

# Parent Handbook



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# Welcome

Tree of Life Learning Center is a private, family-owned, developmentally-based Jewish preschool. We are located across from the Sycamore Valley Park and next to Sycamore Valley Elementary School. Our school is surrounded by the beautiful, lush rolling hills of Danville. We offer full-day, school-day, and half-day programs for children ages 2 - 5 years-old.

We believe that small student-teacher ratios allow us to better meet the needs of the children in our care. This also allows us to support children that may need extra guidance, while also supporting the children that may need more of a challenge. We strive to keep a six to one student-teacher ratio in the 2 year-old program, an eight to one ratio in the 3 year-old program and a nine to one ratio in the Pre-K program. We are a year-round school; open Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 6:00pm with the exception of major holidays and a spring and winter break. We celebrate both Jewish and American holidays. We welcome and celebrate children from all religions and backgrounds and work with our families to ensure that all family traditions are respected and valued.

As a school, we value the process of learning, exploration and discovery. We want every child to gain a love of learning in their time here. We view families as a valued part of our community and a necessary part of growth and development. We strive to help our children establish a strong sense of community and social responsibility.

# Our Philosophy

At Tree of Life Learning Center our goal is to create a warm, caring, comfortable, and safe environment where children are able to reach their highest potential. We view children as capable and competent, so we create an environment that allows children to explore, investigate, and discover their abilities through an array of activities and play. We offer a program that fosters young children's curiosity, creativity, self-esteem, and confidence through developmentally appropriate practices.

We believe that every child has their own unique learning style, so we use multiple teaching styles in order to reach each individual. Our program focuses largely on building social skills - teaching them how to build relationships, play, navigate through social situations, make connections, problem solve, and become leaders. We encourage your child to become a purposeful individual, to respect themselves and others, to gain awareness of the diversity of cultures in the world, and to understand what it means to be part of a community. These skills build confidence and self-esteem, which create the foundation for all learning, growth, and development. When given the proper support and guidance, children naturally thrive!

We believe in creating a balance between play-based learning, academic learning and values-based learning. We believe that "play" has an important role in children's overall development. As stated by Karen Bilich (author from Parents Magazine), "Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. It allows children to explore the world, practice adult roles, and gain confidence. And it improves children's social skills as well, by helping them to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills." (Excerpt taken from the article *The Importance of Play* - can be found in the "articles" section of our website).

We also believe in offering a balance of academic learning to help prepare your children for TK, Kindergarten and beyond. There is so much pressure put on young children these days. We want to make sure that your children are best prepared for the next phase in their academic journey. Being prepared helps relieve stress and anxiety, allowing children to better focus on the learning aspect of school.

# Our Curriculum

At Tree of Life Learning Center we believe that the children, teachers, parents, community and environment are all part of the curriculum. We create a curriculum that cultivates young children's cognitive, physical, social, emotional, academic, and spiritual development through multiple integrated disciplines. Our teachers support children's learning through play and developmentally appropriate activities.

## Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum

What does "developmentally appropriate" mean? Developmentally appropriate means molding our curriculum, lessons, and environment based on what the children are capable of cognitively, physically, and emotionally at a specific stage in their development. Not all children develop at the same rate, so often there's a range of abilities that are considered developmentally appropriate for each age.

Developmentally Appropriate skills for one child may be very different than that of another child in the same classroom, so educators often make small (or sometimes large) changes to the way they teach concepts to different children.

Our great student-teacher ratios allow us to adapt our curriculum for children who may need additional support or for children who may need more of a challenge. Every child progresses at their own rate across all areas of development and our program is designed to meet the needs of the individual child.

## Play-Based and Academic Learning

We create a curriculum that balances play-based, academic and values-based learning. Children learn academic skills through a combination of child-directed play, as well as teacher-directed activities. The academic component of our program continuously builds over the course of your child's years here at Tree of Life.

**Our curriculum encompasses the following components:**

### Zoo Phonics®

Zoo Phonics® is a multisensory language and literacy program that teaches children vocabulary development, articulation, letter and sound recognition, reading, writing, spelling and more through phonics and phonemic awareness. We believe that every child learns in their own unique way and Zoo Phonics® helps support this philosophy by using all the senses: "phono" (hearing), "oral" (speaking), "visual" (seeing), "kinesthetic" (moving), and tactile (touching) to teach children language and literacy - a whole brain approach.

The Zoo Phonics® program assigns an animal, a sound and a body movement to each letter. The animal is drawn in the shape of the letter for ease of memory. This approach creates a concrete connection between the sound and shape of the letter. Initially, the emphasis is put on learning lowercase letters because they make up 95% of the text we read. They learn uppercase

letters later on in the program. Zoo Phonics® helps benefit children that may need more support, yet it continues to challenge the children that are ready for more.

### **Themes & Letter of the Week**

Along with the Zoo Phonics® program, we have monthly themes. Our themes incorporate holidays, events, seasons, and important topics such as: our senses, health and nutrition, all about me, dinosaurs, experiments, clouds, or volcanoes. We also observe the interests of the children and incorporate them into the curriculum. If we build the curriculum around their interests, they become part of the learning process.

In addition, we will be introducing one letter of the alphabet per week. We practice reading, writing, spelling and articulation with each letter through developmentally appropriate activities, games, and projects. We may search for words in books that contain the letter of the week, find the letter in nature, or discover which items in the classroom contain the letter sound. These fun activities help develop letter and sound recognition. Creating fun and engaging learning experiences helps the children develop a deeper love of learning! Even though our focus is on a particular letter each week, we are constantly incorporating all of the letters of the alphabet into our curriculum.

### **Spiritual and Values-Based Learning**

We celebrate both Jewish and American holidays and encourage families to share their cultures, rituals, and customs with the classes. This is one of the many ways that we try to bridge the gap between school and home, while also teaching the children to value differences.

Our program cultivates social-responsibility, independence, positive self-image, and respect for themselves and others. Our Jewish-based values are taught through modeling, reinforcement, and understanding. For example: the way you treat yourself and others, how you choose to solve problems, the way that you respond to adversity, how you carry yourself even when you think no one is watching, or how you take care of others and the environment when you receive nothing in return. These are the values that largely define you as an individual and that is why we focus so much of our program on building these skills! By teaching children to think beyond themselves, they gain a better understanding of the world around them.

### **It's All About the Process**

Our role as educators is to create a program that fosters, supports, and guides children's learning and development! By teaching children to question their environment, they are learning how to think critically and problem-solve, which are necessary life skills! We strongly believe in focusing on the process of learning, rather than the final product as a way of supporting children to become independent learners. The process looks at what the children are gaining from the experiences. For example, a painting activity is not about the beautiful picture at the end, it is about the way a child learns to hold the brush, move it in different ways, and create different colors by mixing paints. The process of learning engages them in trial and error,

requires them to be active and hands-on, and it provides a sensory-rich environment. It also encourages imagination, builds confidence, self-esteem, and enhances overall development!

### **The Second Classroom: Outdoor Play**

We have such a beautiful outside space, and we like to think of it as the second classroom. We eat lunch outside every day as a whole school (weather permitting) . This is one of the many ways that we help to form our strong sense of community! We have an outdoor art studio where children can engage in a variety of art projects and techniques such as: Jackson Pollack (splatter painting), Michelangelo (painting upside down), Degas (pointillism), Monet (watercolors, blending colors) and self-portraits. The Art Studio is also a place for children that may need a quieter activity that day, a place where they can create and engross themselves. Children can also be seen participating in manipulative play with blocks, wandering around the play yard drawing on clipboards, engineering with pipes and gutters, playing games, engaging in sports, dancing to music, or digging in the garden. We will often bring our daily lessons outside, exploring and engaging in the natural environment!

# Green, Purple, Red & Orange Room Daily Routine

**Open→8:15am - Drop Off In The Blue Room**

**8:15am→9:00am - Child-Centered Activities**

- Table Activities, Easels, Puzzles, and Books

**9:00am→9:15am - Bathroom and Diaper Changes**

**9:15am→9:30am - Morning Circle Time**

- Calendar, Weather, and Zoophonics.

**9:30am→10:00am - Theme Based Curriculum, Projects, and Activities**

- Art, Language, Fine Motor Skills, or Literacy

**10:00am→10:45am - Morning Snack/Outside Play Time**

**10:45am→11:00am - Bathroom and Diaper Changes**

**11:00am→11:45am - Continue Theme Based Curriculum, Projects, and Activities**

- Art, Language, Fine Motor Skills, or Literacy

**11:45am→12:00pm - Midday Circle Time**

- Read Books, Music & Movement, and Games

**12:00pm → 12:20pm - Lunch Time**

**12:20pm→12:45pm - Outside Play**

**12:45pm→1:00pm - Bathroom and Diaper Changes**

**1:00pm→2:45pm - Nap/Rest Time**

**2:45pm→3:15pm - Wake Up Time and Bathroom/Diaper Changes**

**3:15pm→3:30pm - Afternoon Snack**

**3:30pm→4:30pm - Outside Play**

**4:30pm→5:00pm - Afternoon Circle Time**

- Songs/Singing, Stories, and Goodbyes

**5:00pm→6:00pm - Child-Centered Activities**

- Building, Art, Dress Up, Reading, and Imaginative Play
- 6:00pm- TOL Closes



# Blue Room (Pre-K)

**Open→8:30am - Drop off in the Blue Room**

**8:30am→9:00am - Child-Centered Activities**

- Table Jobs, Easel/Free Art, Puzzles, and Books

**9:00am→9:30am -Morning Circle Time**

- Calendar, Weather, Music & Movement, ZooPhonics, and Games

**9:30am→9:50am - Curriculum-Based Activities**

- Zoophonics, Patterns, Learning games, Sorting, Fine Motor Skills, etc.

**9:50am→10:00am - Bathroom Break**

**10:00am→10:15am - Morning Snack Time**

**10:15am→11:00am - Outside Play**

**11:00am→11:50am - Project/Activity Based on Theme of the Week**

- Art, Math, Language, Cutting, or Literacy

**11:50am→12:00pm - Bathroom Break**

**12:00pm→12:30pm - Lunch Time**

**12:30pm→1:00pm - Outside Play**

**1:00pm→2:45pm - Nap/Rest Time**

- If children are not asleep after 30 minutes they may look at books or do a quiet table activity

**2:45pm→3:15pm - Bathroom Break**

**3:15pm→3:30pm - Afternoon Snack Time**

**3:30pm→4:30pm - Outside Play**

**4:30pm→5:00pm - Afternoon Circle Time**

- Songs/Singing, Stories, and Goodbyes

**5:00pm→6:00pm - Child-Centered Activities**

- Building, Dress-Up, Reading, and Imaginative Play

**6:00pm - TOL Closing**

# What to Bring From Home

At the beginning of the school year, please bring an extra set of clothes for your child to keep at school. Please send it in zip-lock bag, labeled with your child's name. Throughout the year there will be many activities in which your child may need them. Also, please bring a sweater and/or jacket every day as Bay Area weather can be unpredictable and change quickly in almost any season.

During hot summer days, we ask that you apply sunscreen in the mornings before school and we will reapply it later in the day. Please bring a bottle to leave at school if your child stays at school for a full day, and make sure to sign the permission slip allowing us to reapply it. Please be sure to write your child's name on the bottle.

We want your child to feel safe and comfortable at Tree of Life, so they may bring a favorite comfort item, such as a blanket or stuffed animal, to school with them; however, it must stay at school and cannot go back and forth and should be able to fit into their cubby. If your child will be napping at school, your child's sheet and blanket, which the school provides, will be sent home with you on Fridays to be washed. Please return them on Monday. Your child is welcome to bring their pacifier to use during naptime. Please make sure it is brought in a closed Tupperware container and both are labeled with your child's name. **Please no backpacks.**

Please bring in a photo of your child on your first day. We use the picture to label each child's cubby, along with their name, so they know exactly which cubby is theirs. We also ask that you bring a family photo. Many children, especially in the beginning, enjoy being able to look at their family throughout the day or tell their friends about them.

You are responsible for providing a lunch for your child if your child attends school days, full days, or you choose the lunch option. Tree of Life Learning Center is a "nut free" school. **Please make sure that your child's lunch does not contain any nut products** or traces of nuts. Please make sure to check labels of snack bars carefully. In addition, **please do not send any food that contains any shellfish or pork products.** This includes salami and pepperoni!

If your child is not yet "potty trained," you will be responsible for providing diapers. The school will provide wipes unless you have a specific preference. We will let you know when diapers or Pull-Ups need to be replenished.

Lastly, please remember to label everything you send to school with your child's name or initials: sunscreen, bags of diapers, jackets, extra clothing, etc.

# HEALTH & SAFETY

For the health and safety of all the children and staff at Tree of Life, PLEASE keep sick kids and their siblings' home! It is imperative that we all do our part to keep our community healthy. Please use your best judgement and err on the side of caution.

Our school is equipped to provide care for healthy children only. PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME IF THEY HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- A fever of 100 degrees or more
- A cold
- Vomiting;
- Diarrhea two or more times in a day;
- An unidentified skin rash; unless identified and OK'd by a physician;
- Head lice and/or other parasites;
- Conjunctivitis/pink eye;
- A cough
- Green or yellow mucus discharge from nose
- Difficulty breathing
- *Any sign of illness or suspicion that they may be getting sick*

At our discretion, if any other alarming symptoms should occur, we reserve the right to notify you for **an immediate pick-up (within 45 minutes)** of the child and their sibling. Please have a plan in place to have your child picked up as soon as possible in the event they may become ill

If your child is taking prescription medication and requires a dose during the school day (such as antibiotics), or has a rescue medication, such as an epi-pen or nebulizer, you will need to complete a provided medication form in order for us to administer any type of medicine. Prescriptions must be in the original bottle with the RX number and the child's name printed on the label. All medications, prescription or non-prescription, must be administered as stated on the label.

If your child was sent home with a fever, or any other symptoms of illness, they may only return once the fever and or symptoms have been gone for 24 hours **without** the use of medication. If your child has a minor injury, such as a scraped knee or bloody nose while at school, an "incident report" will be sent home so you know what happened. A copy of the report will be filed in their records.

The number one goal at our school is to provide a safe environment for your child. To ensure this, we ask that your child be signed in every day with the time of arrival and a legible parent signature, and the same upon departure.

When first registering your child at Tree of Life Learning Center, we will ask you to fill out paperwork that includes a list of authorized adults who can pick-up your child in the event you are unable to. It is necessary for you to notify us through written communication of any person picking up who is not listed on the pick-up list. Anyone other than you who is picking up your child will be required to show identification at the time of pick-up. Please make sure the person picking up your child is aware of this policy.

In an effort to maintain safety throughout the school, all of our equipment, furniture and materials are child friendly and age appropriate. All of our cleaning supplies, chemicals and medications are secured and kept out of children's reach. Each day we will provide the utmost safety for your child.

# Emergency Procedures

If there is a major injury, but not life threatening, such as a broken leg, we first contact the parents and administer first aid. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, our first priority is to call 911, then call you, the parent. While waiting for emergency personnel to arrive, we begin any first aid or C.P.R. necessary.

We have an emergency disaster plan in place, which is outlined and posted in the sign-in area. It lists emergency phone numbers, our temporary relocation sites as well as the location of our first-aid kit, utility shut off, smoke detectors, fire extinguisher and our exit locations.

In the event of a fire or evacuation emergency, an example being a gas or chemical leak, we will all relocate, by foot, to East Bay Four Square Church, located approximately two blocks away. In the event of an emergency, you will be notified as to our whereabouts and pick-up plan.

We conduct monthly fire drills at school to review the route and proper evacuation procedure. If there is ever an earthquake, we will follow the "Duck and Cover" procedure, which is taught and practiced throughout the year.

We hope to never have to experience any such disasters that would call for unexpected measures; however, it is necessary and important to be prepared.

# Nutrition

Mealtime is an important and fun part of your child's day. Morning and afternoon snacks are provided. Students must bring their own lunch.

Our snack menu changes each week of the month and is always posted at the sign-in area for you to view daily. We are aware of, and exceed State Licensing requirements, regarding the serving amounts and number of food groups that must be met for each meal. We limit sugars and saturated fats and offer nutritious and tasty snacks while introducing the children to a variety of foods.

We encourage children to try the offered snacks, but we do not force anyone to eat. At meal times we establish a climate of relaxation and conversation. We can also somewhat modify our menu to accommodate children with specific food allergies or vegetarians.

Below is a sample menu.

## Morning snacks:

- Fruit with graham crackers
- Sliced cheese with rice cakes
- Cheerios with bananas

## Afternoon Snack:

- Chex-mix with raisins
- Celery with cream cheese
- Apple slices and string cheese

# Discipline Policies

## Techniques we use:

- Give the children choices;
- Set clear limits;
- Always follow through and be consistent;
- Let the children experience natural consequences unless it poses a danger;
- Use positive redirection and reinforce positive behavior;
- Help the child put their thoughts and emotions into words;
- When needed a "time-in" with a teacher for some one on one; and
- Open communication with parents and conferences when needed.

## Techniques we do NOT use:

- NO corporal punishment of any kind;
- Children are NEVER humiliated, intimidated or threatened; and
- Children are NEVER denied food, clothing or other aids to physical functioning.

## Grounds for dismissal:

- Ongoing destructive behavior, which interferes with daily curriculum;
- Behavior which causes harm to themselves, others or property;
- Three biting incidences;
- Child or his/her adults that do not follow the school policies and/or procedures.

# Tuition Rates 2024-2025

<u>Daily Options:</u>	<u>Green Room</u>	<u>Red, Orange, Blue</u>	<u>Lunch Time Option</u>
	<u>2-3 Yrs old</u>	<u>Purple Room</u>	
		<u>3-6 Yrs old</u>	
5 Full days	\$2020	\$1865	
4 Full days	\$1860	\$1650	
3 Full days	\$1555	\$1460	
2 Full days	\$1200	\$1130	
5 School days	\$1700	\$1605	
4 School days	\$1460	\$1420	
3 School days	\$1260	\$1220	
2 School days	\$1050	\$1020	
5 Half days	\$1175	\$1090	\$115
4 Half days	\$1050	\$1010	\$105
3 Half days	\$940	\$900	\$95
2 Half days	\$795	\$765	\$85

Full day hours are 7am-6pm.

School day hours are 8:30am-3:30pm.

Half day hours are 8:45am-11:45am.

Lunch option for the half day is 11:45am-12:30pm.

***\*\*Please note-*** we are a year-round school. Tuition will not be prorated for illness, vacation, ***including in the summer***, or school closures, including reasons related to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

\*Please inquire about our sibling discount for families with more than one child attending



# School Calendar 2024-2025

## School Closures

September 2<sup>nd</sup> - Labor Day

October 11<sup>th</sup> - Yom Kippur

November 11<sup>th</sup> - Veteran's Day

November 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> -Thanksgiving Break

December 23<sup>rd</sup> - January 3<sup>rd</sup> - Winter Break

January 20<sup>th</sup> - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 17<sup>th</sup> - President's Day

March 28<sup>th</sup> - Parent/Teacher Conferences

April 7<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> - Spring Break

May 26<sup>th</sup> - Memorial Day

June 19<sup>th</sup> - Juneteenth

June 30<sup>th</sup> - July 4<sup>th</sup> - Independence Day- Summer Break

August- 18<sup>th</sup> - Teacher Work Day

\*\* This is a list of all the days the school will be closed during the school year. The children's monthly tuition has been calculated to take into account vacation and holiday closures. There is no tuition reduction or proration due to holidays, illness, vacation, extended vacations, natural disasters or the pandemic