

Beth Emet Synagogue Bulletin Article  
March-April 2008

Although our classes are filled with young children, our school is made of families. One of the areas we've been examining through our NAEYC (The National Association for the Education of Young Children) re-accreditation process is our work with families. How do we work in partnership with families and maintain ongoing communication with them? How do we strengthen the relationship between parents and the school and synagogues communities? How do we join hands with parents to strengthen the Jewish life of young families?

We value the involvement of parents. We conduct home visits at the beginning of the school year to help young children make a smooth transition from home to school. Parent orientations are held before school starts, where staff discuss the school's philosophy, curriculum goals, and procedures, and give 'tours' of the classrooms. Teachers maintain ongoing communication with families through weekly notes. Parent-teacher conferences are important opportunities for teachers and parents to share information about each child.

We want parents to feel a part of our community. Family programs, such as Sh'ma parties, Chanukah parties, G'dolim Family Havdalah, practice Seders, and Shabbat dinners help families share Jewish experiences with their child and help them connect with other families. Room parents plan social events for families to get to know one another. We also offer programs just for parents – the Melton adult education class held here at Beth Emet, discussions with Mollie Reed, our child development specialist, and other adult education opportunities.

The relationship between the early childhood staff and parents is reciprocal. Parents, through their involvement in the Early Childhood Committee, offer our program support in a variety of ways. Room parents are always ready and willing to help teachers with classroom activities. In January our staff was given a lovely appreciation lunch by the ECC. Currently, some parents are working with Cantor Frankel to develop a CD of Shabbat songs for young children, while others are planning the very successful Mishpacha activities.

Dedicated parents spend much time and energy working on the Spring Event, our program's major event raising funds for scholarships and special programs. This year the Spring Event will be held on Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. with a performance by Jeanie B. and a silent auction. We hope you can join us! See sidebar for details.

We will continue to look at ways to strengthen the feeling of community in our early childhood program – building positive relationships between parents and teachers and helping families connect with each other and with the larger Beth Emet community.

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