



Gan Avraham Preschool

PARENT HANDBOOK

GAN AVRAHAM PRESCHOOL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OUR GAN PHILOSOPHY

Page 3

SCHOOL DAYS – THE ESSENTIALS

Pages 4-6

Arrival and Departure

The Preschool Day/Extended Day Programs

Summer Sessions

Calendar and Holidays

SCHOOL DAYS – THE EXTRAS

Pages 7-8

Snacks and Lunch

Kashrut

Birthdays

Field Trips

Clothing

Toys from Home

CREATING A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

Pages 9-10

Separation

Parent Conferences and Communication

Parent Involvement

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Pages 11-13

Health and Safety

Admissions

Discipline

Financial Arrangements

OUR GAN PHILOSOPHY

Gan Avraham, the preschool program at Temple Beth Abraham in Oakland, California, was founded in 1979. Over the years, we have worked diligently to create a program where the Jewish curriculum is built around the interests of the child. Our play-based program is one that, at its core, believes in the competency of the child. We believe that children have an inherent drive to be kind and respected members of our community. We believe that children love to learn in a variety of ways. We believe that they possess a hunger for strong, supportive relationships. Our job as Jewish early childhood educators are to help children increase their skills in all areas of development, provide positive experiences with various materials, and build a deep bond with each person that is a part of our program. We encourage our educators to engage in their own learning so that our teaching contains practices that are current with the trends in early childhood education. Below, please find descriptions of our core values.

Our Core Values

We have four main Jewish values that we rely on at the Gan to help us maintain a warm, nurturing, and successful program.

- *Kehillah* (pronounced “keh-HE-lah”), *Community*: As Rabbi Hillel once said, “Do not separate yourself from the community” (Pirkei Avot 2:5). At the Gan, teachers work to build relationships with parents so that they have a comprehensive understanding of the child. We achieve this by providing engaging experiences for families both in and out of the classroom.
- *B'tzelem Elohim* (pronounced “beh-TSELL-em eh-low-HEEM”), *Created in the image of God*: Every member of every family that walks through our gate has their own set of interests, opinions, and strengths. We believe in honoring those traits and celebrating our holy uniqueness. As we get to know the individuals in our community, we provide materials and emergent activities that inspire awe and wonder.
- *Kavod* (pronounced “kah-VOH-d”), *Deep Honor/Respect*: We believe that in order for children to be academically ready, they also need to know how to be kind, tolerant, and capable of solving their own problems. We believe that children can learn to engage with peers and the environment in a kind and respectful way.
- *Shalom Kitah* (pronounced “sha-LOM key-TAH”), *Peaceful Classroom*: We believe in providing an environment that is stress free and one in which children can learn about regulating their own bodies. We strive to create a welcoming and supportive environment.

We welcome your family as a valued member of our community. All of us at Gan Avraham look forward to becoming your partner in nurturing and teaching your children.

SCHOOL DAYS – THE ESSENTIALS

Arrival and Departure

The school day begins at 9:00am and ends each day at various times depending on your child's schedule. Extended day programs are available in the morning from 8:00am-9:00am and in the afternoon schedules can go until 1pm, 3:30pm, 4:30pm or 6pm. We close at 4:30pm on Fridays.

We find it is much easier for a child to enter into the day if you arrive before 9:15am, so please try to arrive on time. You are always welcome to stay to help your child settle in and begin an activity. Once your child adjusts to our school routine, we hope that arrivals and greetings are swift and completed before 9:30am. As an extra safety precaution, we lock all outside classroom doors at 9:30am.

It is important that you arrive on time to pick up your child. Prompt pick-ups help facilitate transitions and create a sense of comfort and security for children. If you know that you will be delayed, please notify the school so we can reassure your child. **A \$5.00 late fee will be charged for each 5-minute period.** Please remember that you are responsible for your child when you are on site. DO NOT allow your child to exit the school through the gates without an adult present. When picking up, please make sure to promptly sign your child out and exit the classroom, as teachers need to move on to assigned tasks or further activities with the remaining children after that pick-up time.

Our state licensing agency stipulates that all children must be signed in and out of the classroom each day that they attend school. We have a digital sign in & out via the Brightwheel app. Parents or authorized adults must check the child out using their PIN and digital signature. Failure to do so may result in a citation for the school. Children under 18 are not permitted to sign in and out.

We will not release a child to a person not authorized by a parent to pick up the child. A person may be authorized on your Identification and Emergency Information form or in writing. In addition, you may add adults to your child's Brightwheel account. We will ask an unfamiliar authorized adult for photo identification before releasing a child.

The Preschool Day/Extended Day Programs

Morning Program 9:00am-1:00pm

All three classes meet five days a week, Monday-Friday. Kitah Alef children may enroll three, four or five days a week. Kitah Bet & Kitah Gimmel children enroll four or five days a week. Teachers greet and welcome each child to begin the day. During the morning, the children participate in a variety of individual, small group, and whole group activities both inside and outside the classrooms. The classrooms and outdoor yard are set up with age-appropriate interest areas and activities that include art, bayit (house) area, cooking, literacy, dramatic play, block play, active play, tactile experiences, science, and puzzles. Each week the children participate in a music program with our music specialist. Our play-based developmental curriculum actively engages the children and promotes development in all areas.

Jewish curriculum is an integral part of our program. We say blessings before we eat, and we say the Shema every day. We integrate Jewish values, traditions, stories, songs, and Hebrew language into our everyday curriculum. Every Friday, we celebrate Shabbat in each classroom. If your child does not attend

school on Fridays, you are welcome to come with your child to join your class for Shabbat at the time they have determined. We also visit the chapel together for a short Torah service and story from the Rabbi on alternate Friday mornings. We celebrate the Jewish holidays both in and out of the classroom. In the classroom, we focus on traditions, rituals, stories, songs, and food to engage children and deepen their understanding of the Jewish holiday. Outside of the classroom, we provide opportunities for families to gather with the Gan Avraham and greater Temple Beth Abraham community.

We celebrate all holidays with the goal of building a rich sense of Jewish identity and community.

Afternoon Program

Upon enrolling, families choose if they would like their child to stay for nap (beginning at 1:00pm) and into the afternoon. Parents may pick up their child at 3:30 pm or 4:30 pm, or if they are signed up until 6pm, they may be picked up anytime between 3:30-6. Any schedule changes must be requested in writing 30 days in advance. Drop-in is available if there is space in the program. Please consult the director about the availability of drop-in space. Drop-in is charged at a slightly higher rate than reserved space. See the current Gan Avraham fee schedule for exact rates for all programs.

Early Morning 8:00am-9:00am

Families may enroll for an 8:00am or 8:30am schedule. Please do not enter the classroom before 8:00am. One classroom teacher will greet you and your child. Children are welcome to bring their breakfast, to participate in quiet activities or to be a special helper during the early morning.

Afternoon 1:00pm-3:30pm

The early afternoon program begins with a quiet restful time for children. Each child has a rest mat. Please send a crib sheet and a small blanket or a nap roll in a cloth bag for your child. These items will be sent home to be laundered and returned clean on a regular basis. You are welcome to provide other small comfort items (pillow, stuffed animal, pacifier) that will help your child relax. **PLEASE LABEL ALL ITEMS.** Children may have back rubs and listen to appropriate quiet music during this time. Activities for children who do not fall asleep will take place in another classroom at 2pm. A snack is provided at 3pm.

Late Afternoon 3:30pm-6:00pm (4:30pm on Fridays)

All children join together in one mixed age group for the late afternoon program. The late afternoon program begins outside, and the curriculum includes a choice of activities similar to the morning program. Children whose day ends at 4:30pm will be picked up from the park. After the 4:30 transition back into the classroom, children are offered the opportunity to snack on what is left in their lunch boxes.

Summer Sessions

Gan Avraham offers a summer program (GASP) that includes separate sessions of specific length determined by the director and Gan Avraham School's Committee. All sessions are separately enrolled. Summer enrollment begins in the early spring. Summer fees are set at the new rates for the subsequent school year approved by the Congregation of Temple Beth Abraham in the late spring. The teaching staff for our summer program is determined after enrollment is finalized.

Enrollment priority is given to current Kitah Alef and Bet children. Kitah Bet and Gimmel newcomers may be enrolled based upon available space.

Calendar and Holidays (PLEASE REFER TO THE YEARLY SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL CALENDAR FOR SPECIFIC DATES)

School begins towards the beginning of August. Our last day is a Friday in early June.

We are closed on the following Jewish holidays **when they occur on a school day**:

Rosh Hashanah – two days

Yom Kippur

Sukkot – first two days

Shemini Atzeret

Simchat Torah

Pesach/Spring Break – 1+ week

Shavuot – two days

Tisha B'av – one day during GASP

We are closed on the additional following days:

Labor Day – one day

Thanksgiving – three days

Winter Break – 2 weeks at the end of December/beginning of January

MLK Day

Presidents' Day

Memorial Day

Juneteenth – one day during GASP

Independence Day – one day during GASP

We are closed for two or more days in June, before GASP commences to set up the program.

We are closed for one week before the school year begins for planning and preparation.

We are closed for three teacher professional development days.

We are closed for one day in November and one day in the spring for Parent/Teacher Conferences.

SCHOOL DAYS – THE EXTRAS

Snacks and Lunch

We provide a nutritious midmorning and an afternoon snack for the children. **We do not serve ANY nut products.** Commonly offered snacks include a combination of organic fruits and vegetables, cheese, hummus, cream cheese, sunflower butter, crackers, pretzels, pita and cereal. Sometimes the children themselves are the cooks and prepare snack as a morning activity.

The children eat lunch with their classmates and teachers at school. Children bring their own lunch, including a beverage and appropriate utensils, to school. We encourage you to pack nutritious lunches that are ready to eat. **DO NOT PACK ANY NUT PRODUCTS.** Children will make their own choices about what they eat or do not eat for lunch. We model healthy eating, but do not monitor what foods children eat first or save for dessert. Please do not send candy and soda to school. We will try to send home uneaten food so you can get a sense of what and how much your child is choosing to eat. We strongly encourage the use of reusable containers for waste free lunches. Please label all containers including the tops with your family name.

Kashrut

We observe the kashrut policies of Temple Beth Abraham at Gan Avraham. All snacks are kosher. Please respect this policy by following our guidelines. Send non-meat lunches to school. Fish that follow kashrut rules (with scales and fins) are okay to send.

Birthdays

Birthdays are important occasions, and we enjoy celebrating them at Gan Avraham. Each class has its own special birthday tradition. Parents are welcome to bring a special snack (NO NUTS) for birthdays. Please plan the details for your child's classroom birthday celebration well in advance with the teachers.

Some families choose to honor their child's birthday by donating a book to the Gan Avraham Library. Please ask your child's teachers for specific recommendations. Books will be commemorated with a special stamp and notation in the book to honor the event.

We ask that you not distribute party invitations at school. There is too much confusion and unreliability in school distribution even if the entire class is invited. In keeping with the tenets of Conservative Judaism and in consideration of some families, **we request that you not schedule parties on Shabbat and Jewish holidays.**

Field Trips

Children may go on walking field trips in the neighborhood as part of our program. Parents complete a general Field Trip Permission Form allowing their child to participate in field trips, but we will always let you know in advance with specific information about a planned trip.

Clothing

Children should come to school in comfortable, washable clothing appropriate for the weather and active, messy play. Please provide your child with appropriate outerwear since we spend part of each day outside. To ensure their safety, children should wear sturdy, rubber-soled, closed toe shoes. We discourage wearing party shoes and sandals. Flip flops and clogs are not permitted.

Please keep at least two complete sets of extra clothing with an extra pair of shoes at school for your child. **Check your child's supply regularly for seasonably appropriate and correctly sized clothing, so that we may change wet clothes. Please label all clothing with your child's name.** A lost and found box is in the director's office.

If your child wears diapers, you will provide a supply of disposable diapers to be used at school. Please bring ten or more diapers at a time in a package labeled with your child's name. A teacher will let you know when it is time to replenish your supply. We provide unscented diaper wipes unless you prefer to provide a specific brand of wipes for your child.

Toys from Home

Children may bring comfort items to school. Special security items often help children adjust to a new situation. Except for those special items that are needed at the beginning of the school year to help ease the transition, we ask that Kitah Bet and Kitah Gimmel children leave their toys at home. Toys from home can create disputes among the children and get lost or broken causing some upset.

We encourage children to bring books to share with their class. Teachers sometimes ask children to bring in things from home to support curriculum. Appropriate rest-time items, such as stuffed animals, may be brought with nap things if your child stays after 1:00pm.

Weapons and war toys are not permitted at school.

Please label all items with your child's name.

CREATING A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

Faculty, families, and children are all part of our community at Gan Avraham. This trusting relationship is grounded in a shared interest in the growth and development of each child and is nurtured through active participation and open communication. The director and teachers are always eager to learn your thoughts regarding your child and our program. At Gan Avraham, we have a long history of fostering a vibrant and supportive community of families who will continue their relationships beyond their years at the Gan.

Separation

Separation anxiety is common among children entering preschool. Our teachers are experienced in making the transition to school easier for both parents and children. You are welcome to stay at school until you and the teachers feel that your child is comfortable, and it is time to separate. Teachers often ask children to bring a photo of their family to school to keep in their cubby. Sometimes bringing a special object from home helps a child during this initial transition time. Teachers and parents work together to do what is most appropriate and beneficial for each child.

Parent Conferences and Communications

We schedule two formal conferences for each child between parents and teachers during the school year. Parents or teachers may also request a conference regarding issues of concern at any time. The director is available to meet both formally and informally. Brief communications and check-ins between parents and teachers may take place daily at arrival and departure times. We are eager to share information about your child's day at school. It is important for you to let us know about changes in your child's life at home and to share any variation in your child's usual pick-up schedule with a teacher. However, please be aware that during school hours, the teachers' priority is the children. We will gladly schedule another time to discuss specific issues privately without interruptions.

There is a board in each classroom for teachers to share daily information. This is a great way for you to learn about the day's activities so you can have conversations at home about what your child did during the day at the Gan. There also may be special notices and sign-up sheets posted on the classroom doors. Each child has a mailbox or file in the classroom, so please check it regularly for artwork and information.

In addition, we also share most information through group email lists or on Brightwheel. We have a Gan Families email group for the whole school. The Gan Schools Committee sends news in a weekly email, and the director uses this group to communicate general school information. Each class also has a separate class email group for information sharing. Class newsletters are sent via Brightwheel to the class twice monthly. Parents also use the class groups to share information. All our families are included in the appropriate groups unless otherwise requested. Please inform the director of any email address changes. We look forward to continuing to build our special and vibrant community in the coming years. We are always here to listen, offer support and share information.

Parent Involvement

We begin the year with a New Parent Orientation the week before school starts. This is an opportunity to meet other parents, talk with the director and teachers, clarify information in the Parent Handbook, learn more about the school day and the many ways you can become involved at the Gan. We also have a Back to School Night in the early fall to further familiarize you with your child's school day activities and give you an idea of what you can expect of us and your child during the coming year. We sponsor many special events during the school year including an all-school Share-a-Shabbat and Pajama Havdallah evenings, holiday celebrations and a school picnic. Please check your Gan Avraham Instructional Calendar for the specific dates.

There are many ways for parents to be involved at Gan Avraham. Parent involvement is important as it helps strengthen our community and provides vital support to our many wonderful programs and traditions. We do hope you will choose to become an involved member of our community. **We ask that each family volunteer for at least 10 hours per year.** There are opportunities suitable for any schedule. Our Gan Avraham Schools Committee will solicit volunteers at the beginning of the school year.

The focus of the Gan Avraham Schools Committee is to assist the director in evaluating policies and procedures for the Gan and to serve as a sounding board about general Gan topics. It is composed of parent representatives from all three classes. The Committee meets once a month and consistent attendance is helpful to the productivity of the group. We appreciate any time and energy that parents can provide.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Health and Safety

Our goal is to promote good health at Gan Avraham. We want to keep all children and adults as healthy as possible throughout the year. If your child appears to have symptoms of illness or is unable to participate during the school day, we will contact you to pick up your child immediately. A sick child will be separated from the group until he or she is picked up. We ask that you keep children home if they cannot fully participate in our daily activities.

Please keep your child home if he or she:

- has an illness or symptoms that prevents him/her from participating comfortably in our school activities.
- has an illness that results in a need for greater care than the staff can provide without compromising the well-being of other children.
- has had a fever during the previous 24-hour period.
- has a heavy nasal discharge or constant cough until checked and cleared by a physician and a negative Covid-19 test.
- has had two or more episodes of diarrhea.
- has vomited in the previous 24 hours.
- has symptoms of a possibly communicable disease or head lice. NOTE: WE HAVE A NO NIT POLICY FOR HEAD LICE. Please refer to your physician to determine when the child can return to school. Please notify the school at once if your child does have a communicable disease.

Your child may come to school if he or she:

- is recovering from a cold (more than 2 days old) but still has residual symptoms (cough, minor nasal drip) with a negative Covid-19 test. (As long as they can comfortably participate in their full day)
- has an illness or communicable disease that is no longer contagious.
- has been fever free without medication for 24 hours.
- Diarrhea/vomiting symptom free without medication for 24 hours
- is well enough to play outside. We cannot keep a child indoors at outside time.

If it is necessary for a teacher to give your child any medication (prescription or over the counter, oral or topical), you must complete a Medication Record Form. Medication must be in the original container that includes the child's name, instructions for use and the expiration date. **Give the medication directly to a teacher. Please do not put medications in lunch boxes or cubbies.**

Please notify us regarding your child's special needs. These include allergies and visual, auditory or behavior challenges.

Covid-19 Specifics

Illness & Symptoms

- If a child has any symptoms, they must stay home for at least 24 hours to monitor & test negative before returning. Normal illness policy remains that the child must feel well enough to participate in the program. Fever free for 24 hours w/o medications. Vomit & diarrhea symptom free for 24 hrs w/o medication.

Covid Exposure

- A child exposed to Covid (anywhere) may come to school if they test negative every day before arriving at school until 5 days after last exposure.

Positive Case

- If there is a positive case exposure at school, all families will be alerted.
- A child who tests positive for Covid may return after 5-9 days if they test negative, or after 10 days with no test.

Masks

- Masks are optional.
- If you prefer your child to wear a mask indoors, let the teachers know and we will support them.
- If a child was exposed to Covid outside of Gan and is testing to stay, they must wear a mask for 10 days.
- For classroom exposure, the whole class masks for 10 days if they are testing to stay.

In case of accidental injury, we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent and administer first aid. At least one faculty member trained in Child CPR and Pediatric First Aid is on site at all times. If we cannot reach you, we will try another adult on your Emergency Information Form. If necessary, we will call the child's physician or 911. Please keep the school up to date with all current phone numbers and other pertinent information.

Admissions

Gan Avraham is open to children (of TBA member-eligible families) between the ages of two years and 5 years. Enrollment applications and information are available from the Gan Director.

Interested families complete the online enrollment application. Tours can be scheduled beginning in the Fall. Families are offered enrollment based on the priorities established by the Gan Avraham Enrollment Priority Policy.

The following forms must be completed and on file by the first day of school:

Signed Enrollment Agreement

Identification and Emergency Information (Lic 700)

Emergency Information and Release with Consent for Medical Treatment

Email Addresses and Phone Numbers

Health History (Lic 702)

Physician's Report with Immunization Record and TB Risk Screening (Lic 701)

Parents' Rights (Lic 995)

Personal Rights (Lic 613A)

Field Trip Permission

Media Release

Permission to Sunscreen

Discipline

Gan Avraham provides a quality environment with reasonable expectations for all children. We respect all children, and we want to help them feel good about themselves and build positive self-esteem. The faculty models appropriate behavior and provides positive guidance to the children. Specific classroom methods include encouraging appropriate behaviors, offering constructive alternatives, setting clear and consistent limits, planning ahead to prevent problems and applying natural or logical consequences.

Gan Avraham prohibits all violation of personal rights and methods of corporal punishment and punitive measures. Examples of unacceptable methods include, but are not limited to, spanking, hitting, shaking, shaming, humiliation, retaliation, threats, ridicule and interference with daily functions (eating, sleeping, and toileting).

Gan Avraham is committed to addressing behavioral and developmental issues as soon as they arise. When a child's behavior or development is of significant concern to a teacher, the teacher will notify the Director. When parents need to be involved, we will request a conference. We feel that open, but confidential communication between home and school is essential. Continued communication, outside professional observation, closer one-on-one supervision and a specific plan of action are some approaches that may be employed to find a successful solution.

We are committed to providing a safe environment for all children. However, if it is apparent that we are not able to provide an appropriate environment for an individual child or if in our judgment it is in the best interest of all children, Gan Avraham may require a family to find an alternative setting more suitable to the needs of their child. Examples of such circumstances may include a child being a danger to him or herself or others, or a child requiring special services that the Gan cannot reasonably provide. Gan Avraham reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of a child if other measures are not successful.

Financial Arrangements

Deposit

Families pay a nonrefundable deposit upon enrollment acceptance or continued enrollment confirmation. **All tuition deposits will roll over to the next school year until the student graduates, and then be applied to the May tuition in their last year. The deposit is forfeited if a family withdraws from the Gan.**

Fees

Morning session fees are set each spring for the following year and approved as part of the Temple Beth Abraham budget by the congregation. Fees are calculated annually and divided into ten equal payments (August - May). These fees, along with reserved extended day fees, late fees, and drop-in fees for the previous month, are billed monthly on the first of each month. Please see the current Gan Avraham Fees for exact rates for all programs. Dues to the Congregation must be current in order to keep your membership fee rate status.

A \$5.00 late pick-up fee will be charged for each 5 minute period beyond your contracted pick-up time.

Financial Aid

Our goal is to keep Gan Avraham affordable to a wide range of families in our community. We encourage any Temple Beth Abraham family who is in financial need to apply for a scholarship. Applications for financial aid are available from the Temple Beth Abraham Executive Director in the spring at the time of enrollment or continuing enrollment confirmation. All information is confidential. Applications will be reviewed and decisions for financial aid awards will be made by the Treasurer of the Congregation.

Schedule Changes

Please communicate to the Director, in writing, any changes in reserved extended day program schedules. This information must be received 30 days before the change takes place. You will be charged the new fee at the beginning of the next month.