



MJDS FAMILY HANDBOOK

Your Guide to an MJDS Education

2024-25 MJDS FAMILY HANDBOOK

EMBRACING THE SPIRITUAL VALUES OF JUDAISM.
NURTURING A NATURAL LOVE OF LEARNING.
FOSTERING A RESPECT FOR SELF AND THE WORLD
THAT LASTS A LIFETIME.

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WELCOME TO MONTESSORI JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

OPENING MINDS AND HEARTS

It is our pleasure to welcome your family to Montessori Jewish Day School. Thank you for choosing MJDS for your children. You are now an integral component of our joyful community, where every family is valued. We feel privileged that you have placed your trust in us to provide a rich, safe, and nurturing learning environment for your children. We are committed to the well-being and success of every child.

MISSION

Embracing the spiritual values of Judaism.

Nurturing a natural love of learning.

Fostering a respect for self and the world that lasts a lifetime.

JUDAIC PHILOSOPHY

MJDS is an inclusive, pluralistic, egalitarian school dedicated to instilling respect for the individual and for the community. MJDS provides an engaging Jewish educational experience that embraces the diversity of Jewish practice, integrates Hebrew, and responds to a child's natural search for spiritual and intellectual growth. MJDS educates its students toward becoming knowledgeable and committed Jews and responsible citizens who love Judaism, Jewish culture, and Israel.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our view of the child at MJDS is of a unique individual on the path of self-construction. We believe that every child has an innate and natural desire to learn and has a growing tendency towards independence and developing a strong sense of self. The MJDS child thrives on social interactions with peers and in the warm, caring guidance of qualified adults. Every child will know that school and learning are joyful experiences.

VISION STATEMENT

When students graduate from MJDS, they greet new challenges with confidence. Learning and development outcomes are maximized on the completion of each program cycle and fully come to fruition at the end of the Middle School program, upon completion of Grade 8 at the school. MJDS students and alumni are creative and resourceful young people skilled in critical thinking, with abilities to focus and process information. They are sure in their Jewish identity, with Jewish values fully instilled. They are organizers and planners, they are self-motivated and self-regulating, and they demonstrate a mental flexibility beyond their years. Our graduates are ready to participate fully in the Jewish community and in the world, as willing and able contributors, and life-long learners.

GOVERNANCE

The Montessori Jewish Day School is a non-profit organization incorporated in the Province of Ontario and recognized as a charity by the Canada Revenue Agency. The Board of Directors is comprised of current parents and members of the community. Elections to the Board of Directors take place annually. The Board is bound by a written constitution of standing rules and a permanent philosophy of education. The School's Constitution is available for examination by all members of the School Community.

ACCREDITATION & LICENSING

Montessori Jewish Day School is licensed under the CCEYA (Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014) by the Ontario Ministry of Education and is a registered private school. MJDS is also an Accredited Member in good standing of the Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators (CCMA). This means that the school has met the highest standards for authentic Montessori Toddler, Casa and Elementary programs. This accreditation is reviewed and renewed every five years through undergoing rigorous self-study and external validation, to ensure that the school continues to offer the best learning environment possible. Our Adolescent program will also undergo accreditation once CCMA institutes accreditation procedures for that level.

MJDS is an affiliated school with the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto through The Julia and Henry Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Education. MJDS receives no tuition subsidy funding from UJA.

DAILY PROCEDURES

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

Toddler & Casa	Half Day: 8:45am - 12:00pm Full Day: 8:45am - 3:30pm
Elementary & Middle School*	8:30am - 4:00pm

*FRIDAY DISMISSALS ARE AT 3:30 PM FOR ALL STUDENTS

SHABBAT TIMES DURING DAYLIGHT SAVINGS

From the week of Sun November 5, 2023, to the week of Sunday March 10, 2024, Friday dismissals are at 3:00 PM due to Daylight Savings that are in effect.

RECESS & LUNCH

Toddler	Recess: Lunch:	10:45am – 11:45am 12:00pm – 12:30pm
Casa	Recess: Lunch:	11:45am – 12:30pm 12:30pm – 1:00pm
Elementary	Recess: Lunch:	11:45am – 12:25pm 12:30pm – 1:00pm
Middle School	Recess & Lunch:	Self-determined

ARRIVAL

Early Morning Care:

Starting at 8:00 am outdoors (indoors in case of inclement weather). *This program is available at no additional cost.*

Kiss & Ride:

From 8:20 to 8:45 am, at the Beth David entrance. Children will be overseen by a staff member to the playground. This convenience is for speedy, safe drop-offs, as well as for fostering independence. If more time is needed with your child, please park and escort your child to the door. **Kiss & Ride will not be available when the temperature is colder than -20°C.*

DISMISSAL

Once a student has been dismissed, parents assume the responsibility for their supervision.

Dismissal locations

Toddler	School Entrance
Casa	Playground

Lower Elementary	School Entrance
Upper Elementary	Independently to School Grounds
Middle School	Independently to School Grounds

*PLEASE NOTE THAT THE HALLWAY AND CLASSROOMS ARE FOR CHILDREN AND STAFF. PARENTS ARE REQUESTED TO DROP OFF OR PICK UP FROM THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE.

IRREGULAR PICKUP - EARLY DEPARTURE

Please inform the school when your child will be leaving earlier than the scheduled dismissal time, by phoning the office, (416) 784-5071 ext. 1, or by emailing adminmjds@mjds.ca and your child's teachers through the class email.

IRREGULAR PICKUP - AUTHORIZED PICK UP

Students will be dismissed only to individuals named on the student's authorized pick-up list. If there are any changes, parents must inform the school. If you are asking someone else to pick up your child, please inform that person where to wait and ensure they have a photo ID ready to show if they are not known to the teachers.

LATE PICK UP

If you are running late for pick-up, please contact the office via email adminmjds@mjds.ca. Students who have not been picked up within 5 minutes of dismissal time will be placed either in the Office (Half-day) or in the After School program. Parents will be invoiced accordingly.

CONTACTING THE SCHOOL WHEN ABSENT OR ARRIVING LATE:

To inform the school of an absence or late arrival, please call (416) 784-5071 ext. 1, or email adminmjds@mjds.ca and your child's teachers through the class email. Please provide the nature of the absence (illness, doctor's appointment, etc.).

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

The After School Program runs Monday to Thursday, 3:30 pm - 6:00 pm. Snacks will be provided.

**Additional fees apply*

PARKING

Parking is permitted in the centre and west end of the parking lot. Please be mindful of the following:

- The driveway in front of the school is closed to vehicles from 7:45 am - 6:00 pm.
- The east end of the parking lot is a play area used by the Elementary students and we ask that you avoid parking on the east end in the middle of the day.
- The reserved spaces for Beth David personnel should not be used.

CLOSED DAYS AND HOLIDAYS OBSERVED

Reason Closed	Dates	Days Closed
Labour Day (Statutory Holiday)	Sept 4	1
Erev Rosh Hashanah	Sept 15 12:00 pm Dismissal	0.5
Yom Kippur (Jewish Holiday)	Sept 25	1
Erev Sukkot	Sept 29 12:00 pm Dismissal	0.5
Erev Shmini Atzeret	Oct 6	0.5
Thanksgiving (Statutory Holiday)	Oct 9	0.5
Professional Development Day	Nov 17	1
Parent Teacher Conference	Nov 24*	1
December Break	December 25-29	5
Winter Break	January 1-5	5
Professional Development Day	January 8*	1
Professional Development Day	February 14*	1
Mid-Winter Break	Feb 15-16	2
Family Day	Feb 19	1
Purim (Jewish Holiday)	March 22 12:00 pm Dismissal	0.5
Good Friday	March 29	1
Passover Break (Jewish Holidays)	April 22-30	7
Professional Development Day	May 17	1
Victoria Day (Statutory Holiday)	May 20	1
Shavuot (Jewish Holiday)	June 12-13	2
Last Day of School	June 21 12:00 pm Dismissal	0.5
Professional Development Days	June 24-28*	5

*NB: Please note: On Nov 24, Jan 8, Feb 14, June 24, June 25, Toddler and Casa classes will open from 8 am-12 pm.

SNOW DAYS

In case of severe weather, MJDS may call a snow day, in consensus with the other Jewish Day Schools. Parents will be informed by 7:00 am via:

- Transparent Classroom Announcement
- Email
- MJDS [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

FIELD TRIPS

Refer to Program Statement in the Appendix for details.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

TRANSPARENT CLASSROOM

You will receive notifications from Transparent Classroom regarding your child's activities, photos, teacher updates, anecdotes and so forth. Follow links to any Montessori material to see a full description and purpose of

the activity. Transparent Classroom is also used to register for most programs, and to complete and submit student information forms. Teachers use Transparent Classroom for lesson planning, record keeping and written progress reports.

MJDS SOCIAL MEDIA

- Follow us on MJDS [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to keep up-to-date on the latest news, special events and great day-to-day learning at MJDS.

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent Teacher conferences will take place in Fall and Spring. You will receive a calendar invitation to book your time slot. Upper Elementary students write their own self-evaluations and participate in the parent-student-teacher conferences, while Middle School conducts student-led conferences.

PROGRESS REPORTS

- **Toddlers:** Bring home a photo album in December and June
- **Casa, Elementary and Middle School:** Fall and Spring, through Transparent Classroom

ASSESSMENT & RESOURCES

An assessment would be required if you or your child's teachers feel that additional support may be beneficial for your child. Before you proceed with an assessment, it is very important that you consult with the Head of School; this will help you understand your child's academic needs, as well as what constitutes a quality assessment.

MJDS offers in-school services for Speech and Occupational Therapy through the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). For Psycho-Educational Assessment, MJDS can recommend the services of a trusted psycho-educational consultant who is knowledgeable of Montessori pedagogy and of MJDS specifically.

TESTING

Evaluation of students' progress is founded on observation, direct interaction between students and teachers, and the students' material work output when applicable. It is important to note that the curriculum is process based and, as such, so are the expectations.

Assessment is most meaningful when using tools specifically designed to measure the unique characteristics and curriculum of the Montessori environment. So as to have and report on a well-rounded view of children's progress, we use a variety of tools in addition to the daily assessment of progress that takes place in our classrooms.

Assessment tools include:

1. Observation
2. Informal regular testing / The Three-Period Lesson
3. Transparent Classroom
4. Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS)

5. Mastery & Transference
6. Student Self-Assessment and Self-Reporting in Upper Elementary and Middle School

The Canadian Achievement Test (CAT tests) are given to all students from Grade 2 through 8. Encompassing the Ontario curriculum, this testing protocol is designed to assess the essential learning outcomes of skills in reading, language, spelling, and mathematics. CAT tests compare MJDS students with students of the same age and grade across Canada.

They are administered twice a year: in the Fall for diagnostic assessment, and in the Spring as a progress check. Overall and consistently, MJDS students outperform the norm.

**Results are available to parents on request and are incorporated into the progress reports.*

INDEPENDENT SUPPORT PLAN

Upon review of a professional psycho-educational assessment, MJDS may develop an Independent Support Plan (ISP) for a child to identify specific goals and accommodations if these are required by both the child's learning profile and are not already part of the instructional supports offered to all students. For example, support already includes individual and small group learning, with opportunities for executive function and socio-emotional learning. The ISP would be developed in collaboration with parents and teachers. The ISP will be discussed during parent-teacher conferences.

LIFE AT MJDS

NURTURING A PEACEFUL SCHOOL COMMUNITY

At MJDS we think of Peace from both Jewish and Montessori perspectives:

- *Shalom* שלום refers to much more than the cessation of war, it means wholeness, completeness, and spiritual fulfilment: "All that is written in the Torah was written for the sake of Peace" (Midrash Tanhuma, Shoftim).

- Dr. Montessori's view is perfectly congruent: *"Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war"* (Maria Montessori, *Education and Peace*).

B'YACHAD

B'Yachad means 'together'. This unique MJDS program celebrates the leadership qualities of the older students as they model peacefulness and engage with their younger peers. Connections are made that facilitate a more meaningful experience of community.

TZEDAKAH

Charity plays an important role at MJDS. Every Friday, all students are invited to contribute to the tzedakah box. Additionally, Middle School students donate a portion of their profits from their microbusiness to charity.

FOOD

MJDS adheres to the following Kosher practices:

- Any food coming from an outside source must be Kosher.
- No pork or shellfish is allowed.
- No meat and milk products are served at the same meal.

MJDS respects the diversity of practice within individual homes, while also requesting that families respect the standard observed by the school. MJDS adheres to the Kosher practices above at all school events—on-site and off-site— including field trips, overnight trips, parent activities, committee meetings, and Board meetings.

**MJDS is a Peanut/Tree Nut-Safe environment. No items containing nuts or nut products are permitted to come to school.*

**Healthy snacks are provided by MJDS daily.*

Full-day students bring a packed lunch from home, with the following guidelines:

- Must have an ice pack.
- Should respect kashrut - either dairy, parve or meat, and no tref. Should be well-balanced and nutritious.
- Packed in reusable child-friendly containers-labelled with name.
- Toddler, Casa, Lower & Upper Elementary students must bring a fabric placement to be used daily.
- Labelled & filled water bottle.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are recognized in the classroom in a way that celebrates your child while minimizing interruptions to regular daily routines.

- **Toddler:** Celebrated in class with peers and teachers. Parents may provide a fruit or vegetable tray.
- **Casa:** Children enjoy the [Montessori Birthday Circle](#) and parents and other family members are invited to take part in the celebration. On the day, please send your child to school with printed pictures of themselves throughout the years. A fruit or vegetable tray is welcome.

- **Elementary & Middle School:** Birthdays are observed in class with peers and teachers. Lower Elementary students celebrate by bringing in a fruit or vegetable platter to share, and by making two wishes - one for themselves, and one for the world.
- **Upper Elementary and Middle School:** Students are encouraged to bring kosher and nut-free ingredients and a recipe from home to prepare a cake or special food at school to share with their peers and teachers. (No cake mixes or canned frosting please). Please be in touch with your child's teachers ahead of time if you and your child would like to bake at school for further guidance.

**At all levels children are encouraged to bring a gift or special item such as a plant, a book to give to the class.*

CLOTHING

Students should be free to choose their clothing, with the following points in mind:

Days are active! Wear comfortable, unrestricting, and washable clothes.

School-Appropriate: Not be overly tight or revealing and should cover midriff and shoulders.

Fridays and Holidays: Children are encouraged to wear white.

Labelling: All clothing and items—including footwear—must be clearly labelled with the full name of the student. Unlabeled items will be labelled by the teacher.

Encourage independence: Clothing should be easy to manipulate. For younger children, we suggest clothing such as sweatpants, shoes with Velcro closures, and pull-on items that are easy for them to take on and off independently.

Footwear: All students must have a separate pair of indoor and outdoor shoes. Indoor shoes should have a non-marking rubber sole and be easy for the student to put on and take off independently. Running shoes are ideal. Indoor shoes are kept at school in your child's space. Outdoor shoes must be seasonal and weather appropriate.

**Non-sports sandals and crocs are not permitted for indoor or outdoor wear.*

Outdoor Clothing: Must be seasonal and weather appropriate. It is the parents' responsibility to check the weather each day to ensure that their children are properly prepared for outdoor play. This includes:

- **Winter:** Snow pants, warm snow jacket, waterproof mittens/gloves, hat, neck warmer or scarf and boots
- **Spring/Fall:** Hats and proper jackets
- **Warm weather/Summer:** Sun hat and labelled sunscreen, provided by the parents and kept at school.
- **Rain:** Rain boots, rain jacket with a hood, splash pants

Phys Ed: On gym days, students must have running shoes with non-marking soles, a t-shirt or sweatshirt, and track pants or sweatpants.

Change of Clothes: Toddler and Casa students must always have a full change of clothing at school. For Casa students, these clothes are kept in a small personal bin (provided by the school) in the student's cubby space; the Toddlers keep their spare clothes in their backpack. Recommended items include underwear, socks/tights, pants/skirt, shirt. Please replenish items as they are worn.

MOVING UP & CLASS PLACEMENT

As a child prepares to complete one cycle of learning at MJDS, their transition to the following cycle is facilitated cooperatively between the teachers at the present level and the next one. Prior to the end of term, the 'moving up' child will begin visiting their new classroom. Familiar teachers and peers, and known classroom materials, make these transitions smooth and exciting. Factors such as classroom balance, gender mix, and cohort suitability are considered when determining class placement. While we are happy to hear parents' requests, classroom placement is at the sole discretion of the school.

DISCIPLINE & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

At MJDS, the guiding principles are: *"be kind, be respectful, be safe"*. We recognize a child's need for self-expression, so before intervening, staff are trained to take a moment to observe. If safety is a concern, then intervention is immediate. When children are disruptive, distraction or redirection are used. Children are encouraged to enact their own conflict resolution and are shown the tools for achieving this. We are always mindful to preserve the dignity of each and every one of the children and the peacefulness of the environment. MJDS does not tolerate bullying behaviour.

TOYS & ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

Children are asked to leave all toys at home. Books and cultural objects brought from home to share with their classmates are encouraged. Kindly make sure that all items are labeled. Use of cell phones, video games and other electronic devices are not permitted during school hours, events and trips.

LOST & FOUND

The school maintains a Lost & Found. At the end of each term, parents will be notified and collected articles will be displayed. Unclaimed articles will be donated to charity.

PARENT PARTNERSHIP & PARTICIPATION

Parents and MJDS form a partnership, with one goal in mind -- the best school experience possible for your child. Understanding what we do is the best way to support your child. Parent involvement is encouraged and valued; by working together, your child will gain the most from their time at MJDS.

PARENT OBSERVATIONS

Parents are encouraged to observe in the classrooms once the children have settled in and established routines. The purpose of classroom observations is four-fold: (1) to provide parents with an insight into the unique environment that is the Montessori classroom; (2) to help parents better understand how their child learns and the role of the teacher in their child's education; (3) to help parents become more engaged with their child's education; and (4) to enhance the child's experience of school by sharing it with significant adults.

MJDS provides opportunities on a regular basis throughout the year for parents who wish to observe their child in the classroom. Parents are notified via school email of when observation times are to take place and a sign-up will be offered.

Prior to entering the classroom, parents will meet with a member of the Leadership Team, to prepare them for the observation.

Following the observation, teachers will be available to briefly meet with the parent outside the classroom and answer questions about the observation. The teacher has discretion whether to answer the question at that time, or whether to schedule a longer meeting to answer the questions.

PARENT EDUCATION

MJDS hosts a number of parent education and information events and we count on your participation. A sampling of evenings includes Curriculum Nights, Moving-Up Nights, the "Journey of Discovery," Coffees and various workshops and lectures. Participation in these events is highly encouraged.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

We welcome your presence in a myriad of ways, some of which are listed below:

- Join community events.
- Attend parent evenings; they are informative and social too.
- Use Transparent Classroom as your portal into your child's environment, and as a conversation starter with your child.
- Follow us on social media (MJDS [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) and read our school communications.
- Attend the Annual General Meeting.
- Consider joining the Board of Directors.
- Consider joining the "Ruach Team", a group of parents committed to helping grow MJDS.

MJDS EDUCATION: THE PROGRAMS

Every classroom at MJDS has an integrated team consisting of certified Montessori guides and qualified Hebrew-speaking Judaic Studies teachers. Each classroom is a mixed-age group in a carefully prepared environment designed to suit the developmental needs and physical size of the students. Every classroom creates a special atmosphere by marking Havdalah at the beginning of the week and welcoming Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday. The acquisition of Hebrew and immersion of Jewish practice progresses at each stage. Essential to Montessori philosophy is the demonstration and practice of grace and courtesy, interwoven throughout the programs at every level.

TODDLER COMMUNITY - KITAT ZOHAR AND KITAT TAMAR (Age 18 months-3 years)

Montessori Education starts here. As soon as you enter, you are struck by the scale of everything. There are small tables and chairs, lowered fixtures, shelves at a toddler's waist height and so forth. This enables our youngest children to feel safe and confident in their own environment.

The Toddlers participate in group and individual activities.

- **Practical Life:** Activities that make up daily life hone children's motor skills and promote independence as the children look after themselves and their environment.
- **Sensorial:** These activities develop sensory awareness, and function to refine all of the young child's senses. This nurtures their ability to classify sensory impressions, which supports their need for order.
- **Jewish Life:** Interwoven throughout MJDS Education are facets of Jewish life. The children hear Hebrew spoken through the day, participate in weekly rituals, and experience the cycle of the holidays.
- **Motor Skills:** Through the use of manipulatives, the motor exercises develop eye-hand coordination, strengthen fine and gross motor skills, and help the children to formulate spatial relationships.
- **Language:** Crucial at this age is the acquisition of language; the language materials in both English and Hebrew build vocabulary and facilitate the child's quest to express their needs and interests.
- **Cognitive Skills:** The children develop the ability to focus through exercises of matching, sorting, sequencing, grouping -- all excellent preparation for the development of the mathematical mind.
- **Social Skills:** Social lessons and experiences give toddlers the skills needed to live and work within a community. The children learn about sharing and consideration for others and are provided the tools to recognize feelings within themselves and others. At a young age, our toddlers are internalizing empathy and a sense of community.
- **Independence:** Intrinsic in everything the toddlers do is the fostering of their independence. Whether it is dressing themselves, pouring a cup of water, or wiping a spill, it all leads to a sense of accomplishment and pride. The words, "I did it!" are often heard ringing out.
- **Toilet learning:** As each child shows readiness (physically, cognitively, and emotionally), toilet learning becomes part of the daily activity. MJDS faculty work in tandem with parents.
- **Eating:** Social rituals and behaviors are developed during snack and lunch time. The children set and clear their own place and sit and visit socially.
- **Cooking and Baking:** Here the toddlers integrate so many of the skills they're learning: the development of fine motor movement, an indirect introduction to numeracy with measuring, the sensorial aspects of touching, smelling, and tasting, the ability to watch, wait their turn and share, and most importantly, their pride in seeing the results of their work. Seasonal recipes, and recipes for many of the Jewish Holidays will be selected.

In order to be enrolled in our Toddler Program, children must be walking and feeding independently. Milk bottles and pacifiers are not permitted during school time.

CASA DI BAMBINI - KITAT GEFEN AND KITAT MAZAL (Age 3-6 years)

The MJDS Education that began in the Toddler room continues and progresses in Casa. The same areas of activities -- Judaic Studies, Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, plus the introduction of Math and Culture -- are used for individual lessons, both in small groups and independently. The quest for independence is still strong, so we understand what it means to 'help them to do it themselves.' Materials are autodidactic, and skills are perfected as activities are repeated. Longer and more complex activities develop concentration and sequential thinking and are excellent preparation for the introduction of the writing, reading and math materials.

- **Jewish Life:** The children participate in the cornerstones of Jewish life, including t'fillot, mitzvot, tzedakah, and the chaggim. The cycles of Jewish life are experienced with the holidays and rituals and form lifelong Jewish values and a love of Israel. The acquisition of Hebrew continues, as the students begin to converse, write, and read in Hebrew. The same respect, joy and love of learning fostered in the Montessori curriculum is also instilled in the Judaic Studies program.
- **Practical Life:** Activities that children observe being performed in the home are present in the class. Plentiful hand work using a pincer grip prepares for holding writing implements. Taking care of themselves -- especially with their clothing -- furthers the children's quest for independence.
- **Sensorial:** Increasingly more refined, these materials require grading, advanced nomenclature, and developing memory skills. Geometric concepts are indirectly introduced and will reappear later with the math materials.
- **Language:** The continued development of spoken language provides the building blocks for the introduction of the sounds of letters and the letters themselves. Writing progresses in several steps, which leads naturally to reading. From there, the children are exposed to grammar, story writing, wordplay and so forth. The foundation has been laid for becoming a life-long lover of books.
- **Math:** As the child understands quantity in a tangible way, they move towards the abstract concepts of numeracy. Basing each activity on what has preceded it, Casa students work through numbers 1 - 10, teens and tens, mathematical operations, and so on. Multiplication, Division and Fractions may be introduced in Casa.
- **Culture:** A Casa student is discovering the world...geography, botany, music, science -- the Casa environment offers a rich sampling of it all. With the sensorial child in mind, activities and materials are designed to attract and encourage exploration.
- **French:** Casa students have French three times a week, in small groups and individual lessons.
- **Off site activities:** children take part in field trips, park visits, and neighbourhood walks.

Children must be fully toilet independent before entering the Casa program. Children must attend full-days once they are 4 years of age and older.

ELEMENTARY - KITAT MAGEN DAVID AND KITAT SHALHEVET (Grades 1-6, Age 6-12 years)

The Elementary Program at MJDS occupies two levels, Lower -- Kitat Magen David (Grades 1, 2 and 3), and Upper -- Kitat Shalhevet (Grades 4, 5, and 6). Children between the ages of six and twelve are entering a new stage in their lives - as they have become more aware of the world around them, their creativity and imaginations are sparked with every new discovery. They are keenly interested in moral issues; they hunger to explore; as well to understand the reasons for things. The Elementary students will develop problem-solving and in-depth research skills. By working in small groups, they learn teamwork and group communication skills. Using their own judgement and making their own decisions, they strengthen their mental independence and develop critical thinking skills.

The launching point for a Montessori Elementary Program are the *Five Great Lessons*. At MJDS, a sixth lesson is added to integrate the Jewish narrative. These are big and bold stories that present the whole, or 'cosmic,' view of the world. Each lesson is designed to first give the child an inspiring 'big picture' view of the world and life; by awakening the students' imagination and curiosity, they are motivated to do further research.

The Six Great Lessons, presented every year are:

- Coming of the Universe and the Earth
- Bereshit / Genesis - The Creation of the World
- Coming of Life
- Coming of Human Beings
- The Story of Language and Communication
- The Story of Numbers

The Great Lessons provide the core foundation to the elementary curriculum. In essence, the students are offered the universe so that they can find their place within it. Guided by the Great Lessons, the MJDS Elementary Program fosters excellence in academics and a Jewish identity bolstered by strong social, communal, and personal values.

The Elementary curriculum incorporates:

- Judaic Studies
- Hebrew (beginning in Grade 6, the Bishvil Ha'Ivrit program is used)
- French
- History, Geography, Biology, Ecology, Art
- Instrumental & choral music
- Performance arts and physical education
- The Community - at - Large: Opportunities to explore the larger community, through self-organized trips to museums, theatres, children's film festivals, etc., as well as an annual overnight trip for the Upper Elementary community. Past trips have included Montreal, Ottawa and camping.
- Volunteerism: Embracing the Jewish value of tzedakah, students volunteer to make a difference in areas where help is needed.

MIDDLE SCHOOL - KITAT RIMON (Grades 7-8, Age 12-14 years)

The Middle School at MJDS is truly a unique learning environment created for the adolescent student and supported by developmental research. With a rigorous curriculum, this program is designed to expand the social, personal, and intellectual capabilities of each student. We expect hard work, solid effort, and accountability. Our adolescent students do real and meaningful work of value; this work imbues each student with a sense of worth. We provide an experience that well prepares young people for the transition from MJDS to High School.

The approach to academics is multi-faceted: direct-teaching methods are interlaced with experiential, exploratory and self-correcting ones. As the MJDS program supports the development of the whole adolescent, so does the work itself: it is largely inter-disciplinary and cross-curricular.

The Middle School forms its own community within the MJDS community. Their program encompasses:

- **Erdkinder Trip:** The Middle School year begins with an overnight trip for the students and teachers, for a combination of individual growth and reflection and a team-building experience.
- **Odyssey Trip:** In the spring term, the students plan, prepare for and implement a class trip. In prior years the children have gone to Washington, D.C., New York, Quebec City, and Niagara on the Lake.
- **Judaic Studies:** A deeper exploration of Judaism takes place in the Middle School. The students will learn *Tanach*, *Mishna* and the Jewish Sages. Jewish history, contemporary Israel, Jewish ritual, and advanced Hebrew are studied. Here, our students can understand that the study of text is a means for applying Jewish values to everyday life.
- **French:** French is taught three times a week by a native French speaker. Through a creative mix of art, poetry, recipes and history, the children are delving deeper into French culture while expanding their knowledge of the written and spoken language.
- **Specialists:** Middle School students participate in physical education twice weekly and a creative music program once a week.
- **Guest speakers:** Visiting professionals enhance General Studies by sharing their expertise in various fields.
- **The B'nai Mitzvah year:** Kita Rimon students turn 12 and 13 while in Middle School. This is the year of their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and MJDS recognizes this with the presentation of a commemorative gift and ceremony. The students embark on their B'nai Mitzvah project - a year of volunteering for a cause that has personal meaning.
- **Largely independent work:** Emphasis on ownership and responsibility and supported by daily assessment and evaluation.
- **Community Meetings:** All issues are discussed, the agenda for the day is set, and acknowledgements are shared.
- **Food Preparation:** On a rotating basis, small groups of students budget, plan, shop and prepare a nutritious lunch every day for the group.
- **Micro-Economy:** An experiential and interdisciplinary endeavor that incorporates social studies, math, media, technology, language, and practical skills. Each year, the Middle School micro-business raises funds for their class trip at year-end. A portion of all money raised is set aside for *tzedakah*.
- **Seminar:** A structured approach to the multi-faceted exploration of a text.
- **School-wide Responsibility:** The students contribute to the school community by taking on responsibilities that benefit the entire student body and staff. These tasks may include shoveling snow, classroom laundry, child supervision during parent evenings, etc.
- **Community outings:** Learning opportunities are everywhere, and these students are exploring the community around them. These outings support their need for responsible freedom and independence. They include trips to museums, theatre, natural settings, visits with other local communities, self-planned excursions, and neighbourhood projects.

CONTINUOUS CLASSROOM - TODDLER & CASA SUMMER PROGRAM (Age 18 months - 6 years)

Continuous Classroom offers the Toddler and Casa children the continuity of their established routine in their familiar academic and social surroundings. Activities will include using the Montessori and Judaic materials, and, because it's summer, there will be more time spent outdoors, for play and for learning. Plus - water play!

This 7-week program gives families the flexibility of enrolling in 2-week blocks (except for session 4) to allow for family Summer holidays. For incoming families, enrolling in the summer program provides your child with an easy transition into the school year.

ELIGIBLE CHILDREN

- Current MJDS students enrolled for the upcoming school year.
- Children enrolled in the Toddler and Year 1 & 2 Casa programs.

SESSION DATES AND COSTS 2023

	<i>Continuous Classroom takes place Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 3:30pm</i>				
	Session 1* July 4 - 14	Session 2 July 17 – 28	Session 3* July 31 – August 11	Session 4 August 14 - 18	Total
Frozen Fees	\$702	\$780	\$702	\$390	\$2574
Fees with CWELCC Rebate (52.75%)	\$331.70	\$368.55	\$331.70	\$184.28	\$1,216.23

*(no program Monday, July 3rd and August 7th)

CHAGGIM - THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS

At MJDS, students enjoy a rich experience of Jewish Life and cycles. They learn about and celebrate all the Jewish holidays through:

- Meaning and ritual
- Blessings
- Traditions and customs
- Food
- Song

Various aspects of each holiday are explored at MJDS. Each year, we also highlight three holidays to be studied in greater depth.

Outlined are some of the Chaggim observed at school and ideas for how to connect these practices at home.

HAVDALAH

As the children start a new week at school, they take part in a Havdalah ceremony in the classroom. By bringing Havdalah into the home on Saturday evening, your children will experience the separation between the end of Shabbat and the start of a new week.

SHABBAT

The children observe Kabbalat Shabbat every Friday. They are asked to bring tzedakah and they are encouraged to wear white and a kippah or head covering. You can welcome Shabbat into your home by lighting candles and reciting the blessings. You may sign up for our MJDS challah program and have a fresh-baked challah coming home with your child every Friday.

ROSH HASHANAH

Coinciding with the start of the school year, it is the perfect time to talk about new beginnings and to celebrate growth and renewal. The children learn about Rosh Hashanah during the month of Elul.

YOM KIPPUR

Tashlich is celebrated annually leading up to Yom Kippur, which includes activities for learning and reflection for the whole family, ideally in nature at a river, such as the Don River at Earl Bales Park. Erev Yom Kippur is an opportunity to create new goals for the upcoming year.

SUKKOT

The moment of joy after the solemnity of Yom Kippur. Sukkot is the fall harvest festival of the Jewish calendar and is celebrated just before the earth goes into dormancy for the winter. Sukkot has two foundations: a historical one and an agricultural one. At home you can build your own Sukkah, make decorations with your children and eat outside. It's a great time for storytelling.

SIMCHAT TORAH

Simchat Torah celebrates the annual cycle of reading the Torah. Each year on this joyous holiday, Jews worldwide complete the cycle of Torah reading and immediately begin reading from the book of Genesis. This cycle of reading illustrates the importance that Judaism places not only on the Torah, but also on study. Since Simchat Torah celebrates the cycle of learning and beginning again, it is seen as a perfect time to celebrate Jewish education. MJDS children participate in the ritual of hakafah (revolution or circuit) made when the Torah is taken out of the ark and paraded around the synagogue.

CHANUKAH

This is a time of light and laughter, and a moment to reflect on our history and the power of faith. It's about tradition, family and celebration. To support this at home, you can help your children make candles, *levivot* (latkes), gifts or wrapping. Start conversations by talking about your family traditions when you were growing up and encourage your children to tell you about what they've learned about Chanukah at school.

TU BISHVAT

Tu Bishvat is a holiday honoring trees, the environment, and the land of Israel. We do a special Seder on Tu Bishvat. Using a mystical interpretation of the Bible, rituals were developed for rejoicing over trees in a format loosely based on the Passover Seder. For example, the Tu Bishvat Seder includes drinking four cups of wine – just as on Passover – but in this case, they represent seasonal changes.

PURIM

The festival of Purim is fun! Dress up, read the story, dance, and sing together.

There are four mitzvot in regard to Purim:

- **Hear the Megillah** – make your own *ra'ashan* (greggor or noisemaker), decorate it, and take it with you to synagogue.
- **Eat and rejoice** - sit together with your family and friends, for dessert you can bake *Oznei Haman* (*hamantashen*).
- **Give gifts of food: mishloach manot** – you can prepare your own origami box, decorate it, and send it to family or friends.
- **Tzedakah** – as a family, give items to a food drive or donate to any organization you choose.

PESACH

Children can, and should be, an integral part of the Passover preparation and Seder. There are many ways they can participate, depending on their age. They may help by cleaning the house of chametz, setting the table and folding the napkins, peeling the hard-boiled eggs, making the charoset and so forth. By involving your children in preparing the Seder plate, you can discuss what each piece symbolizes.

YOM HA'ATZMAUT

Israel's Independence Day. The Middle School students lead activities for the whole school. All the children wear blue and white, *kachol ve lavan*, to mark this joyful spirit of the day.

SHAVUOT

On Shavuot, we commemorate the gift of Torah to the nation of Israel and mark the occasion of the first harvest in the land of Israel. Shavuot is often celebrated with 'white' or dairy foods.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

TUITION FEES AND POLICIES*

Fee for Services

As part of the Canada Wide Early Learning Child Care (CWELCC) program, fees associated with Toddler and Casa programs are frozen. The school's programs, fees, and rates after CWELCC rebates are listed below.

Half Day Programs	Tuition	Tuition after 52.75% CWELCC Rebate	Non-tuition Snack Fee	Non-tuition Snack Fee after 52.75% CWELCC Rebate
Toddler 8:45am – 12:00pm	\$9,500**	\$4,488.75	\$250	\$118.12
Casa 8:45am – 12:00pm	\$9,900**	\$4,677.75	\$250	\$118.12
Full Day Programs	Tuition	Tuition after 52.75% CWELCC Rebate	Non-tuition Snack Fee	Non-tuition Snack Fee after 52.75% CWELCC Rebate
Toddler 8:45am – 3:30pm	\$16,500**	\$7,796.25	\$250	\$118.12
Casa 8:45am – 3:30pm	\$18,400**	\$8,694.00	\$250	\$118.12
Lower & Upper Elementary 8:30am – 4:00pm	\$18,950	N/A	\$300	N/A
Middle School 8:30am – 4:00pm	\$19,750	N/A	\$1000	N/A

** NB: Please note. Since Casa and Toddler classes are closed for 3 days more than the mandatory maximum of 20 days according to our CWELCC agreement, Casa and Toddler tuition will be reduced as follows: Half-Day: Toddler \$131.03, Casa: \$126.90. Full Day: Toddler: \$227.58, Casa: \$253.80. These amounts will be applied as a credit against payments in May 2024. For children beginning school after September 2023, and for whom payment plans have not yet been implemented in Tuio, our tuition software, pro-rated monthly rates for Toddler and Casa programs will be based on program fees as follows:

- Half-Day: Toddler \$9368.97, Casa: \$9,763.45.
- Full Day: Toddler: \$16,272.42, Casa: \$18,146.20.

As a non-profit, self-funded school, MJDS receives no tuition or bursary assistance from the government or UJA. Despite that, we do have a limited self-funded tuition subsidy program.

Payment Methods

TuioPay (tuiopay.com) is the online payment system used by MJDS. Upon registration, every family will be invited to establish an online account. Once banking information is set up, parents may use *TuioPay* for direct debit payments. MJDS will also accept payment by check or cash. Credit cards via PayPal may be used for additional non-tuition activities and fees; payment by credit card may be subject to an additional processing fee.

ADMISSION AND DISCHARGE POLICY

Parents complete an application to express their interest in enrolling their children to MJDS. If the application is deemed accepted, parents complete an enrollment form with a deposit of \$750 and an administration fee of \$250. The administration fee for re-enrollment may be waived if parents re-enroll within an Early Bird period communicated to the parents.

Payment Schedule

The payment schedules at MJDS are as follows:

Toddler: 10 monthly payments, September - June

Casa: 10 monthly payments, April - June & September - March

Elementary & Middle School: 12 monthly payments, April - March OR 2 lump sum payments, April & September

If alternative arrangements are required, please contact the Head of School

Requested Withdrawal

Should the Administration ask a child to leave the school permanently for any reason, or if a program change is recommended, a pro-rated refund will be extended.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance is available for qualifying families. For more information about this program and how to apply, please contact the Head of School.

Refunds

In the event that a family chooses to withdraw after enrollment is confirmed, a refund may be possible in accordance with the MJDS refund policy. The refund policy is designed around levels of financial responsibility. Levels of financial responsibility are based on how soon before school starts a decision to withdraw is made, as the timing reflects the school's ability to match staffing costs with tuition received. Where the parents' payments exceed the responsibilities enumerated below, a withdrawal form must be completed to receive a refund.

Financial responsibility withdrawal dates for the school year are listed below:

- By May 31 before school starts OR within 30 days of enrollment date financial obligations are as follows:
Non-refundable tuition deposit of \$750 + \$250 Administrative Fee:
- From enrollment until July 31: \$1000 + 15% of remainder
- After August 15th \$1000 + 20% of remainder
- After September 1st \$1000 + 30% of remainder
- After October 1st \$1000 + 40% of remainder
- After November 1st \$1000 + 50% of remainder
- After December 1st \$1000 + 60% of remainder
- After January 1st \$1000 + 70% of remainder
- After February 1st \$1000 + 80% of remainder
- After March 1st \$1000 + 90% of remainder
- After April 1st Full Tuition

Note: If a program change for a child is recommended by the administration that results in a withdrawal from the school, a full pro-rated refund will be given without penalties.

PARENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing. Responses and outcomes will be provided verbally, or in writing upon request. The level of detail provided to the parent/guardian will respect and maintain the confidentiality of all parties involved.

An initial response to an issue or concern will be provided to parents/guardians within 2 business day(s). The person who raised the issue/concern will be kept informed throughout the resolution process.

Contacts:

Head of School: Sarit Yurovitch 416-784-5071 ext 2 or sarit@mjds.ca

Vice Principal: Steve Bibla 416-784-5071 ext 4 or steve@mjds.ca

Chair of the Board of Directors: Jacob Jesin or chair@mjds.ca

Ministry of Education, Licensed Child Care Help Desk: 1-877-510-5333 or childcare_ontario@ontario.ca

*Please see appendix for the full Parent Issues and Concerns Policy. * (O. Reg. 126/16, s. 31.)

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

In the event of an emergency situation at the school, as per our Emergency Management Policy, parents will be notified as soon as possible via email and by phone, if necessary.

HEALTH

Maintaining a healthy school community

A student must stay at home if exhibiting any of the following symptoms in the prior 24 hours, or requires medication in order to suppress symptoms or reduce fever:

- Fever (>37.9 Degrees Celcius)
- Pink eye

A student must stay at home if exhibiting any of the following symptoms in the prior 48 hours, or requires medication in order to suppress symptoms:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

Students must be **symptom-free for at least 24 or 48 hours**, according to the list above, before returning to school. For example, if a child is sent home from school on Monday with gastro issues, they may not return to school until Thursday at the earliest.

Medication

When a child is required to take medication while at school, parents must provide the school with a completed consent form. Attached in original email and available in the Main Office:

- the name of the student
- the name of the medication

- where/how it is stored
- the strength of dosage
- when and how often the medication is to be administered
- written instructions for giving the medication during school hours

**The medicine provided to the school must be in its original packaging, including the prescription label with the child's name. Please do not send the medication in the child's lunchbox or backpack. Any medication should be given to the Office or the child's teacher and will be administered by school personnel. To ensure no allergic reaction to the medication takes place while at school, medication must have first been administered at home by the parents.*

Immunization

Students are required to remain up-to-date with their immunizations. Parents of Toddler and Casa children are required to provide a copy of their child's immunization **record before the first day of class**. Parents of Elementary students are **responsible for reporting their child's immunization status every year**.

Children should be immunized against the following diseases or conditions:

- **REQUIRED BY LAW:** Diphtheria, Tetanus (Lockjaw), Polio, Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED:** Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Hepatitis B, Influenza, Varicella (Chicken Pox), Meningococcal disease-group C (Meningitis and Meningococcaemia) and HPV (Human Papillomavirus; Gardasil free to Grade 7 & 8 students)

**Parents who object to the mandatory immunization policy should contact the school for further information.*

Head Lice Checks

MJDS arranges a professional lice check at least once a year. Parents will be notified prior to the scheduled dates. If a student is discovered to have head lice, the school will contact the parents. Parents who discover their child has head lice should immediately contact the school.

GIVING TO MJDS

As a non-profit school, MJDS relies on revenues from tuition and fees as well as the generous support of our donors. MJDS receives no outside agency support, and no tuition assistance funding from UJA Federation, and is fully self-funded. We are always grateful for the support from the MJDS community.

MJDS SCHOOL FUND

Your [support](#) allows us to enhance and enrich our programming, including new Montessori materials, specialized materials for arts, science, and technology, sports equipment, facility upgrades, professional development, and tuition assistance.

DAY OF GIVING

Day of Giving is a collaboration amongst Jewish Day Schools in the GTA to highlight the needs of our schools. This annual campaign takes place in March. Thanks to our generous matching donors, on Day of Giving your donation will be matched to maximize the power of your gift.

Interested in being a transformational matching donor for our next Day of Giving?

Please e-mail development@mjds.ca.

LIFE AND LEGACY

Supporting MJDS with a legacy gift ensures a vibrant future for our school for generations to come.

To join our Legacy Circle or learn more, email development@mjds.ca.

"The child learns everything without knowing he is learning, treading always in the path of joy"

Dr. Maria Montessori

"Educate the youngster according to his way, then, even when he grows old, he shall not depart from it"

Proverbs 22:6

CONTACT INFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Office is open Monday - Thursday, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm and on Fridays from 8:00 am – 3:30pm.

**Excluding days when school is closed or scheduled for early closing.*

Telephone: 416 784-5071 ext. 1

Email: adminmjds@mjds.ca

Fax: 416 784-2049

MJDS Website: www.mjds.ca

Facebook: www.facebook.com/montessorijewishdayschool

Instagram: [@mjdstoronto](https://www.instagram.com/mjdstoronto)

CONTACTING THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Big Picture. Montessori philosophy and pedagogy, Jewish Life curriculum, procedures, etc.:

Head of School
Sarit Yurovitch Madar
T: 416-784-5071 ext. 4
E: sarit@mjds.ca

Vice Principal
Steve Bibla
T: 416-784-5071 ext. 3
E: steve@mjds.ca

Education Coordinator
Matthew Cooper
T: 416-784-5071 ext. 2
E: matthew@mjds.ca

Administrative Services. Program registration, scheduling, general inquiries, etc.:

Office Administrator
Katie Tyrrell
T: 416-784-5071 ext. 1
E: adminmjds@mjds.ca

CONTACTING THE TEACHERS

To inquire about your child's classroom experience, please contact their classroom directly:

Toddler Community - Kitat Zohar:	zohar@mjds.ca
Toddler Community - Kitat Tamar:	tamar@mjds.ca
Casa - Kitat Mazal:	mazal@mjds.ca
Casa - Kitat Gefen:	gefen@mjds.ca
Lower Elementary - Kitat Magen David:	magendavid@mjds.ca
Upper Elementary - Kitat Shalhevet:	shalhevet@mjds.ca
Middle School - Kitat Rimon:	rimon@mjds.ca

**Please allow 48 hours for a response. If urgent, please call or email the Office.*

APPENDIX

VOLUNTEER & STUDENT SUPERVISION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are an important part of the MJDS community. They are individuals who donate their time and energy with a view toward helping MJDS staff and students reach their full potential. Volunteer participation in various activities and capacities is encouraged and, in many cases, necessary to augment staff supervision.

POLICY

Parents, alumni, and community members are encouraged to volunteer whenever possible.

RESPONSIBILITY OF ADMINISTRATION

The Principal/Designate at MJDS will ensure the following:

- According to section 11.1 of Ontario regulation 137/15 all volunteers will be supervised
- No volunteer/placement student will be counted in ratio for staffing purposes
- Every volunteer/placement student will be assigned to a staff member of MLMS for mentorship and supervision
- Each mentor will supervise each volunteer/placement student to ensure that they comply to our Behaviour Management /Discipline and Safety policies.

REGISTRATION

Individuals who wish to volunteer are required to register with the school as a volunteer.

The process for registration shall include:

- i. a written letter or email to the school expressing interest.
- ii. a background check, in accordance with the MJDS "Criminal Reference Check" policy [see below].
- iii. participation in a training session [see "screening" below].

Once registered with the school as a volunteer, individuals will be forwarded "calls for volunteers" detailing volunteer opportunities at the school.

VOLUNTEERING FOR ACTIVITIES

A. Call for Volunteers

Registered volunteers shall be informed of volunteer opportunities through:

- i. email.
- ii. telephone call.
- iii. letter mail; or
- iv. notes sent home with students

A “call for volunteers” shall contain;

- i. the name, date, and location of the event.
- ii. the nature of the volunteer position.
- iii. a deadline for responses

B. Responding to Call for Volunteers

Individuals who have been notified of an opportunity to volunteer and wish to volunteer for casa Field Trips shall inform the school of their availability, no later than two weeks prior to the date of the trip, unless otherwise noted on the “call for volunteers.”

C. Confirmation

Following the receipt of a response, the school shall confirm with the individual that they are able to volunteer at that event or activity. This confirmation is an acceptance of the offer to volunteer by the individual. Without it, the individual may not participate in the event or activity as a volunteer.

D. Screening

The School shall reserve the right to screen parents and or other individuals who wish to volunteer for field trips. N.B. Parent volunteers will only be requested for Casa Field Trips.

E. Police Background Check

In accordance with recent government changes regarding volunteers in schools, parents who wish to participate in field trips are required to undergo a police background check before they are allowed to be registered as a volunteer.

The background check may be conducted at the beginning of the school year. Once on file with the school, a police background check shall be valid until the following September 1st.

Please refer to the MJDS “Criminal Reference Check” policy for further information.

F. Training

Due to insurance rules and standards, individuals who are interested in volunteering for will be required to attend a short volunteer training session at the school in which they shall be advised of;

- i. the role of a volunteer
- ii. expectations of MJDS with regards to its volunteers
- iii. processes or actions they are required to take before they are registered as a volunteer with the school for that year.

Depending on the nature of the event or activity, an individual who has been confirmed as a volunteer for that event or activity shall be required to attend a further training session.

G. Supervision Policy

Under no circumstances will volunteers and students have unsupervised access to any children at MJDS. Additionally, neither students nor volunteers will be counted in the staffing ratios.

H. Determination

Volunteers shall adhere to the same requirements as regular employees and will be monitored for compliance and contravention with all policies and procedures on an ongoing basis. This will include but not be limited to conforming adhering to the Dress Code to the Code of Conduct and following the Tenets of the Faculty Handbook.

DRESS CODE

As with staff, no students or volunteer shall be permitted to wear:

- i. Revealing clothing (low cut blouses, spaghetti straps, exposed midriff, extremely low-rise pants)
- ii. Jeans which are not presentable (ripped, torn, etc.)

All staff must wear a white shirt on Fridays (or other designated holidays or events) to help create an atmosphere of Shabbat or other holiday preparations for students.

TEACHERS

Classroom teachers shall wear “business casual” as a minimum standard of dress.

FOOTWEAR

Footwear shall be;

- i. in good repair.
- ii. appropriate given the;
 - a. weather
 - b. position of the individual
 - c. level of activity expected of that individual

Closed back shoes are required when on school outings, during PE or playing outdoors.

Plastic flip flops are not permitted in any circumstance.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- i. To ensure that all members of the school community, especially people in positions of authority, are treated with respect and dignity.
- ii. To promote responsible citizenship by encouraging appropriate participation in the civic life of the school community.
- iii. To maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility.
- iv. To encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict.
- v. To promote the safety of people in the schools.
- vi. To discourage the use of alcohol and illegal drugs.

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR: RESPECT, CIVILITY, AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

All members of the school community must:

- i. respect and comply with all applicable federal, provincial, and municipal laws.
- ii. demonstrate honesty and integrity.
- iii. respect differences in people, their ideas, and their opinions.
- iv. treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, and especially when there is disagreement.

- v. respect and treat others fairly, regardless of, for example, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.
- vi. respect the rights of others.
- vii. show proper care and regard for school property and the property of others.
- viii. take appropriate measures to help those in need.
- ix. seek assistance from a member of the school staff, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully.
- x. respect all members of the school community, especially persons in positions of authority.
- xi. respect the need of others to work in an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching.
- xii. not swear at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority.

SAFETY

All members of the school community must not:

- i. engage in bullying behaviours
- ii. commit sexual assault.
- iii. traffic weapons or illegal drugs.
- iv. give alcohol to a minor.
- v. commit robbery.
- vi. be in possession of any weapon, including firearms.
- vii. use any object to threaten or intimidate another person.
- viii. cause injury to any person with an object.
- ix. be in possession of, or be under the influence of, or provide others with alcohol or illegal drugs.
- x. inflict or encourage others to inflict bodily harm on another person.
- xi. engage in hate propaganda and other forms of behaviour motivated by hate or bias.
- xii. commit an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property or to property located on the premises of the school.

MONITORING FOR COMPLIANCE AND CONTRAVENTION

Process

The Head of School or Designate will monitor compliance with policies and procedures on a consistent and regular basis. A formal Performance Review will take place on an annual basis. Should any contravention occur, this will be addressed immediately following the steps listed below.

In order to properly monitor compliance and contravention to policies and procedures it is important to establish clarity regarding the expectations of Staff Students and Volunteers.

I. Expectations of Staff, Students and Volunteers

All Staff members, students, and volunteers:

- i. are to follow MJDS Program Statement and need to be familiar with the Ministry policy framework "How does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for Early Years" in their daily pedagogical practice.
- ii. must comply with all required policies and procedures (section II)
- iii. must establish and/or follow children's individualized plans
- iv. are required to be knowledgeable of and follow the policies listed below.
- v. are to be well informed of prohibited practices so as to ensure that they do not engage in such behaviours or display such attitudes.

II. Required Policies and Procedures:

- i. Playground Safety Policy
- ii. Anaphylactic Policy
- iii. Sanitary Practices Policy
- iv. Sleep Supervision Policy
- v. Serious Occurrence Policy
- vi. Medication Policy
- vii. Supervision of Volunteers and Students Policy
- viii. Program Statement Implementation Policy
- ix. Staff Training and Development Policy
- x. Criminal Reference Check/Vulnerable Sector Check Policy
- xi. Fire Safety/Evacuation Procedures
- xii. Policies and Procedures for Monitoring Compliance and Contraventions
- xiii. Waiting List Policy
- xiv. Parent Issues and Concerns Policies and Procedures
- xv. Emergency Management Policies and Procedures

III. Monitoring Compliance and Contraventions

The Head of School or Designate regularly monitors programming plans and implementation of planned activities, reviews documented observations, conducts individual and group meetings with Staff members, and communicates with the parents and community partners in order to meet the children's needs.

Should there be discrepancies between the school's program planning requirements and a staff member's personal beliefs and practices, discussions will be held with the staff member and the staff member will be given appropriate time and resources to come into compliance with school policies. However, if differences in style and pedagogy are not in alignment with the school's philosophy and practices then a staff member may be asked to resign.

IV. Prohibited Practices

In compliance with CCEYA requirements at MJDS we do not use:

- i. "Corporal" punishment to discipline a child.
- ii. Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a highchair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- iii. Locking the exits of the childcare centre or home childcare premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures;
- iv. Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame, or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity, or self-worth.
- v. Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing, or bedding; or
- vi. Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will. O. Reg. 137/15, s. 48; O. Reg. 126/16, s. 34.

(2) No employee or volunteer of the licensee, or student who is on an educational placement with the licensee, and no person who provides home child care or in-home services at a premises overseen by a home child care agency shall

engage in any of the prohibited practices set out in subsection (1) with respect to a child receiving child care. O. Reg. 51/18, s. 19.

V. Monitoring of Prohibited Practices:

The Head of School/Designate will conduct a written process for assessment of compliance with adherence to policies and or/ Prohibited Practices checklist once a year.

MJDS's Program Statement states that all adults such as staff, parents, volunteers, and students create a positive, healthy, and appropriate environment for the children.

- i. We expect all staff, volunteers, and students to carry out positive interactions among staff and children
- ii. All staff, volunteers and students should have realistic expectations of children's capabilities,
- iii. All staff, volunteers and students need to set clear limits and consequences for behaviour to promote safe and secure environments.
- iv. Respect is a core Head of School of Montessori philosophy; and therefore, respect for the individual needs of the children needs to be shown at all times, children need to be taught self-respect, and their self-esteem needs to be nurtured.
- v. All staff, volunteers, and students put into practice and maintain warm, friendly, and respectful interactions with children at all times.

All staff, volunteers, and students welcome the diverse abilities, the social and cultural backgrounds of all children and adjust their programming to the child's individual needs.

If difficult behaviours occur in the classroom, staff, volunteers, and students are encouraged to:

- i. Show respect and love for the child.
- ii. Be a role model at all times
- iii. Train the students in the rules and requirements of our program from the first day of school:
- iv. When discipline follows Montessori principles, it is used to foster appropriate behaviour. This philosophy applies even to the use of real consequences which are used to teach children that their actions have repercussions. They are not used simply for punishment, a technique which may build resentment and lead to a loss of self-respect. In keeping with this philosophy, our staff will focus on correcting children and teaching them to solve any problems created by their behaviour.

With parental permission, professional advice is sought for difficult behaviour problems.

VI. Contravention of MJDS Program Statement, Policies and Prohibited Practices

All staff, students and volunteers must review and read MJDS's Policies and Prohibited practices as stated.

All full-time Staff will be monitored for compliance to MJDS's:

- i. Program Statement
- ii. Prohibited practices
- iii. School Policies

Students and volunteers will be monitored by the Head Teacher in the classroom assigned.

In addition, once a year all full-time staff will be observed and monitored by the Head of School or Designate for compliance to:

- i. Program Statement
 - ii. Prohibited Practices
 - iii. School policies
- The recordings of these observations will be discussed with the staff member and will be signed by both parties and kept in the staff member's file.
 - Based on observations, if there are any areas of improvements required, this will be discussed, and strategies given to support the staff member.
 - The staff member will be given a reasonable period of time to improve and show their understanding and commitment to adhere to the school policies, Prohibited practices and program statement.
 - A written warning letter may be given to a staff member at the discretion of the Head of School/Designate and an opportunity to improve prior to termination. However, failure to comply with Prohibited Practices may result in immediate termination.
 - All monitoring documents will be kept in the staff member's file.

If a serious incident has occurred where a staff member has blatantly defied the policies of the school and rights of the child, then an immediate suspension of duties will occur. A follow-up investigation will occur immediately and the Head of School in consultation with the Operator will make a decision of termination if it is deemed necessary. Any allegations of abuse will be addressed as per the child abuse policy.

Failure to comply with any aspect of these policies will result in termination of Staff position or Student/Volunteer placement at MJDS.

WAITLIST POLICY

PURPOSE

This policy ensures that there is a clear and transparent process for parents when the school places a child on a waitlist for enrollment. This Wait List Policy is available on request.

This policy is reviewed by school administration with relevant staff, volunteers and students annually for compliance and contraventions in accordance with subsection 6.1 of the CCEYA Manual (January 2016).

IMPLEMENTATION

1. A child's name will be listed on the wait pool upon request by a parent or guardian and upon completion of the Application for Enrollment Form
2. There shall be no charge or fee collection for an unsecured spot. Once a child has been ensured a spot in the school a deposit will be requested, and a payment plan will be set up as per Tuition and Enrollment Policies.
3. Parents may request information about the waitlist queue for their child.
4. The school determines the order in which children are offered admission. The criteria below are taken as a whole when making decisions about admission.
 - a. Requests for full-day enrollment may take priority over requests for half-day enrollment
 - b. Requests for September enrollment may take priority over requests for enrollment later in the year
 - c. Siblings of children who are enrolled in the MJDS elementary program.

- d. Siblings of children enrolled in the MJDS Casa program.
 - e. Age and gender as appropriate to fulfill the needs of a particular classroom.
 - f. School readiness with respect to language development, independence, separation readiness, and curiosity.
 - g. Toilet independence: This is a requirement to join the Casa program. (This is not a requirement for the Toddler program as this will occur during the school year in cooperation between the teachers and family).
 - h. Walking independently: This is a requirement to join the Toddler program.
5. Please note: Acceptance into the Toddler program does not guarantee a place in the Casa Program in the subsequent year or term. Priority Enrollment to Casa will be given to those families that commit to completing the Casa cycle by keeping the child in the program for the duration of a three-to-four-year cycle.

***Waiting lists**

75.1 (1) No licensee shall charge or collect a fee or deposit for the placement of a child on a waiting list for admission to a child care centre or home child care agency. O. Reg. 274/16, s. 4 (1).

(2) Every licensee that establishes or maintains a waiting list described in subsection (1) shall develop written policies and procedures that,

- (a) explain how the licensee determines the order in which children on the waiting list are offered admission; and
- (b) provide that the waiting list will be made available in a manner that maintains the privacy and confidentiality of the children listed on it, but that allows the position of a child on the list to be ascertained by the affected persons or families. O. Reg. 274/16, s. 4 (2).

PARENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a transparent process for parents/guardians, the child care licensee and staff to use when parents/guardians bring forward issues/concerns.

Definitions

Licensee: The individual or agency licensed by the Ministry of Education responsible for the operation and management of each childcare centre it operates (i.e., the operator).

Staff: Individual employed by the licensee (e.g., program room staff).

School Administration: Head of School, Vice- Principal, Education Coordinator, Office Manager

Policy: General

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take an active role in the school and regularly discuss what their child(ren) are experiencing with our program. As indicated by our program statement, we support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/guardians, childcare providers, and staff, and foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents/guardians about the program and their children. Our staff are available to engage parents/guardians in conversations and support a positive experience during every interaction.

All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians are taken seriously by every staff member and the Administration of the School and will be addressed. Every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties and as quickly as possible.

Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing. Responses and outcomes will be provided verbally, or in writing upon request. The level of detail provided to the parent/guardian will respect and maintain the confidentiality of all parties involved.

An initial response to an issue or concern will be provided to parents/guardians within 2 business day(s). The person who raised the issue/concern will be kept informed throughout the resolution process.

Investigations of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial and respectful to the parties involved.

Confidentiality

Every issue and concern will be treated confidentially, and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents/guardians, children, staff, students and volunteers, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons (e.g. to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities or a Children's Aid Society).

Conduct

Our centre maintains high standards for positive interaction, communication, and role-modeling for children. Harassment and discrimination will therefore not be tolerated by any party.

If at any point a parent/guardian, provider or staff feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused, or belittled, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the supervisor and/or licensee.

Concerns about the Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

If a parent/guardian expresses concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, the parent will be advised to contact the [local Children's Aid Society](#) (CAS) directly.

Persons who become aware of such concerns are also responsible for reporting this information to CAS as per the "Duty to Report" requirement under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

For more information, visit

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/childremsaid/reportingabuse/index.aspx>

Procedures

Nature of Issue or Concern	Steps for Parent and/or Guardian to Report Issue/Concern:	Steps for Staff and/or Licensee in responding to issue/concern:
Program or Classroom-Related E.g: schedule, sleep arrangements, toilet training, indoor/outdoor program activities, etc.	Raise the issue or concern to the classroom staff directly, or the Head of School or Vice Principal if necessary.	Address the issue/concern at the time it is raised, or arrange for a meeting with the parent/guardian within two business days. Document the issues/concerns in detail. Documentation should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the date and time the issue/concern was received; - the name of the person who received the issue/concern; - the name of the person reporting the issue/concern; - the details of the issue/concern; and - any steps taken to resolve the issue/concern and/or information given to the parent/guardian regarding next steps or referral.
General, School or Operations-Related E.g: tuition fees, hours of operation, staffing, waiting lists, etc.	Raise the issue or concern to the Head of School or Vice Principal.	Provide contact information for the appropriate person if the person being notified is unable to address the matter. Ensure the investigation of the issue/concern is initiated by the appropriate party within 2 business days or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter. Document reasons for delays in writing.
Staff, Supervisor, and/or Licensee-Related	Raise the issue or concern to the individual directly, or the Head of School or Vice Principal if necessary.	Provide a resolution or outcome to the parent(s)/guardian(s) who raised the issue/concern.

Nature of Issue or Concern	Steps for Parent and/or Guardian to Report Issue/Concern:	Steps for Staff and/or Licensee in responding to issue/concern:
	<p>All issues or concerns about the conduct of staff that put a child's health, safety and/or well-being at risk should be reported to the Head of School as soon as parents/guardians become aware of the situation.</p>	
Student/ Volunteer-Related	<p>Raise the issue or concern to the staff responsible for supervising the volunteer or student, or the Head of School or Vice Principal if necessary.</p> <p>All issues or concerns about the conduct of students and/or volunteers that put a child's health, safety and/or well-being at risk should be reported to the supervisor as soon as parents/guardians become aware of the situation.</p>	

Escalation of Issues or Concerns

Where parents/guardians are not satisfied with the response or outcome of an issue or concern, they may escalate the issue or concern verbally or in writing to the Head of School and, as necessary, to the Chair of the Board of Directors.

Issues/concerns related to compliance with requirements set out in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and Ontario Regulation 137/15 should be reported to the Ministry of Education's Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch.

Issues/concerns may also be reported to other relevant regulatory bodies (e.g. local public health department, police department, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labour, fire department, College of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario College of Teachers, College of Social Workers, Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators, etc.) where appropriate.

Contacts

Ministry of Education, Licensed Child Care Help Desk: 1-877-510-5333 or childcare_ontario@ontario.ca

Head of School: Sarit Yurovitch Madar 416-784-5071 ext 2 or sarit@mjds.ca

Vice Principal: Steve Bibla 416-784-5071 ext 4 or steve@mjds.ca

Chair of the Board of Directors: Jacob Jesin or chair@mjds.ca

For **urgent matters call 416-784-5071 ext.1**

Communication

At MJDS we aim to provide clear and concise communication throughout the year. To exchange information effectively with MJDS faculty, and to enhance communication with the school, please see below.

To get information or ask questions:

About administrative issues

- e.g. *program registration, fees, scheduling*
- Call or email the office: adminMJDS@mjds.ca 416-784-5071 x 1

About Judaic Studies and Jewish Life

- e.g. *celebration of holidays, Hebrew language curriculum*
- Call or email Matthew: matthew@mjds.ca 416-784-5071 x 3

About the bigger picture

- e.g. *curriculum design, policies, Montessori philosophy*
- Call or email Sarit: sarit@mjds.ca 416-784-5071 x 4

About your child's classroom experience, absences, early pick-up, etc. email your child's classroom directly. Please allow for up to 48 hours for a response.

- Toddler: zohar@mjds.ca or tamar@mjds.ca
- Casa: mazal@mjds.ca or gefen@mjds.ca
- Lower Elementary: magendavid@mjds.ca
- Upper Elementary: shalhevet@mjds.ca
- Middle School: rimon@mjds.ca

To notify the school:

Of daily or minor occurrences

- Email your child's classroom.

Of major or sensitive issues:

- Call or email the office and we will make sure you are in contact with the appropriate person.

MJDS PROGRAM STATEMENT

Inspiring a Lifetime of Learning

The Montessori Jewish Day School will inspire a lifetime love and excitement for learning in an environment that fosters a respect for oneself, for the community and for the world. This goal is achieved by implementing the Montessori methodology supported by the Montessori philosophy and enhanced/enriched by Judaic studies.



As a parent, you are your child's first and most important teacher. A Montessori education at MJDS builds on the foundation you have already created and offers you countless opportunities to learn along with your child. From the moment you step into the school for your first observation of the toddler community and to meet with the Head of School, until your child graduates from the adolescent program more than 10 years later, we are committed to working with you as partners.

The Parent-School Partnership

We create and nurture this partnership together through a commitment to regular, open and honest dialogue. Our role as educators is to share our knowledge and expertise on your child's development, child development in general, the Montessori philosophy, parenting advice and connections to specialist experts such as therapists. Your role as a parent in our community is to seize the learning opportunities we provide and commit to learning about your child in this new context, child development in general, the Montessori philosophy and how to best support your child on his/her individual learning path. (h)

Learning about child's Montessori education

In-class observations are your first introduction to our learning community and continue to be essential as your child moves through the program. You will be invited to observe (at least) twice a year in your child's class, followed by parent teacher interviews. Beyond these scheduled visits, the teachers are always available by phone, e-mail and in person to discuss matters of interest. We offer parent education evenings which are crucial to building and nurturing the parent – school partnership. The more you know about our approach and the more we can answer your specific questions about what we do and why, the stronger this partnership becomes. Parent education evenings cover a range of topics: core aspects of the Montessori philosophy, providing consistency at home by creating a "Montessori" home environment, fostering self-discipline and independence, moving from toddler to casa to elementary to the adolescent program and what to expect at each transition, to name a few. We also have a number of social events (such as) on our school calendar as we understand that strong partnerships with families become even stronger as they grow into the whole school community. (b), (h)

Child Development

Let us begin the partnership by introducing our Montessori program and what you can expect to see as your child moves through the different levels and environments. At the heart of Montessori philosophy is a deep understanding of child development as a holistic process. Your child and all children develop physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually according to their own individual timeline. We strive to support and

nurture your child's development in every one of these aspects to allow your child to reach his or her full potential. We help to shape young people that are "equipped in their whole beings for the adventure of life, accustomed to the free exercise of their own will and judgment, illuminated by imagination and enthusiasm." - Maria Montessori

Unique individuals

Our view of the child at MJDS is of a unique individual on the path of self-construction. We believe that every child has an innate and natural desire to learn, has a growing need for independence to develop skills and a sense of self, should be allowed to make mistakes and have the opportunity to learn from these mistakes, thrives on social interactions with peers and the warm, caring guidance of qualified adults, and has the right to experience school and learning as a joyful experience.

Freedom

Freedom is one of the most important conditions provided in a Montessori environment. Freedom to move, to make choices and decisions, freedom to speak and engage with peers and adults alike, freedom to change one's mind, to start over, to try again. This individual freedom unfolds within the context of a classroom and school community. I am free to choose a seat where no one else is sitting. I am free to choose a material that is available and on the shelf. I am free to ask my friend if I can join her activity. I am free to speak my mind but also to listen to the effect my words have on others and to take responsibility for this impact. I am free to carry a bucket of water that is too full, spill it and then mop up my spill, to make sure my friends and I are safe. I am free to make mistakes and learn from them by myself.

Physical Development

We strive to support the physical development of every child by offering: opportunities for gross and fine motor development through freedom of movement, both indoors and outdoors, materials that help to refine the senses, appropriate physical challenges, “real” materials that carry with them real consequences, excellent nutritional programs, all supported by important safety measures.

Approaches

Freedom of movement

The children are free to move about the classroom during their work cycles in the morning and afternoon. The children can walk around, sit at a table, sit on a carpet, stand at an easel, carry learning materials from the shelf to where the child chooses to use them, and back again. The environment is prepared in such a way as to facilitate this freedom of movement. The furniture is arranged leaving enough room to pass by on all sides. The shelving is low and open to allow for easy access and return of materials. The materials themselves are carefully designed and crafted to allow a young child to carry, manipulate and care for each available item.

Each child decides how he or she needs to move at any given time, based on their inner need to learn and to move. The children are free to respond to their own interests through their own movements, an example of free will and decision making. Learning that intent, action and outcome are all related is a very powerful experience for young learners as they discover their abilities and their power to act. This unfolds over time. Whereas a child who is new to the community may run through the class at first, this is discouraged by the teacher, not to try and limit the child’s freedom but for safety reasons which are explained to the child. We can run outside where there is no furniture to bump into. Inside the class we walk. Similarly a new child may want to throw an object and again the teacher will explain that this is reserved for balls which we use outside. But the interaction wouldn’t end there as the teacher will then help the child to channel their energy into purposeful movement by offering an activity the child already knows how to do, suggesting he or she join a child who has chosen an activity, or by introducing a new activity. The teacher’s careful observations will allow for a meaningful connection to an activity the child has shown an interest in. For example, it would not be meaningful to ask a child who is running to suddenly sit calmly at a table and draw. The teacher would be more likely to introduce an activity like “walking on the line” where the child follows an elliptical line marked on the floor with tape. At first the activity is merely to walk on the line, but then the challenge increases as the teacher introduces walking heel-to-toe, carrying a flag while marching, carrying a bean bag on one’s head without dropping it, or carrying a bell without ringing it. (46.(1) a, d)

Before school, during lunch recess and at the end of the day, the children go outside to enjoy freedom of movement in the outdoors. Two fenced-in areas offer the toddler and casa communities fresh air and outdoor space. There are a variety of activities including a garden and planters, push toys, tricycles, outdoor toys, climbing frames for the casa (3-6 yrs.) children, balls and the natural beauty of grassy surfaces, hills and the shade of trees. The children are free to explore bigger movements as there is room to run, play tag, bounce and throw a ball, and ride wheeled vehicles. (46.(1) g)



Refinement of the senses

The casa environments have an entire area of the curriculum called the “Sensorial Area” which allows the child to refine his/her senses. These activities include blocks and rods of varying sizes which allow for the refinement of the visual sense of size, length and volume. Other activities include colour tablets that are named, matched to a pair and to objects in the environment, as well as graded from lightest to darkest. Further activities include varying degrees of roughness of sandpaper, different types of fabric samples and tablets made of wood, steel and marble to refine the sense of touch. The children love the challenge of exploring these activities while wearing a blindfold which really allows them to focus just on the sensation of touch. Still further activities explore the sense of smell by matching different scents, and sound by matching cylinders filled with different substances such as sand, grains and beans. Building on these senses, geometric shapes and comparisons are introduced through a variety of two- and three-dimensional puzzles. (46.(1) d,e,f)

Appropriate challenges

Young children enjoy feats of strength where they carry large objects which they experience as “heavy”. The Montessori environments offer many such experiences as young children can carry a large block, a long rod (of up to one metre in length), sometimes taller than the child who is carrying it, a bucket filled with water or a tray with real glasses. The environments are set up in such a way to purposely allow for the child to cover a distance through the classroom from the shelf to where he/she is working. In this way the child gains the experience of what the object feels like as well as the satisfaction of having carried something big. If the child shows interest, the teacher must follow the child in this interest in order for the child to meet his developmental needs. (46.(1) d,f,g)

Real Materials

Most of the furniture and materials in Montessori environments are made of wood. Many of the items the children use and carry are jugs and vessels made of china or glass. This is quite intentional in order to allow the children to value these items as it is possible for them to break. If something does drop and break, an adult steps in immediately to sweep up the shards for safety purposes. The child who has dropped and broken an item, however, learns of this very real consequence and over time becomes more careful with his/her movements. Were the items to be all made of plastic, and nothing ever happened to them if they are dropped, the child is deprived of the learning opportunity to refine his/her movements as well as a lesson in cause and effect. Note: In such a case, the teachers do not admonish the child. Most children wish to have items remain whole and beautiful, and learning that things can break will be deterrent enough. (46.(1) c, d,e,f)

Nutrition

Excellent nutrition is essential for every child’s optimal development. We ensure that we comply with nutrition guidelines and ensure that daily servings include fruit and vegetables, protein in the form of poultry, fish, cheese and milk, and carbohydrates in the form of bread, crackers, rice, potatoes and pasta. As well, the teachers talk to the children about what constitutes healthy choices in their diet, especially since some families will choose to pack a lunch from home.

A morning and afternoon snack is served to the toddler community before going outside and is available all morning and afternoon for the casa communities. The hot lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. in all environments. MJDS has a *kashrut* policy requiring all foods brought to the school to be kosher and nut-free.

Safety

An important part of optimal physical development is ensuring the safety of the children. MJDS policies cover the essential components of locked doors, emergency procedures, police checks and First Aid training of all staff, fire safety inspections and timely repairs.

Another important aspect of safety for young children is the establishment and maintenance of routines. At MJDS each environment has specific, predictable routines that the children come to know and expect as constant in their school. For example, in the toddler environment, you will find taped stripes on the floor marking lines where the children line up to wash their hands before snack time and a separate line to sit and wait until they are ready to change into your outdoor clothing and footwear before going outside. Every effort is made by the teachers to introduce and reinforce these routines to new children and to have snacks

and outdoor time occur at the same time every day. In the casa environments, a chime means a call to gather for a morning circle. At the end of the circle, the children automatically remove their indoor shoes, preparing to carry them into the hallway where they will fetch their outdoor gear. This well-established routine can unfold with minimal adult reminders, providing safety and security to the children.

Safety practices are also exhibited in the interactions between children and adults. The teachers' consistent behaviour, and calm and caring responses to all questions offer the children the security and predictability of an environment where they feel they belong and are loved and safe. (a,b)

Social development goals

We strive to support the social development of every child by creating communities of multi-age groupings, following a multi-year cycle, offering the children the freedom to interact with peers and adults alike, offering the children the freedom to choose their space, encourage self-expression through language, offering peace corner/table activities, and protecting the dignity of each child through the lessons of grace and courtesy.



Approaches

Multi-age groupings

The toddler environment includes children aged 18 months up to 3 years. Each casa environment includes children aged 2 and a half years up to 6 six years. The multi-age groupings mirror a family setting of siblings and offer countless opportunities for meaningful social interactions. Younger children are naturally drawn to older children and watch their actions and behaviours, learning from their older peers without any formal lessons. Older children love to help their younger counterparts, role models and gain a sense of their own achievements when sharing their skills and knowledge. The teachers encourage the younger children to ask an older child for help before coming to an adult. In this way positive social interactions are further fostered. (46.(1) b, c)

Multi-year cycle

A child will join the toddler community for one and a half years. A child will join a casa community for three to four years. During that time, each child has the opportunity to create strong bonds with his/her teacher and peers. A multi-year cycle reduces the number of transitions a child goes through and allows for more sustained social relationships. When a child is new to the casa environment, he or she may feel like one of the youngest and smallest and spend a great deal of time observing and following the older children. During the second year, it is typical to see a child become more comfortable and show a greater readiness for more challenging work and risk taking. This can occur in part when the younger children join the group and the now older child recognizes that he or she is now one of the more experienced members of the community. In the third or fourth year, returning children may begin to demonstrate behaviour that shows they are ready to take on leadership responsibilities, to give lessons to the younger children, to role model and reflect on how far they have come during their time in the casa environment. (46.(1) b, c, f)

Freedom of movement and interaction

The children can choose where they would like to sit, where they would like to set up their work, with whom they would like to work and enjoy snacks. This freedom allows the children to pursue friendships with different peers and to change their working partners throughout the day, the week, even the year. What is often observed is that when two young people find a connection, they will choose to work together continuously throughout a morning, a whole day or even several days, as their friendship is built. In the beginning both will often agree on where to work, which activity to choose, even when to break for snack. As time wears on, disagreements will arise and these partners will have the chance to express their differences of opinion, to disagree and then to decide whether to continue working together or not. By speaking and listening to one another, the children learn to develop social skills. They also learn to encounter social problems, argue, converse, problem solve and resolve conflicts. (b, c, f)

Care of the environment

One section of the practical life activities in the casa environment focus on the care of the environment. There are activities to water and care for the plants, arrange flowers in a vase, sweep and wash the floor, fold cloths and towels, and look after a class pet. Every practical life exercise ends with the child putting the materials back on the shelf where he/she found them as well as replenishing anything that was used up, such as soap, polish, a Q-tip or cloth. Dirty cloths are placed in the dirty linen basket and another child may choose to wash these as part of the washing linens activity. The cloths are replaced with clean ones from a central supply area so that the activity is returned to the shelf complete and ready for the next child. Every activity includes the idea that the work will be available to everyone in the class and that whoever uses it needs to make sure it is ready for the next person. In this way respect for the surroundings and for fellow classmates is present in all of the children's work. (46.(1) b, c, d)

Peace corner/activity

Every environment at MJDS has a peace corner or activity. A peace corner is used as a concrete place for children to learn conflict resolution. An object can be used as a concrete tool to demonstrate turn-taking: the child holding the flower has a turn to speak and when finished passes the flower to the other child. This activity is first introduced by the teacher like any other lesson, but then it can also be freely chosen by children who are experiencing a conflict. The teacher observes to see whether the children involved are ready to tackle the conflict resolution independently or whether they need his/her guidance. (46.(1) b, c, e)

Lessons of grace and courtesy

The lessons of grace and courtesy are an important cornerstone of Montessori philosophy. They include lessons on how to introduce oneself, how to open a door and hold it for someone else, how to blow one's nose, how to interrupt a conversation, and how to excuse oneself when passing by others. These essential impromptu lessons give the children essential skills to preserve their own dignity and to interact with others successfully and politely. (46.(1) b, c, e)

Emotional development goals

We strive to support the emotional development of every child by establishing a lasting connection with each teacher, always encouraging independence, preserving each child's dignity, allowing each child to follow his/her interests, allowing the freedom to choose his/her space, encouraging self-expression through language, and establishing and maintaining predictable rules and routines.



Approaches:

Establishing a lasting connection with each teacher

A child who is new to any of the environments at MJDS will always be welcomed with a warm smile by every one of the teachers. The teachers at MJDS understand the importance of the bond between them and every child as the foundation for all future interactions and learning. Just as the preparation of the physical environment is carried out with utmost care, so is the introduction of a new member to the community. First, you, the parents, visit the school and observe in the classrooms so you have a sense of the environment and the teachers and can convey a positive image of the school to your child. Once your child is enrolled, you are given a special book to read with your child to prepare for the start of school. Next your child comes to visit the new classroom for a short period of time, since there is a lot to take in, especially for someone who has never attended any kind of school: new adults, lots of children, many beautiful materials, books and toys. Additional visits are scheduled to further increase your child's comfort level and connect your child with his/her new teacher. The teacher will approach your child and offer various activities they can do together so that they can get to know one another, so that your child becomes familiar with some of the activities in the classroom, and so the teacher can observe your child's reactions, interests and movements and can then plan for the next visit and lessons accordingly. The teacher also plays many games during circle time to introduce the children's names to each other, further reinforcing the importance and value of each member of the community. (46.(1) a, b, f, g – give consideration to the individual needs of the children)

Encouraging independence

"Help me to do it by myself!" This is often cited as the credo of the Montessori approach as the teachers are there to support and guide until, and only until, the child can act independently. This begins with simple tasks like learning to get dressed, a great but meaningful struggle for a toddler and an accomplishment for the casa child. Putting on his or her own shoes and coat is not only a useful and necessary daily skill for a young child, but also gives the child a sense of being capable and competent, allowing his or her self-esteem to unfold. The teachers at MJDS are always striving to increase the children's independence as they see their readiness, whether this involves climbing stairs, carrying their own backpacks, threading a needle for sewing, memorizing letters for writing and reading or preparing for a presentation. This can also apply to emotional matters where at first a child who is crying may not be emotionally independent and will thus need the teacher's help to calm him/herself by receiving a hug and some reassurance. Over time the child will be given the opportunity to calm him/herself. Options like sitting in the reading or listening chair are introduced, as well as practical life activities that often include cleaning, polishing or pouring, which can have a calming effect. A tissue is offered by a teacher or perhaps by another child. A question might be posed: "What will make you feel better?" If the child misses a parent who is travelling, he/she might feel better expressing these feelings through a piece of art or writing made especially for the one they miss. The teachers facilitate the activity that will meet the child's needs, always with a view towards how the child can carry out the same actions on his or her own one day. (46.(1) d, e, f, g)

Care of self

One section of the Practical Life activities within the casa environment focuses on care of self. The activities include learning to comb one's hair, wash one's hands and nails, and work with the dressing frames where a child can practice opening and closing buttons, zippers, buckles, hooks and bows. These exercises foster a growing sense of independence and further a child's dignity by giving the underlying message that each child is important and valued and that each child must look after her/himself. (46.(1) c, e)

Preserving each child's dignity

At MJDS and according to Montessori philosophy, every child is regarded with the utmost respect as a unique and wonderful individual who will one day discover his or her cosmic task. Each child is regarded as an individual and contributes to the whole community to the best of his/her abilities. The teachers work very hard to see "the child of the future". If a child behaves in a way that is detrimental to him/herself, others or to the environment, the teacher observes closely to determine the cause of the behaviour and what needs the child is trying to meet. The teacher will then look for other, more appropriate ways for the child to meet these needs. As well, the teacher will always look for the child who is not yet there: the child who will one day not hit her friends when upset, or the child who will one day not break down crying when having spilled the beads. The teachers also offer grace and courtesy lessons to try and correct behaviour; however, this does not happen in the moment of the indiscretion nor immediately afterward but at a separate time when the child's emotions are calm and when he/she can make the connection between the lesson and his/her behaviour freely rather than as a punitive measure. Children are never scolded, neither alone nor in front of others. The members of staff focus on using positive language to express their goals and wishes. (46.(1) f)

Allowing each child to follow his/her interests

Each teacher carefully observes what interests each child and he/she then matches this interest with developmentally appropriate activities. The child enjoys the freedom to pursue these interests from a wide variety of activities and materials. Listening to their own inner voice, the children can then freely determine what appeals to them at any given time. We have observed that sometimes math materials are particularly appealing and may call to a child or small group of children for several days in a row. This might be followed with an interest in a particular animal which can be pursued through creating a booklet. When a child is interested, true learning can take place. This freedom to pursue interests can only happen within a schedule of long periods of uninterrupted work time. At MJDS, the mornings regularly offer 3 hours of uninterrupted time. (46.(1) d, e, f)

Allowed to repeat activities and determine when an activity is finished

The children can choose to repeat an activity as many times as they like. They are also allowed to decide when they are finished with an activity. This freedom creates a cycle of work that allows each child to attain a sense of satisfaction in completing his/her work. Only the child can determine when he/she has arrived at this point, but may not even be able to articulate it. This experience instills a sense of competency in the child and the idea that their work, actions and effort have inherent value. (46.(1) d, e, f)

Offering each child the freedom to choose his/her own space

The children enjoy the freedom to choose their own space within the classroom. This means that they may choose where they will set up their work, with whom or next to whom. They can choose whether to have a snack at the snack table, enjoy a quiet moment in the reading chair or in the listening chair (where headphones and a CD are available). The children may also choose a place in the classroom to think, reflect or draw. All of these

options allow the child to be in touch with his/her emotions and to respond to these emotions by choosing a corresponding space to engage or disengage, relax, reflect, contemplate or take action. (46.(1) f, g)

Encourage self-expression through language

Method: The teachers use positive language through role modeling, role-playing and positive feedback as a means to foster a culture of positive communication. The teachers model and emphasize the importance of using words at all times. Young children have many feelings but may not know the appropriate term to name that feeling. The teachers offer these terms in both group lessons and individual interactions. Words to describe emotions are most important in the moment, when a child can state emphatically, "I don't like it when you take my work!" rather than acting out physically. The teachers observe the children carefully to try and determine the emotions at play at any given time. They endeavour to offer specific language with shades of meaning, such as "upset, angry, frustrated, confused, hurt, happy, satisfied, content, lonely, restless, left out". The greater the choice of words available to the young child to express her or himself, the more powerful the child feels and the more effective a communicator s/he becomes. (46.(1) b, c, g)

Establishing and maintaining predictable rules and routines

As mentioned above under the heading of safety, predictable rules and routines offer each child security in the physical sense. The same can be said for emotional security. Therefore the schedule for each classroom is set to best meet the needs of the children in each environment as suited to their developmental levels and is not changed unless absolutely necessary. Field trips enhance the children's experience and enrich their education. They take place three times a year.

For example, the morning for a casa child begins with outdoor time on the playground under the supervision of the teachers. Upon entering the school building, the children walk down the stairs and along the hallway to where their cubbies are. Here they change, as independently as possible, out of their outdoor clothing and into indoor shoes before entering the classroom. Once inside, they greet their teacher with a handshake while making eye contact. This short daily interaction incidentally is a great way for the teacher to check in and connect with each child. The child then proceeds to choose his or her own work, or join or ask for a lesson. The "work cycle" continues for most of the morning until a chime is sounded calling the children to a gathering at circle time where songs are sung, stories told and/or birthdays are celebrated. Snacks are available throughout the morning at a table where four children can sit and eat at the same time. After circle, the children wash their hands to prepare for a hot lunch, which is served at the tables in their classrooms. After lunch, the children go back into the hallway to change into outdoor clothing and then head outdoors for their recess. These routines are so ingrained that the children do not need reminders of what comes next but anticipate what they have come to expect each and every day.

If there are unusual events, such as a special visitor, the teachers make every effort to schedule this at a time when it will be least disruptive to the regular cycle of work and they will also prepare the children ahead of time. This preparation might entail an announcement of what will take place as well as clearly defined expectations for behaviour. For example, listening to a special visitor might require sitting cross-legged in a circle, waiting until the end of the presentation to ask questions, and designating one or two students to express a special thank you at the end of the presentation. (46.(1) a, c, e, f)

Intellectual development goals

We strive to support the intellectual development of every child by helping each child to develop concentration, by following the child's interests, by presenting new lessons and follow-up geared to each child's individual pace of learning and according to a sequential and developmentally appropriate curriculum, by monitoring each child's progress through ongoing assessments and using the information gathered to inform our lesson planning, and by supporting the child to develop skills of self-evaluation.

Approaches

Helping each child to develop concentration

In order for a child to become engaged and maintain engagement with his or her activities, it is essential that the child is able to focus and concentrate. Much of the early work in the toddler and casa environments is preparation for later work in that it leads to concentration. Examples include caring for the classroom environment through such activities as washing a table, chair or part of the floor, or polishing small objects made of glass or metal. The exercises increase in the number of required steps and complexity so that as the child is ready, he or she is increasingly challenged to remember how to lay out the materials, how to use each material, the proper sequence of steps and how to put everything away properly at the end. For example, an early exercise involves pouring water from one jug to another. The proper hand positions to accomplish this task are modelled by the teacher in order to set the child up for successful, independent action. The fine motor strength and skills acquired through simple pouring movements are then applied to further exercises such as pouring a drink into a cup, pouring water into glasses at different levels, pouring water from a jug into a basin for washing larger objects, and pouring water from a basin into a pail to be emptied into the sink.

Each activity holds within it a specific set-up and required tools. Laying out a towel, putting on an apron, (and possibly asking a friend to tie one's apron strings), placing soap dish, brush, water jug and basin, and a drying towel into the correct sequence from left to right, engages a child's memory through purposeful movement. The activity then is to wash a table. Within the exercises, there are points of interest that the teacher may highlight. For example, when pouring from a jug, we watch for the very last drop to drip out of the jug and into the glass. The young child is drawn to this small detail and so his or her attention begins to emerge. When washing a table the children love the feel and sound of the scrubbing brush on the table as they swish the soap bubbles around in circles. When a brass object is polished, the point of interest is noticing how shiny it becomes after the work has been completed. Since the children are allowed to repeat the activities as often as they wish, this further builds concentration since each child can decide when he or she has reached a satisfactory point of completion. And so the child becomes engaged in choosing work, setting it up, following a sequence, using his/her memory, fine and gross motor skills, applying effort to the task at hand and admiring his/her achievement afterwards. Over time a cycle of work is established for each child and this leads to concentration. (46.(1) d, e, f)

Following a child's interests

The teachers complete scientific observations of the children. They watch for that which engages them most. They respond to the child's interests and set design the classroom and lessons around these interests.



When a child is focused and interested, true learning can occur. At MJDS each child is free and encouraged to follow his/her interests. Every day offers each child the opportunity to choose his/her own activities from a growing assortment of materials within each classroom. The teacher carefully observes each child to look for what might be of interest at any given time and offers new lessons according to interest and the child's readiness. The teacher also tracks each child's progress very carefully so that he/she is ready to offer new lessons spontaneously as new interests arise. (46.(1) d, e, f)

Learning according to individual pace

The teachers support individual learning styles and adjust their approach and content as needed. The teachers create individual lesson plans for each child in their environment. The teacher observes each child during the course of their lessons together, most of which are presented individually, and then plans for and offers new lessons accordingly. After a new lesson has been presented, the teacher again observes to see how the child works with the material, how often, and the child's level of engagement. The teacher can cater the lessons to each child's abilities and level of readiness. Some children will need more time with a certain concept or even at a particular time of the day or the year. Other children may seek out new challenges quickly and can then proceed to new lessons and concepts as they are ready. (46.(1) d, f, g)

Sequential, developmentally appropriate curriculum

The Montessori curriculum unfolds sequentially as the children master one skill or concept and can move on to the next. The guideline for lessons suggests an age range as to when it is best to present a certain lesson, as some children will be ready sooner than others and not always according to their chronological ages. Preparation for new skills and concepts is essential to allow a child to be successful and independent. For example, before writing is introduced in the casa environment, the hand is prepared. Dozens of practical life exercises mentioned earlier have served to strengthen the hand and many of the materials with small knobs have helped to develop the child's pincer grip, which is necessary to hold a pencil properly. Now the child is ready to hold a pencil and is therefore introduced to the metal insets, a group of ten geometric shapes which the child can trace and shade with a variety of coloured pencils. The metal insets lend themselves beautifully to repeated activity as in addition to six formal presentations of increasing difficulty, the children can explore countless shape and colour combinations. Parallel to this exploration and skill-building is the work with sandpaper letters, where the child is learning to recognize and memorize the letters of our alphabet by the most commonly used sound they represent. Only after significant development of both dexterity and recognition of letters is the activity of writing introduced, minimizing senseless struggles and leading the child to a joyful and successful experience of writing.

When observations are made and the children are shown how to work: how to write, how to conduct research, how to read and how to put together a project, the teachers give them freedom to initiate their own work. They create their own assignments.

The Montessori curriculum covers more than 3 years of new lessons and follow-up work within any classroom cycle. (Toddlers are an exception as the age range is between 18 months – 30 months). Within the casa environment a child may work his/her way through arithmetic all the way into long division work or up to grammar exercises within the language area. The teachers are trained to follow the child to wherever he/she is ready to venture and so are prepared to present lessons that are often part of the lower elementary (Grades 1-3) experience.

The casa curriculum is rich in content and covers five main areas: practical life, sensorial, language, math and culture. Language includes reading and writing in English and Hebrew, recognizing parts of speech and creative

writing. Math includes numeration, operations into the thousands, the decimal system, patterns, memorization of number facts, fractions, squares and cubes. Culture includes an introduction to geography through the use of abstracted models of land and water forms and puzzle maps of every continent as well as many countries of our globe. Culture also includes introductions to biology as leaf shapes, margins, venation and varieties are explored, along with types of vertebrates and invertebrates, studied through a series of "Parts of..." booklets (for example, Parts of the Frog). Culture also includes music, visual arts and drama. (46.(1) d, e, f)

Monitoring each child's progress

In the Montessori environments, assessments are ongoing. Every time a teacher gives a new lesson, s/he assesses whether the child is truly ready for the new lesson. Does the child recall the concepts from the preceding lesson or has the child developed the necessary skills to enjoy independence with the new activity? If yes, s/he will proceed; if not, s/he will modify the lesson, repeat the preceding lesson or move to a more appropriate lesson. All of this happens without the child even knowing that he or she is "being assessed".

The three-period lesson

When introducing new concepts and vocabulary, the three-period lesson is used. This three-step approach is a teaching and assessment method that lends itself easily to game-like activities which the children really enjoy. For example, the visual symbols representing the sounds of the letters of our alphabet are introduced through the sandpaper letters. This material is made of wooden rectangles that are roughly 20 x 25 cm in size with some variation for larger letters. The background is either pink for consonants or blue for vowels and the symbol is superimposed on top of the colour in sandpaper. The child can see the shape of the symbol, trace and feel it, while associating it with the sound the symbol represents. This multi-sensory approach is very successful for young learners and we often see children return to the sandpaper letters and trace one carefully to help them recall the sound or the way to write the symbol.

During a lesson, three new symbols are usually introduced at one time. Prior to this work, the teacher will have to make sure that the child has the necessary prerequisites to be ready for the lesson: the ability to distinguish the sounds aurally, which is accomplished through sound games, the ability to visually discriminate shapes, which is accomplished through the sensorial work, and the ability to sit and focus on a fairly abstract lesson for about 5-10 minutes, which is accomplished through building concentration by way of the practical life activities. The teacher will choose three symbols which show some contrast, for example, c, m and i. The first period of the lesson is when the teacher introduces the new concept; in this case, she will trace each symbol and produce the sound orally, then invite the child to do the same. In the second and longest period of the lesson, the teacher now tests for recognition as s/he asks the child to point to "c", "m" or "i" in and out of order. The second period is where the teacher can get very creative and really engage the child. Can you tap the "c"? Can you trace the "m"? Can you hand me the "i"? If the child has difficulty at this stage of the lesson, the teacher will not proceed to the third period. The third and final period of the lesson is where the teacher tests for memory and asks the child to recall which sound is associated with each symbol. "What is this?" as she points to the "m". If the child does not answer correctly, the teacher simply takes note and records this information in her/his notes, making sure to return to these sandpaper letters again soon.

All of this "assessment" happens as an integrated part of each lesson and every day without stress for the child, without pencil and paper. But the data that the teachers can gather is essential information about each child's progress and can help to identify obstacles and unusual difficulties very early on. The notes the teachers collect after their lessons are very important and help them to plan for the next lesson for each child. (46.(1) d, e, f, g)

Supporting the child to develop skills of self-evaluation

As the children mature, the teachers will guide them to reflect on their work. Often excited children run up to their teachers, holding up a painting, a story or an equation and ask for feedback. While the teachers always celebrate the children's efforts and accomplishments, they will not offer empty praise or external rewards. They will however, help the children to develop self-evaluation skills by asking questions. How do you feel about your work? Are you ready to share your work? Would you like to invite someone (often an older sibling or friend from another class) to come and see your work? This allows each child to think about his/her work and how he/she truly feels about it. "I actually liked my first drawing better". "This one is good but I'd like to try again." "This story has better words but it's not as exciting as my last one." "I'm ready for a really loooooong math equation!" In this way, the children get in touch with how they feel about their efforts and what goals they wish to set for themselves. Although the teachers will help to guide the children on this path, the children will ultimately only be independent if they have the chance to practice using their skills of self-evaluation.

Another crucial aspect of this development is the approach towards mistakes: they are necessary, they happen to everyone, they are an important part of the learning process. Instead of dwelling on mistakes, the focus is on what the child would like to do now: mop up the spill, wash the dirty linens, rewrite the sentence, sweep up the beans. Because the children are empowered to take responsibility for their mistakes and then to fix them as well as they are able, their self-esteem and independence grow. As well, a healthy approach to learning, inquiry, experimentation and problem-solving is fostered. (46.(1) b, c, d, f)

Spiritual development goals

We strive to support the spiritual development of every child by offering connections to nature, the time and place for quiet self-reflection, modelling and discussing virtuous behaviour, emphasizing education for peace, introducing religious stories, traditions, prayers and celebrations from the Jewish faith and culture.

Approaches

Connections to nature

Within every classroom begins a reverence for nature through the simple acts of caring for plants and animals. Specific lessons introduce the children to how they can best water, prune, and even re-pot a plant to help it thrive. This is continued in the outdoor environments where the children help to tend gardens and observe how nature responds to changes in season and weather. Life is valued and revered as precious and wonderful. (46.(1) (f)

Time and place for quiet self-reflection

Every classroom has a reading and/or listening chair that is available for one child to sit and enjoy a book or listen to music through headphones. This opportunity is very important as each child will at some point need a break from intellectual, physical and social activity and will need rest. This respite from action and activity brings balance to a child's development as his/her spirit has time to unfold. This can happen anywhere in the classroom when a child chooses to sit by him/herself and quietly reflect, ponder, wonder or even meditate. (46.(1) a y, f, g)

Modelling and discussing virtuous behaviour

The teachers model kindness and love for the children and the school through all of their actions. When greeting each child upon arrival in the morning, the teacher bends down to be at the child's eye level and shakes his/her hand, connecting emotionally and also modelling caring behaviour. When a child feels upset or is hurt, the teachers tend immediately to the child's physical needs but also offer kind words, time to listen and the comfort of a lap, a hug or a hand

The teachers use positive language to guide, correct and encourage the children, always seeing the best in each child and the potential of their capabilities. In this way, each child's spirit is nurtured and can develop. The children in turn treat each other with kindness, offering hugs and tissues when a friend is hurt, asking "are you ok?" The teachers minimize interruptions during their conversations with individual children. One child may have to wait while the teacher listens to another child, knowing however, that when it is finally his/her turn he/she will receive the same undivided attention from the teacher as the other child did. In this way, the teachers model and the children experience patience. (46.(1) a, g, b, c, f)



Jewish Education

MJDS innovates in the area of Jewish experiential education. Our students are surrounded by Judaism throughout their day. We integrate Jewish values into their lives, no matter what life path they may choose. We are driven to create a positive educational environment that fosters spiritual and intellectual growth, pride in Jewish identity, and love of learning.

Our Judaic Studies curriculum integrates and celebrates the study of Jewish holidays and culture, Jewish texts, Hebrew language and the love of Israel.



Jewish Holidays And Culture חגים ותרבות יהודיים

Students enjoy a rich experience of Jewish life and cycles. They learn about and celebrate all the Jewish holidays by understanding their meaning and rituals, blessings, traditions and customs, food and song. Each year we highlight three holidays to be studied in greater depth.

Hebrew Language שפה עברית

Ivrit B' Ivrit drives the learning of Hebrew at MJDS. Hebrew is taught in Hebrew. The children hear and use Hebrew conversationally and in a practical way on a daily basis which gives them a more intimate and practical understanding of the language. Our specialized Hebrew language Montessori materials lay a strong foundation for Hebrew literacy skills. Our children learn to communicate competently in oral and written Hebrew. The specific routine and spiritual practices at MJDS add to learning through repetition in a structured and joyful manner.

Love Of Israel אהבת ישראל

Love for and connection with Israel are critical components of Jewish identity. At MJDS Israel's education is all about building strong bonds and imparting the student's passion and love for Israel.

We know that personal connections are most meaningful therefore we are thrilled to be a part of UJA's Israel Engagement ShinShinim program. Every year, we welcome two Israeli young adults who have chosen a gap year to serve the Jewish community in Toronto. They create fun and engaging activities for students in all grades to strengthen the bond between Israel and our children.

Jewish Texts מקורות יהודיים

Jewish texts contain insights into the history of the Jewish people and the world at large, and a code for living a meaningful life. By engaging in text study, our students gain insights, critical thinking skills, practice with dialogue and teamwork, and opportunities for reflection.

Our Integrated Approach

As educators and parents, we have unwavering requirements for our children's education. Our needs are two-fold. We seek to combine the ideals of a deep Jewish education with teaching methods that have a track record for academic excellence.

Judaic and Montessori philosophies share many of the same ideas: respect for the individual, love of learning, care for the natural environment, and a desire to live a moral life. Both place much importance on education as a tool we can use to create a better world.

Ongoing Professional Learning

Central to establishing and maintaining these lofty goals and approaches is the staff of MJDS. The classroom teachers, both Montessori and Judaic studies specialists, the subject specialists in French, Music, Art and Physical Education, the support staff, the administrative team and the Head of School all invest a great deal to make the school as vibrant, dynamic and progressive as it is. This can only happen when each member of the staff feels supported and has the opportunity to develop him/herself professionally.

Visiting other programs

To this end, MJDS policies ensure that each member of staff has the opportunity to visit other programs at least once a year. There is a budget available annually to each staff member to attend conferences and workshops. Teachers also participate in Community wide PD Days and Conferences (j)

Local Community Partners

At MJDS we understand that all of our internal goals and approaches can only be attained with the support of our community. This includes all of our families as well as our community partners. We strive to involve these community partners in our work and offer opportunities for their expertise to support our children, families and staff.

We have a strong and healthy relationship with the neighbouring synagogue, Beth David, which offers us space and facilities to run our programs, as well as cultural and spiritual support. We have an agreement with the Community Care Access Centre of Toronto that allows our students to be referred for services such as speech, language, physio and occupational therapy with costs covered by the province of Ontario. We also have a list of therapists, psychologists, educational consultants and other experts who can be hired privately.

Beyond the Classroom

Through our Middle School at MJDS we expand the boundaries beyond the classroom. This means involving local businesses, community groups, museums, and more in our student's experiences. We have already done this in many ways, and we will strive to continue to improve and expand this outside cooperation. In the past the Middle School has had a relationship with a local flower store that helped us with our micro-business, and we have participated in many community service outings.

There is a ripple effect through the school as the older students connect with these community partners and build connections that all of the MJDS community can enjoy. We connect our parents and children to guest speakers from the community such as a speech and language pathologist and other professionals who can speak to parents about important topics concerning their child's development. Depending on the circumstances, Theme of the Year and availability of speakers, we endeavor to connect with community partners as follows:

- visiting artists, musicians, craftspeople, trades people, professionals to visit the students and share their art
- Jewish elders, rabbis or otherwise cultural liaisons
- Outreach to and with native groups
- Fundraising for charitable events
- Partnerships with local libraries
- Community service for a seniors home, food bank, animal shelter, etc.)
- student teachers from the Foundation, TMI or other Montessori training programs
- ECE student teachers

- observations by other teachers, Montessori and otherwise
- visitors from high schools who help the students and their families apply and transition into their programs

Continuous School Improvement

In order to keep our program statement a living document and have our written goals and approaches actually match with the work that is taking place in our classrooms every day, we have an annual review process in place where all documents are reviewed by all of the staff and board members. This process takes place every summer over a number of days to ensure that everything we do is still in keeping with our goals and principles and that new ideas and practices which work well are also reflected in our publications.(k)