



Early Childhood Center

Westchester Reform Temple



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What is the Early Childhood Center at Westchester Reform Temple?

Some say nursery school, some say pre-school,
but **WE SAY Early Childhood Center or ECC.**

Why? Because our ECC offers **morning school-year programs (toddlers through age five), extended-day options for our older students, as well as an end-of-year Mini Session and Summer Play Place camp.** Plus, the ECC is involved with a great deal more than just counting and ABCs.

We are **dedicated to guiding, supporting and enriching young children's lives** spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically, in addition to being highly family focused.

We say ECC because we're widely regarded as **a team of experienced and caring educators, specialists, dynamic clergy and a dedicated social worker** who strive to implement effective programs using developmentally appropriate best practices. We prepare our students for the demands of personal and academic success.

We say ECC because our **small class sizes and low child-to-teacher ratio** allow for individualized attention and the ability to be fully responsive to children's needs, strengths, interests and personalities.

We say ECC because with hands-on activities, theme-oriented units in social studies, science, math readiness, cooking, yoga, physical fitness and the enhancement of social skills, our **rich curriculum** always reflects continuity of content. It ensures meaningful growth and development at each age level.

We say ECC because through innovative programs for children, parents and caregivers, we encourage **a love of learning and Jewish family life** within our active, creative and nurturing environment.

We say ECC because most importantly, **we have fun!**

Guiding Principles of our ECC Curriculum

Programs at the ECC are created and implemented with an emphasis on the following developmental areas for all our children:

- **Intellectual or Cognitive** - The ability to think, reason and solve problems. Forming concepts, remembering ideas and recognizing objects.
- **Social** - How children interact with their peers and adults, share, negotiate, cooperate, follow rules/directions as well as adjust to schedules and routines.
- **Language** - The ability to listen, understand, speak and expand vocabulary, which eventually leads to reading and writing.
- **Physical and Gross Motor** - The way that children use their large and small muscles, including the ability to draw, write, feed and dress themselves.
- **Emotional** - Growth of self-esteem and the ability to express feelings openly.
- **Jewish Values** - The five pillars of the Westchester Reform Temple community: *Avodah* (Spirituality), *Chavurah* (Community), *Talmud Torah* (Learning), *Tikkun Olam* (Repairing the World) and *Clal Yisrael* (The Jewish People).



ECC Offerings

Offerings include morning school-year programs for children, toddlers through age five, extended-day options for our older students, along with an end-of-year Mini Session and Summer Play Place camp.

Temple Tots Classes

Mommy and Me Parenting Class – Ages 15 to 24 months

- Group meets one morning per week with the ECC social worker to discuss parenting topics while teachers facilitate projects, play and enjoy music with the children.
- The year progresses towards child independence and readiness for parental separation.
- Classes are divided according to age levels.

The Twos

- Program meets 9:15AM-11:30AM with three, four and five-day options.
- Curriculum focuses on separation, children’s literature, speech and language, small and large motor skills, socialization, recognition of colors, shapes and numbers, sensory integration, Jewish holidays as well as the four seasons.

Threes & Fours

- Meets five days a week, 9:00AM-12:00PM; optional afternoon electives are offered until 2:30PM, Monday through Friday.
- Purchase lunch option is available Monday through Friday.
- Learn simple Hebrew and challah baking with a Judaic specialist.
- Exposure to a developmental curriculum which includes hands-on science, social studies, math concepts, reading/writing preparation and creative arts.

All groups participate in:

- Jewish learning experiences; understanding and appreciation of Jewish holidays and culture, including monthly mitzvah activities.
- Weekly music and movement/yoga programs with specialists.
- Outdoor and indoor play spaces, including a state-of-the-art playground & nature play space.
- Simple cooking projects.
- Physical Fitness Program which includes Happy Feet Soccer.

A Caring Community

The Early Childhood Center strives to accommodate the needs of all children (physical, behavioral, cognitive, dietary, etc.). Ongoing communication with parents is an essential part of our commitment to provide quality care for each and every child. All information shared is strictly confidential.

Explore, Discover and Learn!

The ECC offers afternoon enrichment classes for students enrolled in the three's and four's programs, building upon our curriculum and extending their day until 2:30PM with program options until 3:15PM on select days. The afternoon consists of lunchtime (students may bring food from home or arrange for a school meal), rest and elective offerings. Some examples include:

Little Explorers - Explore the wonderful world of science, magic & fun! Meet "Mr. Air", explode a volcano and participate in many creative hands-on experiments.

Three's Option

Super Science - Four year-olds learn through hands on experiments and explorations which include topics like astronomy, gravity, insects and kitchen chemistry.

Four's Option



Cooking Creations - NUT FREE - Children's literature related to eating and cooking provides rich exposure to a broad spectrum of learning experiences including: math (counting, measuring, fractions, etc.) science concepts (mixtures, heat, cold, etc.) and foods unique to other countries. *Three's & Four's Option*

Music, Motion and More - The children will have the opportunity to explore music through various activities. They learn basic musical concepts such as form, steady beat, dynamics and expressive movement. Children are encouraged to use their imagination and creativity as they experience new adventures through classical, jazz, pop music and fairy tales. Activities will include arts and crafts, dance/movement and instrument play. *Three's Option*



Count Me In - Math literacy is the focus in this class. Through board games, cards, mental exercises, puzzles and playground activities, children naturally and comfortably develop an understanding of math skills and the concepts of numeration, sequencing, patterns, geometric shapes, inequalities and logic.

Four's Option

Little Picassos - Give your child the opportunity to expand awareness of their own creativity as well as experience the styles and methods of arts and crafts. Participants will explore and experiment with materials and equipment in a number of unique modules relating to the "Great Artists." *Four's Option*

Let's Be Friends - Children are involved in a variety of activities which will sharpen the skills needed for a successful transition to kindergarten. The focus is on navigating social relationships, managing/resolving conflicts and encouraging appropriate behavior. Additional emphasis is placed on independence, self confidence, leadership qualities and self esteem, all while having lots of fun! (Run by Brenda Stern our social worker). *Four's Option*

Outdoor Play



The Tour of Israel Playground

This state-of-the-art playground focuses on developing the skills of climbing, balancing, jumping and more. Studies show large motor activities which focus on concepts of body movement and effort go hand in hand with the development of small muscle control used in writing, building and puzzles. The sand area encourages imaginative play, while age-appropriate riding toys allow our students to try and explore at their own pace. The playground elements are named to correspond to places in Israel, fostering our connection to the world beyond our ECC.



The Gan: A Nature Play Area

The Gan (Hebrew for garden) inspires a child's sense of wonder to explore nature through both a scientific and Jewish lens. This innovative space highlights WRT's commitment to the Jewish value of environmental sustainability with the Early Childhood Center's Learn through Play curriculum. Children produce visual masterpieces, build with and climb on natural materials, and create in areas designed for music and movement. Through hands-on exploration, children establish early skills in science, math and engineering along with connections to nature and Jewish values. The Gan encourages children and families to connect more deeply with the world around them and, in turn, their own Jewish practices.



Special Programs



Weekly Shabbat Celebration

Every Friday morning our ECC celebrates Shabbat as a community. Parents from each class are designated as The Shabbat family for that week. We gather together with our Westchester Reform Temple rabbis and cantors in the sanctuary for an age-appropriate service including Shabbat prayers, removing the Torah from the ark, singing and a celebration of children's birthdays. Upon returning to the classroom, each class recites the prayers over candles, wine and challah and enjoys their special Shabbat celebration.

ECC Specialists

All our full-morning programs meet with specialty teachers. A music specialist teaches both secular and Jewish songs. Our Judaic specialist introduces simple vocabulary and bakes challah with the threes and fours several times during the year. The movement/yoga specialists encourage children, through music and motion, to gain an awareness of their own bodies and to express themselves creatively. Three and four year-olds participate in sports on a bi-weekly basis with an athletic coach.

Unique Activities and Events

Throughout the year, all classes participate in several special events. Everyone looks forward to them!

- Visits to the ECC by Fire/Police Department (Safety Programs), local dentist for promotion of good oral hygiene and our most exciting year-end event, Truck Day
- Torah Alive - Each week our fours meet and act out the *parashah* (Torah portion)
- Holiday Celebrations - The Annual ECC Purim Carnival and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) Virtual Trip to Israel
- Monthly Programs - Tzedakah projects and Tot Shabbat with families
- Annual Events and Celebrations - New Family Welcome, Book Fair and Author Visit, the Four's Shalom Service and an evening Art Show/Pajama Party with a performance by musical entertainer Bobby Doowah
- Nature Exploration of various animals including owls and the lifecycles of monarch butterflies.



Green Initiative

Westchester Reform Temple has become a “zero waste” facility and the ECC is proud to be a part of this program. A zero waste facility is one that produces little to no waste by making sure that what is used by our facility is either reusable, recyclable or compostable. WRT has embraced this initiative to support the health of our congregants, the health of our earth and to be a positive role model to our families. For more information about this exciting initiative, please contact the WRT Zero Waste Committee at ZeroWaste@wrtemple.org.

An Inclusive Community

The Early Childhood Center provides many opportunities to get involved in the classroom and beyond.

Westchester Reform Temple is deeply committed to the value of inclusion. Understanding that each child is a unique individual with unique gifts and needs, WRT strives to create the most inclusive environment possible for our children, and works to design a program that is appropriate for children of differing abilities.

The Westchester Reform Temple/Early Childhood Parents Association is yet another connection to the ECC. From simple one-time participation to full-year commitments, everyone is welcome. Opportunities are available for daytime and off-hours so that all can engage in a manner that suits their unique schedule. Volunteering is a terrific way to be directly involved in our school and it allows parents to get acquainted with other families in the program. Becoming an active participant enables moms and dads to interact more closely with the Director, teachers and staff members. Parents also enjoy a variety of informal gatherings from stroller walks to our *Dishin’ in the Kitchen Mitzvah* cooking program, *Babies & Bagels*, *Drop in Playgroup* and *ECC Dad’s Club* get together.

There is truly something for everyone at our Early Childhood Center!



Summer Activities at the ECC

Mini Session

At the conclusion of the school year, we offer an optional “Mini Session” for currently enrolled two, three and four year-olds. The Mini Session bridges the gap before our Summer Play Place camp begins. This exciting and innovative program incorporates children’s literature, art activities and cooking projects. Additionally, music, movement, outdoor playground time, snack and classroom play are all part of the program.

Summer Play Place

- **Play Place Pixies– for children 15-24 months old and walking, entering 2s in the fall:**

A Program for children and a caregiver, parent or loved one (non separation class)

Arts and crafts, music, movement activities, outdoor/indoor play. Class is facilitated by a certified teacher and CIT. Meets two days a week.

or

For children entering 2s program in the fall: (Drop off option)

Arts and crafts, music, movement indoor/outdoor play, water play. Three or Four Day options

- **Three and Four Year-Old Programs** – meet Monday through Friday. These youngsters enjoy theme days, nature, dance, music and singing, arts and crafts, playground, movement, water play, physical fitness/sports, activity center, and other special projects. Snack is included. Children bring their lunch.

All classes are staffed by certified teachers and CITs



Meet the Staff

Susan Tolchin, Director - sue.tolchin@wrtemple.org

Sue joined Westchester Reform Temple in 2004 as Director of the Early Childhood Center (ECC). An educator for over 30 years, she previously served as an assistant director at the JCC of Mid-Westchester in Scarsdale, NY. She has worked in the classroom as a preschool teacher and also taught first grade at Westchester Day School in Mamaroneck, NY. Sue earned a B.A. in Elementary Education with honors from Russell Sage College and holds an M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University. Her professional memberships include both the National and Westchester Association for the Education of Young Children, The Jewish Education Project, the Child Care Council of Westchester, the Jewish Early Childhood Association of Greater NY (JECA) and QUALITYstarsNY.

Brenda Stern, Social Worker

Brenda is a certified, licensed social worker with degrees from Columbia University School of Social Work and the Metropolitan Institute for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy. She works with the children at the school along with ECC parents and also serves as a consultant to our staff. Brenda plays an integral role in assisting with issues such as separation, transition, early intervention and anti-bullying awareness. In addition to running the “Let’s be Friends” enrichment program for our fours, she facilitates our weekly Temple Tots classes and offers a number of parenting programs throughout the year that explore topics such as toilet training, discipline and sibling rivalry.

ECC Faculty

Our staff members are hired for their personal warmth and love of children, coupled with their knowledge of child development. Teacher certifications include masters and bachelors degrees in Early Childhood Education as well as associate degrees. All are trained in CPR and First Aid, and some are MAT (Medication Administration Training) certified. Each set of classroom teachers meet with parents twice a year to discuss progress in school and at home. They are available throughout the year for conferences and updates as needed.

Our Facility

- Spacious, air-conditioned classrooms
- State-of-the-art outdoor playground as well as a nature outdoor play area
- Large indoor play space
- Preschool library
- Nut/allergy-aware facility

Licensing and Affiliations

- Licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)
- Affiliated with the Child Care Council of Westchester and WAEYC, the Westchester Association for the Education of Young Children
- Participating member of The Jewish Education Project (formerly the Board of Jewish Education, BJENY) and URJ-ECE (Union for Reform Judaism-Early Childhood Education)
- The Jewish Early Childhood Association of Greater New York (JECA)
- QUALITYstarsNY, a project of the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)

