

Ohr Kodesh

Principle of Excellence 5

Indicator 13 - The environment reflects the school's vision.

- 13.1 The school's vision and identity are visibly articulated and represented.
- 13.2 The school's engagement with Jewish life is evident through the environment.
- 13.3 The identity and voices of children are evident through photos, stories, artifacts, and other items throughout the school.
- 13.4 Families', host institution's, and local and Jewish communities' identities are evident through photos, artifacts, and other appropriate items
- 13.5 The space is designed to be welcoming.
- 13.6 The school building includes space for families to build relationships with one another.
- 13.7 Space promotes interaction, conversation, and learning among all who enter the school.
- 13.8 Children, families, and teachers demonstrate their sense of responsibility and ownership of the school by caring for and enhancing the school property.
- 13.9 Materials are constructed and arranged to be accessible to children, aesthetically pleasing, and engaging to promote learning.
- 13.10 Natural materials are used throughout the school.
- 13.11 Children, teachers, and families take care of the environment.

Indicator 13 - The environment reflects the school's vision.

13.1 The school's vision and identity are visibly articulated and represented.

OKECC's vision and identity is visibly articulated at Back-to-School night, Open Houses for prospective families and on our website and parent newsletters. It is also very visible on our display board in the main early childhood hallway with our mission statement, core values and JECEI lenses.

MISSION STATEMENT

Ohr Kodesh Early Childhood Center (OKECC) is a synagogue-based preschool engaging children, families, and teachers on a journey of Jewish and secular learning. We instill pride in our Jewish identity through religious, familial, cultural, and Jewish values. We are a community of caring where each individual is accepted for his or her uniqueness. Each child is seen as an equal and active partner within the school community. OKECC is a place where the whole child is empowered to be a life-long learner alongside their teachers and parents.

VISION STATEMENT

We will continue on our journey of providing a school of excellence where our families are nurtured in a community that provides the best practices of Jewish early childhood education.

- On website; see website www.ohrkodesh.org under Early Childhood Center
- Parent Handbook; evidence page 2
- Core Values of the OKECC; evidence see photos of bulletin board in hallway and classrooms.
- Folder given out during Open Houses for prospective families



13.1 Hallway display of OKECC's vision, mission, core values and JECEI lenses



13.2 The school's engagement with Jewish life is evident through the environment.

The environment of OKECC clearly reflects the engagement with Jewish life:

HALLWAYS:

- Tree of life board - "Tree of School Life" at OKECC with the roots of the tree representing our core values, the trunk the JECEI lenses and the leaves the classes that make up our school community. (see photo)
- Display board of the Jewish holidays which includes an overarching theme that the teacher's after text study about the holiday, choose as the value or meaning they want to emphasize for the children. Each class submits a photo and the story behind it for the board. It changes with each holiday.(see photo)

CLASSROOMS:

- Judaic corner with small Torah with complete Hebrew and other ritual or holiday items.
- Mezzuzot on the doorposts of all classrooms and entrances.
- Ta'am Shel Shabbat - Every Friday (Thursdays for the two day 2's class) each class has a different family as a "Shabbat" guest and says the blessings over the candles, wine and challah. At the end of Friday morning, the whole school and families come together in the Synagogue chapel for singing with the music teacher.
- Each classroom's unique way of engagement with Jewish life. (see photos of boards in each class)

SYNAGOGUE:

- Ritual objects in lobby, outside chapel, gift shop, Sanctuary



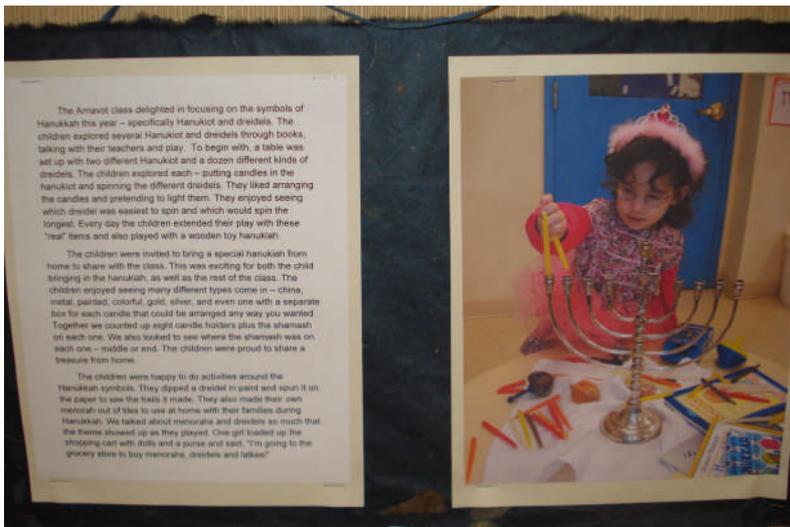
13.2 The Synagogue: Ritual objects in main hallway of Synagogue



13.2 CLASSROOM: Engagement with Jewish life in the classrooms through Judaic corners and centers



13.2 HALLWAYS: Holiday display board for Hanukkah with each class' focus.

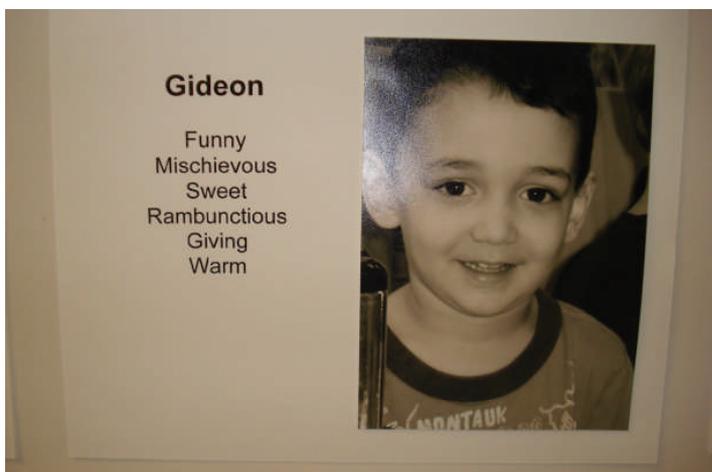


13.2 Holiday Display Board of Hanukkah with each class' focus

13.3 The identity and voices of children are evident through photos, stories, artifacts, and other items throughout the school.

The children's identity and voices are made visible through various documentation:

- Children's portfolios or journals in the classroom
- Self portraits pervasive throughout the classrooms, hallways and entryways.
- Children's words captured in documentation on walls, e-mail postings to parents and class newsletters
- Children's individual cubbies
- Identity panels
- Children's artwork





13.3 Children's identity and voices through documentation

13.5 The space is designed to be welcoming.

OKECC creates welcoming environment. Parents or Cargivers are required to bring children into school. The parents drop off and pick up their children inside the building greeted by one of the professional leadership each day at the entrance and by their child's teacher as they walk their child to or pick up from the classrooms.

The main foyer is a gathering place for children and families and on any given day at pick up time, parents are talking with each other, feeding their babies, etc. while their children are playing together .

The children's cubbies are in the hallway with their photos and names so they feel immediately a sense of belonging as they find their special space for their belongings.

The classrooms are bright and airy with large windows to let in the natural light of the day creating a cheerful and welcoming feeling. Upon entry, each teacher greets the children and parent and/or caregiver at the door at the beginning of the day and has their own welcoming ritual for the children - whether it is finding their photo to put up or signing in with their name.

Each Friday, all families are encouraged to gather with their children in the chapel for our Ta'am shel Shabbat.

Evidence: photos of environment, cubbies, arrival and departure, main foyer; sign-in or photo attendance



13.5 Main foyer of ECC where parents, caregivers and children congregate before and after school



13.5 Welcoming ritual for the children - This child is finding her picture and putting it up under her photo on the board.

13.8 Children, families and teachers demonstrate their sense of responsibility and ownership of the school by caring for and enhancing the school property.

OKECC has created school gardens and every year the PTA organizes "Planting Day". They provide the necessary materials and each class has a chance to plant in their own designated area. The children take care of the plants and flowers throughout the growing season. Some classes have planted a vegetable garden that the children who come to our summer program take care of and eat the "fruits of their labor".

The PTA purchased a canopy for the sandbox to help shade the children from the intense sun. One parent could not keep a bird feeder in her condo, so she gave it to the school for the playground.

Families have volunteered and donated money towards items that we needed for the school. This year, one family donated enough money so that each classroom could have a netbook computer for teachers to use for documenting the children's learning and newsletters.

Families have also taken responsibility in constructing items for their child's class: parents in one class put together a loft for the room; a few years ago, a grandfather build a dollbed and

put hooks to hang dramatic play clothes in a classroom; a parent built with his child's class a school tzedakah box for the hallway.

Parents serve as guides during Open Houses and this year when National Jewish Early Childhood Network (NJEEN) toured our school during the NAEYC conference week, many parents volunteered their time as guides for the early childhood educators who visited our school.

The aesthetically pleasing environments that the teachers have created in the classrooms have also demonstrated their sense of responsibility and ownership of the school.



13.8 PTA organized "Planting Day" and each class planted a garden.



13.8 Canopy purchased by the PTA for the sandbox.

Dear Tour Guides,

I truly appreciate your willingness to help share the ECC with 50 other Jewish Early Childhood Educators from around the country. We are all very proud of our accomplishments at the ECC as we continue to grow and learn from each other.

We have built a wonderful, warm and vibrant community and offer the children a high quality Jewish and secular education daily.

As our ambassadors on Tuesday from 11:00-12 noon, you may share whatever pieces of information you would like the visitors to know about the school. (personal or otherwise) And answer any questions they may have. If you don't know the answer, tell them and they can ask us at a later time.

Your role is very important, yet quite simple. Below are the guidelines:

- Arrive at the ECC by 10:45
- Go to the Social Hall
- Greet visitors as they enter and let them know they can leave their belongings in the social hall, but should take their purses and the notepads we made for them, which are on the tables.
- Everyone will take a seat for a brief welcome and I will share with them what we plan to do from 11-12.
- After the explanation for the tour, each of you will hold up a sign and you will lead your group to the classroom. (5-6 people)
- If you would please stay close by the classroom for a while in case they have questions and/or need to know where the bathrooms are located that would be most helpful.
- By 12 noon, some of you are planning to sub, once the visitors go back to the social hall, you are free to go teach or to go home.
- If you son/daughter is still in school and you have time on your hands, you are welcome to stay for lunch.

Thanks so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to help us.

Joanie

13.9 Materials are constructed and arranged to be accessible to children, aesthetically pleasing, and engaging to promote learning.

The materials in the classrooms and the hallways are accessible to the children, aesthetically pleasing and engaging to promote learning. The materials are natural and are kept at a minimal to reduce clutter. They are on child-height shelves with baskets or pull out bins so the children have open access to different materials.



13.9 View of two classrooms presentation of materials

13.10 Natural materials are used throughout the school.

- Wooden child size tables and chairs
- Natural light in classrooms
- Natural baskets and bins
- In sensory table - rocks, shells, dirt, corks, sand, beans
- Recycled materials for Art
- Natural materials are used for counting, sorting, arranging and classifying as well as art projects and play



13.10 Natural materials used in the classrooms

13.11 Children, teachers, and families take care of the environment.

Taking care of the environment and our world was our overarching school theme for the school year. Each class demonstrated this in their own unique ways.

Several of the classes have class pets (fish, worms) and the children help the teachers in taking care of them. They learn the Jewish value of taking care of animals (*tzar ba'alei chayim*). The children also make bird feeders for the birds.

The PTA each year organizes "Planting Day" and each class plants and takes care of their own garden plot. Some classes also plant vegetable gardens and eat the food that they grow.

The children are very aware of the Jewish value, *Baal Tash'hit*, taking care of the environment. The school and classes are very aware of recycling and each class recycles paper, snack & lunch items, and other materials.

Some of the many ways that children, teachers and families take responsibility are:

CHILDREN:

- Class jobs - children take care of the classrooms through various tasks
- Taking care of class pets - Fish (Dvorim, Kofim), worms (Klavim, Chatoolim) (see class portfolios)
- Nature art projects - making bird feeders for the birds (Klavim, Chatoolim, Dvorim, Peelim (see class portfolios)
- Participate in room clean-up
- Clean up after themselves after snack and lunch
- Help clean spills
- Return materials to proper location after use.
- Bring recycled materials to the bin

TEACHERS:

- Maintain classroom space: Help to keep it organized, neat, aesthetically pleasing (see class portfolios)
- Create documentation displays in classrooms and shared spaces

PARENTS:

- Planting Day - PTA organizes planting day. Each class has a garden plot outside to plant flowers and maintain their gardens.
- PTA develops a wish list items to enhance classrooms, shared space and playground



Planting Day



"It is forbidden to live in a town that does not have a green garden."
— Talmud, Yerushalmi, Kiddushin 4:12

LET'S PLANT OUR ECC GARDEN!!

We are asking that each family make a suggested **donation of \$5.00** to help pay for the flowers, topsoil and mulch. Please put your donation in the Tzedakah Box outside Joanie's office and symbolically decorate the??? with stickers with your child's name.

WHEN ARE WE PLANTING:

Sunday October 22nd 10am – 12 pm We are asking for **only adults** to come to prepare the flower beds so that the children have an easier time on planting day.

Monday, October 23

RAINDATE Monday 10/30

Peelim-9:30-10:00

Arnavot- 10:00-10:30

Chatoolim-10:30-11:00

Paparim-11:00-11:30

Dvorim- 11:30-12:00 noon

Tuesday October 24th

RAINDATE Thursday 10/26

Arayot-9:30-10:00

Kofim-10:00-10:30

Klavim-10:30-11:00

Tzfordim- 11:30-12:00 noon

DON'T FORGET: Please have your child bring a small spade and watering can on planting day and PLEASE remember to LABEL your items with your son/daughter's name.

Please email Ellie Schuchman at elliemosch@yahoo.com if you would like to help or have any questions.
