



# HANDBOOK



**Early Childhood Program**

**2025/26**

**Parent's Guidebook**  
**Revised 2025 – 2026 School Year**

**Akiba Yavneh Academy Early Childhood Program**  
**12324 Merit Drive**  
**Dallas, Texas 75251**

**214-295-3400 Main Number**

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## **FROM THE LEADERSHIP OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

**Dear Families,**

We are delighted to welcome you and your child to the Early Childhood Program at Akiba Yavneh Academy! We are so pleased that you have chosen to be part of our community and to join the hundreds of families who share a deep commitment to nurturing children through developmentally appropriate, child-centered, and joyful learning.

Our success at Akiba Yavneh is rooted in the strength of our partnerships, with families, with children, and with one another. The connection between home and school is at the heart of all we do, and we look forward to working together to support your child's growth and development.

Much thought, research, and passion have been dedicated to understanding how young children learn. As modern research affirms and as Jewish tradition teaches, every child is capable, curious, and full of potential. created *B'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of G-d, each child is uniquely valuable, infinitely worthy, and a deep thinker. Through strong relationships, collaboration with families, and careful observation and documentation, our educators support each child's learning journey with intention and care.

Our goal is to meet the needs of each child while also honoring the expectations of each family. Your input is essential to the success of our program. We believe that ongoing communication and shared understanding between families and educators strengthen the educational experience for everyone. Together, we will also determine the best ways to assess and support your child's growth in meaningful and individualized ways.

This handbook outlines our educational philosophy, daily routines, and school policies. We encourage you to read through it carefully and to share any relevant parts with your child to help them feel comfortable and confident as they begin school. If you need help understanding any of the information or would like translation assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out, we are here to support you.

We are honored to partner with you this year and look forward to all that lies ahead. May this year be filled with learning, laughter, growth, and connection, for your child and for your whole family.

**Bivracha and best wishes for a successful school year and a Shana Tova,**

***Chana Ben-Abraham***  
Early Childhood Director

***Deborah Gubin***  
Assistant Early Childhood Director

## **AKIBA YAVNEH ACADEMY EARLY CHILDHOOD VISION AND SHARED VALUES**

### **Our vision for the Akiba Yavneh Academy Early Childhood Program is to:**

1. Create a supportive, welcoming, safe environment that inspires a love of learning, nurtures healthy social and emotional growth, and facilitates exploration, critical thinking, and discovery.
2. Inspire children with Torah and real-life experiences, celebrate their creativity and achievements, empower them to develop themselves spiritually, and establish a meaningful connection to Israel.
3. Utilize a curriculum that is constructed to emphasize and respect how each individual child thinks and learns from their own personal world and is rooted in the American Jewish culture in which we all live.
4. Grow genuine, passionate, and forward-thinking Jews prepared for the challenges of the modern world, seamlessly integrating Torah into their everyday lives.

### **At Akiba Yavneh Academy, we are committed to providing our children and families with the best practices in early childhood education and believe that:**

- We are all created B'Tzelem Elokim – in the image of G-d – every person is valuable and worthy of respect.
- As the Jewish people, we have a covenant with G-d to uphold the teachings of the Torah. As an early childhood center, we commit to helping each family deepen their connection to Judaism.
- Children have an inborn sense of wonder. Our early childhood educators honor the children's curiosity by facilitating and enriching their journey of discovery and learning.
- We support the collaboration of children, families, and educators. Together, we recognize how we can contribute to the broader community and world.
- Learning and growing together, celebrating the holidays, and sharing life events, we nourish the bonds of our AYA family.

## **PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)**

AYA's Parent Teacher Organization is here to enhance our entire AYA community. We provide extra support for both the faculty and our families to make sure that everyone feels a part of our wonderful AYA family. The PTO is dedicated to making the children's learning come to life by sponsoring a wide variety of programs, both secular and Judaic.

From hosting the ECP Thanksgiving feasts to supporting school programming, the PTO is a meaningful reminder of parental involvement in the school. School spirit and pride are also enhanced through our spirit wear and various community events.

The PTO thrives on the work of its volunteers. The active participation of parents and teachers is encouraged and appreciated. All parents and teachers are invited to join and become involved in PTO's worthwhile events.

As soon as you enroll your child, you are automatically a member of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The PTO plays a vital role in supporting our school in various ways, including:

- Encouraging parent connections through social activities.
- Supporting staff through appreciation events and in times of need.
- Organizing community-wide celebrations for parents and students.
- Maintaining parent engagement on campus, by filling volunteer and leadership opportunities. 1 hour of service each semester is requested per family.

Each grade level has class parents to help you navigate the many activities, social events, and volunteer opportunities throughout the year, and to answer any questions about the Akiba Yavneh experience. Please complete this [PTO Volunteer Interest Form](#).

—  
President: Shlomit Friedman  
Vice President: Amber Waks  
Immediate Past President: Alyssa Gruen  
Treasurer: Jessie Stein  
Secretary: Abby Frankel  
Communications: Shoshana Ellis  
Event planner: Danielle Mendelsberg  
Division Leads

ECP Leads:

Marissa Gedalia  
Jen Weiss

Lower School K-6 Leads:

Sarah Paillet  
Elana Shulkin

Upper School Leads (7th - 8th grade)

Lauren Siskind  
Dena Englander  
Yaelle Tucker

Upper School (9th - 12th grade)

Julie Drinkwater

For any questions about PTO, please email PTO President Shlomit Friedman at [ayapto@akibayavneh.org](mailto:ayapto@akibayavneh.org)

## LICENSING

The Akiba Yavneh Academy Early Childhood Program (ECP) is licensed by Texas Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing Division. [Click here](#) to learn more about Child Care Licensing.

## SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Phone: (214) 295-3400

Fax: (214) 295-3405

Website: <https://www.akibayavneh.org/>

We use a text messaging system to keep families, faculty, and staff up to date on urgent messages, including weather-related closings, lockdowns, drills, and more. Parents who wish to receive text messages from AYA need to ensure that their phone numbers are on record and updated. To update your phone information, please login to [AYA Connect](#).

*This Week @ AYA!* — Weekly email of happenings for the past week and upcoming events

Facebook and Instagram: Akiba Yavneh Academy

## HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Akiba Yavneh Academy believes in a close and harmonious relationship between home and school. Such cooperation can help each child derive the utmost from their school experience.

**Classroom Visits/Family Meetings** – Before school begins, teachers will set up a family meeting in

the classroom for the families and teachers to get to know one another. At this meeting, families will have the opportunity to share information with their child's teacher about what is valuable and important to them with regards to their child's education, their family culture, home language, and home and family values. This is also a time when parents can share with their children's teachers any allergies or health concerns, as well as any fears or concerns regarding either. This information is used to help inform the classroom curriculum, planning, routines, and assessment tools so they are sensitive to the needs of every child in the classroom. In addition, classroom visits allow teachers, children, and families to set foundational relationships to last throughout the school year.

**"Let's Get Acquainted" Night** will be held before school begins to acquaint parents and staff, educational objectives and classroom routines will also be reviewed.

**Parent Teacher Conferences** occur twice a year (Fall and Spring) and serve as an opportunity for families and teachers to collaborate and create a whole picture of the child. During conferences, teachers can share the developmental progress of the child in the classroom, as well as documentation of the child's classroom experiences. Parents can share their observations of their children, as well as how they feel their children are doing both at home and at school. Together, the families and the teachers will develop a plan for the child and complete a goal setting form that will align the two settings, home and school.

**Early Childhood Digital Portfolios/Progress Reports** begin when a child enters the ECP and move with each child as they progress from one class to the next. Portfolios include a documentation of the child's journey and developmental growth in the program and are shared with parents by e-mail towards the end of the fall and spring of each school year. Observation of pupils' habits and impressions of their learning activities are conveyed in the portfolios by teacher's comments, photos, and videos.

**Children's positive attitudes** towards learning are enhanced by interested parents who express a positive opinion about school, staff, and studies. Parents are encouraged to contact the appropriate school personnel directly to discuss any aspect of their child's education and growth. As the need arises, please feel free to call the office to make arrangements to meet or confer with teachers or administration. **The first school contact for parents should be the classroom teacher. Most concerns can be resolved at that time.** If this does not occur, then the appropriate administrator should be contacted. Teachers, however, cannot receive phone calls or meet with parents during class time. Please be considerate and do not call teachers at home.

At times, parents and teachers may have differing opinions when planning for the child. First and foremost, the Early Childhood Director should always be informed of such conflicts and is always available to aid in negotiating differences between families and teachers. If this situation does occur and the teacher and family cannot come to an agreed upon resolution, then a meeting will be set up with the Early Childhood Director, the teacher, and the family in order to negotiate the differences. Ultimately, if the situation has not been resolved, a meeting can be set up with the Head of School to help negotiate the differences. In addition, should you need a translator to ensure that all communication is clear, please let the Early Childhood Director know and one will be provided for you.

We believe that students' perceptions of the school, and the seriousness of academics, are influenced by the attitudes of the adults around them. We count on parent participation in our learning activities and invite active involvement and support as this enhances the entire learning experience for children, families, and teachers. In addition, we welcome parents to visit any area of the ECP at any time during the program's regular hours of operation.

## **SCHOOL HOURS**

The 2025-2026 AYA ECP begins on Wednesday, August 20th and the last day of school is

on Friday, June 5th. Please refer to the full calendar on the AYA website for more information about school closings and other special events..

Nevatim	8:00 – 3:15 or 5:30 – 5 days
Teenoki & K'TonTon Afternoon Program (includes nap):	8:00 – 12:30 5 days 5 days until 3:15*
Nitzanim Afternoon Program (includes rest) Mon-Thurs	8:00-12:30 5 Days until 3:15*
Chaverim	8:00 -3:15

\* Friday dismissal for ECP: 2:00 all year round

## SECURITY MEASURES

Every effort is made to maintain a safe and secure environment for our students, parents, staff and visitors to our campus. In order to do so, we have implemented the following:

- For carpool drop off and pick up, all cars entering our campus will require a sticker identifying them as cars of AYA families. No car will be allowed to enter the campus gates without a sticker.
- Parents and visitors who enter AYA buildings will be required to sign in at the Welcome Center (formerly the security desk) and to obtain a nametag to be worn while at AYA.

## EXTENDED DAY CARE HOURS

Available for Nevatim through Eighth Grade by prior registration only. Should you wish to register your student, please contact [Registrar@Akibayavneh.org](mailto:Registrar@Akibayavneh.org).

## EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS WILL BE OPEN AT 8:00 A.M.

### After Care

Monday - Thursday 3:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Monday - Thursday 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM

Fridays 2:00 - Close Based on Daylight Savings & Shabbat

**Conference Care Plus:** For half-days at school, care is available from 12:00 PM until approximately 1 ½ hours before candle lighting times, and for Parent Teacher Conference Days and Teacher Inservice Days is available from 8:00am – 5:30pm. This service is complimentary for AYA staff members. Fees are on a per-year basis, payable in advance. Should you wish to register your child, please contact [Registrar@AkibaYavneh.org](mailto:Registrar@AkibaYavneh.org).

Children whose carpools arrive late will be taken to After Care; a late fee will be charged.

For further information about extended day needs, please contact Ms. Michaela Blair at [mblair@akibayavneh.org](mailto:mblair@akibayavneh.org).

## ARRIVAL, DISMISSAL, AND AFTERNOON PROGRAMS GENERAL RULES:

The safety of your children is of utmost importance. ALL DRIVERS, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, must follow the procedures outlined below.

1. Parents wishing to enter the school building must park in one of the marked parking spaces. **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CAR UNATTENDED AT ANY CURB, OR PARK IN ANY HANDICAP/ AUCTION/PROSPECTIVE PARENT PARKING SPACES WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION.**
2. For the safety of all children, all visitors to the school building must check in at the Welcome Center in the Administration Building Lobby and receive a school Guest Badge. For the safety of the children, students and faculty have been asked not to open the door for visitors.
3. Parents wishing to enter the school building must park in one of the marked parking spaces. **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CAR UNATTENDED AT ANY CURB, OR PARK IN ANY HANDICAP/AUCTION/PROSPECTIVE PARENT PARKING SPACES WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION.**
4. For the safety of all children, all visitors to the school building must check in at the Welcome Center in the Administration Building Lobby and receive a school Guest Badge. For the safety of the children, students and faculty have been asked not to open the door for visitors.
5. If your child will be picked up by someone other than the regular carpool driver, please notify us of changes by submitting a Blue Note on the AYA website: <https://www.akibayavneh.org/student-life/bluenote> Website submission is preferred, however if you encounter difficulties, you can send an email to [bluenote@akibayavneh.org](mailto:bluenote@akibayavneh.org). When sending a Blue Note by direct email, please include the words Blue Note in the subject line. Please do not wait for school personnel to try to reach you for authorization.
6. Parents wishing to enter the school building must park in one of the marked parking spaces. **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CAR UNATTENDED AT ANY CURB, OR PARK IN ANY HANDICAP/ AUCTION/PROSPECTIVE PARENT PARKING SPACES WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION.**
7. For the safety of all children, all visitors to the school building must check in at the Welcome Center in the Administration Building Lobby and receive a school Guest Badge. For the safety of the children, students and faculty have been asked not to open the door for visitors.
8. If your child will be picked up by someone other than the regular carpool driver, please notify us of changes by submitting a Blue Note on the AYA website: <https://www.akibayavneh.org/student-life/bluenote> Website submission is preferred, however if you encounter difficulties, you can send an email to [bluenote@akibayavneh.org](mailto:bluenote@akibayavneh.org). When sending a Blue Note by direct email, please include the words Blue Note in the subject line. Please do not wait for school personnel to try to reach you for authorization.
9. All those picking up children must present valid identification upon request.
10. It is the **parents'** responsibility to notify carpool drivers of any changes (illness, early pickup, going with a friend, etc.)
11. AYA cannot assume responsibility for the safety of children who are brought before school hours or who remain at school after hours, unless they are registered in extended daycare.

### **Morning Drop-Off:**

**For Nevatim, parents** should enter the campus using the Coit Road service entrance and must park and walk their children to their classrooms.

**For Teenoki, K'Ton Ton, Nitzanim, and Chaverim,** parents should enter the campus using the Coit Road service entrance. Teachers will be outside to help take children out of the car.

After 8:00am, all ECP families should enter campus using the main entrance off of Merit Drive and walk children to their classrooms. **It is imperative for the child to arrive at school on time so they can participate in the most prevalent parts of their learning day.**

### Afternoon Pick-Up:

For the 12:30 carpool, please enter the campus from the Merit Drive main entrance and wait for the teacher to escort your child to your car in the Schultz Circle. (if Merit Drive construction is not finished, protocol will be updated).

For 3:15pm pick up for all ECP children, the line will form on Coit Road, and cars will enter through the Coit service entrance. Please follow the posted signs, as well as all rules and instructions from the carpool staff on duty. In addition, for the safety of your children during carpool, the following safety guidelines must be followed:

1. SLOW DOWN. Remember that the Schultz Rosenberg Campus is a school zone and to drive slowly, carefully, and mindfully.
2. STAY OFF OF YOUR PHONE. Drivers who are distracted by their phones are not mindful drivers and don't necessarily see when a child or adult is crossing or when a car has slowed down in front of them. In the carpool lane you must be hyper-aware of everything going on around you in order to help keep everyone safe. You need to be off of your phone in order to be as vigilant as possible
3. CONTINUE MOVING FORWARD AS DIRECTED. Please do not try to go around another car in the carpool line (even if your children are already loaded and buckled into their seats). There are cars that are passing on the left, therefore it is extremely important that you move forward as directed in the carpool line in order to avoid any accidents.
4. STAY IN YOUR CAR UNTIL WE BRING YOUR CHILDREN TO YOU. Please do not get out of your car to buckle in your children until we bring your children to your car. We are very methodical about when we load children into their cars in order to keep the carpool line moving. You may see that your children are outside already, but we will bring them to you when it is time for you to buckle them.
5. BUCKLE YOUR CHILDREN IN QUICKLY. As soon as your children are brought to your car, buckle them in immediately and move on so that we can begin to load the next cars. Please refrain from asking the morahs questions in the carpool line. If there is something you need to know about your child, please send an email.
6. EXERCISE PATIENCE. We know that carpool takes time and we appreciate your continued patience as we all make safety our number one priority.
7. In addition:
  - If you would like to come into the building during carpool time, you must park in a designated parking space. Parents should not park in the carpool line, as we must keep the carpool line open.
  - All children must be in proper safety seats for transport. Teachers are not allowed to put a child in a car without the proper safety seat. In addition, teachers will walk children to the cars at carpool; however, for liability reasons, they will be unable to buckle them into their seats. Parents will need to buckle their children into their car seats.

If your child or family has a special need or disability and needs special assistance during arrival or departure, please contact the Early Childhood Director to develop a plan that will meet your family's needs.

**Students who are not picked up at scheduled Dismissal Time will be sent to After Care at the regular rate of \$15.00 per hour, your account will be billed for this amount. We request that you let ECP leadership know ahead of time whenever possible to let us know that you will be late.**

Aftercare students who are scheduled to be picked up at 5:30 PM, or the stated Friday and holiday pick up time, will be charged \$1.00 per minute if picked up late.

## CLASSROOM VISITATION

Parents are welcome to visit our school. We have an open door policy in the ECP. Parents are welcome anytime.

Anyone other than a student or faculty/staff member **must sign in and obtain a visitor's pass from the Welcome Center**. A person without a visitor's pass will be asked to check in at the office.

To preserve the learning environment in the classroom and allow the teacher to focus on the children, we ask that parents set up an appointment for a personal or telephone meeting if they wish to conference with their teacher. All teachers have their own personal e-mail and voicemail box number where detailed messages can be left.

Classroom volunteer opportunities are available.

Parents of the host class's grade are invited weekly for a family Shabbat celebration and are also invited throughout the year for special holiday celebrations.

We ask that all parents and visitors observe any health and safety rules that may be in place for their children's classrooms while visiting. This may include washing hands before entering, and refraining from bringing in certain foods or materials.

## **HEALTH**

A child who is in good health has a distinct advantage when starting school. Steady progress is dependent on physical well-being. Good health enhances the ability to learn more easily, to adjust to classroom activities, and to get along well with others.

1. All students should have a complete check-up before school starts. Special consideration such as near- or farsightedness, speech or hearing difficulties, allergies, medication, etc., should be called to our attention in writing.
  - a. All medications must be accompanied by our medication authorization form.
  - b. If your child has any allergies you must provide a letter from their physician listing their allergy (ies) and any needed accommodations needed, as well as have the Allergy Action Plan (AAP), filled out.
2. Children's emergency information must be current, with vaccination dates and emergency numbers updated annually before school begins. All immunizations must be current for a student to be admitted to school. The only exception will be the rare, documented medical exemption. It is the school's position that established Halacha dictates that children should be vaccinated for their own protection, as well as for the protection of the community at large.
3. Current information about your child's health insurance coverage required for treatment in an emergency must be kept on file in the school office.
4. Parents/Guardians must provide signed authorization of the names of any individuals allowed to have access to health information about their child.
5. The content of every child's health and safety records is confidential but is immediately available upon request to: Administrators and teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian to access the records, the child's parents or legal guardians, and regulatory authorities
6. Please see that your child receives sufficient sleep each night and a nourishing breakfast daily.
7. Please keep your child at home if signs of a coming cold or other illness are evident. When in doubt, keep your child home. Do not risk infecting others.

**CHILDREN AT SCHOOL ARE MUCH MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO CONTAGION. TO PREVENT AN ILL CHILD FROM INFECTING CLASSMATES AND TEACHERS, THE FOLLOWING WILL APPLY IN ADDITION TO GENERAL SCHOOL POLICY:**

1. A child who has a fever of 100.4 or higher must stay home. Children are to stay home for 24 hours after they are free of fever, without the use of fever reducing medication.

2. A child with a green or yellow discharge from the nose, an infectious rash on the skin, and/or an eye discharge will be assessed on an individual basis to determine whether or not they may attend school. At times children will not be allowed to return to school without a doctor's written authorization. In addition, children who are recovering from an infectious rash (hand/foot/mouth, chicken pox, etc.) will need to be cleared by the school health office before returning to class.
3. If a child is diagnosed as having strep throat, he/she must be kept out of school for 24 hours from time an antibiotic is given and fever subsides.
4. When a child has croup, (a cold of the vocal cords which produces a barking cough), the child must be kept at home.
5. If a child is vomiting or has diarrhea, the child should be kept home until they are free of symptoms for 24 hours.
6. Children will also be excluded from school if they have a condition that prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities, results in a need for care greater than staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children, or poses a risk of spread of harmful disease to others.
7. Any child known or suspected to have a contagious ailment must be kept at home, and will be readmitted to class only with a written authorization from their pediatrician and sometimes at the discretion of the school health office.

The AYA Early Childhood Program follows these practices in the event of a child becoming ill while at school:

- If an illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities or creates a greater need for care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children, or if a child's condition is suspected to be contagious and requires exclusion as identified by the school health guidelines listed above or by public health authorities, the child is made comfortable in a location where they are supervised by a familiar caregiver and is located where new individuals cannot be exposed.
- The program immediately notifies the parent, legal guardian, or other person authorized by the parent when a child has any sign or symptom that requires exclusion from the school and the child will need to be picked up from school.

Staff and teachers provide information to families verbally and in writing about any unusual level or type of communicable disease to which their child was exposed, signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures that are being implemented at the program and that families should implement at home.

## **PREPARING FOR AND RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES**

We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment on the Schultz Rosenberg Campus and practicing for emergency situations is one of the ways that we do this. We have campus-wide fire drills (monthly), lockdown drills (quarterly) and weather drills (three/year in Spring).

Parents of children with allergies should provide shelf stable food to keep on hand in the unlikely event of a lockdown extending past the school day.

In the event of an emergency, parents will be notified of the situation using our emergency communication plan. You will receive communications via email, phone call, and text.

## FIRST AID, HEALTH CARE AND MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In case of emergency, parents will be notified immediately. It is the responsibility of each parent to leave their current business and personal phone numbers with the school office to enable us to contact you at once if necessary. Should we be unable to reach a parent, it is our policy to take the child to the nearest hospital or the hospital designated by the parents/guardian on the child's Emergency Form when

indicated, and/or contact the child's personal physician whenever possible. Only superficial wounds may be treated by school personnel. When parents cannot be reached during a medical emergency, we will call the emergency contacts listed on the child's Emergency Form.

The school insurance policy prohibits the faculty or office staff from administering any oral medication to a student, including acetaminophen (Tylenol), unless the Tylenol is supplied by the parent with a note instructing when to administer. The school is not permitted by the State of Texas to administer Tylenol or aspirin. **If your child must take medication (prescription or over-the-counter) during school hours, the medication must be brought to the school clinic in its original container with a signed note stating at what time(s) and in what dosage the medication is to be given, as well as a filled out Medication Form.** Written instructions from the licensed health provider who has prescribed the recommended medication for that child must be kept on file in the office; alternatively, the licensed health provider's office may give instructions by telephone to the program staff.

All medications, over the counter or prescription, must be labeled with your child's first and last name. Prescription medications must also include the date that either the prescription was filled or when the recommendation was obtained from your child's licensed health care provider, the expiration date of the medication or the period of use of the medication, the manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of the medication, and the instructions on how to administer and store it.

Medications should be taken to the school health office where you will need to complete permission forms. The school health office will store all medications in the clinic and administer them. Some medications may need to be kept in the classroom, such as, an epinephrine auto-injectors for a child with severe allergies or an inhaler for a child with asthma. This will be decided as per the child's Individualized Health Care Plan.

In addition, parents of any children in our care who have special management procedures ordered by a physician should meet with the school health office to discuss the procedures necessary to meet their needs. In addition, all teachers are trained in the use of an epi-pen and will also be trained to handle certain special management procedures for students in their class when ordered by a physician.

This will help us ensure that while students with specific medical needs are present, there is always someone on campus trained to meet their needs. In some circumstances, the school administration will need to determine whether or not we can meet a child's medical needs while at school.

## ALLERGIES

***“Yafa Torah Im Derech Eretz”*—Study and learning are enhanced by sensitivity and respect toward others.**

To best meet the needs of children with life-threatening allergies, the school and families must work together to help ensure a safe and inclusive educational environment. The school will be responsible for and help ensure that all faculty and staff are trained to understand how to recognize the signs and symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction, as well as how to respond when a child or adult is having a reaction. At times, the school may need to limit the use of certain food items in the classroom when a

life-threatening allergy for any child is present. All parents and teachers are expected to comply with any decisions made to help ensure the safety of a child with a life-threatening allergy.

Parents of children with seasonal, food, or other life-threatening allergies, must notify the school health office, the early childhood director & assistant director, and the child's teachers, in writing, of their children's allergies before the child begins any on-campus activities. Children with allergies must have a written Allergy Action Plan (AAP), signed by a physician, in place before the start of the school year. The AAP must include the details of the child's allergies, previous signs of a reaction if it has occurred (knowing that this will not necessarily be present during a future reaction), and action to be taken, and must be shared with the school health office, early childhood director, and all teachers responsible.

Parents will need to provide epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPen, Auvi-Q, Adrenaclick, or their generic counterparts) for their children's classrooms when necessary, and it is the responsibility of the parent to make sure epinephrine auto-injectors are current and not expired. Parents may also need to keep a "safebox" in their child's classroom. The safebox should contain safe non-perishable snacks for their children to use when necessary. It is the responsibility of the parent to make sure that the school health office, early childhood director, and teachers are aware of any changes to the child's allergy profile, and the AAP must be updated and reviewed at least annually. All children with allergies will have their photo, allergies, and AAP [LR1] posted in all essential classrooms and shared spaces in the school building. Also, a list of all children and their allergies will be available in every classroom in which an allergic child might be. This list will also be available in the ECP kitchen common area.

Parents of children with allergies are encouraged to work with their children's teachers to help plan for safe activities, if any involve food. Parents will be notified of any activity that involves food at least one week before the activity takes place; when possible, the child's allergen will not be used.

Families who do not have allergies in their families are expected to be supportive of this policy as a reflection of "*Yafa Torah Im Derech Eretz.*"

## **ECO-HEALTHY PRACTICES**

We work hard to ensure that we maintain the healthiest environment possible for your children. As recommended by the Children's Environmental Health Network, some of the eco-healthy precautions we take include:

- We use non-toxic techniques inside and outside of the facility to prevent and control pests.
- We thoroughly wash all fruits and vegetables to avoid possible exposure to pesticides, and we take the opportunity to educate children about the importance of doing so.
- We prohibit smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes or "vaping", anywhere on the premises or in sight of children.
- We use EPA certified, least-toxic, green cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting products. When sanitizers and disinfectants are required, they are used only for their intended purpose and in strict accordance with all label instructions.
- We screen our toys for lead by searching [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).
- To avoid possible exposure to flame retardants, we ensure furniture is in good condition without foam or inside stuffing exposed. Stuffed animals, carpet padding, nap mats, pillows, and other foam items are also intact.
- We use only non-toxic art supplies.
- For more information on how you can keep your home environment as eco-healthy as possible, visit [www.cehn.org](http://www.cehn.org)

## **HEAD LICE**

Lice infestation may occur in any age category but is more frequent among younger school children. Though not a disease, students identified as having head lice are excluded from school until they are “re- screened” and determined to be “nit-free.” It is recommended that parents discuss this with their children.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS WHO HAVE CHILDREN IN DIAPERS**

We make every effort throughout the day to ensure that children who wear diapers are kept clean and dry. As such, we expect that children will come to school wearing a clean and dry diaper. We understand that children may soil their diapers while en route to school. If this should happen, we ask parents to change their children before leaving them in our care. Parents may have access to all diapering supplies in the classroom.

In addition, we expect parents to keep their children’s diaper supply stocked in the classroom. Parents who receive a request from a teacher to replenish their children’s diaper supply should do so immediately and by the very next day of school.

## ***EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM***

The Akiba Yavneh Academy early childhood curriculum is based on the belief that all children are born with great potential and resources within, and they begin constructing their own knowledge through engaging with the world around them. Our constructivist theory recognizes that culture plays an important role in what children learn, how they think, and what they believe. In this process of development, children create their own theories, strategies, and hypotheses as they make sense of their lives in relation to others. By utilizing their unique qualities and creativity, all children are valued as contributing members of the classroom community, each individual offering to the group as a whole.

The curriculum used at AYA is emergent and contextual, building on the interests of the children and incorporating Torah and Israel into their everyday lives. The curriculum consists of several components, integrating the key content and developmental areas, which include: social-emotional, spiritual, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, math, science, technology, social studies, creative expression, and health and safety (see developmental continuum on how children learn and develop at back of handbook). The four components of this curriculum are:

(1) Project Work – projects are in-depth studies of concepts, ideas, and interests which either arise within the group or those which the educators recognize might engage the children. During project work, while the children work in small groups and whole groups to investigate topics, the teachers learn alongside the children as researchers and listeners of the children and their work. Projects:

- can emerge from children's ideas and/or interests
- can be provoked by teachers
- can be introduced by teachers knowing what is of interest to children: shadows, puddles, tall buildings, construction sites, nature, etc.
- should be long enough to develop over time, to discuss new ideas, to negotiate over, to induce conflicts, to revisit, to see progress, to see movement of ideas
- should be concrete, personal from real experiences, important to children, should be "large" enough for diversity of ideas and rich in interpretive/representational expression

(2) Torah True Environment– Educators teach the children about the various brachot to say before and after eating, they learn Parsha and Torah values and concepts with the children, and they daven tefillah with the children every day, building each year on the brachot that were learned the previous year.

(3) Materials, Methods, and Expression - Children have the right to investigate, to try things out, and to make mistakes and correct mistakes. The educators set up the environment in a way that

offers the children many different types of experiences and many different materials with which they can interact. Children are given the freedom to choose where to invest their curiosity and by offering the children such a variety of materials to work with, the children begin to represent their theories using different media. The more they interact with various types of materials, the better they come to know and understand each type of media, enriching and refining them and allowing the children to express themselves through action, emotion, symbolic representation, and a hundred different languages with which they explain themselves and their world.

Teachers facilitate the use of new materials by:

- Allowing the children to explore first.
- What is this material?
- What does it do?
- And then, what can I do with it?
- Providing variation in color, texture, pattern: help children "see" the colors, tones, hues; help children "feel" the texture, the similarities and differences.
- Presenting in an artistic manner. It should be aesthetically pleasing to look at, it should invite you to touch, admire, inspire.
- Revisiting throughout many projects to help children see the possibilities.

(4) Traditions and Celebrations – Holidays, Birthdays, life events, and other Jewish traditions are celebrated together as a community.

In order to design an emergent curriculum, Early Childhood Educators must listen deeply to what is taking place in the classroom, within and among the children. Educators observe children in action, document observations, and interpret data collected. Educators collaborate and participate in a process of reflective thinking and practice with their co-educators. During weekly meetings, the Early Childhood Educators bring artifacts of learning that they have collected in their classrooms, which may include: photography, video, transcribed conversations, anecdotal notes, and samples of children's work. They interpret this information collaboratively with other Early Childhood Educators. This collaboration and think-tank approach enables the educators to reflect on their work with one another, which offers the teachers multiple perspectives in analyzing the work, increasing the quality of teaching to both children and families.

Early Childhood Educators recognize the importance of making learning visible to the community to strengthen relationships and offer the opportunity for everyone to build knowledge about the journey of learning. In this way, AYA becomes a center of inquiry for children, parents and educators.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENTS**

Early childhood assessments are an integral part of the AYA ECP. Assessments are used to support children's learning and a variety of methods are used.

Prior to entering the classroom, all Early Childhood Educators participate in professional development opportunities throughout the year. In addition, AYA Early Childhood Teaching Teams meet regularly to interpret and use assessment results to align teaching to the interests and needs of the children.

The following is the written plan for assessments. This plan describes the assessment purposes, procedures, and uses of the results.

### **Assessment Purposes:**

The purpose of AYA's plan for early childhood assessment is to:

- Identify children's interests and needs
- Describe the developmental progress and learning of children
- Improve curriculum and adapt teaching practices and the environment to the needs

- of the individual children and the classroom as a whole
- Plan and implement long term project work
- Plan program improvement
- Communicate with families
- Arrange for developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment when indicated

**Informal Tools and/or Instruments for Assessment that May be Used:**

- iPad
- Anecdotal Notes
- Voice Recorders
- Digital Portfolios
- Parent Input

**Formal Tools and/or Instruments for Assessment that May be Used:**

- Developmental Assessment Forms
- Child and Family Profile Form (completed by family)
- Individually Administered Tests (when appropriate)

**Procedures For Using Assessment Tools And How The Results Are Used:**

- **Tablet** – Tablets are available in every classroom and are used by teachers daily. They are used to take pictures of observed moments, to document different types of interactions and experiences, to document progress of projects, to document emotions and reactions, to show children exploring environments, to document mastering of milestones, to use as visual cues for teachers to further record events in writing, and to use for the purpose of meeting time/planning time and discussion among teachers. They are also used to take video to track progress in a project and plan further project experiences, for teachers and children to develop project experiences, to record and document behaviors, and to help develop types of necessary interventions
- **Anecdotal Notes** – Teachers use anecdotal notes to record interactions between children, to record responses to instruction, to record conversations, to document conflict resolution, to document milestones, to record and follow children’s interests for planning purposes
- **Developmental Assessment Forms** – Teachers use this tool to gauge children’s developmental progress and plan curriculum according to each child’s developmental level and must be completed at least three times a year
- **Voice Recorders** – Teachers use voice recorders to record conversations and responses to questions, to help develop projects by gauging children’s interests
- **Digital Portfolios** – Samples of children’s work, photos and video of children’s experiences, and documentation of developmental progress are documented in individual digital portfolios for each child, to monitor progress and development over time
- **Parent Input** – At parent teacher conferences and throughout other communication opportunities throughout the year, parents offer their input and collaboratively set goals with their child’s teacher. Parents may also raise questions or concerns about how assessment methods will meet their child’s needs. This allows the teacher to gain full perspective of the child and to plan an environment for each individual child that reflects individual families’ cultures, traditions, and perspectives
- **Child and Family Profile Form** – This form is completed by each family before school starts and shared with the teacher at the Classroom Visit. It is a way for families to inform teachers about their family culture, experiences, children’s abilities and disabilities, and home language

**Conditions Under Which Children Will Be Assessed**

*In order to ensure every child’s comfort level, assessment is always conducted with familiar teachers and adults*

- In the classroom
- On the playground

- During free play
- In large groups
- In small groups
- Individually
- In Specialties (Music, P.E., Art, Library)

### **Communicating Assessment Results To Parents**

- **Informally** – Telephone conversations, meetings with parents, notes home, e-mail
- **Formally** – Parent/Teacher Conferences (Fall and Spring), digital portfolios (Fall and Spring)

### **Types of developmental screenings offered at AYA:**

*(Results of these screenings will be mailed to the child's parents)*

- **Developmental Screening** – All children are screened within the first three months of entering the program using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. The Questionnaire will be sent home for parents to complete and return to the school to be scored. Results from the screening will be used to determine if further evaluation or an individualized learning plan is necessary.
- **Vision Screening** – All children ages four-years-old and up will have their vision screened within the first three months of school (conducted by ophthalmologists on campus with classroom teachers present)
- **Hearing Screening** – All children ages four-years-old and up will have their hearing screened within the first three months of school (conducted by school health office with classroom teachers present)
- **Speech Screening** – Parents will have the opportunity to choose to have their children's speech screened by a speech therapist in the Fall and Spring. Teachers will make recommendations when necessary (conducted by outsourced speech therapists with teachers present when necessary)

When necessary, for additional referral, a meeting will be scheduled with the child's parents, teachers, educational administrator(s), and school counselors (as needed) to develop an individualized assessment plan. This plan may include the recommendation of norm-referenced and standardized tests (when seeking information on eligibility for special services), which parents may obtain outside of AYA. AYA will provide references for professionals who perform these services. All information obtained from all assessments, such as observation, checklists, rating scales, work samplings, and norm-referenced and standardized tests will be combined to develop a plan that will meet the child's individual needs in the classroom.

Information about each child is confidential and will only be shared with the child's parents, teachers, educational administrators, and school counselors (when necessary). Information about a child can only be shared with others (personal occupational therapists, speech therapists, etc.) with written and signed parental permission.

All children's records are kept in locked file cabinets in the administrative offices and access is only permitted to appropriate personnel, which includes: teachers and administrators during hours of operation for use in an emergency, parents during a parent conference with a teacher or the early childhood director, and Child Care Licensing upon request during hours of operation.

### **ADULT-CHILD INTERACTIONS**

To facilitate adult-child interaction and constructive activity among children, AYA is committed to the following teacher-child ratios based on standards published by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

- Nevatim (infants) – 1:4
- Teenoki (younger toddlers) – 1:5
- K'Ton Ton (older toddlers) – 1:7
- Nitzanim (3 – 4 year olds) – 1:8

Chaverim (4 – 5 year olds) – 1:8

The above ratios will be maintained throughout all hours of operation, including indoor time, outdoor time, and field trips (parent chaperones are invited on field trips to provide for an even better ratio and more supervision). Groups of children may be limited to one age or may include multiple ages.

## **BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS**

**“Yafa Torah Im Derech Eretz”—Study and learning are enhanced by sensitivity and respect toward others.**

*AYA encourages its students to develop self-discipline based upon the guidelines of Jewish ethics and a positive self-image. Emphasis is upon “being a Mensch”—by displaying a refined, respectable character. AYA students are expected to abide by the:*

### **AYA Code of Citizenship:**

- Always strive to do your best
- Respect all adults
- Respect all peers, including those that are different
- Take responsibility for yourself and the AYA community
- Contribute to a positive learning environment
- Be inclusive in learning and play
- Respect school property and communal spaces
- Show gratitude

When children are successful they interact positively within a group, and social skills are one of the most important lessons to be learned. In order to support this growth we have established guidelines and policies for all children in the Early Childhood Program.

These routines and schedules have been established to enable all children to feel safe as they grow and explore their environment.

We have a low student-teacher ratio that creates high adult-child interaction. This reduces opportunities for inappropriate behavior and allows for a quick response to children’s needs.

## **DISCIPLINE**

The Akiba Yavneh Academy Discipline Policy complies with federal and state civil rights. The goal of our discipline policy is to limit expulsions and suspensions, and teach new skills by:

- Treating each child with dignity
- Setting clear, consistent, and fair limits
- Valuing mistakes as learning opportunities
- Redirecting children to more appropriate behavior and giving specific instructions
- Listening to children discuss their feelings and frustrations

- Guiding children to solve their own conflicts
- Patiently reminding children of rules and their rationale as needed
- Creating visual routines and/or social stories for behavioral expectations when needed

**Under no circumstances will there ever be any harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. Discipline should NEVER include any form of physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion. The following are examples of discipline and guidance practices that are strictly prohibited at Akiba Yavneh:**

***Examples of physical punishment:*** Shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time.

***Examples of psychological abuse:*** shaming, name-calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection.

***Examples of coercion:*** Rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up).

**Appropriate discipline techniques include:**

- Encouraging positive learning and growth to take place.
- Establishing peace and order in the classroom.
- Encouraging the child to re-enter the classroom activity in a positive friendly manner.
- Setting good examples of adult behavior.
- Keeping the self-esteem of the child intact.

**Inappropriate behavior is defined as:**

- Any repeated act of aggression that puts another child or teacher at risk of being hurt, such as biting, scratching, hitting, pushing, or throwing toys.
- Any repeated behavior that requires an inordinate amount of time by the teacher away from the classroom routine and the other students, such as fighting, destruction of classroom property, and inability to follow classroom rules and routines.
- Sexual behavior or touching genitals in an inappropriate manner (such as in front of other children or with other children). Here is a link for more information at [StopItNow.org](http://StopItNow.org)

**When inappropriate behavior continues, the following successive steps will be taken as needed:**

1. Teachers and Directors will assess the function of the child's behavior, and will assess the school environment to make necessary modifications, which will include positive support strategies to support the child's needs. For example, an individualized plan will be created, visual routines and/or social stories will be implemented, classroom environment design will be assessed and modified (i.e. removing problem materials, rearranging classroom furniture, adjusting seat assignments in a circle-time). Concerns will be documented privately for each student.
2. Parents will be called to keep them informed of the child's situation. If inappropriate touching is involved, the parents will be informed immediately. In some cases, parents will be asked to come to campus for a meeting after a brief explanation.
3. When necessary, for the purposes of calming the child down, the Director or other responsible staff member (other than the classroom teacher) will take the child for a short five-minute walk or spend some time with the child outside the classroom. The child will be taken from the classroom in a discreet and sensitive manner.
4. Parents will be called in for a Parent-Teacher Conference. Options will be discussed as to

how parents and teachers can best work together to serve the child's needs. Parents will be asked to give written permission for the school counselor and/or the Early Childhood Intervention Specialist from Jewish Family Service to observe the child in the classroom. A meeting with the counselor, teachers, parents, and Director will follow and the individualized plan, which will include positive support strategies, will be reviewed and modified as needed. A prevention plan will be written up and shared with the family, counselor, teacher, and admin team. The headmaster will be consulted as needed.

\*Outside consultation will be considered on a case-by-case basis, parents will be informed.

5. The child will not be permitted to attend school for up to one week for acts of aggression that repeatedly put the teachers or other children in danger or require excessive time with another adult. This includes regularly hitting, kicking, pinching, scratching, drawing blood, throwing furniture, inappropriate touching, or excessive foul language. Excessive time with another adult is defined as regularly needing more than 5 or 10 minutes away from the class to calm down.

6. As a condition for continued enrollment, parents will be required to seek outside professional intervention to support their child's healthy development, which may include family counseling and or play therapy.

7. Parents will be asked to provide an aide for their child in the classroom.

8. Follow-up will occur with parents weekly for 2-3 weeks, then monthly once behavior decreases.

9. The Director and parents will discuss if the school is able to meet this child's needs within the classroom structure at Akiba Yavneh Academy.

*In the event that parents do not wish to follow the above steps or provide the support necessary to meet their child's needs, or the Director and parents decide together that an alternative school program is necessary, the school will offer assistance for accessing services and an alternative placement.*

## **INFANT AND TODDLER BITING POLICY**

Our program recognizes that biting is, unfortunately, not unexpected when infants and toddlers are in a group setting. We are always upset when children are bitten in our program, and we recognize how upsetting it is for parents. While we feel that biting is never the right thing for infants and toddlers to do, we know that they bite for a variety of reasons and most of these reasons are not related to behavior problems.

When a biting incident occurs, we put the children's safety and comfort first and the following steps are taken:

### **A. Care for child bitten**

- Help the child who was bitten feel better
- Appropriate first aid is applied
- Child's family contacted the same day
- Incident report sent home

### **B. Care for child biting**

- Help child who is biting learn replacement behaviors
- Teacher will contact child's family the same day of a biting incident
- Collaboration with family to reduce the behavior at school and at home
- Review our program and make necessary adjustments to limit biting behavior

1) When ongoing biting occurs, the teacher, Early Childhood Director, the parents, and school

counselor (when necessary), will develop a written plan with specific strategies, techniques, and timelines to work on the problem. The parents of the child who is biting may be required to provide additional teacher support in the classroom at their expense while working through the timeline.

## 2) ongoing biting

a) biting continues after incorporating several steps in response to the biting, and after working with the child's parents or

b) the biting reaches an intolerable level in any given period, the school may require the child to be taken home until that child can exhibit that they have advanced beyond the stage where the safety of other students is a substantial risk. This will be decided in collaboration between the Head of School and the Early Childhood Director.

*All names of children involved in biting incidents are kept confidential to avoid labeling and to allow our teachers to focus their time and energy on stopping the biting.*

## **BULLYING**

### **What is Bullying?**

The definition of bullying below is taken from [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) and [www.adl.org/combatbullying](http://www.adl.org/combatbullying).

*Bullying is a widespread and serious problem that can happen anywhere. It is not a phase children have to endure; it is not "just messing around"; and it is not a developmental stage. Bullying can cause serious and lasting harm.*

### **Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying involves:**

- **Imbalance of Power:** People who bully use their power to control or harm and the people being bullied may have a hard time defending themselves.
- **Intent to Cause Harm:** Actions done by accident are not bullying; the person bullying has a goal to cause harm, damage a student's property, or place a student in fear of harm to the student's person or property.
- **Repetition:** Incidents of bullying happen to the same person over and over by the same person or group.

### **Types of Bullying**

#### **Bullying can take many forms:**

- **Verbal or written:** name-calling, teasing
- **Social Aggression:** spreading rumors, leaving people out on purpose, breaking up friendships, creating an intimidating or threatening environment for one or more students
- **Physical:** hitting, punching, shoving
- **Cyberbullying:** using electronic communication to harass, threaten, intimidate or otherwise mistreat others. New to this generation, cyber bullying has become an easy and convenient means for some to bully and harass others, sometimes anonymously. Many students do not recognize that this can be the most far-reaching, long-lasting, insidious, and most damaging form of bullying. While most cyberbullying does not take place in school, there is still a significant impact to the school following such an incident. Thus, there will be consequences at school because of it.

## **What Bullying is Not:**

Students may demonstrate inappropriate behaviors to others from time to time, but these behaviors may not necessarily be considered bullying. The two critical aspects of the inappropriate behavior that have to be present to be considered bullying involve the imbalance of power and the repetition of the behavior.

## **No Excuses:**

When the behavior is determined to be a form of bullying, students may try to downplay their bullying behavior by characterizing the harm inflicted as, “it was just a joke” or “I was just kidding” or “we are friends; he knows I was just kidding”. Bullying is harmful and destructive and unacceptable in any form.

At AYA we are committed to ensuring the physical and emotional safety of each and every child. One child being bullied is one too many. Our process for dealing with bullying issues is as follows:

## **Reporting Bullying:**

Any parent who is concerned that their child is being bullied should contact the child’s teacher, one of the counselors, or an administrator. The earlier the school finds out about the situation, the better chance that an early intervention will be able to resolve the situation. A child who feels bullied should speak to one of the teachers, to one of the school counselors, or to an administrator. Part of resolving a bullying issue is teaching our students the skills to take the initiative to report and/or discuss these kinds of issues, rather than be reduced to a victim or a bystander. Whenever a potential bullying incident is reported, the administration will be made aware of it.

## **No Retaliation:**

Retaliation towards anyone who reports bullying will not be tolerated.

## **Interventions for Bullying:**

The first action at the school is taken by our school counselors who are involved in preventative steps and programming within the classroom and campus environment.

The teachers, counselors and administrators, in consultation with the parents of the victim and perpetrator(s), will collaborate to ensure the accuracy of the information regarding the alleged bullying incident. Once it has been established that a bullying incident has taken place, the school will take the following actions:

The administrators and counselors will collaborate to determine appropriate guidance for all parties (both victims and perpetrators) in an effort to resolve the issue.

Appropriate guidance *may* include:

- Counseling
- Individual behavior plans
- Removal from extra-curricular activities, including sports
- Temporary removal from the classroom
- Long-term removal from the classroom

Subsequent occurrences of the bullying behavior by the same perpetrator(s) will be dealt with on an individual basis and can include more severe consequences, including expulsion.

*With bullying, some situations are more complex than others. Some situations are not clear cut. The Head of School, director of the educational division, and school counselor will make decisions of what is in the best interest of the child and of the school at large.*

#### **Follow Up For The Victim And The School Community:**

- The school may recommend that the targeted student receive psychotherapy and/or psychiatric intervention.
- It may be necessary to discuss incidents of bullying with the classmates of the students involved and inform parents.

#### **COUNSELING SERVICES**

Counseling services are available to aid teachers and parents in developing strategies to benefit a child's development. These services include academic, personal guidance, and group counseling, as well as referral when necessary.

The counseling program is based on the principles of care, respect, responsibility, and confidentiality. Within this framework, the counseling staff works together with the teachers, administration, and parents in an effort to enable each child to derive full advantage from the school's program.

All involvement with our professional staff is done with the highest degree of confidentiality. Parental permission is obtained prior to the administration of special assessments deemed necessary by the professionals involved.

Through a partnership between Jewish Family Service and the pre-schools, day schools, and high schools that are served, our counselors work closely with school personnel and parents to assess student behavior and make recommendations for intervention. As part of the special needs initiative, our school counselors will work with teachers to determine the students' abilities and disabilities in relation to the curriculum.

The following services are provided to the school by our consultants:

- Assess the behavior of children who have been referred, by observing classrooms, recess, and lunch, and then making recommendations.
- Assist teachers, parents, and administrators with academic, behavioral, social/emotional, or family issues.
- Provide crisis intervention and limited individual counseling to students, 1-2 sessions.
- Provide group intervention when appropriate on topics such as peer relationships, problem solving, and conflict resolution.
- Offer consultation to parents.
- Provide Second Step or a similar program- which emphasizes feelings, problem solving, and anger management.

The purpose of the program is to be a resource for the school, the parents and caregivers, as well as the teachers and students at Akiba Yavneh Academy. When indicated, referrals will be made to community agencies, private mental health professionals, and/or Rabbis for additional assistance.

Faculty or parents may refer students to the counselor. All personal information about the students is kept in strictest confidence. Information regarding a student will only be released with written consent from the parent or caregiver.

#### **PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN**

All teachers are mandated reporters and are required to participate in annual training to learn about

how to prevent and respond to abuse and neglect of children. In addition, Akiba Yavneh Academy partners with Jewish Family Service to help raise teacher and parent awareness of prevention techniques for child abuse and neglect. A parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect should obtain assistance and intervention by contacting the child abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400. In addition, parents can obtain further support by contacting Jewish Family Service at 972-437-9950.

## **OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

Students participate in outdoor activities except on days that are extremely cold (below freezing) or when air quality or environmental safety conditions pose a health risk.

Proper clothing for outdoor activity, such as boots, mittens, scarves, and hats, will protect your child's health. Children must also come to school wearing clothing that is dry and layered for warmth in cold weather. An extra set of clothes must be sent to and kept at school at all times to use in case your child's clothes become wet or soiled. Extra clothes sent must reflect the current season and be the correct size.

Children have the opportunity to play in the shade when outdoors. During hot weather, sunscreen should be applied to children before coming to school and when public health authorities recommend, parents should apply insect repellent to children before coming to school to prevent insect-borne disease. Teachers will reapply sunscreen when necessary to children older than 6 months, but only with signed permission by the parents. In addition, when public authorities recommend use of insect repellents due to high risk of insect-borne disease, teachers may apply insect repellent (only those not containing DEET are used) to children older than 2 months and only with written permission by parents.

During smog or other air pollution alerts, children will remain indoors until the alert has been lifted.

For safety reasons, students are not allowed to bring hard balls or bats, or pointed objects such as toy swords to school.

## **DRESS FOR THE PRESCHOOL CHILD**

- Early Childhood students use paint, sand, and chalk, and they play on the floor. Children should wear clothing that is comfortable for them and that they will not worry about dirtying.
- Children should wear sneakers or shoes that are not open-toed or slick.
- Appropriate outerwear should be provided for outdoor activities on cold days.
- Children also play in mud and water at school. You are encouraged to send a set of mud shoes (i.e. rain boots, water shoes, crocs), extra pants/shorts, and a sweatshirt for your child if you are concerned about them getting dirty when they play in the mud. Teachers may also ask you to send in extra sets of clothes if the children will be playing in water.
- Nitzanim and Chaverim children who wear skirts/dresses should also wear shorts or leggings underneath.
- All items of clothing should be easily identifiable with the child's name clearly written.
- A complete change of clothing should be sent to the school to be kept in the child's classroom. The change of clothing should keep pace with the season and the child's correct size.

## SUPPLIES

Akiba Yavneh Academy provides basic school supplies to all students at the start of the school year. You will be notified of any specific supplies to provide from home and may be asked to replenish supplies during the year.

## NAP TIME

All children who sleep at school (Nevatim – Chaverim) will need to bring bedding to cover their cot or their crib. Bedding will be sent home at the end of each week to be washed and should be returned to school the first day of each week of school.

For children in Teenoki – Chaverim, in order to help your children's cubbies stay organized and to help foster their independence during naptime, we ask that you provide an "All-in-One" nap mat that either rolls up easily and velcros together or fits easily in its own carry bag. The children will be helping to take out and put away their nap mats each day, so we want to make sure that they are very simple to roll up and use.

Younger teenoki toddlers will be sleeping in Pack and Plays. Older teenoki toddlers will be sleeping on a cot.

Nevatim children take their naps in cribs. Nevatim children nap as needed, Teenoki and K'Ton Ton children nap from 12:45 – 3:00, and Nitzanim and Chaverim children nap from 12:30 - 1:30 daily.

If your child uses a pacifier at school, you will need to send it in with your child daily. Pacifiers will be sent home every day so they can be cleaned and sanitized and should be returned to school the following day.

*For Nevatim Only:* Unless otherwise ordered by a physician, infants will be placed on their backs to sleep (a physician's note will be required for alternative sleep positions). Pillows, quilts, comforters, soft or loose bedding such as blankets, sleep positioning devices, sheepskins, stuffed toys, bumper pads, and other soft items will not be allowed in cribs or rest equipment for infants younger than 12 months old. As loose blankets should not be used for infants younger than 12 months old, approved infant clothing sacks or other clothing designed for sleep may be used as an alternative to blankets and should be lightweight to avoid overheating. In addition, we are unable to swaddle the infants nor use swaddling blankets with the infants.

## LUNCHESES, SNACKS, AND NUTRITION

Our Day School, as most others, has a student body whose families do not all follow identical standards of religious practice. Our school, however, does maintain fixed standards of observance. Lunches sent to school must be either pareve or dairy, no meat. **In-school lunches, snacks and treats, as well as all food served at parties, both in and out of school, must be in accord with these kashrut guidelines.**

The following is a partial list of some reliable certifications found locally. The list is not exhaustive and is subject to change at any time.



Good nutrition is basic for a child's good health and learning. Following are links to the infant and child meal patterns recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These meal patterns are also posted on the Parent Information Board in the Early Childhood Building.

If your child's lunch requires refrigeration, then you must send your child's lunch in an insulated bag with a frozen gel pack or juice box, or you may pack your child's lunch in a cooler with ice or other cold source. There is no refrigerator available at school to keep your child's lunch cold. The following foods must be kept cold and must be sent to school using one of the cooling sources stated above: fish, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, fresh fruits or vegetables, or opened cans of fruit or pudding. In addition, your child's lunch bag and all foods in containers and beverages brought from home must be labeled with your child's name and the date.

## LUNCHES AND SNACKS

- 1) Lunch is the only meal served to the children at AYA. There is also one snack served in the morning and one snack served in the afternoon.
- 2) All snacks and lunches brought to AYA must be kosher. No meat lunches should be sent with a child. The only meat that is allowed on campus is served by the caterer or served at special school related events.
- 3) In order to ensure safety for children with food allergies or sensitivities, as well as to respect each family's dietary observances, students will not be permitted to share lunches at school.
- 4) We provide snacks to the children daily (Teenoki – Chaverim). At AYA we have committed to serving the children only the healthiest foods. Children will always be served milk (cow's milk; soy or rice milk will be provided when necessary) and fruits and vegetables. Snacks may include the following: oranges, apples, grapes, cantaloupe, watermelon, bananas, strawberries, and pears. Fruits and vegetables must be thoroughly washed before serving and eating. Cereal may be supplemented at times. Challah and grape juice will be served for snack on Fridays in celebration of Shabbat.
- 5) Teachers' and children's hands will be washed before and after any snacks or meals.
- 6) Whether provided by the school or brought from home, foods should be cut into pieces no larger than ¼-inch square for infants.
- 7) The following foods will never be offered to children younger than four years (whether provided by the school or sent from home): hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds, it can be served if sliced long-ways); whole grapes, chunks of raw carrots, nuts; popcorn; raw peas and hard pretzels.
- 8) The program does not feed cow's milk to infants younger than 12 months, and it serves only whole milk to children of ages 12 to 24 months. Milk alternatives are made available to children who are allergic to cow's milk or have other dietary restrictions.
- 9) *For Nevatim Only* – Parents of infants must provide snacks, lunch, and either formula or breast milk. All items must be labeled with the child's full name and the date. (Only dairy or pareve items are permitted; no meat.) A refrigerator is available in the infant room for storing formula, breast milk, and food. Staff will warm bottles in water (not boiling) to no more than 120°F for up to five minutes.

Nevatim staff will partner with families to ensure that feeding aligns with each infant's nutritional needs and developmental stage. Parents must sign off on feeding instructions. Bottles will not include solids unless required by a healthcare provider with written documentation. Infants may drink from the same bottle over the course of an hour with breaks, but any unfinished formula or milk must be discarded after one hour (whether used or not and if unrefrigerated). Staff will record start times to ensure bottles are used safely.

- 10) Teachers cannot heat up any of the children's lunches, bottles, drinks, or snacks in the microwave.
- 11) Birthday cakes will be baked in school to celebrate a child's birthday. When there is a child in the class who is allergic, an alternative treat will be made for birthdays in that class.

As a Modern Orthodox Jewish day school, we require that all food served at birthday parties be kosher. This ensures alignment with our school's values and inclusivity for all students.

As the school does not provide cups, plates, or utensils for lunches, students are expected to bring these items from home. The school does not maintain cooking or heating facilities for student use.

**Forgotten Lunches:** Parents are encouraged to check that their child takes their lunch bag daily. If your child forgets their lunch, please bring it to the Office. Please note that the emergency lunch or snack the school may provide may not meet your child's expectations or needs.

## **TZEDAKAH**

*Tzedakah* is collected at *tefillah* daily. Students are encouraged to develop the habit of fulfilling this mitzvah as often as possible. Your child's teachers will request coins be sent to the classroom for the children to participate in tzedakah.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

All clothing and personal belongings should be clearly labeled with your child's first and last name. Apparel carelessly left in classrooms or washrooms will be retained in the 'lost and found' for a limited time before being donated to charity. Large quantities of fine clothing and belongings are disposed of each year as a result of the inability to identify them.