



**ARONOFF
PRESCHOOL**
The Merage JCC
AGES 0-5

Aronoff Preschool

Parent Handbook

Eric & Sheila Samson Family Early Childhood Learning Center Merage Jewish Community Center
1 Federation Way, Suite 200 | Irvine, CA 92603



Welcome

Dear Parents,

We want to welcome you to the Eric and Sheila Samson Family Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC). 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 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 understand and remember what they have learned fully, 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,

Carly Middlebrooks
Director of Early Childhood Education

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Our Values

Community: kehillah

We work together to build a community founded upon people who learn together and share values. Each member of the community has meaning within the whole, and the whole becomes more than the sum of its members. Our lives are enriched by these binding relationships, knowing that our opinions are heard and our needs are considered.

Respect: kavod

With respect at the core of every interaction, our community is elevated. We recognize that our actions not only affect ourselves but will also affect those who come after us. We agree to communicate honestly, treat others with respect, and work to understand our individual needs, considering the needs of the community.

Peace: shalom

We work together to create a place of warmth and peace at our school for all who inhabit it. These homes are places of empathy, guided by listening and caring for one another's well-being. We all can contribute when we bring the best of ourselves to the place in which we live and the community of which we are a part.

Love: ahavah

We are elevated through loving interactions as we share the day-to-day moments of our lives. Our collective behavior and partnership help us create loving connections and interactions. We appreciate that we are not alone and that our lives are not random acts or unrelated incidents.

Inquiry: d'rash

Inquiry is the impetus for growth and reflection. The Jewish understanding of inquiry goes beyond the interaction of knowledge with others. It engages the knowledge and experience of the past and provides new learning for the benefit of future generations.

Responsibility: tikkun olam

We take our work to repair the world as a responsibility. We are working towards a world of increased harmony, unity, and partnership. Our responsibility extends 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.

Fostering an Inclusive Community

At the ECLC, we value diversity and strive to reflect our broader world by fostering open dialogue, collaboration, and respect for different perspectives. Guided by the Reggio Emilia approach, our emergent curriculum encourages children to explore their interests through group and individual learning, preparing them for kindergarten and beyond.

Teaching Faculty

Our faculty is comprised of educators with degrees in child development, early childhood, elementary education, child psychology, and educational psychology. They participate in professional development seminars on child development and cutting-edge practices in early childhood education. 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 a passion for their work.

Application and Enrollment

Step 1: Initial Visit

- A tour of the school is required before applying
- You'll visit classrooms, meet faculty, learn about our philosophy, and discuss your child and family
- To schedule a tour, email preschooladmin@jccoc.org and bernadety@jccoc.org

Step 2: Submit Application

Please complete and submit the following to begin enrollment:

1. Aronoff Preschool application
2. Policies and Procedures form
3. **\$150 non-refundable application fee (\$75 per additional student)**
4. **\$400 non-refundable deposit**
5. Tuition agreement for payment by credit card or bank transfer
6. Merage JCC Membership Application form (if not already a member)
7. Confirmation that Merage JCC accounts are current and in good standing
8. Enrollment forms

You will be **eligible to receive the \$400 deposit back** after your child completes the program through Transitional Kindergarten, as applicable. Withdrawal before the end of the program results in forfeiture of the deposit.

Note: Enrollment is not guaranteed until you receive confirmation of placement. 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. Once a space is available, your application fee will be utilized as your application fee in the first year you are accepted into the program. Application fees are non-transferable between different students.

Step 3: Enrollment Paperwork

- You'll receive emergency and health forms after applying
- All forms must be **current and complete**
- Update changes (e.g., phone numbers, immunization records, allergies, emergency contact information, etc.) should be passed on in writing to this email aronoff@jccoc.org.

Wait Lists

If space is not available, your child will be placed on a waitlist. You will be contacted by phone if a space opens and will have **2 business days** to respond. Declining a space moves your child to the bottom of the waitlist.

Priority Enrollment

We will give priority to applicants as follows:

1. Children already enrolled
2. Children with a sibling in the program
3. Children of Merage JCC members on the wait list
4. Children of non-Merage JCC members on the wait list

Class Size and Placement

To guarantee the individual attention our children need and to maintain the quality of the ECLC, class sizes are limited. ECLC administrators will place each child in the class that best serves the child's developmental needs. Parents will be notified of class assignments by email before the beginning of the school year. The final decision will be made by the ECLC Administrative Team.

Placement is based on:

- Date of birth
- Schedule
- Formal/Informal evaluations

For families who select our part-time programs, we do our best to accommodate your choice of days. However, you may only be able to enroll if space is available. You will be informed which days are available before confirming your registration.

Payment and Scheduling Policy

Tuition Payments

- Tuition is processed on the **4th business day of each month**
- Tuition installments are not reduced or prorated further due to scheduled closures or emergency closures
- There is no reduction of fees, refunds, or make-up days for illness or vacation

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, and all returned checks will be assessed a **\$30 fee**.

Financial Assistance

If you are interested in applying for financial assistance for your child, please contact our scholarships team scholarships@jccoc.org.

Families must apply each program year. If a family's financial situation changes, a new application needs to be completed. Applicants will be notified of approval, in writing, of scholarships. Payment arrangements must be made at that time.

Membership

Membership will be activated **1 month** before 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.

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 **2 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 \$75 processing fee per change**. Schedule changes are granted only if space is available.

Extra Hours

You may occasionally request additional hours if space and staff ratios allow. All requests must be approved by the ECLC **at least 24 hours in advance**. Teachers are not permitted to authorize extra hours. For extra hours, email aronoff@jccoc.org.

ECLC Calendar

Families are provided the ECLC calendar at registration. Please review the closures and early dismissal times carefully. **The school year begins in August 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 and Camp Yeladim

To further serve our working parents, we offer JCamps during holidays when our school is generally closed. JCamps are not factored into annual school tuition. (ITC families do NOT need to register for camp).

- Fall/Thanksgiving break (3 days)
- Winter break (1 week)
- Spring/Pesach break (2 weeks)

Our summer program, Camp Yeladim, is offered for children who are 2 years of age or older. Separate registration for Camp Yeladim is required at an additional cost.

Hours of Operation

The center is open from **8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.** on regularly scheduled school days. Within the operating hours, we offer the following programs:

- **Half-day: 9 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.**
- **Plus-day: 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.**
- **Full-day: 8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.**

Morning programs begin in assigned classrooms at **9 a.m.** Activities are planned so that the children will benefit most by being prompt and regular in their attendance. 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.

Transition Guidelines

We are delighted to welcome you to our preschool community and thank you for entrusting us with your child's care. We understand that first goodbyes can be difficult, and we are dedicated to supporting both you and your child during this important transition.

Having a transition plan and regularly talking with your child about what to expect at school can help make the adjustment smooth and successful. The guidelines below are flexible and can be adapted to meet your child's individual needs. After your child's first day, their teachers will make observations, keep you informed of their progress, and develop a personalized transition plan to share with you for reference.

One week before your child's first day we recommend the following:

- Let your child know they will be going to school — nobody likes surprises.
- Talk about how you will miss them, but try not to dwell on it.
- Read books about meeting new friends, starting school, and saying goodbye.
- Tell your child about the fun activities they will enjoy at school.

Week 1 (All Schedules)

Your child will attend school from 9:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Please provide a family photo and a transitional object (such as a favorite stuffed animal, lovey, or teddy bear) to help your child feel more comfortable.

On the first day, after you say goodbye, we will keep you updated on your child's day and progress. Please plan to remain nearby in case we determine that your child would benefit from an earlier pickup.

Weeks 2–3, by Schedule Type

Schedule	Week 2	Week 3
Half Day	Continues at 9:00AM-12:45PM	--
Plus Day	9:00AM-3:30PM Child naps in classroom—please provide nap items (blanket, etc.)	--
Full Day	9:00AM-3:30PM Child naps in classroom—please provide nap items (blanket, etc.)	Scheduled full-day hours

Please plan to stay as long as the teachers request to help make your child's transition as smooth as possible. We recognize that every child is unique and thus look to work with you in your initial visits.

What to Bring/Wear

Each child will have a designated cubby in their classroom to store belongings.

ALL belongings should be clearly labeled with your child's first name and last initial:

- Lunchbox with ice pack (if not purchasing hot lunch)
- Filled water bottle or sippy cup
- Extra shoes (no backless shoes)
- Extra clothing: underwear, pants, shorts, shirts, socks
- Hat
- Extra sweater/sweatshirt/long-sleeve shirt for cooler days
- Sunscreen (form required)
- Diapers and wipes (if not potty proficient)

For nappers only: Blanket, crib sheet, and optionally a small pillow in a bag/sack (sleeping bags are not allowed). All bedding will be sent home weekly to be washed and returned with your child the following week.

Dress your child in comfortable clothes for messy activities and easy movement. Avoid clothing with drawstrings. Shoes must fit properly and have a heel strap if open-toed. Improper footwear will require parents to bring a suitable replacement.

Diapering and Toilet Learning

If your child is in diapers:

- Please supply an adequate number of diapers and wipes for your child (Teachers will notify you when more are needed)
- ECLC staff provide frequent diaper checks and changes throughout the day
- The school supplies gloves for all diapering procedures

We take a child-led, supportive approach to toilet learning. We encourage positive experiences but never pressure them. Children do **not** need to be toilet-proficient to enter our 2- or 3-year-old programs. **However, children should be toilet-proficient before entering Transitional Kindergarten (TK).**

Common signs of readiness may include:

- Seeking privacy during bowel movements
- Communicating discomfort after going
- Beginning to recognize body cues
- Giving some advance notice before needing to go

Please make sure your child has enough extra clothes during toilet learning. The Aronoff Preschool requires that children in the process of toilet learning wear underwear or pull-ups for the health and safety of all participants.

Nap Time

As required by childcare licensing (Title 22), children staying 6 hours or more will have a rest period (**1–3 p.m.**) **Please avoid picking up during this time.** Children may bring a comfort item (e.g., stuffed animal or blanket). Nap needs vary by child, and teachers will support their rhythms without pressure to sleep or stay awake.

Arrival

Please arrive before **9 a.m.** Late arrivals disrupt your child's transition and group activities. Notify us of absences or late arrivals via Bloomily or email aronoff@jccoc.org. For urgent matters, call the office: **(949) 435-3404**. If your child is absent for 3 consecutive days, you will be contacted by the ECLC faculty.

No arrivals will be allowed during our **Monday** and **Friday** celebrations (Havdallah and Shabbat), held from **9:30 - 10 a.m.**

Open Door Policy

Parents are encouraged and welcome to visit classrooms once their children are enrolled. We request that you follow the decisions of the classroom teachers regarding visits.

Parking Lot Safety

Parking is available in the JCC parking lot.

- Please use caution and supervise your children carefully while walking and driving
- Please do not leave unattended vehicles in areas where cones are placed to protect the fire lanes and respect disabled/reserved parking spaces

DO NOT leave young children unattended in your vehicle in the parking lot. California Vehicle Code Section 15620 states: "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..."

Child Release Policy

Children will only be released to authorized adults (18+) listed on file. Changes/additions must be submitted in writing to: aronoff@jccoc.org. **The ECLC will not release any child without written permission from a parent.**

JCC badge or photo ID must be shown at pick-up. Children will not be released to anyone without proper identification or who appears intoxicated. In such cases, police may be contacted. ECLC staff may not be listed as emergency contacts.

Signing In and Out

We must maintain accurate daily attendance records. **It is a state law to print your full legal name, not initials, in blue or black ink, including specific drop-off and pick-up times.** A **\$25 fee** will be charged per missing signature.

Under no circumstances may a parent leave a child at the preschool prior to opening (**8 a.m.**) or without making sure that the child has been received by a staff member.

Signatures on the Sign-In/Out sheets should be made by an authorized adult who is picking up or dropping off. Children or siblings should not be signing the sheet at any

time.

Early and Late Fees

- Early drop-off (beyond 5-minute grace): **\$5/minute** without pre-approval
- Late pick-up (after designated time): **\$25 for 5-15 minutes**, plus **\$5 for each additional minute**
- Three or more late pick-ups may result in administrative review or expulsion
- Please call if you will be late: **(949) 435-3404**

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

Birthday and Holiday Celebrations

Coordinate birthday plans with your child's teachers. Please keep celebrations simple and save gifts/party favors for your personal celebrations. Families may bring a birthday snack, but **all food must be in accordance with our food and allergy policy.**

If distributing paper invitations at school, we ask that you invite the whole class out of consideration for all families. Private invitations may be sent via email or mail.

We celebrate Jewish holidays through stories, songs, dancing, and eating holiday foods. While we welcome families from all backgrounds, we do not observe holidays from other religious traditions (Halloween, Valentine's Day, Christmas, Easter, or St. Patrick's Day) and ask that children not bring related items or wear costumes from those holidays to school.

Food and Kosher Policy

The ECLC follows kosher guidelines in accordance with Merage JCC's status as a Glatt Kosher facility. **All student food must be dairy or vegetarian. Shellfish, meat or meat products, including kosher meat, are not allowed.** Boned fish is permitted.

Food brought for the class must be:

- Pre-packaged with a kosher symbol (hechsher)
- Or ordered from our on-site kosher caterer, Blueberry Hill (visit the front desk for details)
- Homemade food may **not** be shared

Snacks or lunches should never be shared between children to protect those with dietary restrictions. We treat all recognized kosher symbols as valid (note: a plain "K" is not sufficient).



Food Allergies

- Notify the ECLC of your child's allergies during enrollment or as they develop
- Submit a doctor-signed **Emergency Health Care Plan** and **Medication Release Form**, if needed
- Families will be informed of known classroom allergies and asked to avoid bringing those allergens when providing shared snacks or ingredients

Note: Our shared facilities cannot be guaranteed allergen-free.

Peanut and Tree Nut Policy

We are a Peanut and Tree Nut Free Environment. Do not send any of the following:

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|-----------------|--------------------------|
| • Peanut butter | • Granola bars with nuts |
| • Almond butter | • Trail mix |
| • Nutella | • Bamba or any |
| • Almond milk | nut-based snacks |

Note: Blueberry Hill (our caterer) is NOT a nut-free kitchen, and cross-contact is possible.

Lunches and Snacks

Each child should bring a packed lunch daily, or you may purchase a lunch for **\$8** each through our hot lunch program. The ECLC follows nutritional guidelines set by the State of California and encourages families to provide well-balanced meals that include dairy, protein (such as eggs, beans, tofu, or cheese), whole grains or bread alternatives, and a total of two servings of fruits or vegetables.

On Fridays, we offer a meat option for hot lunches for children two years and older. In observance of Kosher policies, we will not serve dairy snacks on Fridays.

To help inspire lunch ideas, consider items like:

- Hummus with pita
- Tuna or egg salad/sandwich
- Falafel
- Rice or pasta dishes
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Sunflower or soy butter
- Cheese with crackers
- Soup
- Quesadillas
- Soy nuggets
- Bagel and cream cheese
- Meat-free leftovers from home

Please avoid sending soda, candy, or gum. Teachers model and encourage healthy eating habits, but children will not be required to eat in a particular order. Please include an ice pack in your child's lunchbox and use containers that they can easily open.

The preschool provides a morning snack for every child in the program between **9:30-10:30 a.m.** Afternoon snack will be provided to all enrolled in the plus and full day programs between **3-3:30 p.m.**

Snacks provide 150-200 calories per serving and include:

1. A fresh fruit or vegetable
2. A carbohydrate, usually in the form of a whole grain product
3. A dairy product

Health and Safety

Health Policy

Children must meet all health standards according to the State of California and the ECLC. If your child has a communicable disease, is not fully able to participate in the school day due to illness, or is generally feeling "not quite right", your child will not be allowed to attend school for the duration of the illness and until **24 hours have passed symptom and medication-free.**

The ECLC reserves the right to determine when a child needs to be picked up or is ready to return to school. You will be called to pick up your child if:

- They do not feel well enough to participate comfortably in daily activities
- Their care needs interfere with the care and safety of others
- They show symptoms indicating a contagious disease or requiring immediate medical evaluation, including:
 - Fever of **100.4°F or above**
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - Headache, sore throat, or lethargy
 - Suspicious rashes, conjunctivitis (pinkeye), impetigo, or other easily transmitted conditions

If a child becomes sick while at school, they will be separated from the group and **must be picked up within one hour** of notification. You will receive an **Illness Report** at pick-up outlining when your child may return. If a doctor's note is required for return, the signing physician may **not** be the child's parent.

Parents are required to notify the ECLC administration (aronoff@jccoc.org) immediately if their child is diagnosed with a communicable illness or disease. Failure to do so compromises the health of our community and may result in serious consequences. The ECLC must report communicable diseases to the state licensing department and, in some cases, the public health department. Families will be notified in writing if their child has been exposed to an illness. Diagnosed children's identities will remain confidential.

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:

Illness	When to return to ECLC
Chickenpox	When all the blisters have dried into scabs (usually about 6 days after rash onset).
Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye)	24 hours after treatment begins.
Diarrhea (Infectious)	When diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours. For some infections, antibiotics are also required before return.
Diarrhea (Uncontrolled)	Until symptoms stop for 24 hours. Includes increased stools, watery stools, or stools not contained by a diaper/toilet.
Fever (100.4°F or higher)	When fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.
Impetigo	24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins.
Lice (head)	After the first treatment is complete and no eggs (nits) are present.
Rash (with or without fever or behavior change)	When a medical exam confirms it is not contagious, a physician's return-to-school note is required.
Ringworm	24 hours after treatment begins, affected areas must be covered with bandages.
Scabies	24 hours after treatment begins.
Strep Throat	24 hours after starting antibiotics and fever-free for 24 hours.

Vomiting (2 or more episodes within 24 hours)	24 hours after vomiting has stopped.
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When in doubt, err on the side of caution and inform the ECLC administration.

Immunizations

In compliance with California law (SB277), all children must have up-to-date immunizations as required by the Department of Health. **Medical exemptions signed by a physician are the only exceptions.**

Families must provide **current immunization documentation** before their child attends school and update the preschool office whenever additional immunizations are received during the school year.

Medication

The ECLC will administer only authorized medications under the following guidelines:

- Medication must have signed authorization by a child's doctor and parent
- Medication must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name
- Medication must have a signed **Medication Release Form**
- Parents must give medication to the ECLC administration
- Medication must have instructions and dosage recommendations for the child's age and weight
- Medication must not be expired
- 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

ECLC considers all of the following medications:

- Antihistamine
- Non-aspirin fever reducer/pain reliever
- Non-narcotic cough suppressant
- Decongestant
- Vitamins or dietary supplements
- Ointments or lotions intended 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, written consent only covers the course of treatment as prescribed by a doctor. **Parents must provide a measuring device specifically designed for oral liquid medications.**

All medications must be handed directly to staff for storage in a secure, locked location. **Do not place medication in your child's cubby, lunchbox, backpack or personal belongings.** Children are not permitted to self-administer medication at any time while at school.

Sunscreen

Please apply sunscreen to your child each morning before drop-off. Provide a **labeled bottle** of sunscreen to keep in the classroom; teachers will reapply it throughout the day as needed, provided a **signed Sunscreen Authorization Form** is on file.

For children under six months, **a doctor's written consent is required by law**, which may be valid for up to one year.

Maintaining a Sanitary Environment

Teachers and maintenance staff follow strict cleaning schedules:

- **Tables, counters, and high chairs:** cleaned before and after each meal or snack
- **Sinks, counters, bathrooms, and floors:** cleaned daily or more often as needed
- **Refrigerators:** cleaned monthly or more often if necessary
- **Floors:** swept, cleaned, and sanitized daily
- **Carpets:** vacuumed daily and shampooed at least monthly
- **Toys:**
 - Infant and toddler toys: cleaned daily
 - Two- and three-year-old toys: cleaned weekly
 - Four- and five-year-old toys: cleaned every other week
 - Any toy placed in a child's mouth: cleaned before another child uses it
- **Sleeping mats, cribs, bedding:** cleaned daily and between uses by different children
- **Bedding:** must be taken home and cleaned weekly

Teachers clean surfaces first with soapy water, followed by a sanitizing agent. All cleaning and janitorial supplies are stored out of children's reach.

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 touching animals
- After the child is diapered
- After contact with body fluids
- After outdoor play
- Before and after eating

Accidents and Emergencies

Accident/Incident Reports

Parents will receive an Accident/Incident Report for any injury or serious altercation involving their child. The identity of other children involved will remain confidential.

- **Minor injuries** (e.g., cuts, scrapes, bruises) are treated with soap, water, and ice and reported on Bloomily
- **Serious injuries** (e.g., head, neck, back injuries, suspected sprains, broken bones) will prompt an immediate call to parents.
- If an injury appears serious or questionable, **911 will be called**.

Please keep your emergency contact information current. Regardless of our ability to reach you, ECLC staff will act immediately to obtain needed care for your child.

Emergency Evacuation

The ECLC conducts **monthly emergency/disaster drills** to prepare for emergencies such as earthquakes or fires. Our building is designed to withstand earthquakes and meets all fire safety standards.

A written **disaster and emergency preparedness plan** outlines:

- Administrative authority and staff assignments
- Plans for fires, floods, and earthquakes
- Emergency exits and relocation sites (equipped with 72-hour survival supplies)
- Transportation arrangements if evacuation is necessary
- Contact procedures for local agencies, including fire, police, and civil defense

In the event of an emergency requiring early school closure, parents or designees must be available by phone to pick up their child promptly.

First Aid Readiness

All ECLC staff maintain **current First Aid and Infant/Child/Adult CPR certifications**. Fully stocked first aid kits are kept in each classroom, the ECLC kitchen, and at the front desk.

Child Abuse Reporting

In compliance with **state law and licensing requirements**, the Merage JCC is mandated to report any suspected physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation to law enforcement or Orange County Social Services immediately.

Faculty and staff are **not required to inform parents** if a report has been made.

Communication

Daily Communication

We value daily connection with families. Teachers are available for quick check-ins during **drop-off and pick-up**, but please note that these busy times may not allow for in-depth conversations.

For primary communication, each classroom has a dedicated email address (e.g., **Jerusalem@jccoc.org**; use your classroom name, not number). Teachers check email daily and typically respond within **24–48 hours**.

Bloomily App

We use Bloomily, a communication and program management app, to keep you informed in real time. Through Bloomily, you'll receive daily reports on your child's activities, meals, naps, and learning experiences, often with photos or videos. **Setup instructions will be provided upon enrollment.**

You can also use the app to:

- Mark your child absent
- Share drop-off notes
- Message teachers directly

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are held in **November** and again in **May**. Conference times are arranged by appointment at the school. Areas covered include formal/informal evaluation and progress reports on specific development.

Gesher Parent Committee: Get Involved

Our Gesher Parent Committee builds bridges between families, faculty, and the greater Merage JCC community. We encourage families to participate at least once during the year, whether as a room parent, event volunteer, or committee member. Your involvement not only strengthens our community but deepens your child's experience at ECLC. **To get involved, contact Carly Middlebrooks at carlym@jccoc.org.**

Behavior Philosophy

We believe every child deserves a safe, respectful, and encouraging environment where they can grow socially, emotionally, and intellectually. We view behavior as an opportunity to teach skills like empathy, communication, and problem-solving.

Faculty, staff, and families work together to set clear, reasonable expectations that are modeled and reinforced consistently. Children are included in this process to help them understand boundaries in ways that affirm their individuality and promote mutual respect. If, after reasonable support, a child is unable to adjust to the ECLC, the JCC reserves the right to request a withdrawal of the child.

Guidance Policy and Classroom Management

Our educators guide behavior using a **positive and developmental approach**. We:

- Set clear limits
- Phrase expectations in the affirmative (what children *can* do)
- Support conflict resolution through cooperation rather than control
- Recognize that behaviors like hitting, biting, or limit-testing are normal ways young children express themselves

When needed, a formal meeting with parents, teachers, and administration will be arranged to:

- Share observations from home and school
- Brainstorm strategies
- Develop and commit to a support plan
- Document the plan with a written summary

We are here for the children and want the very best for them. If further intervention is needed, we expect families to partner with us to determine the best path for each child.

Learning and Behavior Diagnosis

We welcome a wide range of learning and behavioral profiles and believe children thrive with the right support and open communication.

Parents are expected to inform the school of any previously diagnosed developmental delays or disabilities. If ongoing challenges or safety concerns arise, we may recommend an evaluation by an independent professional at the family's expense. This helps us understand the child's needs and informs accommodations or outside support. Continued enrollment may depend on evaluation outcomes and the school's ability to meet the child's needs. We will always work in partnership with families, but after reasonable efforts, we may determine that another setting is in the child's best interest.

We welcome students who work with a one-to-one aide and value the partnership this creates in supporting each child's success. Families of students with aides are required to complete a **Partnership Agreement**, which outlines requirements and expectations, including:

- Parents must notify the school immediately if there is any change to the provider or if the provider is no longer working with the student.
- If a student requires one-on-one support as a condition of enrollment, they may not be dropped off or attend school if their provider is absent or late, unless a pre-approved substitute has been arranged.

Classroom Environment

We design classrooms as an extension of home, safe, warm, and reflective of our children and families. You'll see photos, culturally meaningful items, and natural materials throughout the preschool to reinforce connection and belonging.

Classrooms include baskets of pinecones, shells, rocks, and leaves to spark curiosity about the world, along with cozy nooks draped with soft fabrics for reading or quiet play. Soft lighting, live plants, and warm textures create calm, comfortable spaces for children.

Teachers document and display photos and reflections from projects to encourage children to revisit and build upon their ideas. Daily sensory experiences from water play

to nature-based exploration are integral to learning, and we embrace messiness as part of meaningful, hands-on discovery.

Final Note

We hope this is the beginning of a long and enriching partnership with your family. Together, we can provide the best possible learning experiences for your child.

Please note: Policies are subject to change. Families will be notified via email, classroom newsletters, or the Director's newsletter. In some cases, a special parent meeting will be held to discuss changes.



ARONOFF
PRESCHOOL
The Merage JCC
AGES 0-5

Aronoff Preschool

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

Please sign and return to the front desk.

Thank you!

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

Signature

Date

