

Akiba Academy of Dallas  
JECEI Accreditation Program Portfolio  
2010

**Principle of Excellence 1: Indicator #3**

Indicator 3 – Key stakeholders in the community are involved in creating a vision integrating JECEI’s Lenses and Principles of Excellence.

Please provide support for ALL of the pieces of evidence listed below.

**31** Provide a vision, mission, and /or values statement that integrate the JECEI lenses and approach to education with the school's history, culture and context.

- Akiba ECP (Early Childhood Program) Vision and Philosophy Statements – the JECEI lenses were intentionally incorporated into the statements after much discussion on the JECEI lenses with B'tzelem Elokim being the only one explicitly mentioned - statements provided
- Akiba overall Mission Statement – statements provided

**32** Describe how the visioning process included a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, professional leaders, lay leadership, and host institution and may include community leaders and funders.

- The Director put together a Curriculum Committee consisting of five faculty members. They met several times in June 2006. With the support of the JECEI coach, the committee started pondering the questions of: Who are we? What do we want to be? Where are we going? How are we going to get there? Then they brainstormed how the JECEI lenses related to these questions and what they meant for our school. - list of Curriculum Committee members and excerpts of notes from June 2006 meeting
- The Curriculum Committee met over the summer to put the brainstormed ideas into actual statements. The Curriculum Committee created a draft of the statements. In the Fall, they submitted to the Education Committee of the Akiba Board a proposal to change the existing philosophy statement and add a vision statement for the ECP – list of Education Committee members, excerpts from notes
- The Education Committee offered their input on the statements and refined them.
- The Director took the statements to the Preschool Parent Teacher Council (PPTC) . The group offered their input on how they felt the statements represented the school. – excerpts from PPTC notes
- The Curriculum Committee then devised their final statements that are used in publicity and documents about the school.
- The Director would like to take the statements to the Akiba Board of Directors to officially adopt them for the ECP.

### 3.3 Give examples of how the vision is visible in the school.

- Parent Handbook
- Staff Handbook
- Parent Information Board in main school hallway - see photo
- Classroom information board (some)
- Akiba mission statement found on plaques in every office and classroom and in the board room

### 3.4 Give examples of how the vision guides stakeholders' actions and interactions.

- Director reviews ECP Vision and Philosophy statements line by line and points out examples of how what is stated is done in the classrooms with all potential teachers and substitutes
- Orientation - see Orientation agenda
- .Developed projects (e.g. redoing the preschool lobby to create sacred space for parents, teachers, and children to gather and enjoy their time together) to implement JECEI lenses that are part of the Vision and Philosophy statements in 2006
- .Developed a 3-year plan to implement the Vision

# AKIBA

## The Akiba Academy Early Childhood Vision

**Our vision for the Akiba Academy Early Childhood Program is to:**

1. Create a supportive, welcoming, safe environment that inspires a love of learning, nurtures healthy social and emotional growth, and facilitates exploration, critical thinking, and discovery;
2. Inspire children with Torah and real-life experiences, celebrate their creativity and achievements, empower them to develop themselves spiritually, and establish a meaningful connection to Israel;
3. Utilize a curriculum which is constructed to emphasize and respect how each individual child thinks and learns from their own personal world and is rooted in the American Jewish culture within which we all live; and
4. Grow genuine, passionate and forward-thinking Jews prepared for the challenges of the modern world, seamlessly integrating Torah into their everyday lives.

## The Akiba Academy Early Childhood Philosophy

**At Akiba Academy we are committed to providing our children and families with the best practices in early childhood education and believe that:**

- We are all created B'Tzelem Elokim – in the image of G-d – every person is valuable and worthy of respect
- As the Jewish people we have a covenant with G-d to uphold the teachings of the Torah. As an early childhood center we commit to helping each family deepen their connection to Judaism
- Children have an inborn sense of wonder. Our early childhood educators honor the children's curiosity by facilitating and enriching their journey of discovery and learning
- We support the collaboration of children, families, and educators. Together we recognize how we can contribute to the broader community and world
- Learning and growing together, celebrating the holidays, and sharing life events, we nourish the bonds of our Akiba family

**3.1 Provide a vision, mission, and for values statement that integrate the JECEI lenses and approach to education with the school's history, culture and context.**

This is the Early Childhood Vision and Philosophy Statements that integrate the JECEI lenses and approach to education. Statements were developed as part of our JECEI journey. Following is a copy of the Host Institution Mission Statement

## 3.1 Akiba School Mission Statement

### Mission Statement

Akiba Academy provides a superior general and Judaic education to children preschool through eighth grade. As a Modern Orthodox school, Akiba develops ethical and responsible members of the Jewish people and American society who are knowledgeable about and committed to their Jewish heritage and the State of Israel.

As a modern orthodox school, Akiba Academy's mission is to impart the following values upon its students and staff members:

***Ahavat Yisrael:*** To instill love for all Jewish people, a commitment to the Land and State of Israel, and an appreciation of Hebrew, the language of the Jewish people, through its study and application.

***Al Pi Darko:*** To recognize the individuality of our students and to provide for the equal educational needs of boys and girls.

***Derech Eretz:*** To teach our children the importance of respecting the dignity of all people by acting and speaking in a way that enhances each person's self worth.

***Kedusha:*** To understand and appreciate G-d's presence in the world and sanctify our lives through the study and practice of mitzvot.

***Tikkun Olam:*** To develop leaders who possess a strong sense of responsibility to the Jewish community and society as a whole.

***Torah L'Shma:*** To create life-long learners who value learning for its own sake through a rigorous curriculum that emphasizes critical thought, independence, and creativity.

***Torah U'Madah:*** To promote the belief that the acquisition of all knowledge – both Judaic and General – is of intrinsic value and is essential to the growth of our students.

**3.2** Describe how the visioning process included a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, professional leaders, lay leadership, and host institution and may include community leaders and funders.

Following is a list of the curriculum committee members. This committee was formed in the summer of 2006 in order to begin the visioning process.

### **Curriculum Committee Members**

- Jordana Bernstein, Early Childhood Director
- Shelley Sender, Assistant Director and Nitzanim Teacher
- Gail Mabel, Nitzanim Teacher
- Emily Prengler, Chaverim Teacher
- Miriam Geller, K'Ton Ton Teacher

**3.2 Describe how the visioning process included a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, professional leaders, lay leadership, and host institution and may include community leaders and funders.**

Following are notes that were taken at the Curriculum Committee meetings which led to the first drafts of the Early Childhood Vision and Philosophy Statements

Miriam + Orit

6/6/06

Curriculum meeting (Emily, Gail, Jordana, Miriam, Shelly)

Emily - concerned that Sr. Nursing is exposed to all skills  
- patterns, sorting, literacy, educational goals

Hebrew - what is the content?

Judaic -  
academic skills

Should we talking about the alef-bet?

Gail - used book during davening  
& pointed to Hebrew words

Shelly - magnetic Hebrew letters

Sonya - How long a period of time do we have to figure this out?

- Working document by August  
which we continue to reflect on  
& improve if necessary



Miriam - Should we be using  
same tunes, etc. ~~for~~ from one  
year to the next for davening  
what to include:

- Philosophical Statement
- Core content standards
- Jewish components

questions:

Do we want a common tune  
& way to daven or should  
we leave it open for teachers  
to choose their tune

Who are we? What do we want  
to be? Where are we going?  
How are we going to get there?

Gail - If we are becoming JECET ....  
or are we becoming JECET?

Sony a - You are not becoming JECET  
but you are partnering w/  
JECET. When a school is ultimately

*oLuvLat* "E)5onco1 yoiuLti.2

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- Trying to meet everyone's needs
  - be careful not to get caught up in the individual issues
  - can get caught up in the minutia of every class

- permission to photograph

6/28/06

Curriculum Planning Meeting

88  
1

B'Jzeem Elokun

Brit

lech l'cha

Pete

Jessam Olam

Sincere

l'dushia - Sacred Time / Sacred Space

Supportive relationships

- communication & collaboration  
among 3 partners

We are all created B'tzelem Elohim -  
in the image of G-d Hashem,  
the children are a valuable source  
of direction, inspiration, ~~and~~ children  
have an inborn sense of wonder  
as facilitators we ~~can~~ ~~not~~ ~~wish~~  
~~to~~ inspire their wonder, help  
children understand that their  
questions are exciting, ~~their~~  
insill confidence in the children  
that what they think is  
important and valuable and exciting  
"the path is the purpose not the  
answer"

"provide opportunities, set the  
environment"

We are facilitators of their  
wonder + exploration

It akiva, ~~of~~ the teachers are  
driven by a purpose to educate

## Connection

This is a place for our families

potential of every person

competency

Each family will explore their own  
connection to Jewish life

Collaboration of families, teachers,  
& children

- deepens a family's connection  
to Judaism, wherever your  
journey begins

- kids are born w/ a sense of  
wonder, they want to know  
"why", "Why" about spiritual  
things, the natural

- helping children recognize their  
personal gifts that they can use  
to benefit the broader community, and

3.2 Describe how the visioning process included a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, professional leaders, lay leadership, and host institution and may include community leaders and funders.

The following committee contributed their input in the development of the Early Childhood Vision and Philosophy Statements

**Education Committee (Board of Directors Committee) Members and their Roles**

Rabbi Silver - Administrator

Beverly Millican - Administrator

Jordana Bernstein - Preschool Director

Sheryl Wernick - Chair of Education Task Force, Middle and Lower school parent, Executive Board Member

Liz Liener - Past Board President, Lower school parent

Andy Schultz - Board President, Middle and Lower school parent

Robin Stone - Preschool Parent

Melissa Wainman - Lower school parent

Sandra Dickter - Lower school parent

John Lacritz - Middle and Lower school parent

Caren Edelstein - Educator outside of Akiba

Gianina Abouzaglo - Preschool, Lower and Middle school parent

Lisa Siegel - Middle and Lower school parent

3.2 Describe how the visioning process included a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, professional leaders, lay leadership, and host institution and may include community leaders and funders.

**Proposal to Education Committee to Adopt New Vision and Mission Statements  
September 2006**

**Akiba Academy Early Childhood Department**  
Proposal to Adopt New Vision Statement and Philosophy Statement

As we continue moving forward on our journey with the Jewish Early Childhood Education Initiative (JECEI), the early childhood faculty has found ourselves rethinking our early childhood vision and philosophy. In addition, we have found that the curriculum that we have been using, no longer meets our goals and objectives, and we have formed a committee to help re-write our early childhood curriculum.

This curriculum will include a newly written early childhood vision, early childhood philosophy, an assessment plan, and an educational curriculum to outline our goals and objectives for our students from Nevatim – Chaverim, including how the Judaic component will be seamlessly integrated into the entire curriculum.

The members of the curriculum committee include: Gail Mabel, Shelly Sender, Emily Prengler, Miriam Geller, and Jordana Bernstein.

The following is the process that the curriculum committee went through in writing the Early Childhood vision, our first step towards completing our curriculum. In writing this vision, committee members worked from the Akiba Academy mission statement to ensure that our vision was in-line with Akiba's mission. The committee also worked with the seven JECEI domains (B'tzelem Elokim – We are all created in the image of Hashem, Lech L'cha – Journey, Pelech – Wonder, Brit – Covenant, Tikkun Olam – Repairing the World, Somcha – Celebration, Kedusha – sacred time/sacred space), in order to ensure that they were interwoven throughout the vision. Writing this vision was a several day process, as we began by brainstorming the questions, "Who are we?" and "Where are we going?" Committee members all felt very accomplished once our thoughts from the brainstorming sessions were written beautifully as they composed our vision. The following are the five bullet points that make up our Early Childhood Vision:

- We are all created B'tzelem Elokim – in the image of Hashem – every person is valuable and worthy of respect
- As the Jewish people we have a covenant with Hashem to uphold the teachings of the Torah. As an early childhood center we commit to helping each family deepen their connection to Judaism
- Children have an inborn sense of wonder. Our early childhood educators honor the children's curiosity and facilitate their journey of discovery
- We support the collaboration of children, families, and educators. Together we recognize how we can contribute to the broader community and world
- Learning and growing together, celebrating the holidays, and sharing life events, we nourish the bonds of our Akiba family

Once our vision was complete the next step in our curriculum writing process was to rewrite our philosophy statement. Again, the committee joined together and brainstormed our philosophy. Once we had figured out "who we are" and "where we are going," which was answered in our vision, the next question to ponder was "How are we going to get there?" This question will carry us through the curriculum writing process as we also write our assessment plans and curriculum goals and objectives. The following is the early childhood philosophy statement that was written by the curriculum committee:

Akiba's early childhood philosophy of education is based on the constructivist theory that culture plays an important role in what children learn, how they think, and that children learn from the world around them. This theory emphasizes individual differences, personal creativity, and influence of culture.

A supportive, nurturing, safe environment is vital to learning. Healthy social and emotional growth facilitates risk taking, critical thinking, and discovery.

Our emergent curriculum inspires children with real and meaningful experiences that seamlessly integrate Torah into their everyday lives.

The curriculum committee would like to present the above early childhood vision statement and philosophy statement to the Education Committee in order to adopt these statements as part of our new curriculum.



3.2 Describe how the visioning process included a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, professional leaders, lay leadership, and host institution and may include community leaders and funders.  
Further revisions to Statements Based on Feedback from Education Committee .March 2007

*Best Practice*

### The Akiba Academy Early Childhood Philosophy

- We are all created B'Tzelem Elokim - in the image of <sup>G-d</sup> Hashem - every person is valuable and worthy of respect
- As the Jewish people we have a covenant with <sup>G-d</sup> Hashem to uphold the teachings of the Torah. As an early childhood center we commit to helping each family deepen their connection to Judaism
- Children have an inborn sense of wonder. Our early childhood educators honor the children's curiosity and facilitate their journey of discovery
- We support the collaboration of children, families, and educators. Together we recognize how we can contribute to the broader community and world
- Learning and growing together, celebrating the holidays, and sharing life events, we nourish the bonds of our Akiba family

Created by the Early Childhood Curriculum Committee:

Jordana Bernstein  
 Shelly Sender  
 Miriam Geller  
 Emily Prengler  
 Gail Mabel

*Bring to PPTC  
 indicated who  
 has input w/  
 help of  
 Rabbi Silver  
 Council  
 501c3  
 Ed. Committee*

Our Vision for the Akiba Academy Early Childhood Program is to:

1. <sup>C</sup> create a supportive, welcoming, safe environment that inspires a love of learning, nurtures healthy social and emotional growth, and facilitates <sup>ask</sup> taking, critical thinking and discovery
2. <sup>SPG</sup> inspire children with Torah and real <sup>with</sup> experiences, celebrate their creativity and achievements, empower them to develop themselves spiritually, and establish a meaningful connection to Israel;
3. <sup>SPG</sup> utilize a curriculum that is rooted in the Jewish American Zionist culture within which we all live, yet is specially constructed to emphasize and respect how each individual child thinks and learns from their own personal world; and
4. <sup>SPG</sup> grow genuine, passionate and forward-thinking Jews prepared for the challenges of the modern world <sup>for seamless integration of Torah into their weekday lives</sup>

Created by the Early Childhood Curriculum Committee:

Jordana Bernstein  
 Shelly Sender  
 Miriam Geller  
 Emily Prengler  
 Gail Mabel

# Preschool Parent Teacher Council Feedback 5/1/07

The Akiba Academy Early Childhood Vision

Our vision for the Akiba Academy Early Childhood Program is to:

1. Create a supportive, welcoming, safe environment that inspires a love of learning, nurtures healthy social and emotional growth, and facilitates exploration, critical thinking, and discovery. *this is why we chose akiba, you feel this in the school this is what every preschool parent would hope for*
2. Inspire children with Torah and real-life experiences, celebrate their creativity and achievements, empower them to develop themselves spiritually, and establish a meaningful connection to Israel; *Moses talks about Israel all the time. Caroline says Israel is in my heart. Stacy both points out the Israeli flag*
3. Utilize a curriculum that is rooted in the American Jewish Zionist culture within which we all live, yet is specially constructed to emphasize and respect how each individual child thinks and learns from their own personal world; *and mixed thoughts about the world Zionist sounds strong American Jewish Zionist*
4. Grow genuine, passionate and forward-thinking Jews prepared for the challenges of the modern world, seamlessly integrating Torah into their everyday lives. *We will this*

*wonderful,  
feel like  
parents need  
to work*

Created by the Early Childhood Curriculum Committee:  
Jordana Bernstein  
Shelly Sender  
Miriam Geller  
Emily Prengler  
Gail Mabel

## The Akiba Academy Early Childhood Philosophy

At Akiba Academy we are committed to providing our children and families with the best practices in early childhood education and believe that:

- We are all created B Tzelem Elokim – in the image of Hashem – every person is valuable and worthy of respect *respect for the child honey in on the individual needs*
- As the Jewish people we have a covenant with Hashem to uphold the teachings of the Torah. As an early childhood center we commit to helping each family deepen their connection to Judaism *we all practice the same - boys & girls must be scary for some children are not religious but with our children to know about Judaism*
- Children have an inborn sense of wonder. Our early childhood educators honor the children's curiosity and facilitate their journey of discovery and learning *concerned about what they are doing*
- We support the collaboration of children, families, and educators. Together we recognize how we can contribute to the broader community and world *by*
- Learning and growing together, celebrating the holidays, and sharing life events, we nourish the bonds of our Akiba family *central piece to recognize families who have a baby - celebrating teachers birthday*

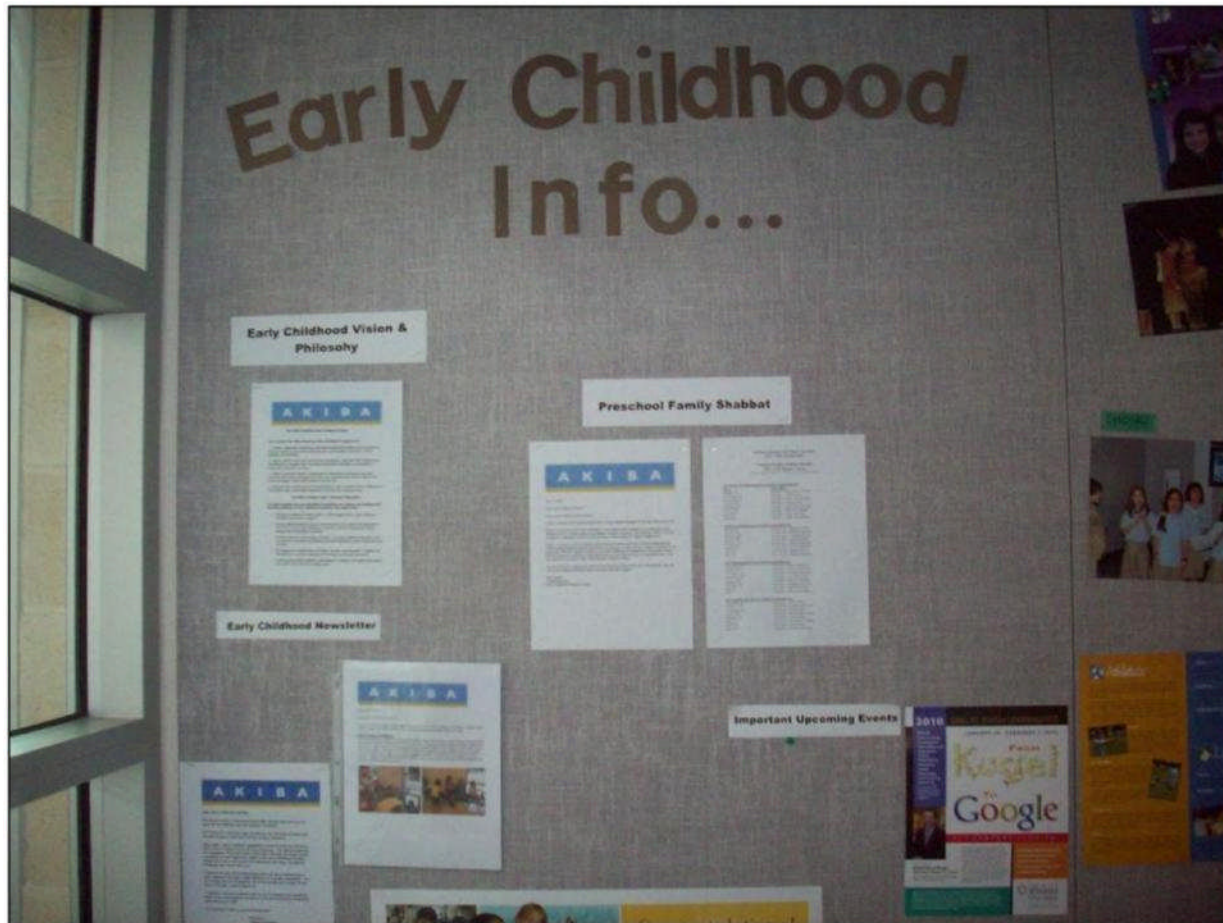
*warm & loving  
with an aim - we need to start to start about the grades  
sand how to set up  
Mitzvah Day*

**3.2 Describe how the visioning process included a range of stakeholders including parents, teachers, professional leaders, lay leadership, and host institution and may include community leaders and funders.**

These are notes that were taken at the Preschool Parent Teacher Council (PPTC) Meeting regarding the development of the new vision and philosophy statements. PPTC also discussed how the vision and philosophy would be carried out in the early childhood program.

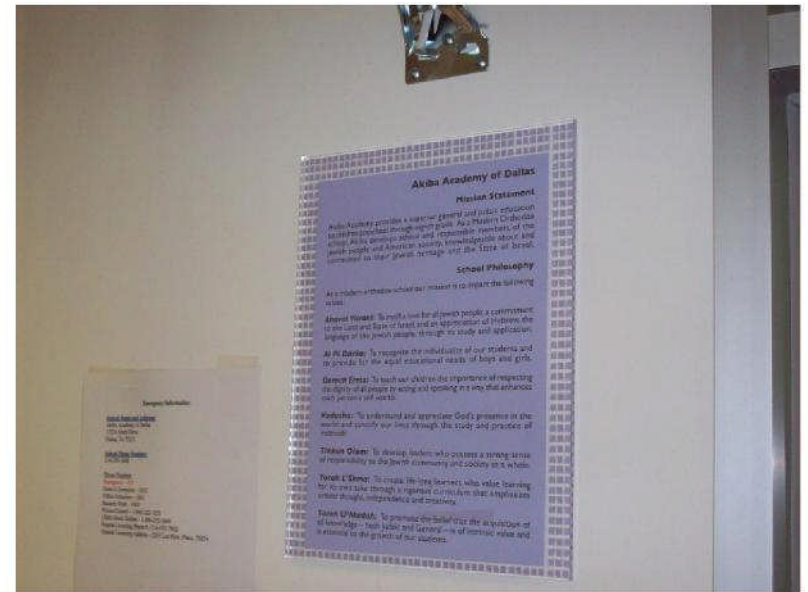
**33 Give examples of how the vision is visible in the school.**

The Actual Vision and Philosophy Statements are posted on the Parent Info. Board located at the entrance of the Early Childhood hallway.



### 33 Give examples of how the vision is visible in the school.

The following are samples of the mission statements of the Host Institution that are posted on plaques inside every classroom and office in the entire school



## **44 Give examples of how the vision guides stakeholders' actions and interactions.**

Below is a copy of a New Teacher Training Agenda. Highlighted is the first point on the agenda indicating that the Program Philosophy, Values, and Goals are not only discussed, but are the foundation for any new teacher beginning in the program.



# 44 Give examples of how the vision guides stakeholders' actions and interactions.

## New Teacher Training for Early Childhood Faculty Agenda August 11, 2008

- Program Philosophy, Values, Goals
- Expectations for Ethical Conduct
- Health, Safety, Emergency Procedures
  - Fire Drills
  - Fire extinguisher locations and use
  - Tornado Drills
  - Lock Down Drills – Keeping doors in locked position
- Individual Needs of Children in your classes
- Accepted Guidance and Classroom Management Techniques
  - Positive guidance
  - Time-out is out
  - Redirection
  - Problem Solving
- Daily Activities and Routines of the Program
  - Playground safety, First Aid Kits, and schedules
  - Hanna's Room
  - Transitions
  - Committees – Kitchen and Closet
  - Wednesday Meetings
  - Carpool – Arrival and Dismissal
  - Field Trips
- Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Procedures
- Program Policies and Procedures
  - Absences/Substitutes
  - Maintenance Requests
  - Accident Reports
  - Sick Policy
  - Administering Medication
  - Communicating incidents with families
  - Dress Code
  - PDS

- Newsletters
- Parent Communication
- Confidentiality
- NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards
  - Diaper Changing
  - Hand Washing – when to wash and proper procedures
  - Daily Classroom Maintenance
  - Snacks
  - Water Play
  - Supervising Children
  - Pet Policy
  - Curriculum
  - Relationships
  - Community Relationships
- Regulatory Requirements
  - Schedule must be posted in the classroom and outside for parents to see
  - Activity plan must be posted
  - Menu must be posted and snack letter
  - Numbers posted by the phone – 911, poison control, PRS child abuse hotline, nearest licensing phone # and address, child-care center name, address, phone #
  - Sign in and sign out logs
  - Older children cannot use infant room as a passageway
  - Nevatim: Soft bedding, pillows, stuffed toys, and quilts should not be used for infants under six months
  - Nevatim: Babies should not be allowed to walk around with or sleep with a bottle
  - Bottles and cups need to be labeled with child's first name and last initial



### **34 Give examples of how the vision guides stakeholders' actions and interactions.**

The following is an agenda from one of our Parent Teacher Orientation Nights – This agenda shows that an important part of our parent orientation is our Vision and Philosophy. Here are some of the director's notes from a parent orientation night concentrating on the program vision and philosophy.

#### **Meet the Teachers**

Welcome families – Mar S. /Jordana Bernstein

D'Var Torah – Rabbi Silver

Info:

New year/new director/new teachers – introduce the teachers – exciting things in store

JECEI Initiative, our vision statement

We are all created B'Tzelem Elokim, in the Image of Hashem. Every person is valuable and worthy of respect

As the Jewish people we have a covenant with Hashem to uphold the teachings of the Torah. As an early childhood center we commit to helping each family deepen their connection to Judaism. Children have an inborn sense of wonder. Our early childhood educators honor the children's curiosity and facilitate their journey of discovery

We support the collaboration of children, families, and educators. Together we recognize how we can each contribute to the broader community and world

While learning and growing together, celebrating the holidays, and sharing life events, we nourish the bond of our Akiba family

NAEYC Re-accreditation – committee opportunity

PPTC – Preschool Parent Teacher Council

Carpool – Drop off/pick up/drop in policy

Health policy

Kashrut/ Peanut Free and Nut free classrooms

Snack

PTA – Caron Robinson



## **34 Give examples of how the vision guides stakeholders' actions and interactions.**

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