

Temple Emanuel Early Childhood Development Center

Family Handbook

School Year 2026-2027



Temple Emanuel ECDC
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Family Handbook (rev. 6/1/26)

Welcome!

Temple Emanuel has offered high quality early childhood programming for more than 60 years. At ECDC we welcome families and children from diverse ethnic, national, racial, and religious backgrounds.

Our intention is to provide a warm environment where children can socialize, learn, and thrive. Temple Emanuel ECDC is influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach. The key feature is a collaborative curriculum built upon the natural themes that arise in our environment – whether by children, teachers, parents or events – with skill development carefully embedded throughout the day.

Our Fundamental Values

The Reggio-inspired approach resonates with our fundamental values, both Jewish and universal.

- Kavod—Respect of self and others
- Kehilah—Community
- Simchat Limud—Joy of learning
- Hachnasat Orchim – Welcoming
- Tzedakah -Sharing with others

Our Guiding Principles

- Socialization and self-regulation are the foundation for healthy development and school readiness.
- Pre-academic skill acquisition is embedded in all activities.
- Art and music are integrated into daily school life.
- Hands-on investigation and open-ended exploration provide the foundation for learning.
- Our immediate and natural environment offers unlimited opportunities for learning.
- Collaboration among children, teachers, parents and school community is critical to the success of the learning process.
- Problem solving is exercised when children have the opportunity to initiate ideas and experiment.
- Close observation ensures that topics will be based on the interests of the children and relevant to the school community.

Your School Experience

In the Classroom

At ECDC we offer programming for children aged 2 to 6. With small class sizes and student to teacher ratios, we support the individual needs and development of children. Our program offers children the opportunity to play and learn together in a collaborative environment where educators support and guide children in their exploration and discovery. Children

participate in class meetings, build social skills, learn to be part of a classroom community, and develop Kindergarten readiness skills. Our Reggio Emilia-inspired approach means that our content is targeted to the interests and wonderings of the learners in the classroom. Children at ECDC participate in Art and Music programming that enriches and extends their work in the classroom. They also have opportunities to learn from the clergy team at Temple Emanuel.

ECDC's Kindergarten Enrichment program is a complement to local half-day kindergarten programs. Children benefit from child-centered, inquiry and project-based learning in a small group environment. Kindergarten skill building is embedded into classroom content with plenty of opportunities for self-guided exploration and play with peers.

School Calendar

The 2026-2027 calendar can be found online at:
<https://templemanuelpgh.org/ecdc/calendar/>.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

For the safety of our community, the following traffic pattern has been implemented. Parents will enter at the traffic light and make two right turns to follow the road in front of Temple Emanuel and will continue around to the rear in one traffic line.

Morning Session

Doors will open at 8:55am and class will begin at 9:00am for morning sessions. Doors will open for pick up from morning session at 11:27am and dismissal will occur at 11:30am.

Lunch

Doors will open at 12:27pm and dismissal will occur at 12:30pm.

Afternoon Session

Doors will open at 12:27pm and class will begin at 12:30pm for afternoon sessions. Doors will open for pick up from afternoon session at 2:57pm and dismissal will occur at 3:00pm.

Food Policy

Snacks—Snack items such as crackers will be provided by the school. Snacks will be plated for each child by a teacher wearing gloves. Children should bring a clean and filled water bottle with them to school each day. ECDC staff and educators are mindful of students with allergies and/or food sensitivities and are happy to work with families to provide safe options for children.

Lunch—Lunches at ECDC are an optional add-on for children ages 3-6. Lunch provides an opportunity to gather and socialize with others. Healthy habits and conversational skills are practiced in a relaxed setting. Families provide packed lunches for their children. Lunch boxes should be clearly marked with the child's first and last name. Lunches will be refrigerated. We are not able to warm foods. *Please note that lunches should **not** include any foods that contain peanuts or tree nuts.* If you include sunbutter in your child's lunch, please label it as such. Important texts in Jewish tradition prohibit eating certain foods including pork (bacon, sausage, pepperoni, etc) and shellfish (shrimp, crab, etc). While individual practices vary, we ask you to *refrain from sending pork or shellfish* to Temple in keeping with this cultural norm.

Birthdays and Holidays—We invite you to coordinate with your child's teachers to make the occasions special and meaningful for your child and their classmates.

Dress and Belongings

- Please provide an extra set of clothing in a baggie with your child's name and replace items as needed. Your child should come to school daily with a water bottle that is thoroughly rinsed, washed, and refilled. Be certain that the water bottle is clearly labeled with your child's name.
- Your child should be dressed in play clothes and sturdy, close-toed shoes. Clothing should allow freedom of movement and maximum independence with toileting. Sandals, dress shoes and long dresses tend to impede movement or cause safety hazards.
- Please dress your child according to the weather and send hats and gloves/mittens on a daily basis throughout the cold season. Outdoor clothing should be clearly labeled with your child's name.

Holidays

We want to introduce you to the Jewish holidays that we celebrate at ECDC. Our aim is to celebrate holidays by focusing on central values and customs such as foods that we can enjoy together. We celebrate in the classroom and in our music program where songs reflect the season and holiday themes. Throughout the year we invite you to celebrate with us and to share customs and stories of the holidays observed in your homes.

Throughout the year –

At school we say a blessing before eating:

Baruch atah Adonai elohenu melech ha-olam ha-motsi lechem min ha-arets

Shabbat – On Fridays we welcome Shabbat with songs of gratitude, peace and community. We enjoy a special snack of juice and challah.

Rosh Hashanah - We welcome the year with apples and honey signifying a good, sweet year.

Yom Kippur - We talk about ways of being a good person and friend.

Sukkot - We learn appreciation for fruits, vegetables and the harvest and enjoy picnics in our outdoor Sukkah.

Chanukah – Our older children learn the story of Chanukah. We all enjoy customs including lighting the menorah, playing dreidel and eating of latkes.

Tu B'Shvat – A holiday similar to Earth Day, Tu B'Shvat is a time to celebrate and respect the earth's bounty. We often enjoy foods that are customary in Israel, such as dates and pomegranates.

Purim – Queen Esther is the hero of the Purim story. We make noisemakers, wear costumes and have a carnival to celebrate the saving of the Jewish people from Haman.

Passover – Passover is a major Jewish festival celebrating freedom from slavery in Egypt. We celebrate at school, as in our homes, with a special seder (ritual meal) where together we eat matzo (unleavened bread) and charoset (an apple mixture), symbols of the holiday.

Communication

At Temple Emanuel ECDC our aim is to develop partnerships with families built on a foundation of mutual respect. The ECDC Director maintains regular communication with families and welcomes your questions and suggestions.

Our primary means of communication is through Brightwheel. Parents and families can expect regular updates from their child's educators, including photos and documentation of the life of the classroom. Brightwheel offers a messaging feature which is a helpful means of staying in contact with your child's educators as well as ECDC administrators. Information regarding special events, school closures, and other important information will be sent through the Brightwheel messaging system.

Designated conference dates are scheduled once per year with your child's teacher. However, ongoing communication is foundational to support your child's education and development. It is important for teachers and parents to establish two-way communication from the beginning of the school year. We encourage you to reach out at any time. Likewise, ECDC teachers will regularly reach out to you to communicate concerns and progress.

Along with pediatricians, early childhood educators play an important role in referring families for additional support. Additional services are available through two main networks:

Early Intervention is offered through the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers for children under the age of three and by PEI, a service of the Allegheny Intermediate Unit starting at age three. Children may be screened in each developmental domain. If a child qualifies, therapists (such as speech and language therapists) may come to the home or school for a specified period per week.

Behavioral health is offered by social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and developmental pediatricians. After an evaluation, treatment recommendations are made. Treatment may be in the form of weekly (outpatient) therapy or more intensive ("wraparound"), where therapeutic support is offered in the home and school setting.

Children who qualify for early intervention or behavioral health services will have an Individual Family Service Plan or an Individual Education Program. The ECDC Director and classroom Educators will participate on the team with you to ensure that the goals and strategies are implemented and to communicate progress in an ongoing manner.

Family Participation

Temple Emanuel ECDC is built upon collaboration among teachers, children, and families. We invite families to participate in the everyday life of school both by frequent communication with the teacher and by sharing ideas, talents, and interests.

ECDC values a community made up of families with a wide range of cultures and languages. We invite you to share information about your family that will help us to better

understand your child and enrich our school life. Likewise, we ask you to let us know how we can best offer a welcoming and inviting school environment for your family.

As ECDC family members, we also invite you to participate in Parent Teacher Partnership. In collaboration with the ECDC Director and Educators, PTP plans and offers a wide range of opportunities including social gatherings, teacher appreciation efforts, fundraising events, school projects, and policy discussions.

Policy Overview

ECDC is licensed by the PA Department of Human Services. Regulations governing child care centers may be found at this link.

<http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/055/chapter3290/chap3290toc.html&d=>

Questions may be directed to the ECDC Director or to the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (Western Office), 11 Stanwix Street, Room 240, Pittsburgh PA 15222; 412-565-5183

Community Resources

Below is a list of trusted services within our community. We are happy to provide a list of additional resources as needed.

Alliance for Infants and Toddlers

The Alliance for Infants and Toddlers provides service coordination for families of children in Allegheny County receiving Early Intervention birth to three years of age. 412-885-6000 www.afit.org

PEI: Preschool Early Intervention

PEI provides free screening to identify developmental needs and provides early intervention services at no cost for eligible children in Allegheny County starting ages 3-5. 412-394-5904 www.aiu3.net

Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh

Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh offers a wide range of services including child & family counseling and physical, occupational and speech therapies. The Child Development Unit offers comprehensive assessment of developmental delays. Please see www.chp.edu for more information.

South Hills Interfaith Movement (SHIM)

SHIM offers assistance with basic needs such as food, clothing and utilities as well as career counseling and family support services. 412-854-9120 shimcares.org

Ways to Support ECDC

We greatly appreciate donations of time and funds to enrich our program at ECDC. Donations to one of the funds benefitting Temple Emanuel ECDC can be made online at <https://www.templeemanuelpgh.org/give/online-donation-form/>.

Parent Teacher Partnership (PTP)

At ECDC we have an active PTP which conducts fundraising, special events and school projects throughout the year. Funds are used to enhance school programming. The PTP invites parents to participate in shared leadership of our school community.

Jeanne Glasspool Fund

The Jeanne Glasspool Fund of Temple Emanuel is used to purchase special equipment, repairs and maintenance of the classrooms, indoor gym and the playground.

Nan Simon Fund

The Nan Simon Fund is used for ECDC staff training and for technology in the classroom.

Martha Klein Lottman Family Fund

Originally created to provide matching monies for Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative which paved the way for ECDC's transition to a Reggio Emilia-inspired approach, the Martha Klein Lottman Family Fund supports continuous quality improvement at Temple Emanuel Early Childhood Development Center by funding staff training and professional development, improvements to our classroom spaces, and the purchase of materials to enrich our environment.

Iris Harlan Library at Temple Emanuel ECDC

The Iris Harlan Library enriches our classrooms with high-quality children's literature ensuring that our collection reflects diversity in our community.

United Way

We are a United Way Choice Contributor agency. Please think of us when contributing to the United Way. United Way funds are used to supplement scholarships available to families facing financial hardships. We appreciate your donations and thank you in advance.

#1250695 must be marked to designate your donation to ECDC.

Note: The Temple Emanuel tax identification number is: EIN 25 – 1029716.

Safety and Security

Temple Emanuel works in partnership with the Mt. Lebanon Police and other regional authorities to provide a safe and secure environment. Measures in place include:

- A locked building with fob entry by staff at programmed times
- A buzzer system for entry monitored by video
- Double doors between the school and the rest of Temple Emanuel secured with access by code for authorized persons
- A playground secured by fencing and a lockable gate
- Annual safety and fire safety training for staff offered by the Mt. Lebanon Police and Fire Departments
- Continuous contact with the security professionals at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh and through them the Secure Community Network, FBI, and regional law enforcement groups.
- Regular fire and evacuation drills as regulated by PA Department of Human Services
- Annual Pediatric First Aid and CPR training in accordance with PA Department of Human Service regulations

- Emergency kits for each classroom which include lockdown and evacuation tools and emergency contact information for each child
- A Blue Point System with 16 pull stations to alert building inhabitants and regional authorities of an active threat
- A (green) Medical Alert pull box located in the central ECDC hallway dispatching an ambulance in case of serious illness or injury

In addition to the ongoing safety and security protocols Temple Emanuel and ECDC have in place, we ask our families to keep our school community safe by:

- Entering and exiting the building through the central doors only;
- Driving safely and slowly (10mph max) in our parking lot using the approved, one-way route, avoiding phone use while in the parking lot, and being alert to children and families crossing the lot;
- Alerting school personnel immediately if unsafe behavior or suspicious activity is noticed;
- Notifying the Director of new people picking up your child(ren) from school. Unfamiliar individuals will be asked to show ID.

On an annual basis, ECDC submits our Emergency Preparation Policy to the Mt. Lebanon Police Department and Allegheny County Emergency Services. This policy is on file and available for your review in the ECDC office.

Required Forms

An updated Child Health Report is required on an annual basis. *Please note that ECDC requires all immunizations, including an annual influenza vaccine, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.* Additionally, families must submit an Agreement/Payment form and an Emergency Contact Form (completed through Brightwheel) annually.

Program Information and Fees

Classes	Time	Days	Fees
2-Day Twos	9:00-11:30 AM	Tuesday/Thursday	\$240/month \$2160/year
3-Day Threes	9:00-11:30 AM	Monday/Wednesday/Friday	\$310/month \$2790/year
5-Day Threes	9:00-11:30 AM	Monday-Friday	\$505/month \$4545/year
4-Day Fours	9:00-11:30 AM	Tuesday-Friday	\$405/month \$3645/year
5-Day Fours/Transition	9:00-11:30 AM or 12:30-3:00 PM	Monday-Friday	\$505/month \$4545/year

Kindergarten Enrichment	12:30-3:00 PM	Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday	\$310/month \$2790/year
Full Day Fours/Transition	9:00am-3:00pm	Monday-Friday	\$1110/month \$9990/year (includes lunch fees)
Lunch (ages 3-6)	11:30 AM-12:30 PM	Monday-Friday You may select 2-5 sessions per week depending on your child's schedule	\$30 per session/month

Tuition Payment Policy

Tuition charges will be deducted on the 15th of the month for the following month starting on August 15, 2026 and for nine months through April 15, 2027. Parent(s) must give written notice of school withdrawal by the first of the month to avoid tuition charges for the following month. Once notice of withdrawal is given, responsibility remains for any charges accrued through the end of the month. No refunds will be given for payments already submitted.

Scholarships

ECDC families who meet income eligibility have access to scholarship funding through the state Education Improvement Tax Credit program. Applications are due in the Spring with awards determined in the summer. Please see our website for details.

Health Protocols and Procedures

Introduction

These protocols describe safety practices conforming to recommendations by the PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Hygiene

Children will wash hands with soap and water before eating, after playing outdoors, after using the toilet and whenever hands are visibly dirty. Hands will be washed for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. When hands are not visibly dirty, hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) may be used with supervision for supplemental washing.

Children will be guided to cough and sneeze into the elbow or a tissue and to refrain from touching eyes, nose and mouth.

Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting

Temple Emanuel follows a cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting schedule which delineates frequency and role of maintenance, cleaning staff and teaching staff.

Our cleaning schedule includes:

- Daily disinfecting of hard surfaces such as counter tops and door handles
- Sanitizing of classroom materials daily and immediately when soiled

Child Health and Immunization Policy

On an annual basis, ECDC requires a Child Health Report, including health history, an immunization report and a signature by the Health Care Provider. ECDC requires all immunizations, including an annual influenza vaccine, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (a committee of the CDC).

Illness and School Attendance

Children should not attend school without clearance from a medical provider:

- When presenting with symptoms of fever, cough, chills, fatigue, body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- If diagnosed with a contagious disease, for example: pink eye, strep throat, or chicken pox
- If diagnosed with a parasitic condition: head lice, scabies, or pinworm

Returning to School After Illness

- Children with pink eye or strep throat must be on medication for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Children with head lice, scabies or pinworms must have signed clearance from a medical professional before returning to school.
- Children with chicken pox must have all skin lesions crusted and dry before returning to school.
- Children with vomiting and diarrhea may not return to school until they are free from vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- Children with a runny nose resulting from an allergy may attend school with clearance from their medical provider.
- Children with runny noses may return to school when fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- ECDC abides by current CDC guidance for cases of COVID-19.

Illness Occurring at School

If a child should become ill during the school day, the child will be moved to a designated area to rest while waiting to be picked up. We contact parents immediately to report the onset of an illness that occurs at school. Parents are asked to keep their phones on and by their sides for the entire school day so that they can be reached immediately as needed. When illness occurs at school, we complete an incident report and provide copies to parents at their request.

School-Family Communication re: Illness

As a measure to prevent the spread of contagious illness, ECDC monitors attendance and the reason for absences. **If your child will be absent from school, please notify the ECDC director to report the reason for absence.** Brightwheel messaging may be utilized for this reporting. If a child has a contagious disease or a parasitic condition, we advise other families in the classroom that their children may have been exposed to that illness or condition.