



Early Childhood Center

Handbook

2008-09

## **Philosophy**

The Torah Tots Early Childhood Center is a warm and caring school that welcomes each child regardless of background or affiliation. The goals of Torah Tots are to preserve and nurture the innate love of learning in each child, to provide each child with a foundation for future learning, to honor the uniqueness of each child, and to ignite a spark in each child to lay claim to his/her Jewish heritage.

Torah Tots prides itself on having a professional staff; teachers are chosen, not only for their teaching skills, but also for their love of children and their nurturing qualities. Classes are kept small to ensure that the teachers have plenty of interaction with each child. Our facility holds all of the most educationally and developmentally sound equipment and materials.

The day in the life of a Torah Tot is truly an adventure. As they move through their environment the children are encouraged to explore, manipulate, experiment, create, problem solve and interact socially through group activities and dramatic play. The centers in the classroom provide hands on opportunities for uncovering future academic learning.

What makes Torah Tots so special is our belief that each child is a special gift. We believe in child directed teacher guided curriculum. Learning styles and individual interests are respected and addressed as teachers plan for the educational experiences that will take place. Since this magical time of early childhood is honored and respected, the children feel safe to express themselves, knowing their voices will be heard. This acceptance of each child builds a strong sense of self that the children take with them in life beyond Torah Tots.

We believe that, like the children, Torah Tots is an ever changing and ever growing entity and our teachers and staff, through workshops, are constantly discovering new ways to provide the best experiences for their students.

## **Separation**

A child's attachment to his/her parents is natural, therefore separation, especially for the first time, can be a difficult process. It is necessary for a child's healthy development that he/she learns how to say goodbye to his/her parents. Children must learn that there are other caretakers (their teachers) who love them and will nurture them while their parents are away. In order to ease this difficult process, parents and teachers need to work together to build a foundation for positive experiences at school.

All parents must say goodbye to their children and tell them when they will return. Parents may NOT sneak out in order to prevent the child from crying at that moment. Leaving without saying goodbye may be easier for the parent than leaving while a child is crying, but is not easier for the child.

Their tears are symbols of their attachment to you and they must be allowed to express their emotions. Children will be comforted by their teachers. Leaving without saying goodbye can also make separations more difficult because a child will fear the unexpected departure and try to keep a close eye on his/her parent. This fear will prevent him/her from engaging in play or interacting with teachers and other children. Children must trust their parents and when they learn the tangible process of separation, this helps them do so.

After your child has adjusted to his/her new environment it will be a good idea to drop them off in the car line which will take place from 8:50-9:00 am and dismissal at 3:00 pm.

### **Communication Between Parents and School**

Open communication between the school's director, teachers and parents is an integral component of Torah Tots. During the initial meeting please give us your impressions of your child such as, personality, general likes and dislikes, pertinent health information, etc. During the school year, please communicate to the school any changes in your child's attitude toward school. In turn, the staff will share with you the experience they have with your child during the day. Notes are sent home weekly to share with you what your child has been doing in class. Parents are invited to come and read a book, supervise an art project, share a special skill (such as playing a musical instrument, assisting with cooking project take pictures, etc.) and assist whenever possible. If it is not possible for parent to participate in the classroom directly, there are other activities that could be done at home that would be very helpful, such as, gathering recycled materials for crafts or props for the housekeeping or, making phone calls etc.

### **Contacting the Teacher**

If you feel the need to talk to your child's teacher at any time, please call the school and leave a message for her. She will return your call at her earliest convenience. The director is always available to speak with you.

### **Student Evaluation**

At Torah Tots we strive for every child to have a successful educational experience. It is with this in mind that we may reserve the right to require an evaluation of any child whom we believe is having significant difficulties functioning in the classroom. We also reserve the right to require additional support if we are unable to meet any child's special needs in the classroom. Additional support may include occupational, physical and /or speech therapists, and/or shadow, at the parents own expense.

### **Changes in Child's Home Environment**

It is important that we know of any changes taking place in your child's environment. The birth of a new baby change of babysitter or family crisis can affect your child's behavior in school. The more informed we are, the more we can do to offer extra support and understanding to your child during unusually stressful times.

### **Open Door Policy**

We have an open door policy as far as parents visiting school is concerned, however, we do ask that visitation not take place the first month of school in order to allow for all adjustments. Although we do encourage visitation, we suggest that the frequency of visits does not interfere with the operation of the classroom and your child's adjustment. Parents are asked to make an appointment with the Director to observe your child's classroom. When visiting in the classroom, we ask that you remember to please not engage in conversation with the teacher when she is working with the students. Her job at that point is to be with the children; please arrange to call her at a different time if you have any questions.

### **Arrival and Dismissal**

#### **Arrival:**

Our school day begins at 9:00 am. Car line & drop off time will be from 8:50 till 9:00 am (use car line only after your child has adjusted to his/her new environment). Children must be received by the director or teacher. We cannot assume responsibility for a child who has not been turned over to a teacher. Please do not drop off your child before this time as the teachers will be preparing their classroom for the day. We urge you to be prompt and arrive on time. It is disruptive for the class and the teachers if you come late in the morning. In addition, your child will adjust better if he/she begins the day together with the rest of the class. If you will be later than 9:30 am please come to the office and we will bring your child to the classroom.

#### **Dismissal:**

We have two dismissal times during our school time one at 12:30 and the other at 3:00 pm. You will drive up, and the teacher will bring your child to you. Please remain in your car and do not approach to get your child. You will then be asked to sign your child out and then the teacher will help your child into your car. If you wish to pick up your child in the classroom, you must arrive 5-10 minutes before dismissal. It is very important to your child that you arrive on time. Young children get nervous very easily if there is an unexpected change in their daily routine.

If you know you are going to be late, please notify the school immediately so that we can notify your child's teacher and reassure your child. Pick up that is 10 minutes or more after dismissal time will be considered late pickup. There will be a \$15 charge per 15 minutes for late pickup.

At no time and under no circumstance will a child be released to a person not authorized by a parent to pick up that child. It is your responsibility to list on the emergency form all the people who are authorized to pick up your child from school. If you plan on having your child picked up by someone who is not listed on the form, you must bring in a note or fax the office at 772-463-2124. In case of last minute change, contact the office and notify the director. This person will also be asked for the photo ID before the child is released.

### **Pre-care/After-care:**

We will be offering before care at 8:00 am and after care until 5:30 pm (excluding Tuesday it will be till 3:30 pm) please see fees in tuition schedule. For special request on extended care beyond those times, please contact us.

### **What to Send with Your child**

When choosing your children's school clothes, please keep in mind that easy, comfortable and washable clothing is best. Choose simple and practical clothing that is free from complicated fastenings and easy to handle in the bathroom. Even though Torah Tots uses washable paints for art projects the materials can be messy, even for those children who wear smocks. Outdoor play can be tough on clothing, so please choose attire that is sturdy. **Please label all your children's clothes with his/her name.** For safety purposes, children should wear sneakers or closed shoes daily. Please do not send your child in flip flops, crocs or slippers.

Please send a full change of clothes, marked with your child's name. Clothes will be kept in your child's cubby for use as needed. If your child has an accident during school please wash and return a change of clothing for the following day.

### **Toys from Home:**

Except for toys that are needed in the very opening days of school to help ease your child's transition from home to school, we ask that you leave your child's toys at home. Children are often very possessive of personal toys and will not share them easily or they become very upset when lost or broken at school. We welcome stuffed or soft animals, soft dolls and blanket. We believe that for the best interest of the child television or movie super hero toys based on aggressive and violent stories can lead to the same kind of behavior in the classroom and often do not promote the Jewish ideals that we teach. If you have a book or a music CD that may be of interest to all children please feel free to contact the Director.

### **Snack, lunch and Birthdays**

**Special Diets:** if your child has any special dietary needs, please consult with the director. She will be happy to work with you to make sure your child is served appropriate foods.

**Lunch & Snack:** As a Jewish Early Childhood Center we will be adhering to the traditional kosher laws. As a user friendly E.C.C., we will walk you through and answer your questions and concerns. We will make suggestions and help you out, to make sure you are not overwhelmed by this.

Please provide your child with a nutritious kosher dairy or Pareve lunch and drink daily. Kosher Products bear the symbols: "OU", "OK", "star K", "K of k", "OV", "CRC" or ORB. Please label lunch box, thermos, utensils and containers. We do not permit children at Torah Tots to exchange or share food items. We are striving to ensure that the children at Torah Tots have nutritious food items at all times.

Please do not send in any candy or sweets with your child. A morning snack of cereal & milk will be served every day. Children staying in full day program should bring an afternoon snack from home.

**School Birthday Parties:** Children love to celebrate their birthdays at school. You may choose to bring a special snack for the occasion. Please check with the director before purchasing any snacks. Absolutely no foods will be permitted into the school without the preapproval of the director. Your child's teacher will add stories, songs and games to make this a special day for your child. Please contact your child's teacher at least one week in advance so that a mutually convenient date can be arranged.

**Private Birthday Parties.** If you plan on having a private birthday celebration for your child outside of school, please be sensitive to your child's classmates. If it is within your means, we recommend that you invite all your child's classmates. Children are sensitive to being excluded and can create hurt feelings.

### **Health, Safety and Discipline**

1-All children are required to have a current health and immunization forms filled out by the child's physician, dated no more than 6 months prior to the beginning of school. No child will be permitted to attend school without these health forms.

2- A child is not permitted to attend school if he/she has a fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher taken by the auxiliary method. The child should be fever free (without the aid of medication) for 24 hours before returning to school.

3-A child is not permitted to attend school if he/she has conjunctivitis (pink eye). The symptoms of pink eye are when the white of the eye appears red, with an itching sensation and may secrete a pussy discharge. The child may return to school 24 hours after the initiation of treatment with a doctor's note saying that he/she is no longer contagious.

4-A child is not permitted to attend school if he/she has more than one occurrence of diarrhea and/or vomiting. The child should be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school.

5- If a child has a severe cold and a cough with nasal discharge that requires attention in excess of four times in twenty minutes, the child may not be in school.

6- In case of a contagious disease, please notify the school at once. All parents will be notified by the school when a child in the group has a contagious disease so that you may check with your physician. If your child should contract a contagious disease or rash, we must have a note from his/her doctor stating that the child in good health before being re-admitted.

7- If your child is found to have head lice, you will be called to pick him/her up so that the appropriate treatment can be administered. Upon returning to school, an administrator will check your child to ensure that all lice and nits have been removed.

8-If an antibiotic is prescribed for an infectious illness; the child should not be brought to school until he/she has been on the medication for 24 hours.

9- Please be aware that in order to protect our children, our teachers are required by Florida law to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

10- No bottles are allowed to be brought into the classroom. Sippy cups are allowed and pacifiers are allowed for naptime.

### **Illness or Injury in School**

In accordance with Florida State Regulations, Torah Tots is restricted to treating wounds or injuries with ice, soap and water and band-aids only. Should other injuries occur, parent will be notified immediately and/or paramedics will be summoned.

These restrictions will also prevent the school from issuing medications such as Tylenol, etc. Parents may come to school to administer medication to their children (please see medication section below for more information). Parent will be summoned to take their child home should the student feel unwell and we ask that parents are sure that children are feeling healthy before sending them to school.

Each student file must contain a signed and notarized Emergency Form. This form, in addition to providing emergency and medical alert information, also grants Torah Tots authorization to act as parent's agent in procuring appropriate medical or surgical services, should the need arise.

### **Medication**

Only prescription medicine for allergies or in the event of emergency will be dispensed by Torah Tots staff. The name of the doctor, child and medication directions for administration must be written on the label and all medication must be in the original prescription container. A written request, signed by the parents, shall accompany the medication stating name of medication to be given, time and dosage. Torah Tots shall record the name of the child, medication, date, time, amount and method of dosage administered and medication log will be initialed by adult who administered the medication. Please make sure to fill out medication permission form at the office.

Over the counter medication may only be administered at our school if a dated doctor's note is submitted with detailed instruction of how and when the dosage is needed.

Physical barrier lotions, ointments and creams such as sunscreen, insect repellent and diaper ointment are generally not considered medications and we allow these to be applied as long as a non-medication form is completed and on file in office.

### **Discipline**

Our philosophy does not consider a child good or bad, however, there is acceptable and unacceptable behavior and Torah Tots staff will never use physical or verbal responses which would demean a child. Instead explanation of acceptable behavior is given and appropriate choices are offered in order to empower the child. We stress the importance of respecting the person and property of our peers and can enjoy our class to the fullest when we do not hurt anyone physically, emotionally or by taking away other's property. Our discipline policy is defined as guidance and teaching with an emphasis on mutual

respect. This method teaches natural and logical consequences for misbehavior instead of the use of punishment; as a result, the child gains self-esteem and cooperation skills.

### Biting

Biting can be a form of expression in children who have limited verbal skills and some children may use biting when angry or frustrated. While it is considered typical behavior for young children, it is detrimental to the safety and well being of children in a school setting.

Biting Procedures:

- 1- After a child bites one time, the family will be contacted by the Director.
- 2- If repeated biting incident occur, the Director will meet with the parents in order to implement a plan that would prevent further incidents from taking place. These may include a "shadow" at the parent's expense or temporary removal from the program.

### Hurricanes and Community Emergencies

Our School generally follows the emergency plans set by Martin County Public Schools. We will at all times try to notify you personally of emergency information or you may call the office directly. In the event the school is closed due to natural disasters such as weather (i.e. hurricanes, etc.) and /or weather related damages to the school, there will be no make- up days.

### Holidays, Family Vacations & Early Withdrawal

Illness, Holidays and Family Vacations:

Every child is enrolled for the entire school year. Since most of the schools costs are fixed and do not vary according to daily attendance, the school cannot issue refunds or credits for illness, holidays or family vacations. Make up days are not available.

In event of early withdrawal, you are responsible for a pro-rated amount of tuition, plus 30% of the annual tuition. The enrollment fee is non-refundable.

Check the school calendar for any school closings and events. Notices will be sent out in the event that there is a change on the calendar.

We look forward to a wonderful school experience with your child!