

**What is the first Jewish memory that
you have?**



A revolutionary partnership in early childhood Jewish education



Plan for Today:

- Welcome & Introduction
- How do Parents make Decisions about Early Childhood and Care?
- Goals of Early Childhood
- The Montessori and Reggio Philosophy
- Extending Early Childhood Experiences into the Home
- Engaging with Early Childhood Programs
- Conclusion & Next Steps





Sasha Kopp

Senior Director of Education and Engagement

Who am I:

- Became an Aunt at 4 ½
- Went to Brandeis University
- Worked at Temple Beth Shalom in Needham MA teaching 3–5-year-olds
- Got MA in Jewish Education at HUC
- Assistant Director of Central Synagogue in Manhattan
- Adjunct Professor at American Jewish University
- Support Early Childhood Jewish Educators through ElevatEd



What is Early Childhood Jewish Education?

- Part- or full-time care for children birth through 5
- Can be based in a JCC, synagogue, day school, Chabad or independent entity.
- Serves as both education and childcare.
- An entry point for children and families into Jewish Life

What is it NOT

- A Pre-K class in a religious school
- Tot Shabbat



Looking Closer at Your Experiences

1. How many of you have young grandchildren who are in early childhood centers?
2. What are you noticing about their experiences?
3. What is different about their grandchildren's experiences from your children's experiences?



Windows of Opportunity: The CASJE Study

The **birth of the first child** and a **child's entry into Jewish early childhood education** are important times when families may become more engaged in Jewish life because the experience of having a young child can create a feeling of openness to new experiences for parents.





How Do Young Parents Make Decisions about Early Childhood?

- Convenience
- Hours
- Location
- Cost
 - Tuition is often 2-3k / month
- Optional: sense of warmth and community
- Most often – ***not*** because the programs are Jewish

Rosen, M. I., & Schwartz, M. (2015, August). *How Jews choose: A study of early childhood decisions among Jewish parents in greater Boston*. Combined Jewish Philanthropies.



What are the Opportunities?

- Parents are more involved
- Vulnerable moment for new parents
- Teachers are partners in parenting:
- Children's first taste of joyful Judaism!



What are the challenges of Jewish ECE for parents?

- Serve 12-15% of Jewish families
- Limited Hours
- Fixed Locations
- Limited infant care spots
- long wait lists – particularly for infant care



Early Childhood Jewish Education in 2025

1. What do you notice?
2. What is surprising to you?



“As human beings, our job in life is to help people realize how rare and valuable each one of us really is, that each of us has something that no one else has or ever will have something inside that is unique to all time. It’s our job to encourage each other to discover that uniqueness and to provide ways of developing its expression.”
-Mr. Rogers

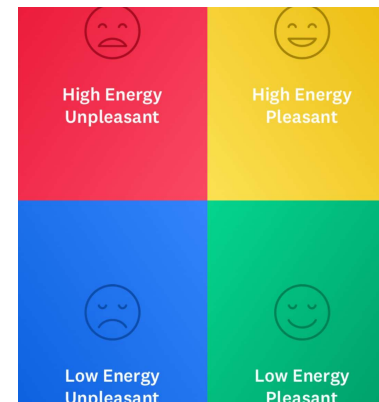


What is Special about Early Childhood?

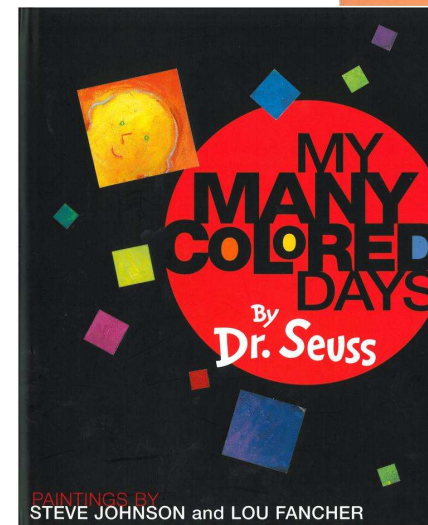
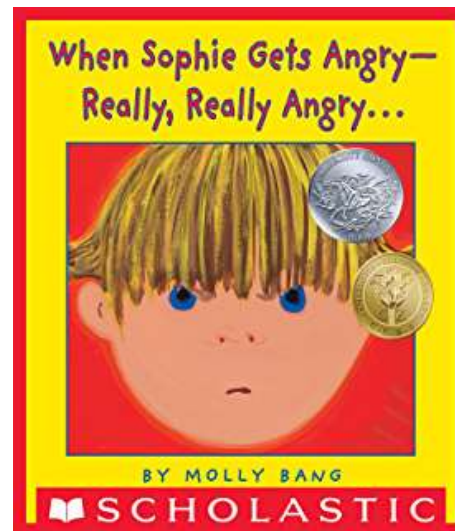
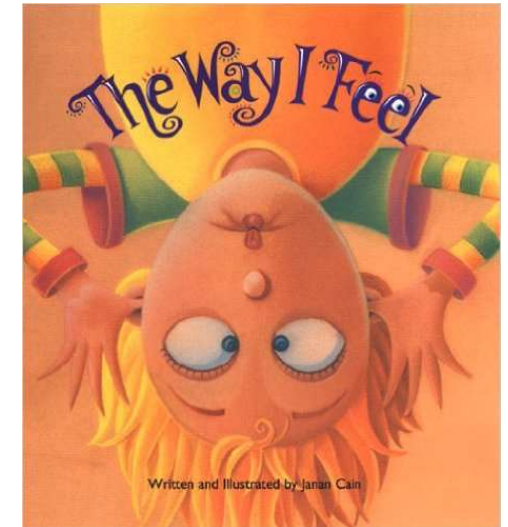
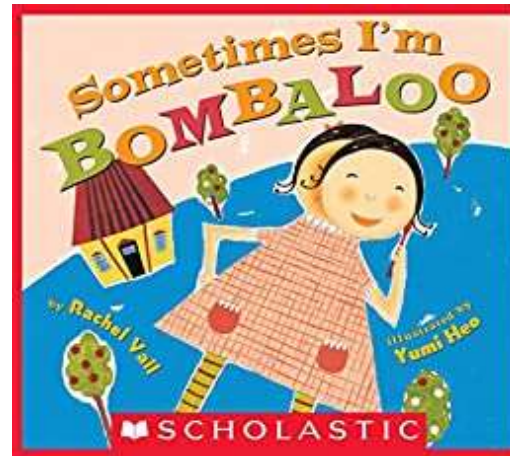
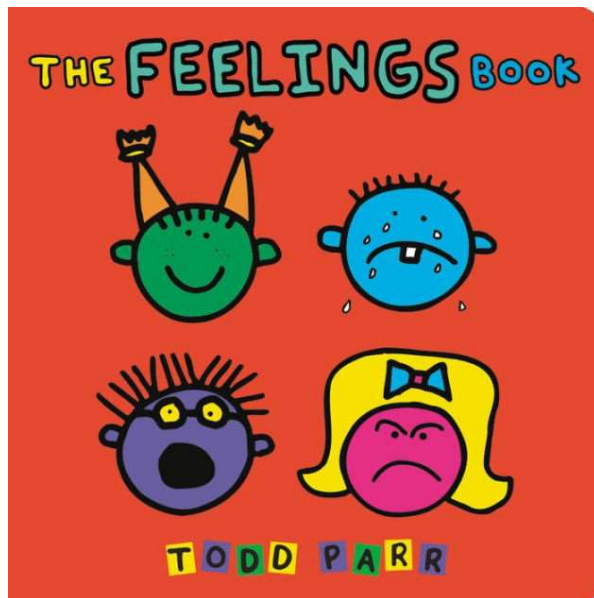
- Caring for “The Whole Child”
- Child’s first experience in a group
- Identify feelings
- Solve Problems
- Socialization
- Learn about themselves, others and the world
- Curiosity, Wonder, Resilience, Communication

Not:

- Worksheets
- ABC’s / 123’s



Feelings Books:



The Montessori Method

- Developed by Maria Montessori in early 1900s
- Mixed age groups (2-6)
- “Child-Centered”
- “Work” time
- Limited materials
- Accessibility of Materials
 - At child’s level
- Children are responsible for their materials and environment
- Clean up
- Independent work mats



The Montessori Method: Practical Life Skills

- Life Skills = Curriculum!
- School prepares for life
- Independence
- Fine Motor/Gross motor
- Real materials
- Learns step by step
- Students are co-responsible for environment
 - Care of Environment
 - Care of Self
- Takes time and patience!

Kitchen Skills

- Open & Close Lids
- Pour Water from a Pitcher
- Sponge Water Transfer
- Wash Vegetables and Fruit
- Wash Dishes & the Table
- Peel & Cut a Carrot, Banana, Apple
- Set a Table, Sort Cutlery, Fold Napkin
- Pour/Spoon Beans, Rice, Salt
- Whisk, Stir, Sift, Ladle, Bake, Cook
- Pack a Lunch or Snack
- Learn Knife Skills & Butter Bread
- Crack Nuts
- Squeeze Orange Juice
- Use a Rolling Pin & Cookie Cutters





Montessori Takeaways

- Cook with your grandchildren
 - Holiday foods
 - Let them use cooking tools
 - Prepare them that cleaning is part of the process
- Practice skills together
 - Cleaning
 - Pouring
 - Practical Life Skills
 - This takes time!!
- Give children designated space and materials for play
 - They can explore with real items!



The Reggio Emilia Philosophy

What is it?

- Developed after World War Two
- Lois Malaguzzi
- Community Orientated Model

Key Takeaways:

- Learning is emergent
- Questions guide explorations
- Children's voices are valued
- Process over Product
- Every year is different.



Reggio Takeaways

- Follow-up on Interests
 - Get books from the library
 - Create art about themes from school
- Process Art
 - Recycled Materials
 - Paper towel rolls, boxes, egg cartons, tape
 - Making “arrangements”
 - Let their imagination lead!
- Explore Nature
 - Collect items to build with or create art with!



100 Languages of Children

The child
is made of one hundred.

The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.

A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.

The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.

The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.

They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and Christmas.

**They tell the child:
to discover the world already
there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together.**

And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.

Loris Malaguzzi (translated by
Lella Gandini)





Key Themes

- Children as capable
- Behavior as communication
 - Connection rather than correction
- Children need open ended opportunities
- Confidence is built when children are trusted with risk

How does this resonate?

What is a takeaway you could use?



Jewish Takeaways

- Let children help with prep
 - Food, table art, etc
- Give children a place to play during large family gatherings
- Let children use school made ritual objects, give them a chance to share about how they made it.
- Find a way to involve children in ritual in a developmentally appropriate way

State of the Field

- Physically and emotionally demanding work
- Abysmal pay
- Few/No benefits
- Lack of respect

Investing in the youngest members of the Jewish community is a moral imperative



Who are the **EDUCATORS**?

"I love being a teacher at a Jewish school because Jewish values resonate with me. Although I do not identify as Jewish, I believe in the value of creating a Jewish experience for the children in my classroom."
-Mentor

Mostly **young** (47% in their 20s), but not only (15% are 50+)



Most (55%) do **not** have a **bachelor's degree**



Most (55%) are **not Jewish**

About one in three (31%) are **not White**



About 31% have a native **language other than English**

Jewish Life in the Curriculum

- Jewish Holidays
- Shabbat / Prayer / Havdalah
- Blessings before snack/lunch
- Tzedakah
- Torah Stories
- Israel
- Ritual Objects
- Jewish Values
- Jewish Lenses

Reminder – children know the most and are often the most excited about the holiday the day after it's over!





How Grandparents Can Support Grandchildren's Program

- Talk to teachers during pick-up
- Spend time in their classroom
 - Read a book, share a story, cook
 - Be a Jewish Voice
- Substitute or volunteer in their classroom
- Create a local "Grand Friends" program
- Advocate for the programs in your community – spread the word!



About ElevatEd

- 3 National Partners: JCC Association, URJ, JFNA
- 3 National Funders
- 12 Local Communities
- 2 National Staff: Orna Siegel - Sasha Kopp Hass
- 15 Local Community Coordinators
- 292 Emerging Educators, 239 Mentors
- 705 Total Educators enrolled in our learning programs

Follow us on Facebook at [ElevatedTogether](#)





Thank You
תודה רבה



A revolutionary partnership in early
childhood Jewish education





Purpose

We elevate early childhood Jewish educators who nurture the infinite potential of children, their families, and the Jewish community. This investment will significantly grow the capacity and reach of this powerful educational experience to create the environment for children and families to root deeply and grow into a strong, connected, diverse Jewish ecosystem.

The ElevatEd Program

Nation

Community

School

Director

**Emerging
Mentor**

**Emerging
Educator**

For Emerging Educators

- Year of learning: New to the field
- Year of facilitated reflection/praxis workshops
- Stipend
- Weekly meetings with mentor
- Cohort – local and national



Elevating the Community

Continued Investment in ECJE

Data Driven Decision Making

Recognizing Impact on Jewish families/community

Attention and Investment in ECJE

Career Growth

Retention: Competence and Confidence

Improved quality: Jewish & General

Connected Networks

Expanding the number of professionals

Recruitment Support and Training





ElevatedTogether
Sponsored



Share what you love about your community and nurture the next generation by exploring your career in early childhood Jewish education. Help them find their spark - Apply today.

Mensch

makers.



INDEED.COM
Early Childhood Educator – Chesterfield
Click here for more details.

[Learn more](#)

Recruitment Resources

- **Recruitment Process Outsourcer**
 - **Digital Marketing Campaign**
- **Applicant Tracking System**
 - **www.ElevatEdTogether.org/Careers**
- **Community Coordinators**
- **Referral Program**

