanukah Parties

Each class holds a Chanukah party where the children participate in singing songs, playing games and eating latkes. **Parents and other family members are invited to take part on this day.**

Purim Carnivals

The Temple Shalom Purim Carnival is sponsored by our high school students. We set aside special games for families with young children. Game booths with prizes, snacks, lunch, a raffle and other activities make for a fun-filled Purim experience for the whole family. Tickets may be purchased in advance from the Religious School office.

Passover Seders

Gan Shalom Parent-Child classes hold model Seders in a developmentally appropriate manner. We use Haggadahs suitable for each age group and parents assist in preparing the ritual items and setting up for the Seder.

Attendance

If your child is sick or has to be absent for another reason, please call the Gan Shalom office between 7:30AM and 8:45AM on the day of the absence. Information about pre-arranged absences, such as out-of-town trips, should be given to the teacher well in advance of the planned absence. Our direct line is 773/525-4867.

School Clothes

Please send your child to school in play clothes! We provide smocks for painting and messy activities, but they do not fully protect everything. We request that you and children wear clothes that can get dirty or stained. Additionally, we request that children do not wear open-toed shoes.

Please label all clothing with your child's name!

Parent Organization

The Parent Committee of Gan Shalom Early Childhood Education Center is an organization composed of the parents of Gan Shalom students. All committee members must also be members in good standing of Temple Shalom of Chicago. The Committee is an arm of the Temple's Religious Education Committee and has representation on the Temple's Board of Directors. The Committee works with the Gan Shalom and Temple Shalom staff to promote excellence in all areas of the school.

We work to achieve this goal by:

- *Introducing families to Temple Shalom and helping to integrate them into the Temple family;
- *Encouraging involvement of parents in their children's education;
- *Encouraging open communication among all members of the Gan Shalom family;
- *Fostering a spirit of community among parents;
- *Channeling the time, energy, and expertise of the parents for the benefit of the school;
- *Developing activities and events that enhance Gan Shalom and its goals.

We encourage parents who are not Temple Shalom members to be involved in Gan Shalom as room parents.

Temple Shalom of Chicago's Policy on Selecting Gan Shalom Parent Committee Members

- *Every parent applying for a place on the Committee must be a member of Temple Shalom of Chicago in good standing.
- *Every parent applying for a place on the Committee needs to be knowledgeable about the mission and goals of this parent organization.

*Every parent applying for a place on the Committee should be available to serve for a one-year term and may reapply for the position annually.

*Every parent applying for a place on the Committee needs a clear understanding of the process that involves the following steps:

1. Application (letting the administration of Gan Shalom know the parent's desire to serve on the Parent Committee);
2. Nomination by the Gan Shalom administration;
3. Consideration by Temple Shalom's professional staff and lay leadership;
4. Appointment by the President of Temple Shalom of Chicago.

Room Parents

Each class can have two or more room parents. Room parents assist the teachers in organizing class celebrations. They also deliver important information to each family, such as school cancellations and calendar changes.

Gan Shalom Room Parent's Responsibilities

- Act as the liaison between the teachers and the class parents to fulfill requests for supplies, relay information about special events and help to coordinate these events.
- Act as the liaison between the Gan Shalom office and the class parents to relay information about school closings due to weather and/or about various special events.
- Act on behalf of the Gan Shalom Parent Committee by assisting with various volunteer efforts such as the Book Fair, Fundraising Event, Staff Appreciation breakfast, etc.

Health and Safety

Health Information

Please inform the office and your child's teacher in writing of any allergies or conditions requiring special care during school hours.

Illness

For the protection of all children, we cannot allow a child to remain at school if we see the following symptoms: temperature of 100 degrees or more, intestinal disturbance accompanied by diarrhea or vomiting, any undiagnosed rash or sore, discharge from eyes or ears, apparent signs of pain and/or discomfort. Please do not send children to school with any of these symptoms or with a contagious disease.

Absence Due to Illness

If your child exhibits any of the following symptoms, do not bring your child to school:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or more
- Intestinal disturbance, such as vomiting or diarrhea
- Undiagnosed sore or rash
- Discharge from eyes or ears
- Sign of pain or discomfort
- Dysfunction of any type
- Any illness

Do not bring your child to school unless he/she has exhibited absolutely no symptoms for the 24 hours immediately preceding the next school day.

If your child has a contagious illness, please notify Gan Shalom immediately so that we may send a note home to advise you, so you are alert to the symptoms and can take appropriate precautions. When you contact Gan Shalom, please state the specific reason for the absence and how long you expect your child to be out of school.

Returning to School After an Illness

Symptoms often linger even after they are not visible. Before returning to class, your child must exhibit no symptoms for the 24 hours immediately preceding the next school day without taking any fever reducing

medications. Thus, children must be completely free from fever of 100 degrees or more, intestinal disturbances, sores, rashes, discharge, pain or other illness for 24 hours before returning to school. If you are at all unsure, please keep your child at home.

Evacuation Procedures

If evacuating the building becomes necessary due to the threat of fire, bomb scare or other building emergency, the following procedures are followed:

- All children will be evacuated through the nearest exit and will be escorted to a safe distance from the building.
- Children will remain outside of the building until the fire/police department informs us that it is safe to reenter.

When instructed by the proper authorities, children will be escorted back into the building.

Fire Drills

In accordance with state law, fire drills are held on a regular basis. These drills are held by the fire department and are usually unannounced. While the fire department tries to select a warm and dry day, it is not possible for all fire drills to be held under ideal conditions. Parents should be aware that their children will be asked to exit the building without coats--simulating emergency conditions--even if the weather is cold. Children usually stay outside no more than five minutes.

Emergency Closing Procedures

Decisions regarding weather closings are made as early as possible. We make every effort to provide parents with adequate notice. Gan Shalom participates in the Emergency Closing Center, which broadcasts school closings over participating radio and television stations. In addition, you can obtain school closing information by dialing 1-900-407-SNOW. (There is a 95-cent charge for the call).

Parking

Temple Shalom of Chicago has a parking lot on the southwest corner of Stratford and Lake Shore Drive. The entrance is on Stratford, directly across from the Stratford (main) entrance to the Temple. Gan Shalom parents may use the lot on an “as available” basis. The Temple tries to plan events with the Gan Shalom schedule in mind. There are times, however, when scheduling conflicts occur. Additional parking is available on side streets and on Lake Shore Drive after 9:00AM. **PLEASE DO NOT DOUBLE PARK.** You may not leave your car in the parking lot beyond drop off

and pick up time. You must be in the building to have your car parked in the parking lot. When dropping off and picking up children from 8:00am to 1:00p.m., you can park on the north side of Stratford from the corner of LSD to the crosswalk. You may leave your car with emergency flashers on for a maximum of 15 minutes. This area is considered a loading zone. Certain spaces in the Temple lot are designated for specific Temple staff. Due to clergy and administrative staff schedules, assigned spots need to be available to them at all times. **DO NOT PARK IN ASSIGNED SPACES OR IN DESIGNATED HANDICAPPED SPACES. YOU RISK THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING TOWED.** Please remember to follow the one-way entrance and exit arrows for the safety of your children.

Tuition and Fees

Temple Sholom of Chicago members receive a reduction in tuition for all Nursery School, Extended Day, Parent-Child, and Summer Camp Programs. You can obtain additional information from the financial department of Temple Sholom.

Parent-Child Program

Tuition for Parent-Child classes are paid in 4 installments:

- \$250 non-refundable and non-transferable deposit due with application
- First Payment due by April 1
- Second Payment due by July 1
- Final Payment due by October 15, 2010

Summer Camp

Summer Camp Tuition for Parent-Child programs are paid in 2 installments:

- 50% Non-refundable Deposit Due with Program Application
- Balance due by April 30th

ALL PAYMENTS ARE NON-REFUNDABLE AND NON-TRANSFERABLE.

Any variation to the original financial contract must be negotiated with the financial department of Temple Sholom of Chicago.

Discipline Policy

The parent or the caregiver is responsible for the safety and supervision of their child. When behavior issues arise it is the parent's or the caregiver's job to discipline the child. If needed, a family-teacher conference can be scheduled at a mutually convenient time.

Mutual Respect

It is essential for the children to be exposed to a healthy and safe physical and emotional environment. Therefore we expect all adults in every classroom to model respectful behavior towards the children, teachers and each other.

The following are the school's expectations:

- Children's voices dominate in the classroom
- Adults use appropriate language
- Parents help the children follow the teacher's lead
- Adult conversation takes place before or after class
- **Use of cell phones is strictly prohibited**
- **All hot beverages can not be brought into the classroom**
- Siblings can participate in special class celebrations only with teacher's and administration's permission
- Parent-teacher communication should take place at a mutually convenient time

Dismissal by School Request

Occasionally, the Gan Shalom program is not able to meet the needs of a child and/or family. After attempts have been made to meet the child's or the families' needs without finding a mutually acceptable solution, the school may come to a decision to terminate enrollment.

Effective Ways for Parents to Negotiate Difficulties and Differences

*Immediately bring your concern to the attention of your child's teachers.

*If your issue has not been resolved, bring it to the attention of the director or the assistant to the director of Gan Shalom.

*Finally, if your issue is still not resolved, bring your concern to the attention of Temple Shalom of Chicago's director of education.

Child's Name _____

I have read and understood Temple Shalom of Chicago's Gan Shalom Early Childhood Education Center's Parent-Child Handbook and Discipline Policy.

Parent Signature

Date

(Please return this page to the Gan Shalom office.)