



Kindergarten Judaic Studies Purpose Statement Shoshana Stombaugh, Kindergarten Teacher

In Kindergarten, children begin the journey of formal education. Social and academic learning are inextricably connected and each is equally important. The balanced integration of the two is essential to holistic growth. A well-socialized child is able to voice his or her feelings, and can recognize others' feelings. The child develops characteristics including willingness to share; knowledge of right and wrong; and respect for other people's property. Kindergarten in both the morning and the afternoon is an integrated, thematic curriculum. Children learn about their world through hands-on experiences. During this year children grow as they become independent learners, exploring their world and learning to be valued members of their community.

The greatest cognitive growth occurs when children are engaged in meaningful ways with each other. In the classroom we talk about differences and similarities openly, and provide opportunities for role-play and positive social interactions. We are committed to finding the patience, time, and desire to help children navigate through bias and prejudice along with the adults in their lives. Jewish values deepen the experience and connection to our Kindergarten Social Curriculum. Children are introduced to values such as *dereh erez* (literally the *path of the land*) - respect, *bita^hon* - safety, and *g'milut ^hasadim* - acts of loving kindness.

The Ladder of Success is a school-wide social curriculum that guides students in becoming independent problem solvers, and teaches that everyone, children and grown-ups alike, encounter solvable problems every day. The Ladder of Success teaches self-awareness as children become more aware of their own physical reactions and those of others. As the young child grows in self-awareness, s/he grows in his/her ability to solve problems independently and to discern what are 'everyday' problems (which eventually children are able to solve themselves) and 'safety' problems, which require adult intervention or support.

The Judaic/Hebrew curriculum in Kindergarten focuses on the Jewish holiday cycle. Children learn to see their world through Jewish eyes, and to see Israel as a special home for themselves and the Jewish people. Children are introduced to Hebrew letters and their sounds through story, song, and projects. Children learn by 'doing.' Our focus in Gan is to provide opportunities for students to experience their lessons through a multitude of modalities, including movement, song, art, drama, the senses, and play. Through this method children have meaningful experiences with new ideas and a new language that will bring meaning and success to their first experiences with Hebrew print.

In Hebrew Language, students gain Aleph-Bet recognition. Students learn to recognize and write their own Hebrew names. Students begin to build an oral Hebrew vocabulary including colors, body parts, family, Jewish objects and activities in the home, in the classroom and in the synagogue, weather, Shabbat, and holiday

terminology. By experiencing the Hebrew Alef-Bet and vocabulary through an integrated and hands-on manner, each child is able to explore Hebrew reading and writing at the pace for which s/he is developmentally ready.

Israel is a central focus of the Kindergarten curriculum. Students develop recognition of Israel as a home for all Jews. They study and experience many places of Israel, including Jerusalem, the Kibbutz, Eilat, and archaeological digs. We culminate our study with an all-school "trip" to Israel.

For T'fillot and blessings students gain familiarity with prayers leading to memorization, especially through song. There is special emphasis on the Sh'ma and the V'ahavtah. Students gain sight word recognition of important Hebrew words from such prayers as the Sh'ma, Modeh Ani, and others. Students make their own Siddur and begin applying developing reading skills, such as tracking, to the familiar prayers. Students are also exposed to blessings related to eating, holidays, Shabbat, and other interpersonal mitzvot.

Torah Study begins in Kindergarten. Students are introduced to many stories in Torah, particularly those relating to specific holidays. Students study B'reshit (the story of Creation), Adam and Eve, Joseph, Moses, Miriam, the Exodus, and the receiving of the Torah at Sinai. Schedule allowing, we also learn about Noah and the Ark, David and Goliath, and other great Biblical leaders of Israel including Deborah and King Solomon.