

Westchester Reform Temple Early Childhood Center



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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 (birth 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** that strives to implement effective programs using developmentally appropriate best practices. They 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, class trips, 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).



WRT/ECC Offerings

Offerings include morning school-year programs for children, birth 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 11 to 19 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.

Nanny and Me Playgroup – Birth to 19 months

- Social worker explores appropriate child care practices with caregiver.
- Teachers facilitate projects, play and enjoy music with the children.

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

- Meet 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 Thursday; children bring lunch on 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.
- 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 morning three's and four's programs, extending their day from noon 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 including but not limited to:

Animals & The Nature of Things - Environmental educators from “The Nature of Things” offer a developmentally appropriate, hands-on program exploring our world. In limited groups, the children are exposed to various small animals, take nature walks and become increasingly aware of the environment. *Three'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 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 just as important as language literacy. 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 - Gives children the opportunity to expand awareness of their own creativity as well as experience the styles and methods of arts and crafts. They 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 assertive 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*



Special Programs

Weekly Shabbat Celebration

Every Friday morning our ECC celebrates Shabbat as a community. Different 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 the 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, December 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
- Four's Class Trips - Past trips have included Stew Leonard's, Greenburgh Nature Center, local supermarkets, Scarsdale Post Office and Scarsdale Public Library
- Free membership to the PJ Library programs
- Observing the life cycle of baby chicks, including incubation/hatching and transformation of caterpillars into monarch butterflies

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 one-week 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

The ECC Summer Play Place camp offers a six-week program for two, three and four year-olds. This is a wonderful session with our experienced staff, plus teen C.I.T.s. Our age-specific programs operate with a low child-to-teacher ratio. All indoor play spaces and classrooms are fully air conditioned. Children also take advantage of our state-of-the-art outdoor playground.

- **Temple Tots** – (for children entering a two year-old program in September) meets 2 days a week from 9:15AM-11:30AM (drop off or stay with your child). There is a low child-to-teacher ratio. Music, snack, arts and crafts, playground, sand and water play, physical fitness and nursery rhymes are all included.
- **Three and Four Year-Old Programs** – meet Monday through Friday, 9:00AM-1:00PM. These youngsters enjoy theme days, nature, dance, music and singing, arts and crafts, playground, movement/yoga, soccer program, water play, physical fitness/sports and other special projects. Snack is included. Children bring their lunch.



An Inclusive Community

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

Families are invited to participate in various school activities throughout the year. Each classroom has two designated parents who assist in notifying the class about upcoming events and programs. All parents are welcome to read in the classroom, share special talents with their child's classmates, attend field trips (fours only) and take part in our virtual trip to Israel as well as monthly Tot Shabbat services.



The Westchester Reform Temple/Early Childhood Parents Association is just one more 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 book clubs to stroller walks to our *Dishin' in the Kitchen/Monthly Mitzvah* cooking program.

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



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. Sue 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 programs ranging from an Infant Group to Nanny and Me to Temple Tots while offering 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; some are First Aid/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
- Large indoor play space
- Preschool library with computers
- Nut free/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)





