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# Denver Jewish Day School Guide to Inclusive Birthday Parties and Gatherings

## 2018-2019 School Year

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## Introduction

Community, or *kehillah*, is part of what makes Denver JDS the special place that it is. It's one of our *Divrei Chaim* (Words to Live By). It's one of the first descriptors that people use to differentiate our school from any other institution, and it's something in which we have a lot of pride. Our school community is inclusive and caring and unique. We do our best to create an environment that fosters that sense of community, and we ask our families to partner with us to strengthen that community even outside of school.

Concerns about inclusivity in our community most often revolve around parties and other events that conflict with Jewish observance, who is or is not invited to these parties and events, and other areas that might prevent someone from feeling included. Our school does not and cannot mandate what individual families do concerning private parties and events that occur outside of school hours. We do, however, have some recommendations for how to approach these events when they involve members of the Denver JDS community.

Our diversity is one of our biggest assets. It fosters mutual respect, understanding, conflict resolution skills, and consensus building. Here, we embrace the learning that comes from divergent points of view. Let us embrace this diversity in a way that recognizes the needs and values of each of our community members.

## Denver Jewish Day School as an inclusive *kehillah* (community)

What does the word "community" mean to you? Does it conjure up images of your synagogue or temple? What about the neighborhood in which you live or the friends you've had for the last decade? Is community just about physical proximity or is there something more to it? What makes a community a community?

As Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Britain's former chief rabbi, explains, classical Hebrew has three words for community: *edah*, *tzibbur* and *kehillah* – each signifying different kinds of association. *Edah* comes from the Hebrew words meaning "witness," and those who constitute an *edah* have a strong sense of collective identity, having witnessed the same thing, sharing the same faith and working towards the same goal. By contrast, *tzibbur* comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to heap" or "pile up" and refers to groups of people who just happen to be at the same place at the same time, showing minimal sense of community, acting more as an aggregate formed by numbers rather than identity. A *kehillah* is different from both an *edah* and an *tzibbur* in that its members are different from one another (like a *tzibbur*), but they have come together for a collective undertaking (like an *edah*) that requires each participant's making a distinctive contribution.

At Denver JDS, one of our *Divrei Chaim* (Words to Live By) is community, and we chose to use the Hebrew "*kehillah*" for our community. Like a *tzibbur*, the members of the Denver JDS community come from all different backgrounds and experiences. Because we are not an *edah*, we do not all have the same way of being Jewish or being part of the community. We take different perspectives on faith and Jewish practice, and we each have a different identity when it comes to Judaism. Like an *edah*, however, we have all come together because we know that

Denver JDS is special, and we want to be a part of its success. That is what makes us a unique *kehillah*, but being a *kehillah* doesn't always come naturally. We may not even recognize how different we are from our neighbors or how our actions might unintentionally harm our *kehillah*, which is why we each have a responsibility to our community and its members to maintain our *kehillah* and make sure everyone feels welcome.

We often hear questions or concerns raised by families about social gatherings that might detract from the building a strong *kehillah* as they do not reflect the inclusivity for which we strive within our community. Events that are planned on Shabbat or Jewish holidays are sending the message that not everyone is wanted. Get-togethers that don't take into consideration dietary needs like kashrut or allergies do not make everyone feel included. Play dates that involve having to spend money might not be an option for everyone. Birthday parties that include only part of the class make others feel like they are outside of the community.

Building a strong *kehillah* does not happen by chance; it happens through intention and purpose. As Rabbi Sacks says, the beauty of a *kehillah* is that, when driven by a constructive purpose, it gathers together the distinct and separate contributions of many individuals so that each member can say, "I helped make this."

We hope that you can use this guide to help make the Denver JDS *kehillah* the best it can be.

## General Guidelines

In order to keep Denver JDS the strong *kehillah* it is, consider the following:

Denver JDS employs a pluralistic approach to religious practice, fostering an environment of consideration, respect, mutual understanding, and open-minded learning. In so doing, we strive to integrate a broad spectrum of the Jewish community into one dynamic institution (see Pluralism at Denver JDS, included in this guide, for more information about how we approach pluralism). When planning gatherings, refrain from planning birthday parties, parent socials, and other gatherings on Shabbat or Jewish holidays (refer to list of dates in this guide).

- Remember that Shabbat goes from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday evening, so programs on Friday afternoons should conclude in time for students/families to get home before the start of Shabbat (see candle lighting times included in this guide for specific times).
- Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Shavuot, and the beginning/ending days of Sukkot and Passover should be avoided.
- Some would not feel comfortable attending a social gathering on fast days (even minor ones).
- If you have questions about dates, please ask!

"Being in an environment which places so much importance on community, it is a priority for us to carry that lesson over into our lives outside of school. It breaks my heart when my child is barred from participating at a party because non-kosher food will be served, or it is to take place on Shabbat or a holiday. It sends a message to both my child as well as our family that we are not welcome in their community."  
- *Denver JDS parent*

When making the guest list, keep the community in mind.

- Inviting the whole class can avoid hurt feelings.
- When not inviting the whole class, consider inviting just the girls/just the boys or, in the Lower Division, just the A class/just the B class so that the delineation is clear.
- Consider partnering with another family for gatherings to share the planning/financial burden so that everyone can be included.

"We work so hard during the school year to make sure everyone feels included and everyone feels appreciated. When students feel excluded from a birthday party, it really hurts our sense of community and impacts how things go here at school."  
- *Denver JDS faculty member*

When planning food for gatherings, think about both kashrut and potential allergies.

- East Side Kosher Deli, Rosenberg's Kosher (formerly The Bagel Store), and Brooklyn Pizza all provide kosher eating options. Also many King Soopers have kosher bakeries and will custom design a cake. Even if there is only one child in the class who will eat only kosher pizza, providing kosher pizza for everyone at the party will assure that no child is made to feel "different" or excluded. (See list of establishments included in this guide.)
- Lots of common items such as potato chips, cream cheese, and cookies are kosher; just look for the symbol (see list of symbols included as part of the Denver JDS Kashrut Policy). Many families

"Food allergies are not just an issue of safety but also an issue of well-being. We really appreciate parents letting us know what will be served at a birthday party so our children don't feel left out of the festivities."  
- *DJDS parent*

eat only certified kosher foods so checking ingredients is not sufficient. See suggested food ideas included in this guide.

- Consider common allergies, such as nuts, when planning the menu.
- Alert parents in the invitation as to what the food will be so that kids with dietary restrictions won't be surprised, and parents can plan ahead if need be. Include whether or not the food will be kosher so that families can take this into account when making plans.
- Reach out to parents to brainstorm ideas to make sure all kids are included, regardless of dietary needs.

"I feel like we are one big family here at Denver JDS, and I want everyone to be included in that family. I feel like I'm everyone's parent, and I want every child to feel like they can be who they are and be included."

- DJDS parent

When planning activities, try to be as inclusive as possible

- If you will be asking families to contribute financially to an activity, be aware that everyone has a different comfort zone when it comes to spending.
- Try planning gatherings with a variety of activities in case students are not physically able to participate in everything.

## Pluralism at Denver JDS

Pluralism at Denver JDS means being rooted in one's own identity while seeking out multiple perspectives in order to clarify, refine, and challenge ideas and interacting with appreciation for those who think and act differently as we unite in our shared values as a Jewish community.

Our commitment to pluralism is based on the understanding that...

- Our world is increasingly more connected and more diverse.
- Being able to understand various perspectives and effectively interact and work with those who hold different opinions and beliefs is an essential capacity for success in today's world.
- In order to most effectively build our own identities, we must understand both what we believe and hold to be true and also how that differs from what others believe.
- The more we understand about the world around us, the more confident we can become in who we are and what our role is in that world.
- Although our community is diverse, we join together as a community of shared *middot*, Jewish values. One of our core *middot* is the concept of *B'tzelem Elokim*, or the idea that we are all created in the image of God, and, as such, we are all deserving of understanding and respect.

At Denver JDS, pluralism is shown by...

- Presenting a variety of perspectives on issues in order to encourage appreciation and respectful dialogue
- Fostering the skill of critical thinking in order for students to be empowered in their own learning and processing of the world around them
- Engaging in ongoing conversations about how we mark holidays, life cycle events, and other occasions in order to celebrate the traditions of everyone

- Providing multiple points of entry and ways to connect to Judaism in a variety of ways and on different levels including religiously, spiritually, academically, intellectually, and theologically
- Focusing on skills and content knowledge in order for students and families to make thoughtful decisions about belief and practice
- Setting identity parameters to ensure the essential character and integrity of our community
- Grounding our understanding of differences in our shared tradition, recognizing that we are all one people and that we are each unique in the role we play
- Offering kosher food at all school functions and ensuring school functions do not conflict with Shabbat and holidays in order to include our full community

## Denver JDS *Kashrut* (Jewish dietary laws) Policy

Kashrut, or keeping kosher, is the mitzvah of eating in accordance with Jewish tradition. Kashrut is maintained at all Denver JDS sponsored events both on and off campus.

1. Food for distribution to groups of students, faculty/staff, parents and/or guests (for classes, parties, programs, events, rentals, etc.)

All food distributed to groups (not brought for individual consumption) of students, faculty/staff, parents and/or guests, must adhere to stricter standards of supervision than that which is permitted for individual consumption. Food that is to be distributed to groups must come from a certified kosher caterer or bakery, be prepared at school under the supervision of one of the school's *mashgichim* (see names and contact information below) or, if it is packaged food, it must be marked with acceptable symbols (*hechshers*) of kashrut supervision (listed below and subject to change). Home baked goods, even from homes where kashrut is observed, may not be distributed to groups. If you are not sure if a product is kosher, please ask in the school office before the item is served. Food to be distributed to groups should be checked by one of the *mashgichim* before being served. These guidelines should be followed at all school functions, both on and off campus, where food is served/provided to groups of students, faculty/staff, parents or guests. Denver JDS also encourages parents and students to adhere to the dietary laws when planning non-school sponsored events, such as parties. This will help ensure that everyone can participate and feel included.

2. Food for individual consumption by students, faculty/staff and guests (lunch, snacks, etc.)

All food brought on to the school campus for individual consumption must be dairy or parve. This means no meat or meat by-products are allowed unless provided by the school and prepared under the school's kashrut supervision. Students, faculty/staff and guests should bring a dairy or parve lunch and/or snack from home if they wish to eat while on campus and will not be eating food served by the school. This policy applies to food for consumption on field trips and class trips as well. Students may purchase food

that meets these requirements, when on field trips and class trips, with permission from their supervisors.

In accordance with the laws of kashrut, poultry is considered meat while fish is not. Parve means having neither meat nor milk in it. Parve foods include fruits, vegetables, juice, soda, eggs, and kosher fish. Please note that to be considered kosher, fish must have fins and scales; shellfish is not kosher. Soups and sauces with non-kosher chicken or meat stocks are also unacceptable.

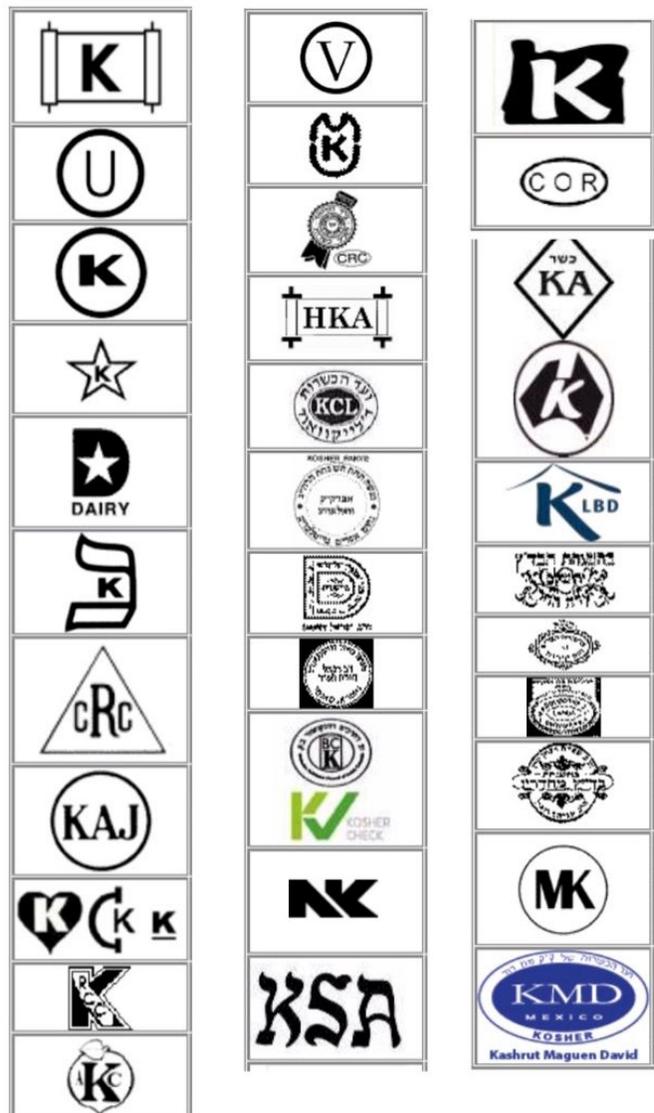
**Acceptable Kosher Symbols or Markings (*Hechsher*)**

All food distributed to groups of students, faculty/staff, parents and/or guests, on or away from campus, require that they be certified as kosher. This is otherwise known as a ‘hechsher.’ The kosher symbols (*hechshers*) below are acceptable at Denver JDS. Other symbols may also be acceptable, but one should consult with the school’s *mashgichim* for approval. When serving food to students, faculty/staff, parents and/or guests, all items should contain one of these certifications. When cooking in a school kitchen, all items and/or ingredients should also have one of these hechshers.

Three symbols that are not accepted by Denver JDS are the ‘Triangle K,’ ‘Tablet K,’ and ‘Stam (plain) K.’ Some items with a plain K may be acceptable upon prior approval from the *mashgichim*. Fresh vegetables and fruits, as well as frozen vegetables and fruits do not require kosher certification, though fresh fruits and vegetables should be washed thoroughly before being served. Canned vegetables and canned fruit do, however, require kosher certification.

Things for faculty/staff and parents to consider when planning an event that involves distribution of food to groups (as described in #1 above)

- Catering
  - Culinary Masters LLC is the school’s caterer. The school recommends, but does not insist, that Culinary Masters be used for catered events. (See contact information below to contact the caterer.)



- Other kosher caterers may be used if approved and supervised by one of the school's *mashgichim*. If you are considering using a caterer other than Culinary Masters we ask that you get bids from Culinary Masters and the other kosher caterer(s) you are considering.
- Clarify all items on a bid with the caterer. Ask if there are any other fees that will be associated with the event. Nobody likes surprises.
- Events without a caterer
  - Parents may prepare and/or cook food at school under the supervision of one of the school's *mashgichim*. Kitchen space (in the gym kitchen or lunchroom kitchen) must be reserved in advance and cannot conflict with the school's needs for the space).
  - Food can be purchased for these events in accordance with #1 above.
  - Food to be distributed to groups should be checked by one of the *mashgiachim* (kashrut supervisors) before being served.
- Coffee
  - Coffee can be purchased from Starbucks in large containers (the cream that accompanies it is acceptable).
  - Using a caterer does not preclude one from purchasing the coffee from Starbucks. It is sometimes less expensive to do it that way.
  - With advance notice, coffee can also be made on-sight using Denver JDS urns.
- Room or space must be reserved for an event. Contact Lower Division or Upper Division front office assistants to reserve a room or space for an event. They will create a room reservation on the school calendar. See contact information below.
- Room or space setups should be submitted well before the event. Provide details concerning number of and location of tables, chairs, etc. List needs for a podium, amplification, etc. The director of security is in charge of setups for events. Room setups can be submitted directly to the Lower Division or Upper Division front office assistants with the room reservation. See contact information below.
- Alcohol
  - All spirits and beers brewed by major brewers are kosher, with or without a *hechsher* (most beers and spirits don't have a *hechsher*).
    - Whiskey and scotch are sometimes aged in oak wine barrels, in which the alcohol is adulterated with non-kosher wine. Whiskeys and scotches served on school premises should be cleared in advance by one of the school's *mashgichim*.
  - All wines must be labeled kosher (*mevushal*).
  - Small batch home-brew must be approved by one of the school's *mashgichim*. Be in contact with the school's *mashgichim* before beginning the brewing process.

## Contact Information

### Denver JDS Staff for kashrut and events

- Denver JDS Main Phone Number 303-369-0663
- Head of School/CEO Avi Halzel, 720-449-9547, ahalzel@denverjds.org
- *Mashgichim* (kashrut supervisors)
  - Dr. Sarah Levy, director of Jewish life & learning, slevy@denverjds.org
  - Benjamin Levy, Upper Division dean of Judaic studies, blevy@denverjds.org
  - Jerry Rotenberg, special activities, jrotenberg@denverjds.org
- School Caterer - Culinary Masters LLC, owned by Marco Valdez - 720-975-7717
- Front Office Assistants (for room or space reservations)
  - Lower Division: Brigitte Stout, bstout@denverjds.org
  - Upper Division: Robin Helgerson, rhelgerson@denverjds.org

## Kosher Establishments

The following establishments are certified kosher:

Name and Product	Location and Contact Information	Notes
Bonnie Brae Ice Creams (ice cream)	799 S. University Blvd. 303-777-0808 www.bonniebraeicecream.com	Only the items noted at the store are certified
Brooklyn Pizza (pizza and salad)	890 S. Monaco Pkwy, Unit 7 303-355-5777 www.brooklynpizzadenver.com	Includes gluten-free and dairy-free options Menu available on website All items certified
East Side Kosher Deli (full meat menu with takeout and catering options)	499 South Elm St. 303-322-9862 www.eastsidekosherdeli.com	Menu available on website All items certified
High Point Creamery (ice cream)	215 S. Holly St. 720-420-9137 www.highpointcreamery.com	All items certified except IZZE sodas
Rosenberg's Kosher (bagels and other baked goods)	942 S. Monaco 303-388-2648 www.rosenbergkosher.com	Retail storefront only open to public on Friday and holidays (can accommodate catering requests other days) Only Monaco location is kosher

King Soopers Bakery (cakes, cookies, doughnuts, bagels and other baked goods)	890 S. Monaco Pkwy 303-333-1535 6470 East Hampden Ave. 303-758-1210 4600 Leetsdale Drive 303-320-3100 4910 S. Yosemite 303-793-9080 1725 Sheridan Blvd. 303-237-4988 BOULDER - 1650 30th St. 303-443-9622 www.kingsoopers.com	
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For the most up-to-date information regarding the kashrut status of Denver-area establishments, visit [www.scrollk.org](http://www.scrollk.org)

## Suggested Food Ideas

Providing kosher food does not have to be expensive or difficult. Below are some things to keep in mind while planning for your gathering:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables are inherently kosher and do not need to be certified (they are also a lot less likely to impact students with allergies).
- These items are easily found with an accepted kashrut symbol:
  - Bagels and cream cheese
  - Potato chips or pretzels
  - Granola bars
  - Popcorn
  - Ice cream

## Dates and candle lighting times for the 2018-2019 school year

While the calendar is full of Jewish holidays, and we appreciate that each of these holidays is marked by families in different ways, in the interest of being inclusive of everyone, we would ask that gatherings not be planned on the following dates (note that all holidays begin the evening before the listed date):

- Shabbat each week (beginning Friday evening and ending Saturday evening)
- Monday, September 10 and Tuesday, September 11, 2018 (Rosh Hashanah)
- Wednesday, September 19, 2018 (Yom Kippur)
- Monday, September 24 and Tuesday, September 25, 2018 (Sukkot)
- Monday, October 1 and Tuesday, October 2, 2018 (Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah)
- Sunday, April 21 and Friday, April 26, 2019 (Passover)

Note that gatherings during Chanukah, the intermediate days of Sukkot and Passover, as well as minor holidays such as Tu B'shevat are generally fine.

Date	Time	Holiday
Friday, August 3, 2018	7:52 pm	Shabbat
Friday, August 10, 2018	7:43 pm	Shabbat
Friday, August 17, 2018	7:34 pm	Shabbat
Friday, August 24, 2018	7:24 pm	Shabbat
Friday, August 31, 2018	7:13 pm	Shabbat
Friday, September 7, 2018	7:02 pm	Shabbat
Sunday, September 9, 2018	6:59 pm	Rosh Hashanah
Friday, September 17, 2018	6:51 pm	Shabbat
Tuesday, September 18, 2018	6:44 pm	Yom Kippur
Friday, September 21, 2018	6:39 pm	Shabbat
Sunday, September 23, 2018	6:36 pm	Sukkot
Friday, September 28, 2018	6:28 pm	Shabbat
Sunday, September 30, 2018	6:24 pm	Shemini Atzeret
Friday, October 5, 2018	6:16 pm	Shabbat
Friday, October 12, 2018	6:06 pm	Shabbat

Friday, October 19, 2018	5:55 pm	Shabbat
Friday, October 26, 2018	5:46 pm	Shabbat
Friday, November 2, 2018	5:38 pm	Shabbat
Friday, November 9, 2018	4:30 pm	Shabbat
Friday, November 16, 2018	4:24 pm	Shabbat
Friday, November 23, 2018	4:20 pm	Shabbat
Friday, November 30, 2018	4:18 pm	Shabbat
Friday, December 7, 2018	4:17 pm	Shabbat
Friday, December 14, 2018	4:18 pm	Shabbat
Friday, December 21, 2018	4:21 pm	Shabbat
Friday, December 28, 2018	4:25 pm	Shabbat
Friday, January 4, 2019	4:31 pm	Shabbat
Friday, January 11, 2019	4:38 pm	Shabbat
Friday, January 18, 2019	4:45 pm	Shabbat
Friday, January 25, 2019	4:53 pm	Shabbat
Friday, February 1, 2019	5:02 pm	Shabbat
Friday, February 8, 2019	5:10 pm	Shabbat
Friday, February 15, 2019	5:18 pm	Shabbat
Friday, February 22, 2019	5:26 pm	Shabbat
Friday, March 1, 2019	5:34 pm	Shabbat
Friday, March 8, 2019	5:41 pm	Shabbat
Friday, March 15, 2019	6:49 pm	Shabbat
Friday, March 22, 2019	6:56 pm	Shabbat
Friday, March 29, 2019	7:03 pm	Shabbat
Friday, April 5, 2019	7:10 pm	Shabbat
Friday, April 12, 2019	7:17 pm	Shabbat
Friday, April 19, 2019	7:24 pm	Shabbat

Thursday, April 25	7:30 pm	Passover
Friday, April 26, 2019	7:31 pm	Shabbat
Friday, May 3, 2019	7:38 pm	Shabbat
Friday, May 10, 2019	7:45 pm	Shabbat
Friday, May 17, 2019	7:51 pm	Shabbat
Friday, May 24, 2019	7:57 pm	Shabbat
Friday, May 31, 2019	8:03 pm	Shabbat
Friday, June 7, 2019	8:07 pm	Shabbat
Saturday, June 8, 2018	9:17 pm	Shavuot
Friday, June 14, 2019	8:11 pm	Shabbat
Friday, June 21, 2019	8:13 pm	Shabbat
Friday, June 28, 2018	8:14 pm	Shabbat

Note: *Havdalah*, which marks the end of Shabbat or a holiday, is the next day, roughly 70 minutes later than the candle lighting time.