



The kindergarten year is a time of continuous discovery, excitement, and affirmation for children. In this year, they learn that they can read, write, do math, speak Hebrew, think about and communicate with God, solve problems, ask great questions, have wonderful ideas about the world around them, and do all of these things in playful ways. In addition, they learn to cooperate, trust and care for one another, resolve conflict, and rely on their teachers and each other for support.

The curriculum that promotes this learning is integrated and hands-on. Explorations are interdisciplinary, multi-sensory, and, in many cases, responsive to student choice, enabling each child to connect new learning to both prior learning and personal experience. Experiences are designed to elicit children's native curiosity, creativity, and passion to make meaning.

ART

The art program in kindergarten provides an introduction to a variety of media through which children have the opportunity to explore materials and build skills, such as painting with a brush, cutting with scissors, and drawing with a variety of implements. The program also guides children to explore their creativity and take pride in their unique abilities. The subject matter is a combination of directed and open art exploration. Lessons are also integrated with the children's other studies, in particular

the Jewish calendar and literacy activities. Children are exposed to the work of a wide variety of artists through books, posters, and museum visits. Each class starts with the children looking at an art poster and talking about their observations. The children explore in a variety of media including drawing, painting, collage and sculpture.

In addition to the formal art curriculum, children are also engaged throughout the year in a variety of art activities that relate to other curriculum areas.

עברית HEBREW

Hebrew is an integral part of the kindergarten day and is a language of communication in the classroom, from teacher to student, from student to teacher, and among students. Students enter kindergarten with a wide range of Hebrew skills; some are native Hebrew speakers others have never been exposed to Hebrew before. Hebrew lessons are designed to meet the needs of all students. By the end of the year, students are able to participate in structured conversations about classroom routines, family, clothing, weather, shapes, numbers, fruits and vegetables, meal times, the seasons, and feelings.

Parts of morning meeting are conducted in Hebrew, as are transitions and many games and activities, particularly in art, music, and *t'filah* (prayer). In addition, stories are read to the children in Hebrew as they act them out, and they learn an extensive repertoire of Hebrew songs.

One goal of the kindergarten year is for children to encounter written Hebrew so that, in first grade, they will be able to learn efficiently to read and write in Hebrew. Children are taught to recognize letters and their names, to associate letters with sounds, and to write the letters. The daily schedule is written in Hebrew, and many classroom objects, including the pages on which they illustrate their daily prayers, are labeled in Hebrew. Students also learn many beginner vocabulary words that begin with each of the Hebrew letters. Fun activities are used to reinforce letter/sound recognition. Towards the end of the year, the children celebrate their mastery of the Hebrew alphabet at the *aliyat hagan* (kindergarten moving-up) celebration.

JEWISH STUDIES

Children participate daily in *t'filah* (prayer). During this time, they not only learn to recite and sing excerpts of the *Sh'ma* and *Amidah* prayers correctly, but also discuss them, inquiring into the meaning of the prayer texts and relating them to their personal experience. Their understandings are recorded in picture and word on large Bristol board *siddur* (prayer book) pages; the class refers to these pages daily to help structure their prayer experience and remind themselves of the significance of each of the prayers they have already learned.

In the middle of the year, the children begin to assume leadership roles in *t'filah* by serving as *chazanim*(leaders). They also begin learning about the idea of an *aliyah*, and each have an opportunity to be “called up” to the Torah with their families present.

At other times of the day and week, as well, children are initiated into the rhythms, sights and sounds, and emotional tone of Jewish life. They look forward to a *Kabbalat Shabbat* celebration and *parashat hashavua* (weekly Torah portion) activities each week. They also learn the rudiments of *kashrut* and recite *b'rachot* (blessings) before and after eating.

Throughout the year, kindergartners experience the rhythm of the Jewish year through stories and experiences, art and drama activities, and a variety of inquiries and explorations that involve all five senses. They learn to associate the smell and taste of apples and honey and the sounds of the *shofar* with *Rosh Hashanah*, feelings of remorse and forgiveness with *Yom Kippur*; the chill of the air in the *sukkah* and the body language of *lulav* and *etrog* with *Sukkot*, lighting candles, spinning the *dreidel*, and eating *latkes* and jelly doughnuts with *Chanukah*, planting trees and tasting dried fruit with *Tu Bish'vat*, reading the *megilah*, giving and receiving gift baskets of food, and costume parades with Purim, hunting for *chametz*, making *matzah*, and celebrating the *seder* with *Pesach*, unfurling the Israeli flag, learning about Israel's geography, and eating pita and other Israeli foods with *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, running relay races and eating a picnic in Central Park with *Lag Ba'omer*, and receiving the Torah and eating cheesecake with *Shavuot*.

LANGUAGE ARTS

In Gan, listening, speaking, reading and writing go hand in hand and support one another. As children learn the basic skills of reading and writing, they do so with an eye towards both understanding the alphabetic principle and making meaning.

Activities that support each child's language development are infused into the curriculum throughout the day. Children are actively engaged in literature through both reading and listening. They have multiple opportunities to develop their oral language skills by sharing their ideas with classmates through play and storytelling. As each child is ready, they begin to express their ideas in both pictures and print.

The curriculum in Gan builds on each child's existing knowledge and linguistic experiences and provides appropriate and individualized literacy instruction to allow each child to grow and develop a love of reading. Daily phonemic awareness activities help children understand and internalize the underlying structure of language with a focus on how sounds blend together to make words and how words can be segmented into sounds. As the year progresses, these activities increase in complexity and provide students with the building blocks for skilled reading and writing. Children are immersed in meaningful reading experiences in a variety of genres throughout the curriculum. They learn to share ideas about reading with their peers and think deeply about

literature through guided discussions and small group interactions with teachers and peers.

Our literacy curriculum emphasizes the interconnectedness between reading and writing. Through daily writing experiences, children learn to understand and use writing as a way to communicate and express a variety of ideas. The children begin by discovering the many uses of writing in their everyday lives, such as making signs for their block building or creating lists for projects in which they are involved. Then, they begin to write in a variety of genres such as personal narratives and factual texts (“all-about” books). They share their writing with one another and respond to their own writing and to each other’s. Students also participate in shared writing and interactive writing activities, such as writing class books and poems that become a part of the classroom library.

Gan students are also involved in word study on a regular basis. They learn a bank of sight words and study the alphabetic principle, mastering the sounds that letters and letter combinations make and appreciating patterns in language. The development of these skills supports language development both in reading and writing.

MATHEMATICS

The math program in kindergarten cultivates both mathematical understanding and the development of basic mathematical skills. Using tangible objects to promote exploration and inquiry, children are encouraged to think about numbers and numerical relations, space and shapes, patterns, estimation, sorting and classifying, and measurement. Working in small groups, they gain hands-on practice in recognizing and forming numbers, adding and subtracting, solving story problems, and representing their data pictorially, verbally, and numerically. They also verbalize their solution strategies, explain their work, and respond to each other's mathematical explanations.

An important goal of the kindergarten math program is for children to understand the role that math plays in the world. Therefore, math takes place throughout the school day. For example, children count, add, estimate, and record attendance during morning meeting. They count the number of school days; make graphs about themselves, their class, and their school; identify patterns wherever they see or hear them; use fractions and whole numbers when they cook; play many board games and card games that nurture mathematical thinking and skills; and identify and create two- and three-dimensional shapes.

MUSIC

Music permeates the kindergarten classrooms. Israeli music is often heard in the classroom, and the children learn traditional Israeli songs of childhood. Students are also exposed to other genres of music. The primary means by which music is taught is through movement. The goal is for children to be able to feel the music in their bodies – they dance, they toss scarves, and they march. They become flowers, soldiers, and animals. In one notable lesson, the children respond through movement to Brahms' Hungarian Dance #5.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The primary goals of physical education in kindergarten are for children to become more aware of their bodies, to exercise more refined control, to develop physical fitness, and to learn how *menschlichkeit* applies to the realm of physical education. The beginning of the year focuses on locomotor skills as well as interpersonal (“sportsmanlike”) relationships. The focus then shifts to skills relating to movement and sports, such as jumping, kicking, tossing, and catching. There is great emphasis on independent learning; students are encouraged to focus on their own growth and development rather than compare themselves to others. Kindergarten is a crucial time to instill the “positive play” approach and celebrate the joys of moving.

THEMATIC STUDIES, SCIENCE & SOCIAL SCIENCE

Theme, or thematic studies, is the focal point of the integrated kindergarten curriculum. It incorporates science, social studies, writing, art, and Jewish Studies, and often spills over into reading, Hebrew, math, and drama.

Theme is a source of great excitement in kindergarten, as children have the opportunity to help determine the direction and content of their learning. The process begins by asking children to think about what they already know about the topic and then to generate questions they have. Teachers aim to design the unit around these questions. Students begin the year by learning and discussing the idea of community, and how it is essential both inside and outside our school. Other units have included Trees, Keeping Our Parks Clean, Animal Homes, Israel, and Wheat. Our lessons are hands-on, child-centered and often inquiry-based.

Among the science skills that are developed in the process are observation, recording, measurement, graphing, data analysis, modeling, and simulation, as well as predicting and experimenting. Science concepts explored include animals, plants, seasons, and the five senses. The social studies concepts and skills that children learn include understanding themselves and others; the characteristics of community; the variety and diversity of their communities; working effectively in a community; making observations and comparisons; listening, asking, and responding; and voting and compromising.

Students learn basic coding skills and engage in various STEAM projects. They work collaboratively to identify a solution to a real-world problem that's meaningful to them. In their weekly coding class, they learn foundational concepts such as sequencing

commands and repetition of steps (loops). Students explore these concepts through a series of "unplugged" games and activities, as well as through iPad-based exercises. Students apply their understanding of coding by programming robots to navigate obstacles and follow simple commands.