

# **The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School North Suburban Synagogue Beth El PARENT HANDBOOK**

## **Welcome**

Shalom! We welcome you and your child to The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El. During the year, we will work together to create a solid foundation for your child's future learning success – socially, emotionally, cognitively, physically, and spiritually. We will partner to build a foundation for academic successes, nurturing your child's unique learning style, interests and abilities in a safe place for fun and positive social experiences. From our first contact at home visits to the many times throughout the year when our families will join together, The Steinberg Pre-School will provide creative programming that will involve your whole family in the richness of our Jewish heritage

We have designed this Parent Handbook to clearly describe our programs, policies and many practical details that contribute to making each day safe and meaningful. Please review it and keep it for a reference.

We look forward to building many wonderful memories with your family as we prepare your child for future successes.

## **About The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El**

The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School is an integral part of North Suburban Synagogue Beth El. It is housed in a pre-school wing containing rooms designed with young children in mind. **Gan Sylvia**, our large enclosed playground, faces Lake Michigan and offers ample opportunities for gross motor development. In addition, **The Grossinger-Brickman Activity Center** is used for large muscle activities.

**The Joseph and Mae Gray Cultural and Learning Center** houses a multimedia collection of Judaica including adult and children's books, video and audio cassettes, records, film strips, and computer software. The Cultural and Learning Center is open daily. Please feel free to visit with or without your child. Two areas within the Cultural and Learning Center are of special interest to our pre-schoolers: **The Pinsof Children's Reading Room**, which they visit for "Jewish Story Hour", and the computer lab in **The Susan Fisher Glick Memorial Research Center**.

The children have the opportunity to experience what is so special about being housed in the Synagogue. Our Rabbis and the Hazzan, as well as other staff members, participate in many pre-school activities, and the children have many

opportunities to ask questions and make observations on a personal level. They are able to visit the sanctuary where they can see the Torah and the Ark as well as many other ritual objects. The Synagogue can become a warm and welcoming place for your entire family.

**B'Yachad** is a family-run mini-service for pre-schoolers through second graders and their families featuring songs, prayers, a Torah procession, Kiddush, and story time. It is held every Shabbat morning beginning at 10:45 am.

**Small and Tall** is an interactive program for our youngest children 0 – 16 months that encourages child development through music, movement and stories. You and your child share time together, explore and socialize using developmentally appropriate equipment under the guidance of a trained, caring, involved teacher. Children gain skills, adults meet new friends.

NSS Beth El offers a variety of Parenting Programs and Enrichment Programs designed to promote positive Jewish parenting from the very beginning of family life and provides support for parents as their family grows. Please contact the Director or the Synagogue office for more information.

## **Early Childhood Educational Philosophy and Curriculum**

### **Vision Statement**

Rooted in Jewish values, we are educating and inspiring our children to meaningfully impact the world around them for the betterment of mankind.

### **Our Vision**

- As educators, we have the ability to provide endless opportunities for our children, their families, and our community, by engaging them in meaningful integrated Jewish and secular education.
- We strive to achieve standards of excellence, by promoting the intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical development of our children, while instilling critical thought, tolerance, social responsibility and self-discipline.
- Our Jewish ethos permeates every aspect of our school life. We provide an exciting, stimulating, inspiring and nurturing environment, where children can thrive and flourish to reach their full potential as individuals.
- Our goal is to prepare our children and engage our families to acquire a deep rooted understanding, curiosity and compassion so that they may participate, embrace and improve the world around them – “Tikun Olam”.

The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School's philosophy and curriculum is based on the integration of a combination of several components that include the most current brain research, developmentally appropriate practice, multiple

intelligences theory, emergent curriculum, the educational standards of the State of Illinois and the educational inspiration from Reggio Emilia, Italy. Listening, observing and documenting the important learning done in the early years is central to our educational approach. We strive to make learning visible. We encourage play and exploration while children move through each stage of development and learn through the use of all their senses. Our professional and warm teaching staff works with your child to achieve the following goals:

- To create an atmosphere where children can grow and develop at their own rate in an environment that supports the development of a positive self concept.
- To encourage the love of knowledge and the development of an inquisitive mind.
- To provide a warm and caring environment where children and families are unconditionally accepted.
- To provide a wonderful first school experience that will frame all of the child's future school experiences in a positive way.
- To encourage a love of Judaism and introduce and enhance Jewish customs, holiday celebrations, Jewish values, prayers, and a Hebrew vocabulary related to daily pre-school activities.
- To create an environment that embraces emergent curriculum and the child's ideas as a critical component of the learning process.

## **Licensing**

**The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** licenses the Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School.

## **OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS**

### **Communication**

We have found that the foundation for good parent-teacher relationships is frequent and open communication, mutual respect and a willingness to discover what is best for each child. Children benefit from this reciprocal relationship between teachers and families. We place a strong emphasis on family involvement by encouraging frequent communication. In an effort to be more efficient, we will be using Shutterfly and e-mail as our primary forms of communication. You will be receiving Shutterfly newsletters and e-mailed Director's messages and notes about your child. You can e-mail the school at [kbilsky@nssbethel.org](mailto:kbilsky@nssbethel.org), [anussbaum@nssbethel.org](mailto:anussbaum@nssbethel.org), or you can e-mail your child's teachers with their first initial, their last name, followed by @nssbethel.org. Outside the door to each classroom is a brief outline of the planned activities for the day. We ask that you take the time to read them and talk to your child about the week's activities. If you have any questions or concerns about your child or a classroom issue, please discuss it with your child's teacher at an appropriate

time and setting. Open, respectful communication is paramount. The Director is always available to discuss your questions and concerns.

**Parent –Teacher Meetings:** Conferences are scheduled twice a year, usually in fall and spring. However, you are encouraged to make an appointment to talk to your child’s teacher whenever you have a question about your child. Teachers will return phone messages and e-mails after class sessions. Parents are welcome to drop into the school office informally when bringing their child to school. It is a good time to browse through the Parent Library and ask any questions you may have.

**Parent Auxiliary:** The Challah Days programs, the Shabbat Dinner, and the Pre-School Seders are among the many activities coordinated by our Parent Auxiliary. A volunteer sign-up sheet will be sent before school begins. You also have an opportunity to sign up for Parent Auxiliary projects at the beginning of the school year.

**Pre-School Committee:** The Pre-School Committee is a group of lay leaders of the Synagogue who, along with the Pre-School Director, make decisions regarding pre-school policies and procedures. They welcome your questions and input. A list of committee members is available in the Pre-School office, and in your Pre-School Directory.

**Visits:** You are encouraged to observe your child’s classroom in session, but we would appreciate you prearranging with the Director and the classroom teachers. This insures that there are always a reasonable number of visitors at any given time. Parents are also invited to participate as volunteers and educational resources.

## **OUR STAFF**

We are very proud of our highly qualified and dedicated staff. They bring to the school academic degrees, experience, and interest in providing the best possible integrated Jewish and general early childhood education for your child. In the interest of helping teachers to continue to grow professionally, they attend a variety of workshops and classes sponsored by the JUF, Community Foundation for Jewish Education (CFJE) and other institutions. The Pre-School provides monthly professional development and staff have access to an on-site resource library. All of our teachers are certified in CPR and First Aid.

**Specialists:** Children meet with the Director of the Gray Cultural and Learning Center biweekly for a special “Jewish Story Hour”, as well as with our music and movement specialist, our art specialist, and our Shabbat music specialist.

## OUR POLICIES

**Class Placement:** The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School reserves the right to determine the appropriate class placement of children.

**Inclusion Statement:** The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School recognizes the need for and supports early intervention, and attempts to address the concerns of families with special needs (physical, behavioral, cognitive, etc.) We support the right of each child to play and learn in inclusive Early Childhood programs, consistent with the best interests of all involved. We will work with families and specialists to provide proper care and education for each child with our current staffing. If the current staffing is not sufficient to meet the needs of a child, then the family will be financially responsible for providing additional support staff that meets the standards of the Pre-School.

Close communication with parents is essential to provide quality care and education. If staff feel that a child should be evaluated, such recommendations will be made to parents. When a child has already been evaluated by outside professionals and/or a school district, then we expect parents to share with us the most recent evaluations so that we can work together to achieve agreed upon goals. We strive to develop healthy relationships with families and specialists so that there is consistency for the child.

**Arrival and Pick-up Procedures:** The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School has developed arrival and pick-up procedures that must be followed to ensure your child's safety. DCFS regulations require that all children be signed out. We require that an adult accompany children to their classroom. If your child is in a carpool, the carpool parent must sign out all of the children participating in the carpool.

Your child can be released only to authorized adults listed on your child's authorization pick up form. Please notify the Pre-School office in writing if there are any changes to your child's authorization form. Under no circumstances is your child released to anyone who is not listed on his/her authorization form without prior written permission. In accordance with DCFS regulations and for your child's protection our staff are instructed to request identification if they are unsure about the identity of the person picking up your child. DCFS also requires that all children wash their hands upon entering the classroom.

**Appropriate Clothing:** Please have your child wear comfortable clothing that he or she can manage independently, that is washable and that is appropriate for outdoor play. Weather permitting (temperatures above 28 degrees) we play outside every day, so please dress you child in appropriate outerwear (jacket, hat, mittens, scarf, boots, snow pants). Your child should have shoes appropriate for running and climbing. **Please label everything!**

**Extra Set of Clothing:** Because spills can happen, a complete extra set of labeled clothing is a must. Please include underwear, shirts, pants and socks in a plastic Ziploc bag clearly marked with your child's name. Check periodically to make sure your child's extra set of clothing is the correct size and appropriate for the seasons.

**Kippot:** The school provides boys with a Kippah. IF your son has a favorite one at home he may bring it (labeled) to be kept at school. Kippot are worn when children are saying brachot (blessings) and when we visit the Synagogue sanctuary.

**School Bags/Backpacks:** Children should bring a schoolbag every day for carrying items home. Please bring a large bag that opens easily, and is clearly marked with your child's name.

**Toilet Learning:** Children do not need to be out of diapers when entering the Pre-School. Please let us know when you feel your child is ready to begin the toilet learning process. Together, we will work out a plan that will make this a pleasant experience for your child.

**Toys from Home:** Group sharing skills are a goal of early childhood. We request that all toys and playthings be left at home. We provide a wide variety of materials and opportunities for sharing. Some exceptions to this policy include show and tell at circle time or help with separation and adjustment. At the beginning of the year, some children may need to bring a meaningful toy from home as they make their separation. Please discuss any exceptions with your child's teacher. We cannot accept responsibility for breakage or loss of items brought from home. **Guns, war toys or other toys of destruction are not allowed in the school for any reason!**

## **Health and Medical**

**Enrollment and Medical Forms:** Please complete all enrollment forms and the medical form (signed by your child's physician) in ink and return to the school before school begins. Please also fill out, sign and date the section of the form for parents. State licensing guidelines require that we have an accurate medical history and an up-to-date record of immunizations on file, including TB and Lead Screening test.

**All children attending our pre-school must be immunized, following DCFS guidelines, unless there is a medical reason they cannot be immunized. In that case, we require a signed letter from your pediatrician.**

Please notify us immediately if there is any change in your address, home phone number, e-mail address, employment address or phone number, and cell phone

numbers, authorized persons for pick-up and/or your pediatrician's name and phone number.

As with all such information, it is strictly confidential and will not be shared with outside parties unless you provide us with written consent.

**Communicable Diseases Policy:** Please call the school office (847) 432-2830, when your child is ill with any suspected or diagnosed case of contagious/communicable disease. The Illinois Department of Public Health mandates reporting of certain illnesses including: food borne illnesses, measles, meningitis, smallpox, whooping cough, and rabies. We will be alert and watch for similar symptoms in other children. We will send a note home to advise you if your child has been exposed to any contagious disease so you can be alert to the symptoms as well.

**Illness that Occur while at School:** When a child becomes ill at school, parents are notified immediately so you can make arrangements to have your child picked up within the hour. **DCFS mandates that children with any of the following symptoms be kept at home. If your child develops any such symptoms during the day, you will be called to pick up your child.**

- Fever of 100.5 degrees or higher, taken under the arm during the last 24-hour period
- An illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities
- An illness that calls for greater care than staff can provide, compromising the health and safety of other children
- Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing or other signs of possible severe illness
- Heavy clear nasal discharge
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Head lice, until your child is nit free
- Whooping cough (pertussis), until five days of antibiotic treatment have been completed
- Mumps, until nine days after onset of parotid gland swelling
- Measles, until four days after disappearance of rash
- Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
- Chicken Pox until your physician has cleared your child to return to school
- Rash combined with fever
- Ear infections until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated

When in doubt, keep them out!

**Medication:** If your child needs medication (prescription or over the counter) administered by the Pre-School, the following procedures are required:

- A doctor's note, including instructions must be sent for any over-the-counter or prescription medication
- Completion of a Medication Consent Form
- Medication container must have the original label with the child's name clearly displayed
- Medication must be in a safety cap container
- Medication must have a current expiration date (one month for antibiotics and one year for other medications)

## **The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School is an ALLERGY AWARE ZONE!!**

**Allergy Alert:** Due to the increasing number of pre-school children with severe, possibly anaphylactic, allergies to tree nuts and/or peanuts or peanut and tree nut/peanut products, our school has a peanut and tree nut free policy. **No products containing peanuts or tree nuts will be allowed in the school.** This policy reflects our continued care and concern for the health and safety of all children who are in our program. We ask your cooperation in adhering to this policy, whether or not there is an allergic child in your child's classroom. As a community of caring families we need to protect all of our children.

**Allergy Protocol:** We acknowledge that despite our best efforts, we cannot guarantee an absolutely allergen free environment. With your child's safety in mind, we have embraced an additional safeguard for all allergic children in our pre-school. If your child has either an air borne and/or food allergy, please make sure to fill out an allergy protocol sheet, which is available in the office. This sheet, with your child's picture on it, is posted in the classroom and the kitchen. A copy is also kept in the pre-school office. Any medication is kept in a marked child safe container in the classroom.

If your child has any food allergies, parents may supply their own school snacks. Please label all snacks with your child's name and bring them to your child's teacher in a labeled container, which will become their "Safe Snack Box". All snacks must be certified kosher.

## **Kashrut and Nutrition**

**Kashrut:** All food brought into North Suburban Synagogue Beth El must be in original unopened containers and marked with a kosher symbol.

**Nutrition:** Life-long eating habits are formed between the ages of one and five years, which makes proper nutrition for young children a very important task for parents and caregivers. It is our goal to promote good eating habits in the following ways:

- Demonstrating the enjoyment of eating nutritiously
- Weaving nutrition education into the daily curriculum



- Having children choose food from a selection of nutritious choices and develop the skills to serve themselves.

The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School provides nutritional snacks that follow Kashrut as well as the USDA's Food Pyramid guideline including fruits, vegetables and whole grain products. On Friday or for our model Shabbat, children enjoy grape juice and challah. If your child has any special dietary restrictions, please discuss these with his or her teacher.

**Lunches:** Please pack a dairy or pareve lunch for your child. Children eat only what their parents have sent from home, there is no sharing of lunches at pre-school. Please remember to adhere to our Kashrut and Allergy Aware Policy as stated above. Children's lunches should be ready to eat and not in need of any preparation. You may send any vegetables, fruit, hard-boiled eggs, all dairy products, cream cheese and jelly sandwiches, cheese sandwiches, tuna fish, or cold pasta. Please include a drink. A cold pack or frozen drink will serve to keep the lunch cold as there will not be refrigeration. Zip lock bags are best for cut up veggies and fruit. They are leak proof and can be thrown away after lunch. Your child will bring home any food that is uneaten.

**Birthdays:** Birthdays are special and we invite you to share this event with your child's class. Special birthday treats are welcome. As with all food brought into the building, all birthday treats must be kosher and pre-packaged. Acceptable snacks include fresh fruit, vegetables, baked goods from a bakery that is certified kosher or packaged goods marked with an acceptable kosher certification. No products containing peanuts or tree nuts will be allowed in the school. Please talk to your child's teacher if you would like to hold a classroom celebration. DCFS Licensing Standards prohibits any home-prepared goods in the school. Please do not bring any individual favors for the children. Instead, we invite you to donate a book to be given to the school in honor of your child's birthday. Each book gets a special book plate with the child's name. Birthday books are available for purchase in the pre-school office.

If your child has a summer birthday you can speak to his/her teacher about an alternative celebration.

**At Home Parties:** Out of respect for everyone's religious observance, please remember to serve kosher refreshments. We strongly suggest that you schedule the party on a day other than Shabbat or Yom Tov. Please consult the pre-school calendar for holiday dates.

## **Guidance**

At The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School young children learn self control, self-help skills, ways to get along with others and routines. We work with parents

to set reasonable limits and encourage children to engage in desired behaviors, and teach children how to make healthy decisions. Criticizing, discouraging, creating obstacles and barriers, blaming, shaming, using sarcastic or cruel humor, or using physical punishment are negative disciplinary methods.

**We do not use negative discipline methods or corporal punishment.**

We use a positive approach to discipline which helps to increase children's self-esteem, allows children to feel cooperative, motivates children to change strategy rather than to blame others, helps children to take initiative, relate successfully to others and solve problems. We allow children to develop self-control and assume responsibility for their own behavior while ensuring the safety of all children.

We communicate behavioral expectations in a language that children are able to understand in order to **redirect** inappropriate behavior. In an effort to support the emotional development of children, limits are set in a calm and reasonable manner.

**About Biting:** Young children tend to communicate with their bodies quickly and many times spontaneously. Reasons for biting range from exploration to frustration, teething, health problems and lack of language skills. Biting is not necessarily an indication of aggression toward another person.

When biting occurs, teachers encourage children to use words, not their bodies, to communicate. The teacher shows concern for the bitten child and provides immediate comfort and care. Both children are treated with dignity and respect. After a biting incident, the child exhibiting the biting behavior is observed, supervised and redirected. It is our policy to contact both sets of parents about a biting incident. To respect the confidentiality of all parties, the Pre-School does not inform parents about the identity of other children who are involved.

## **Safety and Security**

The safety and security of our children is our top priority.

**Accidents/Emergencies:** In the event of a serious accidental injury, we will call 911 first and then contact you or a designated caregiver. If your child needs to be transported to the hospital, we will go to the Highland Park Hospital Emergency Room. A staff member will stay with your child at all times until you arrive.

**Attendance:** Please call the school office (847)432-2830 if your child will not be in attendance or if you will be arriving late.

Following a fever, a child must have 24 hours of normal body temperature before returning to school. Because we spend time outdoors (weather permitting) each day, a child may return to school following an illness, only if he or she is able to participate in outdoor activities.

**Risk Management and Emergency/Disaster Plan:** Our school has a comprehensive Risk Management and Emergency/Disaster Plan. It is available in the Pre-School office. Each classroom is equipped with an emergency evacuation bag and emergency supplies.

**Safety Issues:** Our school has installed a security system to help safeguard your children while in our care. For fifteen minutes at arrival and at dismissal, a staff member will be at the school entry door to greet you and your child and to monitor parking lot safety. If you arrive before or after these designated times the doors will be locked. Each family will be issued an electronic door pass that you can scan at the side of the door to let you into the Pre-School. These passes only work during school hours, and at our Pre-School entry. They cannot be used to enter other doors in the synagogue. If you do not have your pass with you, please ring the buzzer, and identify yourself, and a staff member will let you in. (Listen for a click to signify the door is unlocked.) If no one answers the buzzer, please enter through the main synagogue entrance.

**Parking Lot Safety:** Please enter the Beth El parking lot only from the South entrance. Drive around the driveway closest to the building and park along the North end of the lot. Children should walk along the sidewalk to and from cars. **Please note that in accordance with Illinois Law, children under the age of eight years must be secured in a child safety seat.**

**Late Pick-Up Policy:** The primary responsibility of the Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School (Pre-School) is your child's protection and well being. In accordance with DCFS regulations we are required to set in place the following policy in the event that you do not pick up or arrange to have someone pick up your child at the designated agreed upon time.

1. The Pre-School will attempt to reach all emergency contact numbers including parents or guardians at home, work and cell phone numbers, followed by emergency contact numbers as provided by parents.
2. It is your responsibility as parents or guardians to keep the Pre-School informed of any changes in the emergency contact numbers.
3. In the event that you have not notified us about a late pick up, after 3 unsuccessful attempts to reach all of your contact numbers and one hour has elapsed, the Pre-School will call outside authorities such as the police.
4. If your child is not picked up and remains during lunch and enrichment you will be responsible for the fees incurred for those classes.
5. Under all circumstances, the staff of the Pre-School shall not hold your child responsible in any way for the late pick-up, and discussion of this issue will only be with the parent or guardian and never with your child.

**School Closings:** In the event of an emergency closing that may prevent the school from opening, you will receive a text from a room parent or teacher confirming this information.

**Evacuation Procedures:** If evacuating the building becomes necessary due to the threat of fire 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. Parents will be notified about all evacuations in writing at pick up time. Children will practice evacuation procedures monthly.

**Radon Testing:** This facility has been tested for Radon by a licensed Radon Measurement Professional, in accordance with rules established by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. We are in compliance and the report is posted next to the Pre-School's license. Copies will be provided upon request.

**Pest Management:** The Pre-School will notify parents before a pesticide application. The Pre-School will also maintain a registry of parents who wish to receive notification of when the facility will receive a pesticide application. They will be notified at least 2 days before such application. Chemicals for insect and rodent control shall be applied in minimum amounts and shall not be used when children are present in the facility.

An Integrated Pest Management program is followed by the Synagogue and maintained by a licensed pest control operator that meets all standards of the Department of Public Health. All records re maintained in the main office of this facility.

**Child Abuse and Neglect:** The State of Illinois requires all staff working with young children be aware of the signs of child abuse and neglect. We are obligated by law to report any suspected cases of abuse and neglect to the Department of Children and Family Services Hotline.

## **Grievance Policy**

In order to insure that staff and families have an effective way of negotiating any possible difficulties, if they should arise, the following procedures are in place to handle any parental concerns:

- As a first step, parents should discuss the difficulty with the teacher
- If further action is necessary, consult the pre-school director

- If after these steps you feel that further mediation is necessary, contact the pre-school chairman or the vice-president of education of the synagogue, in writing.

A meeting will then be set up with all parties to speedily mediate any difficulties and to clarify future actions and expectations.

This policy is set up to keep the lines of communications open, and to be able to successfully resolve any difficulties that arise in a positive manner.

**Termination of Pre-School Enrollment by School Request:** There may be occasions when the school program is not able to meet the special needs of a child or parents. Circumstances that would necessitate withdrawal include:

- Behavior which endangers the health or safety of the child or other children.
- Parent refusal to adhere to school policy.
- A child who is not ready to enter a group situation.
- Any other situation in which attendance in our program is not in a child's best interest.

Dismissal is up to the discretion of the director and may be given with one week's notice.

The Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School wants each child to have the benefit of a truly positive pre-school experience. We welcome you to our pre-school family, knowing that the time we share will be special and will provide your child a firm foundation for his/her future school years. Should you have any questions about any information in this Handbook, please call the pre-school office at (847)432-2830.