



# Kane Street Kids

## Parent Handbook 2019-2020

Kane Street Kids embraces families from all backgrounds and cultivates a connection to Jewish traditions and values. Our warm, nurturing teachers promote learning through interactive experiences, play and social interaction, and provide an environment where children develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically.



**KANE STREET SYNAGOGUE**

*Community. Friendship. Learning.*

236 Kane Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231 | (718) 875-1550 | [www.kanestreet.org](http://www.kanestreet.org)





# KANE STREET SYNAGOGUE

CONGREGATION BAITH ISRAEL ANSHEI EMES

236 Kane Street, Brooklyn, NY 11231

Tel: (718) 875-1550

Fax: (718) 875-1757

[www.kanestreet.org](http://www.kanestreet.org)

**Rivka Seeman**

*Preschool Director*

[rivka@kanestreet.org](mailto:rivka@kanestreet.org)

**Shira Berger & Marcy Rubenstein**

*KSK Committee Co-Chairs*

[skk\\_committee@kanestreet.org](mailto:skk_committee@kanestreet.org)

**Adina Solomon**

*President of the Congregation*

[president@kanestreet.org](mailto:president@kanestreet.org)

**Mickey Dobbs**

*Executive Director*

[mdobbs@kanestreet.org](mailto:mdobbs@kanestreet.org)

**Rabbi Samuel Weintraub**

[rabbi@kanestreet.org](mailto:rabbi@kanestreet.org)

**Rabbi Valerie Lieber**

*Director of Youth Education  
and Family Programming*

[RabbiVal@kanestreet.org](mailto:RabbiVal@kanestreet.org)

**Rabbi Jason Gitlin**

*Engagement Director*

[RabbiJason@kanestreet.org](mailto:RabbiJason@kanestreet.org)



---

## **Contents**

A note from Rivka	7
Our Community	9
The First Day, Weeks, and Months	11
Authorization Forms	11
What to Send to School on the First Day	11
Phase-In Period	11
Arrival and Dismissal	12
Morning Drop Off	12
Pick Up	12
Strollers, Scooters and Riding Toys	12
KSK Health Policy — Illnesses, Allergies, and Absences from School	13
Allergies	14
Safety and Security	15
After School	17
Afternoon Friends	17
Stay-and-Play	17
School Closings and Snow Days	18
Toilet Training	18
Home-School Communication	19
Parent-Teacher Conferences	19
Our Curriculum	21
Themes	21
Science	21
Math	21
Literacy	22
Jewish Curriculum	22
Philosophy	23
The Importance of Play	23
Our Approach to Supporting and Responding to Children’s Behavior	23
Cultural literacy	24
Cultural Traditions & Food	24
The Structure of Our Day	25
Snack and Lunch	27
The Structure of our Week and our Year	28
Shabbat	28
Holidays	29
Birthday Parties	29
Kane Street Kids Preschool Committee	30



## *A note from Rivka*

Dear Parents,

When I sit down individually with teachers, one of the questions that I ask is about their goals for the children entrusted to them. Of course we talk about fine motor skills and language development, about literacy and mathematical thinking and about preparing the kids for kindergarten. But my favorite question is about what they want to impart to their students. What do they hope that their students will bring with them into the next twenty years and beyond? What are their *really* long-term goals for the children?

Like parenting, I consider teaching sacred work. The lessons children learn in school at a young age, stay with them. Therefore, the most important part of teaching is not displayed on the bulletin boards that our teachers design so beautifully, though they are a joy to behold. It is the gentle way that our teachers speak to children. It is the compassionate way that our teachers discipline children, letting them know that though something different is expected of them in this moment, we still know that they are good and kind, and they are still so loved. In the words of a teacher I respect greatly, Developmental Psychologist, Dr. Gordon Neufeld, even when their behavior is off track, they are “invited to exist in our presence.”

Heading into a new school year, I wish to share my reflections on what my *really* long term goals are for the children entrusted to my leadership:

I want children to graduate from Kane Street Kids with curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. I want them to have a sense that when they encounter a hard problem, something they don't know how to do, that they have the capability to figure it out or learn the skills that they need. They will know that, because they will have encountered hard problems before and with a little guidance, mastered them.

I want them to bring along with them a love for Judaism that will nurture them throughout their lives, that they can draw on whenever needed. I want them to be able to walk into a synagogue anywhere life takes them and find something familiar, something of home.

I want them to know that when they are sad or angry or frustrated, that those feelings won't defeat them. They can feel them and come out on the other side of them, still okay. I want them to know that they have the right to be listened to and heard, and that other people have that right as well. I want to empower them with the knowledge that they have the right to set boundaries to keep themselves safe as well as the responsibility to respect the boundaries set by others that make *them* feel safe. I want them to be strong in their ability to form the friendships that will support them in life and know how to be a good friend to the people they choose. I want them to be good, strong, kind people with the ability to create the life they desire, which might include making their own contribution to the world and doing what they can to help others. And yes, I also want them to graduate Kane Street Kids knowing how to use a pencil and with the building blocks for literacy. Early Childhood Education is about preparing our children for kindergarten, but it is about so much more.

*Rivka*

*A note from Rivka is the director's musings on educational philosophy and our curriculum which parents receive by email.*





## **Our Community**

We value the diversity in our students' families and in our staff. Our students receive a Jewish education from a diverse group of teachers from different backgrounds who respect and value Jewish tradition. Even if they haven't grown up in the Jewish tradition, all of our teachers learn about and teach Jewish holidays and customs, the words of Jewish prayers, and other aspects of Jewish culture. At the same time, we are made so much richer when teachers bring in pieces of their own culture to share with the children.

Not all of our families are Jewish. Some are interfaith. Some are interracial. Some are Jewish but come from cultures that are not as fully represented in American Jewish schools. We appreciate all of our families and their differences. We welcome everyone to come and be a part of Kane Street and only ask that Jewish culture and religious ritual are respected as an important part of our curriculum and school culture.

We celebrate all family structures. Our families include two-parent families, single-parent families, families with parents living in different households, families with lesbian and gay parents, families headed by grandparents, families who have found each other through adoption. Love makes a family and all families are warmly welcomed at Kane Street Kids.

We are part of an egalitarian, Conservative synagogue. We encourage our students and their families to join our larger community at Kane Street Synagogue for Shabbat and holiday services. When they do so, they will see women and men engaged in religious ritual and leadership activities within the synagogue.



## **The First Day, Weeks, and Months**

### **Authorization Forms**

Before your child starts school, all of the forms that you received in the summer mailing should have been turned in to the Kane Street Kids office, including:

- A recent Medical form signed by your child's doctor with an up to date immunization record
- The Dismissal and Emergency Contacts form
- The Emergency Medical Authorization form
- The Image Release and Field Trip consent form
- The "Tell Us About Your Child" form
- The Early Morning Drop-Off and Afternoon Extensions Form (optional)
- Photographs of the person or people authorized to pick up your child (strongly encouraged).

It is important that you tell us immediately if any of your contact information needs to be updated.

If someone new will be picking up who is not on the pick-up list, you must email the school office at [ksk@kanestreet.org](mailto:ksk@kanestreet.org) and the head teacher of your child's class with the person's full name and phone number. If the teachers have not met the caregiver previously, please make sure that they have a photo ID. Sending a photo of the individual is strongly encouraged. During the school year, any forms or written material should be sent in to school with your child's name clearly marked on an envelope. They can be left in the bin labeled forms on the wall outside the Kane Street Kids office on the third floor, or in the Preschool Director's mailbox in the synagogue office on the second floor.

### **What to Send to School on the First Day**

Please send in the following CLEARLY LABELED items:

- A complete change of clothes including socks (these should be replaced as seasons change and children grow).
- If possible, an extra pair of shoes for accidents and puddles on the way to school
- Diapers and wipes if your child is not toilet trained.
- A package of wipes for classroom messes.
- A crib sheet and blanket,  
(to fit our cots) for those who stay until 2:00pm or later.
- A family photo
- A small comfort object (optional but encouraged)

### **Phase-In Period**

In order to help children achieve a comfortable adjustment to the school environment, the first few days of the school year will be slightly abbreviated for younger students. We ask that a parent/caregiver be easily reachable by phone during those hours, and available to come to Kane Street within fifteen minutes, if necessary. The teacher will keep you posted as to your child's adjustment. We also offer coffee and a comfortable place to sit in the Synagogue's small chapel on the second floor. If you don't feel comfortable leaving the building during your child's first day at school, make yourself comfortable, talk to other parents and caregivers, peruse a book about child development, and wait for updates about how your child is doing, from the Preschool Director or your child's teacher.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

### **Morning Drop Off**

Drop off takes place between 8:45 and 9:15am. Please park your stroller (unless containing a baby) or scooter and escort your child upstairs to the classroom no earlier than 8:45 and place both labeled lunch and outer clothing in your child's cubby. We have frequent staff meetings in the morning prior to the 8:45am drop off and families arriving at classroom doors early may disrupt this important time. We ask that children arriving between 8:30 and 8:45 take advantage of our large play space in the community room to play under the watchful eye of a parent or caregiver.

Children enrolled in early drop off can arrive in their classrooms at anytime between 8:00 and 8:45am. Only those enrolled in the 8:00am drop off, may proceed upstairs to classrooms prior to 8:45 am. If using early drop off on a drop-in basis, please notify the Preschool Director and the classroom teachers by email with as much advance notice as possible. Please pay using the online form: [kanestreet.org/ksk-extensions](http://kanestreet.org/ksk-extensions). Please be on time for both morning drop-off and afternoon pickup. Children thrive on consistency and routine, and teachers really appreciate your respect for the daily schedule. The day starts with choice time, which is an important part of our day and one that tends to make the transition into the school day easier for the child. 10:00am is the latest that a child may be dropped off for the school day, unless otherwise approved by the Preschool Director. *Please schedule routine doctor visits after school hours rather than prior to drop-off.* Please do not allow children to play with the buttons, alarms or switches in the elevator. Children are not permitted to ride the elevator without an adult.

### **Pick Up**

Synagogue building staff will open the doors 15 minutes prior to afternoon dismissal. Teachers will have the children and their belongings in the lobby ready for pick up by parents or caregivers. Children are eagerly awaiting their grown ups at dismissal time and teachers have other responsibilities to attend to after dismissal. Out of respect for your children and their teachers please make sure to be on time for pick up. Children will be asked to wait until the teacher dismisses each one individually after she or he sees their grown up. Please cooperate in a safe and smooth dismissal by encouraging your child to wait in the designated area until dismissed by their teacher, rather than running straight to you. Should that occur, gently bring them back to the designated spot to say Goodbye to their teacher(s) before leaving, until it becomes an established routine.

### **Strollers, Scooters and Riding Toys**

Strollers and scooters may be left in the hallway in front of the sanctuary unless directed otherwise by synagogue building staff. *Please clearly label your strollers.* No strollers may be left on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. If someone new is picking your child up, please make sure that they know which stroller is yours and understand that *it must be taken home at pick-up.* The stroller parking space is an area that receives heavy use on the weekends.

Wait until your child is off of the synagogue premises before using any riding toy. No riding is allowed in the building.

*Please note that Kane Street Kids and Kane Street Synagogue are not responsible for strollers or items left in children's strollers or cubbies.*

## **KSK Health Policy — Illnesses, Allergies, and Absences from School**

Parents or guardians are expected to call or email the school if their child will be absent from school for any reason. If your child contracts a communicable disease, please inform the Preschool Director within 24 hours of diagnosis. You will be notified in turn if your child has been exposed to a communicable disease. The school will not share the name of the infected student.

Every Kane Street Kids student must be up to date on required immunizations and provide documentation along with the medical examination form completed and signed by your child's pediatrician, one week prior to the start of the school year. *The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene requires that every student have documentation on file at school, indicating that they have had the influenza vaccine by December 31 of each year.* Children will not be permitted to return to school after the December break without this documentation. We do not recognize any non-medical exemptions from immunizations.

***Please do not send your child to school if your child shows any of the following symptoms:***

- Fever over 100 degrees
- Vomiting two or more times in 24 hours
- Persistent Diarrhea or diarrhea that cannot be contained within the diaper or clothing, which presents a health hazard to classmates.
- Mouth sores with drooling
- White or yellow discharge from the eyes
- Scabies, head lice, or other infestation
- Impetigo
- Fungal infections including ringworm
- Rashes accompanied by fever or behavior change
- Contagious diseases, including strep infection
- Signs and symptoms of illness including lethargy, atypical crying, uncontrolled coughing, wheezing

***Children may return to school once the following conditions have been met:***

- Child must be able to keep pace with activities and play outside if their class is doing so
- Child must be free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for at least 24 hours without benefit of fever reducing medication. One full school day must pass between symptoms and returning to school. (So if a child throws up at 9:30 am and is sent home from school, please do not bring them in the next day.)
- Strep throat, impetigo, bacterial conjunctivitis, and other contagious illnesses requiring antibiotics – after the child has been on antibiotics for 24 hours
- Chicken Pox – after all lesions are dried and crusted
- Ringworm – 24 hours after treatment has begun
- Infestations – 24 hours after treatment has begun. Children with lice must be free of all nits.
- For vaccine-preventable diseases, hepatitis, meningitis, and tuberculosis – with a note from a doctor or practitioner certifying that the child is no longer contagious

***Children should be fever and symptom free (without medication)  
for 24 hours before returning to school.***

If your child has been given medication before school, please bring in a note indicating the name of the medication, the dose, and the time that it was given. In the case of unusual behavior or an emergency, this information is important for us to have.

Kane Street Kids is in the process of becoming certified to administer medication in some situations. At this moment, the only medication that we are permitted to administer is an Epi-Pen, in the case of anaphylaxis. We keep two Epi-Pens on site for children who may experience an anaphylactic emergency without a prior Epi-Pen prescription. Until we complete our certification process, staff cannot give any other medication to children. A parent or other caregiver must arrange to come in and dispense any needed medication and will be asked to sign our medication log when doing so.

We provide first aid, CPR and Epi-Pen administration training to all of our teachers before the start of the school year.

## **Allergies**

Please notify the Preschool Director and teachers of any allergies that your child may have. You will be asked to provide instructions from your child's doctor on what symptoms we should be looking for and what steps we should take should we suspect an allergic reaction. If your child has been prescribed an Epi-Pen for a severe allergy, we require two Epi-Pens, in original packaging on-site at all times when your child is present. These will remain in the *Go Bag* in your child's classroom. It will be present in the classroom and taken when the class leaves the building. In the unlikely event that we have to administer an Epi-Pen, 911 will be called immediately after and a staff member will accompany your child to the emergency room. A parent will be contacted after 911 has been called.

Prevention is our first course of action. Every situation is slightly different. Please email the Preschool Director and your child's teacher to schedule a time to come in and discuss the steps that need to be taken to keep your child safe. We will exercise care in not serving snacks to your children's class that contain an ingredient which can harm your child. After we have carefully chosen our snacks, we would like you to look at them and make your own judgement about their safety for your child. We will handle the question of restricting what other children bring in for lunch, and other stringent measures that may be needed, on a case-by-case basis. A meeting early in the year with the teachers and Preschool Director is prudent. Although we exercise a great deal of caution, we ask you to partner with us in keeping your child safe. If your child's teacher or the Preschool Director hasn't reached out to you regarding the food at a Kane Street Kids or a Kane Street Synagogue/Kane Street Kids event, please reach out and ask us. This building and all of our classrooms are in use by many groups of people all day into the evening and on weekends. *As careful as we are, we cannot guarantee that your child will not come into contact with an offending food.*

## **Safety and Security**

Fire drills are conducted on a monthly basis so that we are always prepared and ready to evacuate if the need arises. If our fire alarms go off unexpectedly, a signal is automatically transmitted to the fire department. We have sprinklers and fire extinguishers throughout the building. Teachers carry “Go Bags” that they can quickly grab on their way out of the classroom containing first aid supplies and emergency contact information for all of the children. That information is also kept for the entire school in an easy to access binder at the front desk. Should we need to evacuate the building for more than a few minutes, we have designated places to assemble which for security reasons, we do not share publicly. Parents will be contacted by mass email for pick up once we have established that everyone is safe. At that point, phone calls will be made to individual families.

One set of doors is in use in our building when school is in session. That door is attended by a security staffer at all times. This door locks automatically when closed.

Teachers participate in security trainings and lock-down drills periodically. Teachers and children participate in developmentally appropriate lock-down drills that are especially designed not to scare children. Our security plans and procedures are guided by an established expert in the field.





## After School

### Afternoon Friends

We offer afternoon extended days from 12:00-2:00pm (Monday - Friday) and 12:00-4:00pm (Monday-Thursday) for students who dismiss at 12:00 pm and 2:00-4:00pm (Monday-Thursday) for students who dismiss at 2:00pm. This enrichment program can accommodate up to 15 children per day. *Afternoon Friends* is a time when students spend time with friends from other classes. Each afternoon has its own focus. Art, yoga and music are some of the activities we offer. Parents who register for *Afternoon Friends* prior to the onset of the school year receive a significant discount and are always guaranteed space in the program. An *extensions* form is included in the summer mailing. When space allows, children are welcome to join on an occasional basis. To register, go to [Kanestreet.org/ksk-extensions](http://Kanestreet.org/ksk-extensions). Due to space constraints, registration must be approved by the Preschool Director before it is considered final.

### Stay-and-Play

When possible, we provide access to the community room on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the school building from 12:10-1:00pm and again from 2:10-3:00pm (Monday through Thursday only). The room is available to all students after dismissal, to play under the supervision of parents and caregivers. *Kane Street Kids staff are not responsible for the care and safety of children during Stay & Play time.* We ask that everyone abide by the following Stay & Play rules:

- When the Community Room is not available due to usage by the synagogue or other programs, the Preschool Director will give as much advance notice as possible, so that you and/or your child's caregivers may make other arrangements after school is dismissed.
- No scooters or other riding toys from home are permitted in the community room at any time.
- Respect the shared space.
- Clean up after yourself and your child.
- Children should not eat on the mats or walking around the room.
- The following food items are not permitted:
  - meat
  - non-kosher fish or seafood (see [kashrut.com/articles/fish/](http://kashrut.com/articles/fish/) for details)
  - nuts, nut butters
  - foods that are commonly considered choking hazards (see **Lunch** on page 27).
- Strollers, unless containing a sleeping child, should be parked in our designated stroller parking area rather than brought inside the community room. If needing to bring a stroller inside due to a sleeping child, you must wait until dismissal is complete so as to avoid collisions between children and strollers.
- Diapers should be changed in the bathroom on the first floor designated for children and disposed of in the diaper pail. Dirty diapers should be wrapped in a plastic bag prior to disposal.
- In order to prevent the spread of illness, sick children should not be brought to Stay & Play.
- If the caregiver needs to leave the room for a moment or step away to handle a phone call or email, they should either take the child with them or designate another responsible adult to supervise the child in their care.
- Children may never be left in Stay & Play unsupervised.

## **School Closings and Snow Days**

Kane Street Kids generally follows New York City Public School closings and delayed openings, although we may close independently if the weather seems unsafe for our young students and our teachers to travel safely to and from school. The Preschool Director will notify you via email in the event of inclement weather or any other unexpected citywide disruptive event such as blackouts or transit strikes. You can also consult local media or call 311 for closing announcements. If it is announced that New York City Public Schools are closed, Kane Street Kids will be closed as well. School will dismiss at 2:00pm every Friday throughout the school year.

## **Toilet Training**

We do not require children to be toilet trained when they start school. We follow the child's lead in toilet training and offer support and gentle encouragement. We hope that our child-led philosophy in this area will help to instill in our students a sense of their own agency particularly when it comes to something as basic as the workings of their own bodies.

We offer field trips to the bathroom with peers who are already using the toilet. We allow interest to develop and will offer children the opportunity to sit on the toilet without making them feel pressured. We find that too much pressure on children to perform in this way can easily backfire and create resistance. We do not offer rewards for using the toilet. We allow them to experience the pride that comes with being able to do something that they weren't ready to do before.

Please understand that children may be ready to sit on the toilet at home before they are ready to do so in school. Though we understand that there are different schools of thought when it comes to toilet training, in a school setting it is required for children to come to school wearing a diaper until they have achieved a certain comfort level with using the toilet at school. Please discuss your child's readiness with their teachers.

## **Home-School Communication**

The Preschool Director, Administrative Assistant and all Classroom Head Teachers are available by email via their @kanestreet.org email addresses. Please refer to the roster at [kanestreet.org/roster](http://kanestreet.org/roster) for a full listing.

Parents receive a newsletter from their child's teacher by email on a weekly basis. You will learn all about the curriculum from the past week, complete with photos. You will also get a preview of the coming week's activities and special events. Looking over the photos with your child is a wonderful way to hear more from them about their time at school. Please read your class newsletters as they contain important information.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Twice annually, parents are invited to sit down with the lead teacher (where possible, joined by the assistant teacher) to learn about their child's progress in various areas of development and academic readiness.

Parents are always welcome to email teachers and the Preschool Director with any concerns.

Please email us at [ksk@kanestreet.org](mailto:ksk@kanestreet.org) with any concerns of an immediate nature, especially any changes to the pick up routine. Teachers will respond in a timely fashion, but their priority is always the children and they will not be checking their email except when on a break from the classroom.

Please email the Preschool Director and teachers if your child will not be in school.

Teachers will occasionally call or text a parent from their cell phone because they want to discuss something with you at the earliest convenient time. However, we ask that parents use email to communicate with teachers or call the office, rather than calling or texting our staff's personal phones.

You will receive periodic **Updates & Reminders** from the KSK office, particularly before school closings and other important events. Please read these carefully and note items in your calendar. Please remember to inform anyone else who picks up your child of school closings and early dismissals.

You will receive quarterly installments of "*a note from Rivka*" via email, in which the Preschool Director shares a bit about our school philosophy and curriculum and our goals for KSK students. Comments in response are always welcome.



## **Our Curriculum**

### **Themes**

We have a thematic curriculum. Teachers choose a theme to focus on for one or two weeks at a time. Themes are chosen from the Jewish calendar, seasonal changes, something special going on in a student's life, such as a new baby in the family, as well as the strong interests of the students. The theme will be discussed during the morning meeting and there will be activities and often walking field trips related to the field of study. Disciplines such as literacy and mathematics will be incorporated into the study of each theme.

### **Science**

is woven into our curriculum. Some weeks there may be a specific science related theme that children focus on in depth such as dinosaurs or the metamorphosis of caterpillars into butterflies. Other times exploring a scientific concept will simply be one of the available activities during choice time. Earthworms, snails, lady bugs, and caterpillars are brought into the classrooms for children to explore and to ignite their interest in the world around them. Seeds are planted and seedlings observed. Science oriented books provide context and details that support the active learning that the children are doing through their own observations and experimentation.

### **Math**

concepts are an important part of our curriculum in all of our classrooms. As a play based preschool, we support spatial reasoning skills through activities such as block building and puzzles. Math vocabulary is absorbed when teachers talk to the children about their play. "Your block structure is getting so tall!" "Do you want to use long rectangles or short rectangles?" As the children grow older, the range of math vocabulary that the teachers use increases. Research shows that early math vocabulary is an important factor in later mathematical understanding. It provides the foundation for more sophisticated mathematical thinking to come later.

Practice counting and the development of one to one correspondence happens when children are asked to pick up two or three blocks to put away at clean up time or told that they can choose four cars to add to their block structure. Children practice these skills during dramatic play when they need to figure out how many plates to put on the table in order to feed all of their guests. Counting songs and books also support number sense for our young learners. Our frequent cooking and baking activities are another way that many mathematical concepts are learned in the context of real life- 2 cups of flour, 3 tablespoons of oil, ½ teaspoon of salt.

Our three year olds are learning the symbols to express the mathematical concepts that they have internalized through their play. Numerals begin to play a larger role in the curriculum. Patterns are noticed and created when making necklaces out of beads or building a tower out of lego. Chains of large plastic paper clips are connected and used to measure the length of objects in the classroom compared to the length of other items.

Our Pre-K builds on this early learning. Children count the days of school as they go along. They are taught how to write the numerals that express the number concepts they have learned and they learn the concept of place value as it becomes relevant to the task of counting the days of school. On the 100th day of school, they put their knowledge of one to one correspondence to work when they bring in 100 objects to mark the day. They explore more and more complex patterns, learn to count by tens and fives, and begin using graphs to make sense of increasing amounts of information. Our pre K students are expertly prepared for the mathematical concepts they will encounter in Kindergarten.

## **Literacy**

is promoted throughout the day in all of our classrooms. Books are ever present and are rotated to keep children's interest as well as to support specific learning goals for the students. There is at least one group read aloud story daily in every classroom. Our literacy specialist comes in weekly to read the children their favorite books and keep them engaged in literature. Reading aloud to children promotes language development. Even once students are speaking fluently, they are exposed to vocabulary in books that they may not hear in day to day conversation. Story books reinforce memory and sequencing skills for children. They learn the structure of a story which will serve as a foundation to understanding increasingly sophisticated literature. They learn to make predictions as to what might come next in the story.

Children also listen to audiobooks, particularly at rest time, which supports the important skills of listening, focusing, and comprehending information absorbed through listening. Particularly in our increasingly visual culture, it is important to provide these listening opportunities for children.

Stories provide practice in perspective taking. The young reader or listener learns to see events through a literary character's perspective, a skill that can be brought into use in daily interactions with other people. Stories can also be an interesting jumping off point for allowing children to share something personal along the literary theme.

Letter recognition and letter-sound correspondence is an important part of our literacy curriculum in our threes and fours classes. While some children may show interest earlier, we do not formally start teaching letter recognition until the threes. We think our twos have too much important growing and developing to do in other areas and we want to make sure that they have the time to do so!

## **Jewish Curriculum**

While our Jewish curriculum is enriched by our Rabbis, our teachers are well versed in Jewish curriculum as well. Mornings include a daily *tefilah* (prayer) in each classroom, This consists of reciting the *Shema* in Hebrew, which is a declaration that G-d is One and is a crucial piece of Jewish literacy; and the singing of *Model Ani* in Hebrew and in English. *Model Ani* is translated for the students into the following song:

*“Every morning when I wake up,  
I open up my eyes and say,  
Thank you Hashem\* for my  
Neshamah\*  
and for giving me a brand new  
day.”*

*\*Hashem* is an often used name for G-d. *Neshama* is generally understood as the divine spark within each of us.

Much of our curriculum is informed by the Jewish calendar. Children learn stories and cultural traditions related to Jewish holidays. These include dancing with the *Torah* on *Simchat Torah*, playing with *dreidels* (spinning tops) during Chanukah and enjoying a Passover *Seder* (ritual meal).


## Philosophy

### The Importance of Play

Children develop mastery by engaging in activities for the sheer joy that they bring. Play is challenging and immense fun. Children internalize qualities through play that will support them in later school years and future endeavors. Children learn persistence through such activities as rebuilding a fallen block structure or getting back on a bicycle after falling off. They learn collaboration through pretending to be members of a family or creating a dinner party together. They practice their fine motor skills that will later help them learn to write, through persisting at a challenging puzzle because it's just the right amount of challenge to be fun. Children spend time engaged in free play every day in every classroom. Play really is the work of childhood.


### Our Approach to Supporting and Responding to Children's Behavior

Kane Street Kids is a safe, warm, nurturing place for children that strives to instill the values of empathy, perspective taking, and respect for others. Our teachers model those values in their interactions with children. Expectations are stated clearly and consistently (and often expressed through a fun rhyming song). Children are kept engaged during transitions. We have age-appropriate expectations for children's behavior, but we know that they will sometimes act in ways that do not reflect our highest ideals. Our responsibility is to help them get their behavior back on track, while ensuring that they still feel like valued members of our community. For this reason, we do not use time-outs or isolate children. We teach strategies that children can use to get their needs met and to express their feelings in more appropriate ways. We encourage our students to check in with a classmate who may feel hurt by their behavior, to see if they can help.

 *Don't push your neighbor,*

*In the elevator,*

*Because if you push,*

*You might get  
squished! *

## **Cultural literacy**

is an important value here at Kane Street. One of the ways that children learn about the world around them is through learning about the cultural traditions of the people they know. We invite parents to come in and share a cultural tradition from their family, (this will happen a bit later in the year in our younger classrooms), a recipe perhaps, or a story or craft. In the younger classrooms children are exposed to literature as a matter of course which features people from different parts of the world. In the 3 year old classroom, children learn to embrace our ethnic diversity by discussing each other's differences and similarities more explicitly.

In Pre-K, children take a year-long virtual journey with pretend passports, airplanes and pilots to visit every country represented culturally in their classroom. Thus, they might travel to South Africa with someone's grandma, to China with a father, to Mexico after a few families spent a vacation there, or to the Caribbean, Italy, Japan, or Brazil. Egypt is visited as part of our Passover curriculum and a trip to Israel takes place as we celebrate *Yom HaAtzmaut* (Israel Independence Day). In every country they visit, the children learn about geography, native animals, and cultural traditions. They learn a few words from the native tongue.

## **Cultural Traditions & Food**

The exploration of this topic is really just beginning. We all have fond memories of culinary traditions relating to various holidays. We are a Jewish school and one of our jobs is to impart Jewish culture, which as you may know, food is an integral part. We strive to balance our job of imparting Jewish culture with our job of promoting a life-long healthy lifestyle for our young learners. We may not get the balance exactly the way you would and we invite dialogue on this matter. Some factors that we will consider are as follows:

- Items that we make ourselves are often healthier than their store bought counterparts, avoiding some of the most damaging health culprits, and they are a much richer way to impart Jewish culture than offering a store bought treat. Where possible we will offer homemade versions of traditional goodies.
- When a food's color is an important consideration, for instance blue and white when celebrating Israel Independence Day (*Yom HaAtzmaut*), we will be creative in using fruits and vegetables, with an occasional allowance made for natural food colorings rather than petroleum based food dyes.
- We will limit the number of unhealthful options at our holiday parties. We may serve donut holes on Chanukah that the children help prepare, but we won't put out store bought cookies as well.
- We will remember that food is only part of the tradition. There are many ways to celebrate a holiday; music, dance, festive dress, games, telling the story behind the holiday, prayers. It's never only about the food.

In addition to celebrating Jewish culture through food, we also celebrate the culinary aspects of other cultures. Our diverse teaching staff bring in dishes from their cultures to make with the children. We've seen Jamaican fruit salad and mangu- a plantain dish popular in the Dominican Republic. Parents bring in recipes from their family's traditions as well. When our four year olds take their global trips (as described above), they also prepare a local dish and enjoy it during snack time. Some favorites have included avocado rolls, tacos, and eating noodles with chopsticks.



## **The Structure of Our Day**

**Routines** provide an important structure to our day. Students begin to know that the day starts with choice time followed by morning meeting, indoor or outdoor large motor play, and so on, depending on the class. All classrooms have a visual representation of the day's schedule, which provides children with the sense of security that comes from knowing what's coming up next in their day.

Daily classroom schedules reflect a balance between structure and independent choice. Our day always starts with the opportunity for free play or "choice time." Teachers are thoughtful about selecting materials to put out each day that support the learning goals that they have for the children.

### **Choice Time**

A sensory material such as sand, water, playdough and other items is always provided as a gentle and quiet transition into the school day, which many children find calming and enjoyable.

An age-appropriate fine motor activity is provided, to encourage hand strength, grip and dexterity, which supports children's budding competency in carrying out life skills independently, as well as future writing ability.

Quality children's literature is always available in every classroom. When it's not a group story time, children are welcome to walk over to the bookshelf, find a cozy spot to sit and look at a book by themselves or with a friend or teacher. At times, several children gather around a teacher for an impromptu reading session, because it's just too appealing to pass up.

**Dramatic Play**, also known as pretend, is an important part of any early childhood curriculum. It provides an opportunity for collaboration among children while they create a pretend scenario. It enhances language development as children are inspired to use the language that they are learning as part of their play. One of dramatic play's most crucial benefits is the opportunity it provides children to make sense of their experiences and incorporate new information into their understanding of the way the world works. Choice time always includes dramatic play as an option. Teachers enhance this experience with various props, often related to a recent field trip or the current theme.

**Art** materials are often available during choice time. We strive to provide open-ended art experiences for children in which they can explore their own capacity for creating, playing with materials, experimenting with different media, and engaging in self-expression.

**Crafts** can be an important part of engaging with Jewish culture and ritual. Children will spend time in school creating and decorating Jewish ritual objects and crafts such as *Tzedaka* (charity) boxes, Chanukah menorahs (candelabras), and groggers (noisemakers) for the holiday of Purim. These craft activities are more structured than our open-ended art explorations and are an important component of our Judaic studies curriculum. During the creation of these projects, we encourage the use of creativity within the structure of creating a particular product. So while every child may be working on a Chanukah menorah, the menorahs will each have their own unique artistic style based on the young artist's vision.

## **Morning Meeting**

At the end of the morning choice time, toys are put away (a skill that your children will learn) and the children join together with their teachers on the rug. This is a time for the class as a whole to welcome each child by name and talk about the day's schedule. This is also the time when the morning prayers that welcome the new day are sung.

## **Specialties**

To further enrich our program, specialists in music, sports, literacy, and drama visit our school and provide age-appropriate instruction to our students on a weekly basis. Our engagement director Rabbi Jason Gitlin visits classrooms on bi-weekly Fridays throughout the year to teach children about Shabbat and holidays. His visits are more frequent during the holiday season in the fall. Rabbi Sam Weintraub (known as Rabbi Sam to the children) visits the classrooms several times during the year and the children also visit him in the *Sukkah* during the holiday of *Sukkot*.

## **Playing Outdoors and Indoors**

Under the watchful eyes and careful supervision of their teachers, children enjoy developing their large muscles as they climb, throw, run, jump, hop and bicycle. Children will visit our new rooftop playground or take a walk to a local park. During inclement weather, access is provided to a very large indoor play area. We do ask that you send your child ready to play outside even if it's cold. We will use good judgement in keeping children indoors during frigid temperatures, but will want to be able to take children out on a temperate fall or winter day.

## **Field Trips**

Our students take walking field trips to playgrounds and other places that support our curriculum. They have been warmly welcomed at our local bookstore, shoestore, bagel store, and other nearby locations. During their walks, our students hold on to a loop on a rope with one teacher in front (facing the kids) and one behind. Younger kids have a third teacher in the middle. Our young 2-year-olds, go out for the first time, later in the year. They start with short walks down the block without crossing any streets. They venture further as the teachers become confident that they are capable of following directions and have internalized safety routines. When venturing outside of the building, children always wear badges with Kane Street Kids' name and phone number. Teachers also carry *Go Bags* with first-aid supplies, emergency contact information, Epi-Pens (as needed), a walkie-talkie and their cell phones. Every time a class leaves the building, they inform the Preschool Director and the synagogue's security staffer.

## **Snack and Lunch-See page 27**

## **Rest**

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (our governmental licensing agency) mandates that all children who stay in school for the afternoon, have rest time after lunch. Rest time allows children to regain energy for a happy, productive afternoon at school. While some of our younger children sleep for an hour or so, we have found that older children enjoy lying on their mats listening to their favorite stories on tape or some soft music, cuddling up with a stuffed animal from home, and just relaxing.

## Snack and Lunch

### Snack

A snack of fresh fruit or vegetables supplemented with non-sugary items such as pretzels, quinoa chips, or rice cakes with cream cheese is offered to the children, mid-morning. During this time they enjoy socializing and conversing with one another. Snacks are provided by the school, and teachers will post a sign-up sheet for parents to volunteer to bring in a fresh fruit or vegetable. Snacks are chosen with allergen safety and Kashrut (Jewish dietary laws) as primary factors. Once those conditions are met, every effort is made to choose healthier snacks, opting for real ingredients and organic options as much as possible. We ask for your help with this *by not bringing in snacks for your child's class without the Preschool Director's approval*. Children are gently encouraged to try new foods that are presented but their choice in this matter is respected. We take our responsibility to educate young eaters seriously. Please see **Lunch** below for information about food safety and choking hazards.

We encourage you to bring a reusable cup labeled with your child's name, each day. We will provide them with water to drink throughout the day. We will provide a disposable cup for your child in the event that you forget to pack a reusable cup - they will not go thirsty.

### Lunch

Children who remain in class until 2 or who sign up for extended day until 2:00 or 4:00pm should bring a lunch daily. Kane Street Kids follows the laws of *kashrut*, so lunches should contain no meat or non-kosher fish. Shellfish are non-kosher. For a more complete list, please see [www.kashrut.com/articles/fish/](http://www.kashrut.com/articles/fish/).

Children are closely supervised, but are encouraged to eat and clean up independently. Sharing a meal promotes social and self-help skills. We wish to make mealtimes at Kane Street Kids relaxing and pleasurable for the children as well as a time for them to exercise their agency over their own bodies. We will gently encourage the children to eat their healthy food but will never tell them that they have to eat. We will allow them to eat whatever you send provided it follows our guidelines. If you are concerned that your child will not eat their healthy food if they eat their treat first, please consider sending only the healthy food that you will be happy for them to eat and saving dessert for at home.

**Nuts of any kind, or any items made from nuts such as peanut butter should not be brought into school due to possible severe allergies.** The list of foods that may not be brought in due to allergies may vary from year to year depending on the allergies in your children's classroom and their severity. Stay tuned for updates.

Hard candy, chewing gum, popcorn, and small marshmallows should not be brought into school as they are known choking hazards. **Cherry tomatoes, grapes, and similarly sized items must be cut in quarters or halves lengthwise to prevent choking. Raw carrots and veggie hot dogs must be cut lengthwise in quarters or thinner. Even if your child is used to eating these foods whole at home, they may not be brought into school.** Tragic incidents have occurred in other child care programs with some of these foods, so we ask for your full cooperation with this safety rule.

In an effort to reduce plastic waste, we ask that lunch be accompanied by a reusable cup for water (or other beverage that you provide), utensils, and a plate or bowl if you feel that would be helpful to your child, all labeled with your child's name. Teachers will help children remember to pack these items back up to go home. Of course we will have these disposable items on hand should you forget on a particular day.

**Lunch ideas:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sunflower/soy nut butter sandwich</li> <li>● Vegetarian 'chicken' nuggets</li> <li>● Sushi rolls</li> <li>● Pasta Salad/Mac and Cheese</li> <li>● Egg Salad</li> <li>● Rice and beans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tuna Salad</li> <li>● Hummus and pita</li> <li>● English muffin pizza</li> <li>● Veggie burger (Dr. Prager's and Morningstar Farms offer lots of options)</li> <li>● Bagel and cream cheese</li> <li>● Cheese and crackers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Quesadillas</li> <li>● Salmon</li> <li>● Fish sticks</li> <li>● Grilled vegetable wrap</li> <li>● Frittata/Quiche</li> <li>● Yogurt/Cottage cheese</li> <li>● Quinoa</li> </ul>
---	--	--

These are lunch suggestions which are subject to change according to allergies in our school.

You can find a lot of other great lunch ideas at <https://littlekosherlunch.com/index.php/lunch-gallery/>

## **The Structure of our Week and our Year**

### **Shabbat**

Every Friday, children participate in a celebration of Shabbat. They explore the meaning of Shabbat through songs and with blessings over candles, grape juice and challah. Much anticipated and enjoyed classroom visits by Rabbi Sam Weintraub and Engagement Director Rabbi Jason Gitlin (whom our students call Rabbi Sam and Rabbi Jason) teach about Jewish holidays or other aspects of Jewish life.

### **Holidays**

Kane Street Kids is closed in observance of many Jewish holidays. Those days are celebrated at school in the days and weeks leading up to them. We remain open during the intermediate days of the holiday of *Sukkot*, *Chanukah* and a half day on *Purim*. This allows for celebrations in school during the actual holiday. Thanksgiving is generally celebrated with a feast and conversations about gratitude. Our 4-year-olds learn about Martin Luther King Jr. Day and President's Day. At Kane Street Kids, we do not celebrate Halloween, Valentine's Day and other non-Jewish holidays.

### **Birthday Parties**

Out of respect for the observation of Shabbat on Saturday, please do not schedule out-of-school birthday celebrations on Saturdays.

In our younger classrooms, we have found that it is emotionally difficult on some of the children to either say a second Goodbye to their own parent or have someone else's parent in the classroom, early in the year before they have fully adjusted to being at school without their parent or special grown up. Therefore, our youngest students celebrate birthdays in their classroom with their teachers and classmates.

For the older children, if you wish to schedule a small birthday celebration in your child's classroom, please speak to the teachers to find an appropriate time.

For all classes: Party favors, distribution of candy, and homemade goods are not allowed and will be returned to you if sent in. Only packaged treats that are certified kosher and do not contain nuts or nut oils in the ingredients may be served. Permitted snacks may be more restrictive depending on the allergies in each classroom. Please be mindful of the healthy tone that we are trying to set in our school. Treats should be small and simple without icing and artificial colors. Children will be given a healthful drink of water to accompany their snack.

Some families choose to present the class with a book. This custom is welcome but not required. Teachers can share a wish list of books with you if you would like to participate. A notice will be pasted inside the book indicating that it was a gift to Kane Street Kids from your child.

*Some of the best ways that parents can support our curriculum at home is to ensure that children get ample exercise, a good night's sleep, time for play away from a screen, and a daily reading or story time ritual with a special adult.*

*We are a screen-free school.*



## **Kane Street Kids Preschool Committee**

The chair(s) of the Preschool Committee are appointed by the President of the Board of Trustees to oversee the operation and policies of the school, its faculty, facilities, and students. The committee is composed of current and former Kane Street Kids parents, active and retired educational professionals and are all members of Kane Street Synagogue. If you have any questions or concerns about the administration of the school that cannot be addressed by the Preschool Director, you may reach the co-chairs at [ksk\\_committee@kanestreet.org](mailto:ksk_committee@kanestreet.org). There are also many opportunities for parent participation, so please reach out to the committee if you have ideas, questions, or want to get involved.

Shira Berger, Co-Chair  
Marcy Rubenstein, Co-Chair  
Jeremy Kaplan  
Penny Owen  
Jessica Schoengold  
Mary Pender-Coplan  
Lisa Kulak  
Jordan Genee  
Amy Honigman

---

**Kane Street Kids looks forward to  
welcoming your child, you, and your  
whole family into the  
Kane Street Synagogue community!**

