

Parent Handbook

Welcome

Dear Parents,

We want to welcome you to the Eric and Sheila Samson Family Early Childhood Learning Center. We look forward to building a strong relationship with your child and your family over the next few years. We hope that you will share in the excitement and join in a community partnership with us as we work together to promote your child's growth and development.

Our classrooms are places of learning and exploration, rooted in Jewish values, where every child is a gift. They are aesthetically beautiful places, filled with organic materials that elicit a curiosity about the natural world and provide a warm, home-like environment for learning. At our school, children's inherent inquisitiveness is encouraged and nurtured, allowing their interests to develop into learning opportunities through an emergent curriculum. Research has shown that for children to fully understand and remember what they have learned, it must be meaningful to them in the context of their own experience and development. This educational approach is inspired by the theories and practices of the early childhood schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy.

As early childhood educators, the faculty and I are committed to developing a love of learning in our children, nurturing their curiosities, following their interests and exploring their traditions and cultures. We endeavor to create strong relationships within our school where our teaching faculty and administrative staff contribute towards a warm, loving and creative environment.

Sincerely,

Sheila Dalva-Hornback
Director of Early Childhood Education

Table of Contents

Our values	5
Fostering an inclusive community	7
General Information	8
Application and enrollment criteria	8
Priority applications	9
Class size and placement	9
Immunizations.....	10
ECLC calendar.....	10
JCamp holiday programs.....	10
Summer Camp Yeladim	11
Payment and registration	11
Deposits	11
Tuition payments	11
Calendar and tuition payments	12
Withdrawals	12
Schedule changes	12
Membership	12
Financial assistance	12
Hours of operation	13
First days	13
Day-to-day information	14
What to bring/wear	14
Diapering/toilet learning	15
Nap time	16
Birthday and holiday celebrations	16
Arrival	17
Open door policy	17
Parking and parking lot safety	17

Release of children policy	18
Signing in and out	18
Early and late fees	19
Kosher food (Kashrut) policy	18
Kosher symbols:	20
Food allergies, peanut and tree nut policy.....	21
Lunches and snacks	22
Health and safety	23
Health policy	23
Medication	26
Maintaining a sanitary environment.....	28
Accidents/Emergencies	29
Emergency evacuation information	29
Accident/Incident reports	29
Child abuse reporting law requirements	30
Communication	30
Formal parent/teacher conferences	31
Gesher Parent Committee: get involved	31
Behavior philosophy	32
Guidance policy/classroom management.....	32
Learning and behavior diagnosis and testing	34
Philosophical foundations: the classroom environment	34

Our Values

Our values serve as a foundation for our community. The ECLC aims to provide a diverse Jewish setting that constructs possibilities for the emergence of each child through a collaborative learning process. Children are encouraged to test their theories of the world so as to develop a love of learning, a strong sense of self-reliance and a strong foundation for critical thinking.

We are guided by the richness of Jewish tradition and values as well as developmentally appropriate educational approaches. Our core values are outlined below. The value statements are accompanied by quotes from Jewish texts that reflect the intent of the statement.

Community: *kehillah*

We work together to build a community founded upon open relationships between people who learn together and share values. Each member of the community has meaning within the whole, and the whole becomes much more than the sum of its members. Our lives are enriched by these binding relationships, helping us to feel more secure and to know that our individuality is honored, our opinions are heard, and our needs are considered.

“Do not separate yourself from the community” (Pirke Avot 2:5)

Respect: *kavod*

With respect at the core of every interaction, our community is elevated, becoming more than just a random gathering of souls. We become bound to each other over time and trusting, secure partnerships are nourished.

We are mindful of how the quality of our actions forms the foundation of our relationships. We are reminded that each of us is equal in our nature, and that our treatment of others is a reflection of our respect for one another and our community as a whole. We recognize that our actions not only affect ourselves, but also will affect those who come after us. We make ourselves available to each other, listening carefully. We agree to communicate honestly, treat others with respect, and work to understand our individual needs in light of the needs of the community.

“Who is honored? The one who honors other human beings.” (Pirke Avot 4:1)

Peace: *shalom*

We work together to create a place of warmth and peace at our school for all who inhabit it.

Peaceful homes are places in which we feel ourselves to be fully present enough to appreciate the unique, the extraordinary, the awe inspiring. These homes are places of empathy, guided by listening and caring for one another's well-being. We all have the opportunity to contribute when we bring the best of ourselves to the place in which we live and the community of which we are a part.

"Individuality is only possible if it unfolds from wholeness." (David Bohm)

Love: *ahavah*

We are elevated through the connection that is created through loving interactions as we share in the day-to-day moments of our lives. Our collective behavior and partnership help us create loving connections and interactions that share the richness of the human experience. Our community is able to share when each of us is fully present and intentionally open to the potential synergy of people coming together. We appreciate that we are not alone in the world – our lives are not random acts or unrelated incidents.

"Whenever love depends upon something and it passes, then the love passes away too. But if love does not depend upon some ulterior interest then the love will never pass away." (Pirke Avot 5:19)

Inquiry: *d'rash*

The spirit of inquiry is the impetus for growth and reflection. It leads us to discovery, broadens our horizons, and uncovers information from which we grow and learn.

We believe that children are competent, capable and able to be the protagonist in their learning. We allow the spirit of inquiry and natural curiosity inherent in young children to be our guide in learning. The Jewish understanding of inquiry, contained in the term *d'rash*, goes beyond inquiry to interpretation, interaction, and transmission of knowledge to others. It engages the knowledge and experience of the past in conversation with the present, and documents the new learning for the benefit of future generations.

"Who is wise? The one who learns from every person...." (Pirke Avot 4:1)

Responsibility: *tikkun olam*

Our work to repair the world takes us from understanding to action, from the potential to the possible, and from capacity to responsibility. We believe in working towards a world of increased harmony, unity, and partnership with others and with our planet.

We feel that our responsibility to the world extends from the environment to interpersonal ethics, from broad-reaching political action to small, everyday kindnesses. What we do matters not only in our lives today, but in the lives of all the generations to follow. As a

community of learners, we are heartened by the realization that what we do matters, and that we are making a difference.

“It is not your responsibility to finish the work [of perfecting the world], but neither are you free to desist from it.” (Pirke Avot 2:16)

The quotes used in the values statements are taken from the *Talmud* and *Pirke Avot*.

The *Talmud* is a scholastic text that includes the legal and ethical codes of the Jewish tradition compiled during the period of the 3rd to 5th century CE.

Pirke Avot in English translation is often referred to as the “ethics of the fathers.” It is a collection of Rabbinical sayings on various subjects intended to provide ethical guidelines for Jewish life.

Fostering an inclusive community

Our school reflects our world and tries to be an example of the core values we share. We believe in the value of diversity within our school community and look to foster understanding and differences of opinion through open dialogue and collaboration.

The ECLC at the Merage JCC recognizes the potential in each child, and we value the vital contributions that families make to the school community. We believe that children are competent and capable learners, researchers and problem-solvers. Our emergent curriculum, embraces the Reggio Emilia approach and supports children’s spirit of inquiry by offering opportunities for large and small group exploration. Our teachers create a forum for children to share their theories, knowledge and questions, leading to discovery, growth and contextual learning. Parents are invited to be part of this process, ensuring that the childrens’ home and classroom integrate seamlessly. We believe that it takes a strong partnership between parents, faculty and eager young students to create a learning community, a school where the best early childhood theories are put into practice. When children, teachers and families share in this type of learning journey, it is easy to become involved in the excitement of a child who is beginning to understand the world and his or her place in it.

Our curriculum will help your child develop a lifelong love of learning, and our teaching faculty will help prepare your child for the best kindergartens in Orange County.

Teaching faculty

We believe that a quality school is achieved through quality educators.

Our faculty is comprised of educators with degrees in child development, early childhood and elementary education, child psychology and educational psychology. All are certified in CPR, first aid and are Live Scanned. Collectively, they have hundreds of years of teaching experience and most importantly, they have passion for their work. The Merage JCC leadership recognizes the importance of a highly qualified faculty, supporting and encouraging their growth. Educators on our faculty participate in professional development seminars offered by the premier minds in the field on topics of child development and cutting edge practices in early childhood education.

General Information

Application and enrollment criteria

Initial visit

Our only prerequisite to submission of an application for enrollment is taking a tour of the facility. During your tour you will view the classrooms, meet some of the teaching faculty, discuss our school's core values, learn about our philosophy of education and tell us about your family and child. We encourage your questions, and we find that the initial visit is one in which you as a family can discern whether the ECLC matches your family's values and your philosophy of early childhood education. Initial tours are **adults-only** opportunities to view the school.

Enrollment procedures

The next step in enrollment is the completion and submission of our application forms along with forms required by the State of California. These forms **must be returned, completed in full** and accompanied by a \$125 non-refundable application fee and a \$400 non-refundable deposit. The application fee and deposit is not applied to future tuition. Application fee \$65 per each additional student.

You will be eligible for a return of the \$400 deposit after your child completes the program through Transitional Kindergarten as applicable. Withdrawal prior to the end of the program results in forfeiture of the deposit.

After submission of your application you will be notified within a short period of time whether your child has been placed into the program or on to the waiting list.

Wait lists

An application form must be filled out and a \$125 application fee must be paid before you are placed on the wait list. If a space becomes available you will be notified by phone and given two business days to respond and register for the program before the space is offered to the next person on the wait list. If you choose to decline a space in the program you will be moved to the bottom of the wait list.

Priority applications

Please note that if you apply for a program where applications exceed the number of available positions, we will give first priority to members as follows:

- First priority:** Children already enrolled
- Second priority:** Children who have a sibling in the program
- Third priority:** Children of Merage JCC members who are on the wait list
- Fourth priority:** Children of non-Merage JCC members who are on the wait list

Enrollment paperwork

At the time of the application you will receive emergency forms that need to be completed prior to the start of enrollment.

Your child's well-being is our primary concern. We reserve the right to refuse service if your child's forms are not complete and current. You are required to keep your child's forms current by updating them immediately, whenever any of the information changes, this includes phone numbers, immunization records, allergies, emergency contact information, etc. Information updates should be passed on in writing to the ECLC Administrative Team or via email to wendyy@jccoc.org.

Class size and placement

In order to guarantee the individual attention our children need and to maintain the quality of the ECLC, class sizes are limited. Within these limits ECLC administrators will place each child in the class that best serves the child's developmental needs. Staff will use the child's date of birth, gender, the child information form, formal evaluations, informal observations, and parent conferences to determine the most appropriate placement for each child. The final decision will be made by the ECLC Administrative Team. Parents will be notified of class assignments by email just prior to the beginning of the school year.

For families who select our two- or three-day programs, we do our best to accommodate your choice of days. However, you may only be able to enroll if space is available. If your requested space is not available, you will be informed which days are available before confirming your registration.

Immunizations

All students enrolling into our school are required by California law (SB277) to have all immunizations up to date for all illnesses prescribed by the Department of Health. The only exceptions are medical exemptions signed by your doctor.

Families must provide documentation of their child's immunization status before they may attend school and must update the preschool office when their child receives immunizations during the school year.

ECLC calendar

Families are provided the ECLC calendar at registration along with the materials provided at the beginning of the school year. Please review the closures and early dismissal times carefully.

The ECLC programs follow a traditional school-year schedule. The school year begins the Tuesday following Labor Day in September and concludes in June.

Closures include Jewish holidays, national holidays, holiday breaks and professional development. **Refer to the annual school year calendar for all holiday and professional development closures.**

JCamp holiday programs

To further serve our working parents, we offer JCamps during holidays when our school is generally closed, including a variety of Jewish holidays, winter and spring breaks. JCamps are not factored into annual school tuition (except for the Infant Toddler Center) and are offered at an additional cost.

- Sukkot (two days, including Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah), Shavuot (two days)
- Winter Break, and Spring/Pesach Break
 - The dates of Winter Break coincide with the final two weeks of December and may stretch into the first week of January, depending upon the day of New Year's Day.
 - The dates of Spring Break fluctuate yearly to accommodate Passover. Spring Break will be no less than one week and no more than two weeks in length depending on which days Passover falls each year.

Summer Camp Yeladim

Our summer program, Camp Yeladim, offered for children who are 2 years of age. Separate registration for Camp Yeladim is required.

Payment and registration

At the time of application you will need:

1. An Aronoff Preschool Application, completed and signed
2. A signed Policies and Procedures form
3. A non-refundable \$125 application fee
4. A deposit of \$400
5. A tuition agreement for payment by credit card or bank funds transfer
6. Current Merage JCC membership or a completed Membership Application form
7. Confirmation that Merage JCC accounts are current and in good standing
8. Enrollment forms, completed and signed

Enrollment is not guaranteed. You will be notified if the Merage JCC is unable to place your child. In such cases, your deposit will not be processed and your application fee will serve as your wait list fee until a space is available in the school. Once a space is available in the school, your application fee will be utilized as your application fee in the first year you are accepted in the program. Application fees are non-transferable between different students.

A service fee of \$25 will be applied for all returned checks, rejected credit cards or insufficient funds if utilizing EFT.

You can elect to pay your tuition in full or to pay the balance of your annual tuition at any time. There are no discounts for early payment.

A debit or credit card on file is required for all families. Even if you choose to pay your yearly tuition in full or monthly, the card on file may be used for miscellaneous fees. Declined debit/credit card/EFT payments will be assessed a \$25 fee.

Calendar and tuition payments

Monthly tuition is process on the 4th business day of each month. Refer to the annual school calendar showing dates of closures and early dismissals. Tuition installments are NOT reduced or pro-rated further due to scheduled closures or emergency closures. In addition, there is NO reduction of fees or refunds for vacation and no make up days for illness or vacation.

Withdrawals

Withdrawal from the ECLC requires 30 days advance written notice. Withdrawals that occur on or after March 1st of the current school year will be obligated to pay tuition for the remainder of the year.

Schedule changes

If you need to change your child's schedule, you must submit a Schedule Change Request Form 3 weeks in advance. Payment arrangements for an increase in your child's schedule must be made at the time the change is approved. If you need to make any changes to your Merage JCC account or change your child's schedule, you will be charged a \$50 processing fee per change. Schedule changes are granted if space is available.

Membership

Merage JCC membership is an integral part of your child's experience. Your Membership Agreement must be submitted at the time of application to the ECLC. Membership will be activated one month prior to your child's start date and must be kept current and in good standing throughout your enrollment. Membership is based on a 12-month agreement and is automatically renewed and payable unless written notice of cancellation is received.

Financial assistance

If you are interested in applying for financial assistance for your child, please contact Oscar Membreno at 949.435.3400 extension 385 or oscarm@jccoc.org.

Financial assistance is not automatically renewed. Families need to apply each program year. If a family's financial situation changes, a new application needs to be completed.

Applicants will be notified, in writing, of scholarships. (Notification in writing will be your confirmation of your approval for financial assistance.) Payment arrangements must be made at that time.

Hours of operation

The center is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on regularly scheduled school days. The school closes in observance of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and secular holidays and may close early on some Jewish holidays. Please check your calendar for scheduled closings.

Within the operating hours we offer the following programs:

Half-day program: 9 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Plus day program: 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Full day program: 8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Morning programs begin in assigned classrooms at 9:00 a.m. Activities are planned so that the children will benefit most by being prompt and regular in their attendance. It is important that you arrive on time. If you are bringing your child late to school, please do not disrupt the class in progress.

We also ask that you not linger in the classroom after drop-off if you are not actively engaged with your child. We have many areas around the school and within the Merage JCC for parents to talk to one another, share a cup of coffee or have a cell phone conversation. We welcome parent participation in the school and within the classrooms. If you are interested in becoming a regular part of your child's classroom or our parent community, we encourage you to reach out to the administration to find ways to be involved.

First days

In order to make your child's adjustment to the new setting easier, we strongly suggest that parents ease their children into the program. If your regular pattern for drop off and pick up will be 15 minutes on either end, you might spend 30 minutes on either end on your first day, 20 minutes on either end on your second day and reach your regular pattern of 15 minutes on either end on your third day. Please plan to stay as long as your child needs you. To ease the transition the teacher will help your child become involved in activities and guide you in the separation process. We recognize that every child is unique and thus look to work with you in your initial visits and days in the school community.

Day-to-day information

What to bring/wear

Each child will have a designated cubby in their classroom to store spare clothing and seasonal items (hats, coats, sunscreen, swimsuits, water shoes, sun hats, towels). Please see the list below.

In addition to clothing, your child may be best supported by having a comfort object in their cubby. Transitional objects such as a favorite stuffed animal, blanket or other object of connection for the child may help in their acclimation to the school.

What to bring:

All belongings should be clearly labeled with permanent marker, ink, or clothing label:

- Transitional object (teddy bear, blankie, etc.)
- Lunchbox
- Hat
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle
- Extra underwear
- Extra shoes
- Extra pants
- Extra diapers and wipes (for those still in diapers)
- Extra shorts
- Extra shirt
- Extra socks
- Extra sweater or sweatshirt
- For nappers only: Crib sheet, blanket, sheet and optional small pillow in a bag/sack (sleeping bags are not allowed). **As required by law, all bedding will be sent home on a weekly basis to be washed, cleaned, and returned when your child returns to school the following week.**

Clothing/what to wear to school

We get messy: children should be dressed appropriately for all activities, including painting, cooking and outdoor play. Clothing should allow for freedom of movement. Also loose strings on sweatshirts and jackets present a potential danger and we strongly advise you to take them out. Please send your child in shoes that adhere to their feet. Shoes which do not adhere to your feet make outdoor play dangerous and challenging for all play activities and are not permitted.

Please LABEL EVERYTHING: coats, hats, sweaters, lunch boxes, thermoses, food storage containers, etc.

Diapering/Toilet learning

If your child is in diapers, an adequate supply of diapers and diaper wipes must be left at the ECLC. Your child's teachers will inform you when your child requires additional diapers or diaper wipes. Gloves are provided by the school. Children who are wearing diapers have their diapers checked regularly and are changed as often as necessary.

We believe that learning to use the toilet is a developmental step that happens at different times for each individual child. Thus, we do not require children to be proficient with using the toilet in order to move into the two or three year old programs. As is aligned with typical development, generally we do ask that children are proficient at using the toilet before they enter the TK program.

Children will begin showing us cues that they are ready to use the toilet when they:

- Find a private space to defecate or urinate
- Tell us immediately after defecation or urination that they are uncomfortable and would like to be changed
- Begin to "read" their body's cues that they are going to the bathroom and inform us while they are actively defecating or urinating
- Provide us with a few minutes of warning prior to having to defecate or urinate.

We will not force, cajole or bribe children to use the toilet at school. We will provide them with opportunities to have positive associations with using the toilet and will actively support the process when children show us that they are ready through the cues listed above.

Learning to use the toilet is a long process and does not usually happen overnight; having accidents is part of the learning process. Please make sure your child has an ample supply of extra clothes in his/her cubby.

We encourage open communication between teachers and parents about your child's process in learning to use the toilet. We will work together when your child shows signs of readiness.

Nap time

The ECLC provides a supervised rest period for all children who are in care for more than six hours, and for those showing a need for rest.

Rest time or nap time occurs approximately between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. (consult with your classroom teachers for exact times for your child's class). Please make every effort NOT to pick up your child during those times. A transitional item such as a soft animal or blanket may be kept in your child's cubby and used for nap time.

ECLC educators will not force children to sleep who do not show a need for sleep, nor will they force children to stay awake who show a need to sleep. When children nap or stop taking a nap is a developmental step that occurs at a variety of ages. We believe in communication with families during this process and support the child's needs as paramount in evaluating when this change occurs.

Birthday and holiday celebrations

Birthdays are a time to celebrate your child. Arrangements for all birthday celebrations should be made in consultation and collaboration with your child's teachers. Please keep birthday celebrations simple. Please save gifts and party favors for your personal celebrations.

You may bring a birthday snack. However, any food shared in the ECLC must be Kosher and should be clearly labeled with a hechsher (see Kosher section below). Food items shared with children at school may not be produced at home. Our on-site caterer, Blueberry Hill Catering, can provide you with snacks for your child's class. Please see the ECLC front desk for ordering information.

Birthday invitations: if you place paper birthday invitations in the classroom cubbies, please be sure to invite all children in the classroom as a courtesy to all families. Otherwise, you are welcome to send private invitations via email or snail mail.

Holiday celebrations: In accordance with our program's celebration of Judaism through the richness of Judaic traditions and values we celebrate all Jewish holidays through song, dance, telling of stories and eating of holiday foods.

While we honor the diversity of the ECLC community and welcome families from all backgrounds, we do not actively promote the celebration of holidays whose origins come from religions outside of Judaism (e.g. Halloween, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Christmas and Easter). Please do not send your children to the ECLC dressed in Halloween costumes or with Valentine's Day cards.

Arrival

Open communication is vital to maintaining the integrity of the daily classroom routine which optimizes the learning environment for the entire classroom community. The formal class day begins at 9:00 a.m. Arriving after that hour makes it difficult for most children to transition into the group and its activities. If your child will arrive after 9:30 a.m., please notify your classroom teacher ahead of time. If your child will be absent, please either mark out on Tadpols or use our Attendance Line 949.435.3466 or email attendance@jccoc.org. If your child is absent for three consecutive days, you will be contacted by a member of the ECLC faculty.

Open door policy

Collaboration between families, children, and faculty is integral to the ECLC philosophy. Parents are encouraged and welcome to visit classrooms once their children are enrolled in the ECLC program; however, for some children, it is very upsetting to have a parent visit and leave. Because the ECLC strives to maintain an environment where children and parents feel comfortable and safe, we request that you adhere to the decisions of the classroom teachers regarding the advisability of visits. If you have any concerns or questions, always feel free to contact your child's teacher or an ECLC Administrative Team member.

Parking and parking lot safety

Parking is available in the JCC parking lot.

- Please use caution and supervise your children carefully while walking to and from your car. Use equal caution when driving in and out of the parking lot.
- Please respect the disabled and reserved parking spaces.
- Please do not leave unattended vehicles in areas where cones are placed to protect the fire lanes.

DO NOT leave young children unattended in your vehicle in the parking lot.

California Vehicle Code Section 15620 states that: "A parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for a child who is 6 years of age or younger may not leave that child inside a motor vehicle without being subject to the supervision of a person who is 12 years of age or older..."

Release of children policy

Children may only leave the building with adults (18 years or older) who have been authorized in advance. You will be asked to list the names and phone numbers of individuals authorized to pick up your child on his/her emergency card. ECLC teachers cannot be listed as contacts on a child's emergency card. The ECLC is not authorized to release children to the JCC's Club J or babysitting program.

Parents are required to update the list of authorized adults for pick up as changes occur. If a child is to be picked up by an adult that is not listed on his/her emergency card, prior written permission is required. **The ECLC will not release any child without written permission from a parent.**

Parents/guardians and other authorized persons will be asked to present photo identification and or scan their JCC membership badge at the security desk. Faculty members may also ask for photo identification if our faculty does not recognize the person arriving to pick up the child.

Children will not be released to an authorized person who is suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In such a situation, the police department will be called to mediate the situation and decide whether the child can be released to the authorized person.

Signing in and out

Maintaining accurate daily attendance records, including specific drop-off and pick-up times verified by parent signature, is a state regulation. We must insist on conscientious parental compliance with this requirement. ***It is a state law to sign a full legal signature, not initials, in blue or black ink. A \$20 fee can be imposed per incident for neglecting to sign in and out.*** This fee will be automatically charged to your account, as specified in the contract.

Under no circumstances may a parent leave a child in the ECLC prior to opening (8:00 a.m.) or without making sure that the child has been received by a teacher. No children are allowed in the classrooms without faculty members present at drop-off and pick-up.

Early and late fees

If you have not registered for a program that begins prior to 9:00 a.m., we ask that you do not bring your child early even though the classroom might be open with a teacher and children in it.

Whether pick up is during the day or at closing time, if you are late, you will be charged \$25 for the first 15-minutes (or any portion thereof) then \$1 per minute thereafter. If you are going to be late due to extenuating circumstances, please notify the school. On the third occurrence of a late pick up, you will be asked to meet with the ECLC administration. This meeting may include discussion of a change in schedule if your chosen length of day is not meeting the attendance patterns of your child or it may include strategies to ensure pick up of your child prior to closing time (5:30 p.m.). If this meeting fails to correct the problem, you may be subject to additional sanctions, including expulsion from the program.

In the event a child is not picked up and the ECLC cannot make contact with the parents or authorized adults within 30 minutes of the child's pick-up time, Child Protective Services will be contacted.

Extra hours

The ECLC occasionally allows the addition of extra hours, for a fee, (outside of your child's regular schedule), if circumstances and ratios permit. We strongly believe that low ratios in our classrooms and age groups provide for high quality education and care and thus, extra hours will not be allowed if the addition of your child will negatively impact the experience of other children in the program. All additional hours must be approved by ECLC administration at least 24 hours prior to attendance. Teachers are not permitted to approve extra hours and have been instructed to refer all requests to ECLC administration.

Food and Kashrut (Kosher) policy

Jewish dietary laws of Kashrut are prescribed by Halachah (Jewish law). The JCC takes great pride in the fact that it is a place where people at all levels of Jewish practice feel welcome and comfortable. To that end, the board of directors established that the Merage JCC is a Glatt Kosher facility.

The ECLC department ensures a Kosher environment by restricting food brought by all students to dairy and vegetarian items only. Meat (including kosher meat) and meat products (such as lard), are NOT allowed (boned fish is allowed). Please read labels carefully as processed foods often have unexpected ingredients. To maintain the integrity of this policy, individual snacks and lunches may not be shared.

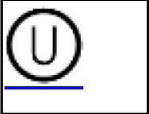
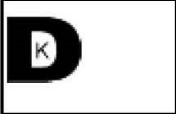














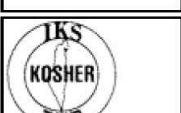






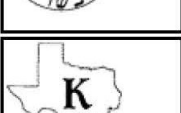





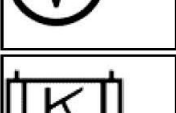




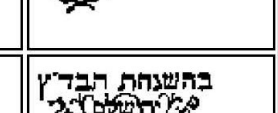







Any foods served to the entire class must be purchased from Blueberry Hill or delivered in a sealed package with a *Hechsher* (symbol for Kashrut, see list below). The ECLC program treats all *hechshers* as equal and accepts all *hechshers* as Kosher. (Please note that a “K” alone is not a *hechsher*.)

If food is being served at an ECLC sponsored community/classroom gathering, regardless of whether it is in the school facility or not, **we ask** that all food adhere to the above restrictions.

The Merage JCC has kitchen facilities that are under rabbinic kosher supervision and this kitchen is used by our Glatt *Kosher* caterer, Blueberry Hill.

The symbols on this page is a list of different symbols found on kosher food packages. If one of these symbols is on the product label, that item is considered kosher and may be served at the Merage JCC.

Kosher symbols:

Food allergies

Some children in the ECLC program are affected by life-threatening food allergies, and even more are affected by less severe food sensitivities. Please be cognizant when selecting the food that you and your children bring in to the ECLC facility.

All families must inform the ECLC of their child's food allergies upon enrollment or the onset of allergies if it occurs subsequent to enrollment. Families who denote that their children have food allergies will need to complete an Emergency Health Care Plan, which must be signed by their child's doctor, as well as a Medication Release Form (if applicable).

The ECLC Program operates within the Merage Jewish Community Center. Our physical spaces, both internal and external to the building, are shared with community groups, individual members and other Merage JCC users. Thus, we are not able to say with certainty that our spaces are free of allergens.

All families will be notified of the food allergies which exist in their child's class at the beginning of each year and as updates occur. We ask that families avoid these foods when bringing in shared items for snacks or classroom cooking projects. Please work with your classroom community to determine the best accommodation for the particular allergies that exist in your child's classroom.

To ensure the safety of all children in the classroom, individual snacks and lunches may not be shared.

Peanut and tree nut policy

In an effort to ensure that all of our students remain safe and healthy, **the ECLC is a "Peanut and Tree Nut Aware" school.** Tree nuts (e.g. cashews, macadamia nuts, pecans, walnuts, almonds) are not permitted in our school.

Products containing nuts, whether they be peanuts or tree nuts, nut products, products containing "traces of nuts", are prohibited in the ECLC facility.

Some examples of these items are peanut butter, certain granola bars, mixed nuts, honey roasted peanuts, and bamba.

We do not prohibit items whose labels read "Manufactured in a plant that may process nut products, or may be produced on equipment that also processes nuts."

Our on-site caterer, Blueberry Hill is **not** peanut and tree nut aware and thus your child may have access to these items if they order hot lunch or if they purchase food from Blueberry Hill Café on Main Street.

Lunches and Snacks

Lunches

Each parent will provide their child with a lunch on a daily basis or purchase a lunch through our on-site caterer, Blueberry Hill. The ECLC follows the nutritional suggestions set by the State of California.

We strongly encourage families to send children’s lunches that contain the following:

- A dairy product
- A protein food including fish, egg, legumes, butters, or cheese
- Bread or bread alternative, whole grain or enriched
- Fruit or vegetables, two total servings

Some lunch suggestions are:

Cheese and crackers	Grilled cheese sandwich	Brown/white rice
Fruits	Soy nuggets	Tuna casserole
Vegetables	Waffles and jam	Hummus and pita
Bagel and cream cheese	Pancakes	Sunflower/soy butter
Tuna or egg sandwiches	Soup	English muffin pizza
Muffins/breads	Yogurt	Quesadillas
Pasta	Fish	Hard-boiled eggs
Veggie burgers	Macaroni and cheese	Veggie dogs
Cottage cheese	Falafel	Potatoes
All soy products	Tofu	Cheese slices
Beans	Couscous	And leftovers!

Gum, candy and soda are NOT allowed in ECLC. Our teachers will do their best to encourage healthy eating habits. **Keep in mind the teachers will not force children to eat their healthy choices first.** Please provide an ice pack for lunch boxes and pack food items in easy to open containers.

Snacks

The ECLC provides a morning snack for every child in the program. Afternoon snack will be provided to all children enrolled in the plus and full day programs. We utilize our on-site caterer, Blueberry Hill to provide snacks that may include:

- A fresh fruit or vegetable
- A carbohydrate – usually in the form of a whole grain product
- A dairy product.

Snacks are served in the morning hours between 10-11 a.m. and in the afternoon between 3-3:30 p.m. Snacks are designed to provide children with 150-200 calories per serving.

Health and safety

Health policy

In order for children to participate in the preschool program, they must meet all health standards according to the State of California and the ECLC. If your child has a communicable disease or is not fully able to participate in the school day due to illness, your child will not be allowed to attend school for the duration of the illness and until 24 hours have passed symptom free.

You are asked to keep your child at home when he/she is unable to participate in activities including outdoor play due to illness, experiences fever, diarrhea or vomiting, or is generally feeling “not quite right.”

Communicable diseases spread very quickly in a school setting. In order to protect the wellness of all children, the ECLC works with the Department of Health to develop specific policies for communicable diseases. In some cases these policies may differ from those of your physician. The ECLC reserves the right to determine when a child needs to be picked up from school and when a child may return.

If your child is exhibiting any of (but not limited to) the following, you will be called to pick up your child from the program:

- Child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in the daily activities
- Faculty cannot care for the sick child without interfering with the care of other children
- Child has any of the following symptoms that indicate a contagious disease or an immediate need for medical evaluation:

- Fever of 100.5 degrees or above, or, behavior changes or other symptoms of illness
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Complaints of headache, sore throat, or lethargy
- Suspicious rashes, conjunctivitis, impetigo, and other easily transmitted conditions.

Please note: When a child has symptoms that require a doctor's note for a return to school, the signatory physician may not be one of the child's parents.

You are required to notify the ECLC administration, wendyy@jccoc.org immediately when a child is diagnosed with any communicable illness or disease. Failure to do so compromises the health of the children, faculty and parents that attend our school. Repeated or intentional failure to notify the school will result in serious consequences. The ECLC is required by law to report communicable diseases to the state licensing department and in some cases to the public health department. In turn, the ECLC will notify each family whose child may have been exposed to a communicable illness or disease in writing. The identity of the child with the illness or disease will be kept confidential. If you have any question, please err on the side of caution and inform the ECLC administration.

If a child becomes sick while at school, he/she will be separated from the other children and **MUST** be picked up **within one hour** of notification. Your child will be given an Illness Report at the time of pick up outlining when they may be eligible to return to ECLC. **Children must be symptom free for 24 hours before they may return to school.**

The following are common illnesses that you are required to report to the ECLC administration and how long a child must remain away from ECLC. This is not an all-inclusive list:

Disease	When to return to ECLC
Chickenpox	When all of the blisters have dried into scabs, usually about six days after rash onset.
Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye)	Twenty four hours after treatment begins.
Diarrhea (Infectious)	When diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours. For some infections, the child must also be treated with antibiotics before returning to ECLC.
Diarrhea (Uncontrolled) – an increase in number of stools, compared with a child’s normal pattern along with watery stools and/or stool that cannot be contained by the diaper or use of toilet.	Until uncontrolled diarrhea stops for 24 hours.
Fever - “ axial temperature of 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.	When the child has been fever-free for twenty four hours (without the aid of fever reducing medicine).
Impetigo	Twenty four hours after antibiotic treatment has begun.
Lice (head)	When the first treatment is complete and no eggs (nits) are present
Rash with or without fever or behavior change	When a medical exam indicates these symptoms are not that of a communicable disease – a return to school slip signed by a physician must be submitted to administration.
Ringworm	Twenty four hours after treatment has begun and ringworms must be covered with bandages.
Scabies	Twenty four hours after treatment has begun.
Streptococcal Sore Throat	Twenty four hours after antibiotic treatment has begun. Child must be fever-free for twenty four hours.
Vomiting – two or more episodes within twenty four hours	Twenty four hours after vomiting has ceased.

Medication

The JCC does not administer over the counter medicine without signed authorization by a child's doctor and parent. Any prescription medicine must be in its original container and needs a signed Medication Release Form. Parents must give medication to ECLC administration.

ECLC considers all of the following medication:

- Antihistamine
- Non-aspirin fever reducer/pain reliever
- Non-narcotic cough suppressant
- Decongestant
- Vitamins or dietary supplements
- Ointments or lotions intended specifically to relieve itching or dry skin
- Diaper ointments and non-talc powders intended for use with diaper rash
- Eye drops
- Any medication or healing agent with an active ingredient

For all medications:

- Medication must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name; *and*
- Medication must have instructions and dosage recommendations for the child's age and weight; *and*
- Medication must not be expired; *and*
- Medication duration, dosage and amount to be given must not exceed label-specific recommendations for how often or how long to be given.
- A health care provider's written consent must be obtained to add medication to food or liquid.
- Medications no longer being used will be returned promptly to parents/guardians.

For medications the written consent may only cover the course of the illness as prescribed by a doctor. For liquid oral medications, a measuring device specifically designed for oral liquid medications must be provided by the parent/guardian.

A licensed health care provider's consent may be given in two different ways:

- The provider's name is on the original pharmacist's label (along with the child's name, name of the medication, dosage, duration and expiration date)
- The provider signs a completed Medication Release Form. (When a child has symptoms that require a doctor's note for a return to school, the signatory physician may not be one of the child's parents.)

The ECLC staff shall administer prescription medications for children only under a physician's directions and when the appropriate forms have been completed. The following regulations govern the dispensing of medication at school:

- Prescription medicines must be in the original prescription container with the instruction label attached and administered in accordance with the label directions as prescribed by the child's physician. When prescription medication is necessary, please ask your pharmacist to divide your prescription in half so you can have two original bottles - one for school and one for home.
- Nonprescription medicine must be administered in accordance with the product label directions on the nonprescription medication container. Pain medication and fever reducers will only be given to a child under certain medically required conditions and with prior permission from the child's doctor.

All medication must be given to a staff member to be placed in a secure and locked location. Never put medication in a child's lunch box or cubby. Children cannot self-medicate at the preschool.

Sunscreen

As we live in Southern California, we have many warm, sunny weather days. Thus, we ask that parents apply sunscreen to their child in the morning before coming to school. Parents must provide a bottle of labeled sunscreen to be kept in the classroom. The teachers will re-apply sunscreen throughout the day as needed, provided a signed Sunscreen Authorization form is on file.

For children under the age of six months, a physician's written consent is required by law. The doctor's written consent may cover an extended time period of up to one year.

Maintaining a sanitary environment

The JCC strives to maintain our building, equipment and premises in a clean and sanitary manner.

Our teachers and maintenance staff use the following cleaning schedule:

- Tables and counters used for food serving and high chairs before and after each meal or snack
- Sinks, counters and floors daily, or more often if necessary

- Refrigerators monthly or more often if necessary
- Bathrooms (including sinks, toilets, counters and floors) daily and more often if necessary
- Floors will be swept, cleaned and sanitized daily, or more often if necessary
- Carpet vacuumed at least daily and shampooed as needed but at least every month
- Toys that children place in their mouth between use by different children
- Infant and toddler toys daily, two and three year old toys weekly, four and five year old toys every other week.
- Sleeping mats, cribs, and other forms of bedding between use by different children daily

When teachers are cleaning surfaces throughout the day, they will first spray the dirty surface with soapy water, followed by a sanitizing agent. All cleaning and janitorial supplies are stored in areas inaccessible by children.

Hand washing

Parents are encouraged to help their child wash their hands with soap and warm water upon arrival at ECLC. Children must also wash their hands after using the toilet, after the child is diapered, after outdoor play, after playing with animals, after touching body fluids (such as blood or after nose blowing or sneezing), and before and after the child eats or participates in food activities.

Accidents/Emergencies

In case of a life-threatening accident such as a head injury, severe cut, convulsion or severe trauma, a faculty member will call 911. Parents will be contacted immediately.

Emergency evacuation information

We as Californians are aware of the ever-present possibility of an earthquake or other emergency occurring, creating damage and dangerous conditions. The safety and welfare of our students is of the utmost concern to us. At present, your children are involved in monthly evacuation drills. Our building was designed to withstand earthquakes and is built with fire safety in mind. Public safety officials have stated that the school environment provides the safest possible protection during a time of general emergency.

In the event of a natural disaster or a similar emergency, a written disaster and emergency preparedness plan is maintained in the preschool, which specifically outlines a course of action for the following areas:

- Designation of administrative authority and faculty assignments
- Contingency plans for fires, floods, and earthquakes
- Means of emergency exit
- Emergency transportation arrangements
- Means of contacting local agencies, including the Fire Department, law enforcement agencies, Civil Defense, and any other designated adults
- Relocation sites equipped with necessary survival supplies to last at least 72 hours.

If an emergency occurs during the day, you may be asked to pick up your child should the school close early. Please be sure you or your designee is available by phone at all times.

Accident/incident reports

Parents will receive an Accident/Incident Report for any type of injury or a more serious altercation occurring while a child is under the care of ECLC. The identity of any other child involved in the incident will remain confidential.

All minor accidents are reported through the use of the Accident/Incident report and will be reported to parents at time of pick up. Minor accidents such as cuts and scrapes will be treated with soap and water; bruises and bumps will also be treated with ice.

Injuries which are of a more serious nature such as head, neck or back, suspected sprains, and broken bones will generate an immediate call to parents.

If the injury appears serious or questionable, the preschool will call 911.

It is imperative that your emergency contact information be kept accurate and current. Regardless of our ability to contact you in an emergency, we will act to obtain the care required by your child.

First aid readiness

All teachers are required to have current first aid and infant/child/adult CPR certifications. A first aid kit is maintained at all times in each classroom, the ECLC kitchen and front desk.

Child abuse reporting law requirements

The Merage JCC is required by state law and licensing requirements to report immediately to the police or Orange County Social Services Agency any instance when there is a reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual or emotional child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Faculty and staff are not obligated to inform parents if the police or the Social Services Agency is called about possible child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Communication

Daily communication

In person: We believe that our school is a place of relationships and thus, you will communicate with your teachers on a daily basis at drop off or pick up or both as a primary means of communication. We recognize that there are often multiple families dropping off and picking up their children at the same time. Therefore, you will likely not be able to rely solely upon in-person communication with your teachers to meet all of your needs.

Email: Teachers have email access per classroom. **The email addresses are:** Insertroomname@jccoc.org **do not** use your room number. Examples: Jerusalem@jccoc.org. Teachers check these accounts each day and can often respond within a 24-48 hour period of time.

Weekly communication

Director emails: As our school's philosophy is based upon a strong foundation of collaboration with the entire learning community, we use the weekly email newsletter, "From the Director" as a primary means of communication with our families. The email will provide you with information on upcoming school events, programming and Merage JCC events for the coming 30 days.

If you would like to add an email to the distribution list, please contact Wendy Yesharim, Early Childhood Learning Assistant Director, at wendyy@jccoc.org.

You will receive regular communication specific to your child's classroom from their teachers.

Formal parent/teacher conferences

Twice a year the school will close for regular class and care to hold our optional parent-teacher conferences. Conference times are arranged by appointment at the school. Areas covered include formal and informal evaluation and progress reports on specific development.

Gesher Parent Committee: get involved

The *Gesher* Parent Committee strives to build bridges between faculty, administration, parents and students in order to enhance the community experience and support the school's core values. In addition, the committee serves as a bridge connecting the school to the JCC and the broader community.

The ECLC's Gesher Committee offers many different opportunities for parent involvement. It is our strong belief that, as a community, it is important for our parents to have a voice and lend a hand. You may choose to get involved as a room parent, through work on an ongoing committee, or by participating in the planning and implementation of one of the one-time events that enhance our children's learning experience. If you are interested in becoming a room parent, please email wendyy@jccoc.org.

In the spirit of building community, we would like to see every family participate in at least one thing during the course of the year. Not only will the community be enhanced by your participation, but so will your experience, and that of your child(ren) within the school.

For more information contact Sheila Dalva-Hornback at (949) 435-3404 ext. 310, or sheilad@jccoc.org.

Behavior philosophy

The Eric and Sheila Samson Family Early Childhood Learning Center at the Merage JCC recognizes its responsibility to ensure that all children have the right to a safe, encouraging and organized environment. In this environment, children learn and practice effective problem solving skills and recognize that appropriate behavior is essential to success.

The teaching faculty, staff, parents, and whenever possible, the child, will all share responsibility in establishing and modeling reasonable and clearly communicated expectations and consequences. By treating each child with dignity, we will affirm the worth and diversity of all, thereby creating a climate of mutual respect and

understanding. We expect that all parents and/or legal guardians also abide by an appropriate code of conduct at all times while on the Samueli/Merage JCC Campus.

If, after a reasonable period of time, it is found that a child is unable to adjust to the ECLC, the JCC reserves the right to request a withdrawal of the child. The ECLC administration will follow procedures as written in this handbook. The decision is left to the discretion of the Director of Early Childhood Education. We work with input from the teachers and parents in our process.

Guidance policy/classroom management

Our faculty and staff is trained to phrase directions in the positive; that is, emphasizing what the child can do rather than relying on “don’t”, “stop” or “no” We also strive to incorporate group learning and cooperation into conflict situations. Care is always taken to help children produce a positive self-image. We view guidance and discipline as positive learning experiences for children, not as punishment.

When children “misbehave”, they are generally expressing themselves in ways that:

- (1) They know will achieve their desired outcome**
- (2) We understand are normal ways of communication at certain stages (hitting, biting, crying)**
- (3) They are testing their limits**

Due to this understanding, we work with children to act in positive and constructive ways. We see them as genuinely virtuous people and want to facilitate appropriate behavior by making it meaningful and relevant.

The most important aspect of guidance in our program is understanding and respecting your child and his/her abilities and needs, providing him/her with a nurturing and supportive environment in which staff can anticipate problems before they occur, and teaching your child the skills he/she will need in order to cope with situations when they arise.

The ECLC has the following discipline policy:

- Our faculty and staff are responsible for setting clear limits; that is, letting children know from the beginning what is and what is not acceptable behavior and why.
- Limits will be clearly defined and consistently maintained.
- Limits are based on an understanding of your child’s needs and stage of development and are designed to help your child develop inner control resulting in a feeling of empowerment. The teacher’s role is to facilitate and model the development of the child’s problem-solving skills.
- If a child displays inappropriate behavior, they will be given choices as to how to best deal with the situation. It is here that we will strive to create positive learning

situations that take into account developmental level, feelings, wants/needs, fairness and cooperation. Our ultimate goal is to give children the tools they need to solve conflict situations on their own.

If necessary, a formal parent/teacher/administrator meeting will be requested. The goals of this meeting will be to:

- Share information based on observations, both at home and at school
- Brainstorm suggestions for solving challenges
- Decide on a plan for ways that teachers/administrators and parents can work together to help resolve challenges
- Agree to commit to the plan until behavior ceases
- Have a written summary of the meeting which defines the plan

It is critical to keep in mind that we are here for the children and want only the very best for them. If there are specific situations that call for further intervention, we expect parents to work with us to decide what is best for the individual child.

Learning and behavior diagnosis and testing

As an early childhood learning center focused on building and supporting our community, our classes include children with a wide range of behavior and learning abilities. Although our program is not geared to children with specific needs, such students often experience success when supported by an honest and cooperative child-teacher-parent relationship.

Parents are expected to inform the school if a child has a previously diagnosed developmental delay or disability. At times, if a child is observed to be experiencing difficulty behaving or is behaving in the classroom in a way that puts themselves or other children at risk, the ECLC administrative team along with the teachers may consult and recommend that he or she be tested or observed, at the family's expense, by an independent professional diagnostician who can help clarify the nature and source of the difficulty. Such testing may be a prerequisite for the child's continued enrollment in the program.

The results of this developmental profile will be used to develop strategies to help the child, possibly including individual instruction or intervention outside the program. The school will work with the parents to implement these strategies; however, after trying to work with the child and his/her family with reasonable attempt to accommodate their needs, the school may decide that the child's interests will be served better in another setting.

Philosophical foundations: the classroom environment

Culture

Valuing children and their cultures is extremely important to us at the Merage JCC. Young children are completely engrossed in the context of their home culture. We strive to make this visible in the classroom by means of photos of children and their families and culturally relevant objects that may be found in their homes. By aspiring to this, we have found that our school becomes an extension of the home and children are able to achieve great things as they are in an environment in which they feel safe, secure and loved.

Items that spark reflection

Photos and panels of children busily working in various areas of the classroom are placed in relevant areas as a means of promoting reflection. Re-visiting previous projects and activities spark children's interest to further their investigations. When children are motivated to learn, we have found that their skill base grows and they become even more experienced and proficient!

Found items

We value items that can be found in nature as great teaching tools. Children are given the opportunity to explore pine cones, leaves, rocks, shells, plants, flowers, etc. These materials open the way to a myriad of questions about nature and life. We are also eager to move away from having mostly plastic containers for our manipulatives and toys to having baskets and other natural objects. Again, we have found that these items are more of what children may see in their homes and create an inviting environment that promotes exploration.

Sensory materials

Sensory exploration is what it's all about in early childhood! Young children are constantly exploring the world through their five senses and therefore we strive to incorporate as much sensory exploration into their days as possible. Messiness is integral to their learning and you do not have to go far to find it. Whether we are outside in the water, entrenched in clay, or up to our ears in paint, our teachers constantly provide the children with creative and imaginative sensory experiences.

Cozy environments

Each of our classrooms has taken great care to create warm and cozy environments. You will find soft lighting, curtains, plants, animals, soft spaces and adult spaces. We have found that by creating these types of environments, all people who visit the classrooms will be comfortable and at ease.

Small and magical spaces

We have observed that children enjoy having areas that they can escape to in order to be alone, with a few friends or an adult. Our teachers have found that by hanging curtains and lights the children are able to be alone while still being kept safely in sight and sound. These areas become favorite places for reading and for creative and thoughtful imaginative play.

Please note: These policies are subject to change. Parents will be notified of any changes by email, classroom newsletter and Director newsletter. In some cases, a special parent meeting will be called to discuss the new policies.

We hope this is the beginning of a long partnership between the JCC and your family. We strive to provide the best possible learning experiences for your child(ren). Working together, we can achieve this goal.

Aronoff Preschool

Welcome to the Erica and Sheila Samson Family Early Childhood Learning Center

Please sign and return to front desk.

Thank you!

I, _____, parent of _____ (name
of child) have read and agreed to abide by the policies and conditions set forth in the
preceding parent handbook of the Merage JCC Early Childhood Learning Center.

Signature

Date