

Parent Handbook



Saul Spielberg
Early Childhood Center
UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION

2025 – 2026 School Year



Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center

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ABOUT US

HISTORY

In the late 1970s, Rabbi Jerome Grollman and the Board of Trustees of United Hebrew Congregation recognized the need for a high-quality Jewish early childhood program rooted in both educational excellence and strong community values. In 1979, United Hebrew Preschool opened its doors with just three classrooms, welcoming children ages 2½ to 5.

As our community's needs grew, so did our school. In 1990, a generous gift from the Spielberg family enabled us to expand and rename the program the **Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center (SSECC)**. Today, we proudly serve children from 6 weeks through pre-kindergarten as a full-time, year-round early childhood center within the heart of United Hebrew Congregation.

MISSION

At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, we believe every child is born with infinite potential, an innate curiosity, and a deep desire to learn. Rooted in Jewish values and inspired by the belief that learning emerges through relationships, exploration, and meaningful experiences, our mission is to nurture compassionate, capable, and confident young learners.

Through a progressive, play-based, and project-driven curriculum, we support each child's social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual development. We foster a strong sense of Jewish identity and belonging by celebrating Jewish life, values, and community. We strive to create a joyful and inclusive environment where children and families feel seen, supported, and inspired to grow.

PHILOSOPHY

We are guided by a constructivist approach that honors children as capable, curious, and active participants in their learning. We believe that:

1. **Children thrive when they feel confident and secure.** We support positive self-image by encouraging creativity, problem-solving, and independence, while also nurturing each child's sense of belonging—within their family, their classroom, and the Jewish community.
2. **Children learn through experience.** We offer rich sensory and hands-on opportunities that build foundational skills and help children make sense of the world around them.
3. **Language is a tool for connection and expression.** We foster development in both English and Hebrew through storytelling, dramatic play, music, prayer, and conversation—helping children express themselves verbally, non-verbally, and spiritually.
4. **Health and physical development are essential.** We encourage growth and coordination through daily movement, outdoor play, and healthy habits that support overall well-being.
5. **Relationships are at the heart of learning.** Through play, collaboration, and group experiences, children develop empathy, cooperation, and the ability to relate to others with kindness and respect.
6. **Jewish values guide our community.** We cultivate a sense of responsibility and care for others, inspired by Jewish teachings that emphasize compassion, justice, gratitude, and respect.
7. **Children are empowered when they have choices.** We provide time, space, and materials for exploration, decision-making, and open-ended inquiry, supporting children in becoming self-directed, joyful learners.

Support for Diverse Learners

At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, we are committed to creating an inclusive and supportive environment where all children can thrive. We recognize the importance of early intervention and are dedicated to partnering with families to meet the individual needs of each child—whether physical, behavioral, cognitive, or developmental.

We believe that all children deserve the opportunity to play, learn, and grow in a welcoming and inclusive setting. Our team collaborates with families and outside specialists to provide thoughtful care and responsive educational experiences, based on our current staffing and resources.

If additional support is needed beyond what our existing team can provide, we will work together with families to determine appropriate next steps, which may include securing supplemental support staff that aligns with SSECC's standards and values.

To ensure we can best support your child, we ask that families share any relevant documentation, such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or behavior intervention plans, with the Director. These documents will be shared with your child's educators and kept confidentially in your child's school file. Ongoing collaboration is essential, and we kindly request that the Director and relevant staff be included in IEP or support planning meetings as appropriate.

Our goal is always to work in partnership—with compassion, respect, and transparency—to support each child's growth and success within our community.

OUR PROGRAM

SEQUENCE OF CLASSES

Our classrooms are designed to support children’s developmental needs and provide continuity in care and learning. Placement is based on both age and developmental readiness, with July 31 serving as the primary cutoff date for classroom transitions.

- **Chai (“Life”)**
For infants beginning at 6 weeks old.
- **Garin (“Seeds”)**
Age varies. This class is typically for older infants and young toddlers who are walking or very mobile, no longer taking bottles, and generally down to one nap.
- **Kee Tov (“It Is Good”)**
Children approximately 18–24 months old. Placement is based on birthday and developmental readiness.
- **Tov (“Good”)**
Children who are 2 years old by **July 31**.
- **Chalutzim (“Pioneers”)**
Children who are 2 years old by **July 31**.
- **Chaverim (“Friends”)**
Children who are 3 years old by **July 31**.
- **Shalom (“Peace”)**
Children who are 4 years old by **July 31**.

ENROLLMENT & REGISTRATION

Enrollment for the upcoming school year begins in **December**. Registration is accepted on a **first-come, first-served basis**, with **priority given** in the following order:

1. Currently enrolled families
2. Siblings of currently enrolled children
3. Members of United Hebrew Congregation
4. New families from the broader community

We are proud to serve a diverse and welcoming community, and we work thoughtfully to balance continuity of care with available space.

Registration is considered complete once both the application form and the non-refundable **\$200 registration fee** have been submitted.

TUITION MODELS AND ABSENCE POLICY

Families may choose between two enrollment options:

School Year Program

Runs approximately **August through May**, excluding interim days (such as winter break, spring break, etc.).

- Tuition is calculated across 10 equal monthly payments.
- There is **no credit** for missed days due to **illness, vacation, holidays, early withdrawal, or weather-related closures**.
- **Make-up days are not offered.**

Year-Round Program

Runs from **August 1 through July 31**, and includes **interim days** (school breaks) in the tuition.

- Tuition is spread over 12 equal monthly payments.
- Up to **two weeks of vacation** are included in the annual tuition cost.
- As with School Year, there is **no credit** for absences due to **illness, additional vacation, holidays, early withdrawal, or inclement weather**, and no make-up days will be scheduled.

SIBLING DISCOUNT

The eldest child in a family will receive a 10% discount on monthly tuition.

ADMISSION POLICIES

The Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center welcomes all families and is committed to creating an inclusive, respectful, and diverse community. **Admission is open to children regardless of race, religion, sex, or national origin.**

Classroom placements are based on a child's age **as of July 31**, in accordance with guidelines set by the **State of Missouri Department of Education**. This consistent cutoff helps us ensure developmentally appropriate groupings across all classrooms.

When forming class groups, we consider a variety of factors to best support the growth and success of each child:

- Recommendations from current teachers
- A balanced combination of developmental stages and learning styles
- The emotional and social needs of individual children
- A healthy and inclusive gender balance

Our goal is to create classroom communities where every child feels seen, supported, and set up to thrive.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center operates Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., except for some national and Jewish holidays.

All scheduled closures—including those for national and Jewish holidays—are noted on the school calendar provided at the time of registration. We encourage families to review the calendar carefully, as there is no tuition credit or adjustment for holiday closures.

Please note that a late pickup fee of **\$1 per minute** will be charged for any child picked up after 5:30 p.m. If you are picking up at **12:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m., or 3:00 p.m.** and are running late, please **communicate with both your child's teacher(s) and the director** so your **account can be billed appropriately** for the additional care provided.

Tuition Payment

Tuition is billed on a **monthly basis** and is due on the **first of each month** via the **Brightwheel app**. A **late fee of \$35** will be assessed if payment is not received by the 1st.

If tuition remains unpaid by the **7th of the month**, your child may not attend school until the balance is resolved.

If you anticipate a delay or need assistance, please reach out to the Director as soon as possible. We are here to support open communication and work with families when challenges arise.

EXTRA CHILDCARE OPTIONS

We understand that scheduling needs can change, and we are happy to offer flexible **additional childcare options** to support our families when space and staffing allow.

Below are the current offerings at the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center:

- **Early Care**
Monday–Friday, **7:30–9:00 a.m.**
Cost: \$12 per morning
- **Lunch Bunch**
Monday–Friday, **12:00–1:00 p.m.**
Children bring lunch from home and enjoy a supervised play period.
Cost: \$10 per day
- **Afternoon Program**
Monday–Friday, **12:00–3:00 p.m.**
Children bring lunch from home, have playtime, and participate in a rotation of engaging activities.
Cost: \$30 per day
- **Late Care**
Monday–Friday, **3:00–5:30 p.m.**
Cost: \$10 per hour or \$6 per half hour
Please note: Pick-up after 5:30 p.m. will incur a late fee of \$1 per minute.
- **Interim Days**
Offered on select days when school is not in session (see calendar) but care is available.
Cost:
 - \$35.00 for **9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.**
 - \$70.00 for **9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.**

How to Request Extra Care

To request additional childcare:

1. **Email the Director, Lauren Lourie**, to check availability.
2. If space and staffing allow, your request will be confirmed.
3. Extra care will be **billed and paid through Brightwheel**.

All extra care is subject to availability and staffing. We do our best to accommodate requests whenever possible and appreciate your communication in advance.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Havdalah

We begin each week as a school community with Havdalah on Monday mornings. This ritual marks the end of Shabbat and the start of a new week. Children sing blessings, smell spices, and watch the candle's flame—building Jewish identity through this meaningful, sensory experience.

Library Time

Library time is scheduled weekly for all preschool classes. Children in **Chalutzim** and above have the opportunity to check out books to take home and enjoy with their families.

Music

Our music specialist leads weekly sessions that introduce children to both Jewish and secular music. Children learn holiday songs, prayers, and participate in joyful singing and rhythm-based activities using both vocal and instrumental music.

Movement

Movement is offered at least once a week and encourages physical development through active play. Children explore balance, coordination, and rhythm through music, games, and group activities that promote healthy movement and listening skills.

Science

Children are natural scientists, full of questions and wonder. Our science activities encourage hands-on exploration through experiments and discovery-based learning. Children are invited to observe, predict, problem-solve, and reflect on their experiences—developing a deeper understanding of the world around them.

Shinshin Program

Through our Shinshin program, we welcome an Israeli teen spending a service year before joining the IDF. As a cultural ambassador, the Shinshin shares Israeli life, language, and traditions—primarily with our Chaverim and Shalom classes—through stories, songs, and games.

Kabbalat Shabbat (Welcoming Shabbat)

Every Friday during the school year from **9:30–10:00 a.m.**, our community comes together to welcome Shabbat with songs, prayers, and joy. Our rabbis guide the children in exploring Jewish traditions and values. Children are encouraged to bring a **nonperishable food item or paper product** to donate to the **Jewish Food Pantry** as an act of **tzedakah (charity)**.

Throughout the year, each child in **Chaverim** and **Shalom** has the opportunity to serve as **Shabbat King or Queen**, with their families invited to join them in the classroom at **10:00 a.m.** for blessings and a story following the community celebration.

All Family Shabbat

We celebrate **All Family Shabbat** twice a year with a special 11:30 a.m. service where children share Shabbat traditions with parents, grandparents, and loved ones.

Grandparents & Special Friends Day

Each spring, we host **Grandparents & Special Friends Day**, welcoming special loved ones to spend the morning at SSECC. Guests participate in classroom activities and experience firsthand the joyful learning and community that surrounds our children every day.

CURRICULUM

At the **Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center**, we believe that children are capable, curious, and full of potential. Our curriculum emerges from this belief and is **co-constructed** with children through **observation, inquiry, and shared experiences**. We honor each child as a unique individual, recognizing that learning happens best in the context of **relationships, meaningful play, and a responsive environment**.

Our approach is **child-led**, yet grounded in the foundations of developmentally appropriate practice and aligned with **Missouri Early Learning Standards**. Teachers thoughtfully observe children's interests, questions, and developmental needs, using this insight to design a curriculum that is **relevant, engaging, and intentional**. Together, we explore big ideas through **investigation, storytelling, art, science, literacy, music, and movement**—allowing children to build skills and knowledge across all domains of development.

We view curriculum as a living framework that is:

- **Co-created** by children and educators through shared exploration
- **Emergent** from children's interests, experiences, and developmental stages
- **Culturally and linguistically responsive**, reflecting the identities and backgrounds of our families
- **Comprehensive and sequenced**, supporting cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and spiritual growth
- **Built on prior learning and experience**, scaffolding skills and deepening understanding
- **Aligned with research-based best practices** and state learning standards
- **Shared and transparent**, with goals clearly communicated among staff and with families

At the heart of our program is a deep respect for **each child's voice** and a commitment to nurturing their confidence, creativity, and sense of belonging in both the classroom and the wider community.

Our approach to early literacy reflects a broad, integrated understanding of language development—rooted in **real-life experiences, play, and relationships**. We recognize that children come to us already immersed in language, and our role is to cultivate a rich, print-filled environment where they can explore reading, writing, speaking, and listening in authentic, meaningful ways.

Early literacy at SSECC is guided by the following principles:

- **Literacy begins at birth**, and early experiences with language are foundational.
- **Reading and writing develop together**, not in isolation.
- Children **construct literacy skills through play, storytelling, conversation, and hands-on exploration**.
- **Being read to regularly** plays a vital role in developing vocabulary, comprehension, and a love for books.
- Literacy learning is **developmental and individualized**—children grow through stages at their own pace.
- **Authentic reading and writing experiences**, such as making signs, writing notes, or reading recipes, are embedded in classroom life.

Teachers create **print-rich environments** that include books, writing tools, labels, and meaningful literacy invitations throughout the classroom. Our goal is to **support self-motivated, self-generated, and joyful learning**—where children view themselves as readers, writers, and communicators from the earliest years.

This approach is consistent with the best practices recommended by the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** and is informed by research across child development, linguistics, education, psychology, and sociology.

ASSESSMENT PLANS

At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, assessment is viewed as an essential part of the learning process. Assessments are designed to be meaningful, authentic, and developmentally appropriate, offering insight into each child's growth, interests, and needs. Our goal is to better understand each child as a learner and individual, so we can support their development in thoughtful and responsive ways.

Purposes of Assessment

Assessments are used to:

- Identify each child's **strengths, interests, and areas of need**
- **Inform curriculum planning** and guide intentional teaching
- **Support communication and collaboration with families**
- Monitor developmental progress and identify areas that may benefit from additional support or screening

Assessment Procedures

- Children are assessed by their **classroom teachers during daily routines and activities**
- Teachers use **ongoing observation and documentation** to track progress
- For preschool-aged children, **written assessments are completed twice each year** and shared with families
- Assessment information is used to guide instruction and enrich the learning environment
- **All assessment records are confidential** and will only be shared with written consent from parents
- Families may review assessment tools and documentation at any time through the Director's office

Tools and Methods

- Assessment tools are aligned with the **curriculum** and reflect the **developmental stages of young children**
- Documentation may include **observations, anecdotal notes, samples of children's work, and photos**
- Methods are culturally and linguistically responsive, and assessments are conducted in **familiar, supportive classroom settings**
- Teachers use assessment data to plan learning experiences that are **relevant, inclusive, and child-centered**

Assessment at the SSECC is not about labeling children or comparing them to one another—it is about **deepening our understanding** of how each child learns and grows, and working in partnership with families to celebrate and support that journey.

Outside Referrals

At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, we are committed to supporting the whole child—academically, socially, emotionally, and developmentally. When additional support may be beneficial, we partner with families to explore the most appropriate resources for their child.

We work in collaboration with **Jewish Family and Children's Service (JF&CS)**, as well as other trusted agencies including **First Steps** and **Special School District (SSD)**. These organizations offer services such as evaluations, developmental screenings, counseling, therapy, and early intervention support.

Referrals are made **thoughtfully and in partnership with families**, with the goal of ensuring that each child receives the support they need to thrive. All referrals are handled with sensitivity, professionalism, and confidentiality.

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATIONS

1. **Brightwheel** is our primary communication tool. Teachers will use the app to share updates about your child’s day, learning, and behavior. Please use the Brightwheel messaging feature to communicate directly with teachers.
2. **During the school day**, all messages for students should go through the school office or Brightwheel.
3. **Additional parent-teacher conferences** may be requested via Brightwheel message, phone call, or by contacting the school office at (314) 434-3404.
4. **Respecting teacher time**: Please be mindful of staff personal time outside of school hours. If you message a teacher after hours, allow time for a response. Non-emergency contact should be limited to 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
5. **Shabbat and Jewish holidays**: Staff do not make or respond to school-related calls, texts, or emails during Shabbat (Friday evening through Saturday) or Jewish holidays. We ask families to honor and respect this observance.
6. **Family changes or challenges**: If a personal situation (e.g., sleep issues, illness, divorce, loss) may affect your child at school, please inform your child’s teacher, the director, or a rabbi. This information will be handled with care and confidentiality, in accordance with our safety and child welfare policies.
7. **Addressing concerns**: If you have a concern about your child, please speak with the teacher first. If unresolved, contact the director. Further concerns may be brought to Cori Neidenberg (Executive Director), Rabbi Rosenberg, or the congregation president.
8. **Stay informed**: Check your Brightwheel app daily for important updates. Additional announcements may be shared via our school’s Facebook page.

PARENT COMMENTS, CONCERNS, AND PRAISES

The SSECC director, teachers, and staff are committed to providing high-quality early childhood education and creating a nurturing, positive learning environment for every child. Open, respectful communication is essential to our partnership with families.

If you have concerns, please share them privately and promptly so we can work together to address them. Waiting until the end of the year limits our ability to respond effectively. We also welcome your positive feedback—hearing what’s working well helps us continue to grow and improve.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping us maintain a supportive and joyful environment for all.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled at least twice a year—once in the fall and again in the spring. These conferences provide an opportunity for teachers to share observations and updates on your child’s development and progress toward curriculum goals.

Families are encouraged to reach out at any point during the year if additional conferences or conversations are needed. The SSECC director and your child’s teacher are available to meet and collaborate with you. If special circumstances arise that may be impacting your child, the teacher and/or director will proactively reach out.

Ongoing communication and partnership are essential to supporting your child’s growth and success.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center maintains the highest standards of confidentiality regarding student records. Each child's file is securely stored in a locked cabinet or on a password-protected computer system. Access is limited to the SSECC director, rabbis, and the child's teachers, unless otherwise required by law (e.g., subpoena, court order, or law enforcement directive).

Records may include:

- Academic documentation
- Health records and accident reports
- Parent-teacher conference summaries
- Outside evaluations or testing (if applicable)

Access is provided as follows:

- Teachers may view records only for students in their classroom
- The director and rabbis may access all student files
- The director determines additional access to health records as needed
- Families may review their child's records, except for documents covered by a signed confidentiality waiver (e.g., recommendation forms)

Student records are used solely to inform educational decisions, support student well-being, and meet licensing and regulatory requirements.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

In the event of an emergency or inclement weather, the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center may close independently of local public school districts (e.g., Parkway or Rockwood).

You will be notified through the following method:

- A **Brightwheel text alert** will be sent directing you to a detailed notification within the app.

If conditions are especially severe, notice may be shared the evening before, though this is reserved for unusual circumstances.

CUSTODIAL PARENTS

The Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center is committed to the safety and well-being of all students. If a child does not live full-time with both natural parents, the school requires a **court-certified custody decree** to be on file with the director. This official document, bearing the judge's signature and court seal, will be kept in the director's office and/or the child's permanent record.

The school will strictly follow the custody decree regarding decisions about education, health, and release of the child. Without a valid court order, the child may be released to either parent.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Protecting children's safety is a top priority. Missouri law requires all school staff to act as **mandated reporters** of suspected child abuse or neglect. SSECC staff are trained to recognize signs of abuse or neglect and will document and report any concerns to the proper authorities.

The school fully cooperates with all investigations related to child welfare. Parents seeking more information about signs of abuse or neglect may contact the director. For immediate concerns, the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline is **1-800-392-3738**.

SSECC Parent Board

Parent Board

The SSECC Parent Board supports the school community by:

- Assisting administration and faculty in advancing the Center's mission and goals
- Encouraging and coordinating parent volunteer efforts to enrich the student experience
- Offering support to administration by sharing talents and skills
- Serving as a communication bridge among parents, staff, United Hebrew Congregation members, and students to foster a strong sense of community
- Providing financial support for Parent Board initiatives that enhance educational programs and student well-being

HEALTH

ILLNESS

At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, the health and safety of all children is a top priority. If your child becomes ill during the day, you will be notified immediately and asked to arrange pickup within one hour.

Symptoms Requiring Exclusion

According to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, children must stay home or be sent home if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- More than one abnormally loose stool
- Difficulty or rapid breathing, especially in infants under 6 months
- Red or blue face or high-pitched croupy or whooping cough
- Yellowing of skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Eye irritation with redness, swelling, or pus discharge
- Unusual spots or rashes
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Infected skin patches (crusty, yellow, dry, or gummy areas)
- Dark, tea-colored urine or gray/white stool
- Fever over 101°F (oral) or 100°F (underarm or temporal)
- Headache with stiff neck
- Vomiting
- Active contagious disease
- Severe itching or scratching of scalp or body (possible lice or scabies)

Return to School

Children must be **fever- and symptom-free for 24 hours without medication** before returning to school. While these guidelines serve as our baseline, final decisions on return are at the discretion of the school staff to ensure the safety of all.

Reporting and Compliance

Please notify the school immediately if your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease so proper precautions can be taken, including cleaning and parent notification.

Failure to follow the illness policy may affect your child's enrollment. A doctor's note is recommended when your child returns after illness.

MEDICATION

To ensure your child's safety, the following procedures must be followed for any medication (prescription or over-the-counter) administered at the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center:

- A signed, dated parent permission form is required, indicating dosage, timing, and duration.
- Medication must be in its original container, labeled with your child's name, dosage instructions, and physician's name (if applicable).
- Medication will be stored securely and returned to storage immediately after use.
- Refrigerated medications will be kept in a separate container from food.
- Medication will be returned to the parent or discarded when no longer needed.
- Each dose administered will be recorded with time, amount, and staff initials; records are kept in the child's file.

Additional Guidelines:

- SSECC staff will not administer the first dose of any medication.
- A physician's note is required for routine use of any over-the-counter medication.
- Staff administering medication are not medically trained professionals.
- Provide no more than a one-month supply for ongoing medication.
- Discontinued or unused medication must be picked up within 5 days or it will be discarded.
- Medication orders will not be accepted from a parent acting as their child's healthcare provider.

INJURY

In the event of a serious injury, we will immediately attempt to contact a parent or designated caregiver. If they cannot be reached, we will contact an alternate listed on the child's emergency contact form.

If needed, 911 will be called. Until a parent, guardian, emergency contact, or paramedic arrives, the SSECC director will assume responsibility for the child and make all care decisions.

All injury and incident reports will be documented in Brightwheel for parent review and acknowledgment.

IMMUNIZATIONS

In compliance with Missouri Department of Health guidelines, all children must have current health and immunization records on file **before** starting school. **Only medical exemptions or physician-documented immunization delays** are accepted; religious or philosophical exemptions are **not accepted**.

If a child is overdue for any required immunizations, parents must notify the office in writing with the date and time of a scheduled appointment in order for the child to remain enrolled.

Required immunizations for children in childcare include:

- Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTaP or DT if appropriate)
- Hepatitis B (HBV)
- Polio (IPV or OPV)
- Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) – required for children under 5
- Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) – required for children under 5
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR – 1 dose)
- Varicella (1 dose or documented history of disease)

State-approved immunization forms are available from your child's healthcare provider. For questions or more information, please contact your provider or the school office.

THE DAILY EXPERIENCE

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, we believe behavior is learned and teachable. Our goal is to guide children in developing self-regulation, empathy, cooperation, and problem-solving skills.

We use a positive, relationship-based approach grounded in **Conscious Discipline** and *The Whole-Brain Child* framework by Drs. Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson. These methods focus on teaching children how to integrate emotion and logic, make thoughtful choices, and build resilience. We incorporate the **12 revolutionary strategies** from *The Whole-Brain Child* to support children's social-emotional development and help them navigate big feelings in healthy, brain-smart ways.

Teachers, the director, and parents work in partnership to:

- Set clear, consistent, and developmentally appropriate limits
- Model empathy, connection, and respectful communication
- Teach conflict resolution and problem-solving strategies
- Help children recognize, name, and regulate emotions

Negative discipline methods are not permitted at the SSECC. This includes, but is not limited to: blaming, shaming, sarcasm, humiliation, threats, or physical punishment. We believe in building skills rather than controlling behavior.

Our approach reflects our deep respect for children's emotional growth and our belief that strong relationships and responsive guidance are the foundations of meaningful learning and lifelong well-being.

BEHAVIOR POLICY

At the SSECC, we believe that all behavior is a form of communication, and that young children are still developing the skills they need to regulate emotions, solve problems, and interact with others. Behaviors such as biting, hitting, or impulsivity are developmentally appropriate for some ages and stages, and our goal is to guide children through these challenges using empathy, consistency, and research-based strategies such as Conscious Discipline and the approaches from *The Whole-Brain Child*.

We do **not** believe in suspension or dismissal for typical early childhood behaviors. However, the safety and well-being of all children and staff is our top priority. If a behavior becomes ongoing, significantly disruptive, or poses a consistent safety risk, we follow a structured plan to support both the child and the classroom:

1. **Family Meeting and Behavior Plan**

The director will contact the family to schedule a meeting (within 72 hours). Together, we'll create an individualized support plan, with clear strategies and a date to reassess.

2. **Ongoing Monitoring and Outside Support**

If behavior persists:

- A follow-up meeting will take place.
- Outside evaluation or additional support (such as a shadow) may be required. If SSECC determines additional staffing is needed, the family will be financially responsible.

3. **Last Resort Measures**

While we work hard to avoid this, in rare and extreme cases where safety cannot be maintained:

- Temporary suspension or dismissal may be considered.
- This decision is made by the director and would be communicated directly to the family.
- Tuition will not be credited during any period of suspension.

These steps are designed to provide compassionate support while keeping everyone safe. Our hope is always to partner with families and help each child succeed within our community.

BITING/HITTING

At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, we recognize that behaviors like biting and hitting are developmentally typical for infants and toddlers who are still learning how to communicate, regulate emotions, and navigate social interactions. While these behaviors are not unusual, they can be distressing for children, parents, and caregivers alike.

Current research affirms that biting and hitting are part of a normal developmental phase for some young children. These behaviors are not the fault of the child, family, or educators. However, because of the safety and emotional well-being of all children, we take any incident seriously and respond with care and consistency.

When biting or hitting occurs:

- The child is calmly and immediately removed from the situation. Teachers remain neutral in tone and avoid dramatic reactions that could inadvertently reinforce the behavior.
- Children are offered simple, clear language such as “Biting hurts,” or “I can’t let you hurt your friends.” We focus on safety and redirection rather than punishment.
- The child is not allowed to return to group play until they have calmed down and are able to re-engage safely.
- Staff document the incident in Brightwheel and notify the families of both children involved. Names of children are kept confidential.

Our goal is always to guide children toward greater self-regulation and empathy. We partner closely with families, communicate regularly about strategies in use, and empathize with both the families of the child who was hurt and the child who is learning. Biting and hitting often resolve with consistency, patience, and the right support.

We are committed to ensuring a safe, nurturing environment for all children and are here to support families every step of the way.

ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT POLICY

All accidents and incidents are documented in the Brightwheel app.

- For minor events, parents will be notified at pick-up.
- For more significant incidents, a phone call will be made.
- If the director determines that medical attention may be necessary, this will be communicated during the initial call.

TOILETING AND TOILET TRAINING

Learning to use the toilet is an important milestone in a young child's life. At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, we do not provide formal toilet training but partner closely with families to support their efforts at home. Families are encouraged to begin toilet training when their child is developmentally ready, often using methods such as the three-day approach. Once a child shows initial success at home, we will support and reinforce these efforts in the classroom.

We ask parents to start toilet training at home because the process requires consistency and individualized attention best provided by caregivers familiar with the child. Our teachers provide regular, consistent opportunities for children to use the restroom and maintain open communication with families throughout the process.

We recognize that children develop bladder and bowel control at different rates. Toilet learning should be based on developmental readiness, not age, to avoid stress and frustration. Some signs that a child may be ready include:

- Communicating the need to use the toilet
- Following simple directions
- Staying dry for two hours or more during the day and after naps
- Having regular, predictable bowel movements
- Being able to walk to and from the bathroom and manage clothing independently
- Showing discomfort with wet or soiled diapers
- Expressing interest in the toilet or wearing underwear

If these signs are not yet present, waiting and trying again later can lead to greater success.

For sanitation and safety, all bathrooms at SSECC have child-sized toilets. Potty chairs or seats are not allowed and should not be brought from home, as they are difficult to sanitize properly and are discouraged by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Restrooms and toilets are cleaned daily and as needed to ensure a healthy environment for all children.

DIETARY POLICIES

The Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center is not a kosher facility; however, we ask that parents send only kosher-style foods with their children. In accordance with United Hebrew Congregation policy, **no pork or shellfish** may be served or brought into the building.

While the school and congregation do not serve meat and dairy together, parents may send meals containing both for their child's breakfast or lunch.

During Passover sessions, additional dietary restrictions apply. Parents will be informed in advance of permitted foods and provided with menu suggestions.

FOOD ALLERGY PROTOCOL & MANAGEMENT

Due to the significant rise in nut allergies and the unpredictable nature of allergic reactions, the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center asks families not to send food or snacks containing peanuts, tree nuts, peanut or tree nut products, or foods cooked in nut oils. While we are a nut-sensitive school and take every precaution to limit nut exposure on campus, we cannot guarantee a nut-free environment and are not liable for accidental exposures.

If a child in your classroom has severe allergies, you will be notified at the start of the year, and we may request additional safety precautions to help protect all children. When providing snacks or meals for your child's class, please keep this policy in mind.

Families of children with any allergies — food or otherwise — must provide an updated, physician-signed Allergy Action Plan annually or whenever allergy information changes. This form is available through the school office and will be kept on file. After submission, the director will schedule a meeting with parents and teachers to discuss the plan. Allergy medications should be given to the director to be kept onsite for emergencies.

Some children may have life-threatening allergies to common allergens including milk, nuts, fish, eggs, wheat, and soy. For more information, visit Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) at www.foodallergy.org. If you suspect your child has severe allergies, please have them tested and provide results to the school so we can create an appropriate allergy action plan.

The SSECC is committed to doing everything possible to prevent accidental allergen exposure, but cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the director.

MEALS AND SNACKS

Children are served a mid-morning snack daily, provided by parents. Teachers may ask families to send individual snacks, contribute to a community snack on assigned days, or provide bulk snacks. All snacks brought for the class must be store-bought and nut-free.

To comply with Missouri Department of Health regulations regarding communicable diseases, all food sent from home for snack, birthday treats, or special occasions must be commercially prepared—either baked and boxed by a commercial bakery or purchased prepackaged (e.g., Hostess or Little Debbie). Please avoid cupcakes, donuts, and cookies with frosting or chocolate except on special occasions. Specific snack guidelines and allergy-related restrictions will be shared with families during the first week of school.

Please provide a healthy, nutritious lunch and drink each day. If refrigeration is needed, include a frozen cold pack in your child's lunchbox. We are unable to refrigerate or heat lunches in the classroom, except for the Chai classroom. Remember to send any necessary utensils. Please do not send pop-top cans, soft drinks, candy, or fruit-flavored drinks (100% juice only). In accordance with congregation policy, no pork or shellfish may be brought into the building.

For children staying in Late Care (3:00 – 5:30 p.m.), please send an additional snack for consumption around 3:30 or 4:00 p.m.

CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays are important milestones for young children. When your child's birthday occurs, their snack day for that month will be scheduled on or near that date, except that birthdays falling on Shabbat will be celebrated on a nearby school day. Birthday celebrations take place during snack time within the classroom community, and parents are not invited to join during this time to allow the children to enjoy a special moment together. The school will only send birthday party invitations home through backpacks if the entire class is invited. Any other communication sent home via backpacks must have prior approval from the school director.

At the Saul Spielberg Early Childhood Center, we celebrate Jewish holidays and secular American national holidays such as Thanksgiving, Independence Day, and Presidents Day. We do not celebrate holidays that are considered secular by some, including Halloween and St. Valentine's Day. While students are welcome to share their experiences of these holidays from home, they are not observed or marked within the school.

OUTDOOR PLAY AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY

Outdoor play is essential for children's gross motor development and overall well-being, providing fresh air and sunshine. All students have daily recess/playground time unless one of the following conditions applies:

- Severe weather alert
- Active rain, thunder, or lightning
- Ozone alert
- Environmental alert (high pollution or temporary air hazard)

The administrative team will notify teachers of any severe weather alerts. As a general guideline, please send appropriate outerwear daily, as children will go outside when temperatures are between 32°F and 95°F. Some older classes may have shorter outdoor time if temperatures fall below 32°F.

If you believe your child should not participate in outdoor play for a day, it is recommended to keep them home that day.

CHILDREN'S PERSONAL ITEMS

One important goal in early childhood is developing group-sharing skills. Toys from home can cause confusion about ownership and disrupt sharing. Therefore, we ask that all toys and personal playthings be left at home.

The SSECC provides a wide variety of engaging materials and many opportunities for sharing. Exceptions may be made for special occasions like show-and-tell or to support children during separation and adjustment at the start of the year. Please discuss any exceptions with your child's teacher.

We cannot accept responsibility for lost or broken items brought from home. For safety reasons, guns, war toys, and other toys promoting destruction are not permitted at school under any circumstances.

WHAT TO BRING

Please send your child to school comfortable and ready to play and learn. Dress your child in practical, comfortable clothes and shoes — avoid party-type clothing or anything you wouldn't want to get dirty. Early learning can be messy!

For safety, children should wear shoes with firm bottoms and both closed toes and heels. Open-toed or open-heeled shoes, sandals, clogs, or shoes with soft soles are not allowed. While Crocs may be comfortable, they are not suitable for playground play. We recommend tennis shoes or other rubber-soled shoes as the best option for daily wear and outdoor activities.

Each child should bring a backpack large enough to hold artwork, a soft-sided lunchbox, and other belongings.

Please send a complete change of clothes, including socks and two pairs of underwear (for toilet-trained children), to keep at school in your child's cubby. As the weather cools, you will be asked to provide an additional set of seasonally appropriate clothing. Be sure to label all items.

If your child uses diapers, you will need to supply diapers and wipes. Cloth diapers are permitted only if they have an absorbent inner lining fully contained within a waterproof outer covering; both are changed together. Cloth diapers will be sent home in a plastic bag without rinsing.