



Education Matters

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center Director

I am blessed to have parents who have always had my best interests at heart and made sure that I was offered opportunities to expand my mind, nurture my creativity and focus on my Judaism. They viewed education as paramount and encouraged me to pursue my interests all the way until I wanted to stop.

My journey began with preschool when I was around 2 and continued through my Masters. They found a preschool that incorporated Jewish holidays in with the academic side of learning. (It might not be a real word, “academic,” but it sounds good right?) I credit this early start for paving the way for my current love of learning.

Why is adding in Judaism so important (especially if a family isn’t religious or even Jewish for that matter)?

That is a great question. You always ask the best questions, keeping me on my toes! Religion and morals provide a strong foundation for creating well-rounded, caring individuals. When you realize that there is a higher power, something bigger than yourself, you can give yourself up to G-d and alleviate a lot of the pressure.

What does that moral-based education look like?

Well, there are a host of values, Jewish values in this case, that really provide a strong, solid learning foundation for children.

- **Ahavat Chesed (Loving-kindness):** This value emphasizes the importance of acting with compassion, empathy and generosity toward others. It's about going beyond the letter of the law to offer help and support.



- **Educating children about *ahavat chesed*:** Encourage acts of sharing, helping friends and family, volunteering and showing care for those in need.
- **Tikkun Olam (Repair of the World):** This concept highlights our responsibility to actively work towards making the world a better place, environmental sustainability and peace.
 - **Educating children about *tikkun olam*:** Teach them to advocate for fairness, to recycle and care for the environment, and to contribute to their community.
- **Kavod (Honor/Respect):** This value stresses the importance of showing respect for G-d, for parents, elders, teachers and for every human being, recognizing their inherent dignity.
 - **Educating children about *kavod*:** Instill good manners, teach them to listen to and value the opinions of others, and to treat everyone with dignity, regardless of differences.
- **Derech Eretz (The Way of the Land/Proper Conduct):** This refers to ethical and polite behavior, good character and common decency in all interactions. It's about living honorably and respectfully within society.
 - **Educating children about *derech eretz*:** Emphasize honesty, integrity, keeping promises, being punctual, and generally being a considerate and responsible member of society.
- **Talmud Torah (Study of Torah/Learning):** This value underscores the lifelong pursuit of knowledge, not just religious texts, but also secular wisdom and understanding. It's about intellectual curiosity and continuous growth.
 - **Educating children about *Talmud Torah*:** Foster a love for reading, encourage curiosity, promote critical thinking, and highlight the importance of lifelong learning in all subjects.



- **Tzedakah (Righteousness/Justice/Charity):** While often translated as charity, *tzedakah* is rooted in the concept of justice. It's about giving what is right and just to those in need, not just as an act of kindness, but as an obligation.
 - **Educating children about *tzedakah*:** Encourage them to contribute a portion of their allowance to charity, participate in fundraising activities, and understand that helping others is a responsibility.
- **Shalom Bayit (Peace in the Home):** This value emphasizes the importance of fostering harmony, respect, and love within the family unit.
 - **Educating children about *shalom bayit*:** Teach them to communicate kindly with family members, resolve conflicts peacefully, share responsibilities, and contribute to a loving home environment.
- **L'dor Vador (From Generation to Generation):** This value speaks to the importance of transmitting traditions, values, and knowledge to the next generation, ensuring continuity and heritage. At the Early Learning Center, we are proud to live this value, *kvelling* that so many of our parents came here as children!
 - **Educating children about *l'dor vador*:** Encourage them to learn about their family history, participate in cultural traditions, and understand the importance of passing on positive values.

These values, while deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, offer universal principles that can guide any child toward a life filled with purpose, compassion, and positive contribution to the world.

How can you ensure your child learns these values? Choose a Jewish preschool for your child and watch them blossom!

#Shabbat Shalom