

Early Childhood Education Center Congregational Meeting Report



Sheryl Welton, Director
January, 2022

- **Summer Camp.** Summer Camp ran for 9 weeks, June 21 through August 20. Enrollment fluctuated weekly, but we had 40-45 children attending camp, a higher-than-expected number. We always have exciting themes each week to make camp very different and special from the school year. Outdoor activities were emphasized as a comfort for the parents and fun for the kids. The kids loved playing in the sprinklers and the water toddler area where there is a water wall maze and car wash. I have already heard from families that are interested in camp 2022. We will start sending out camp registration forms next month and fall registration in March.
- **School enrollment.** School enrollment has almost doubled from last year's Covid-reduced numbers. This is despite an increase of 10% in our tuition that was required to fund staff raises necessary for recruitment and retention in a highly competitive job market. We currently have a waiting list for full-time spots 7:30-5:30. This time last year we had 4 classrooms and now have 6, with a seventh (3-year-old integrated class) opening shortly. I'm still trying to keep capacity numbers lower in each classroom to allow for safety/social distancing. This fall has gone smoothly despite Covid, but like everywhere there has been a huge surge starting after Thanksgiving. We have needed to quarantine 3 separate times within the last month. I still continue to have tours and phone calls weekly for spots. We have also been fortunate to have no staff turnover since the start of the school year. The majority of our enrollment continues to be word of mouth from past families, siblings and current families who love it here. Unfortunately, I did lose 2 families this week because of all the time out due to Covid quarantines from their siblings and their children here. During quarantines, parents have to either be remote or can't work.
- **Special Programming.** Special programming has decreased due to Covid. We still have music twice a month in the social hall with Matt, and in individual classrooms for 20 minutes a class. We also have Amy Drucker (PJ library) coming once a week to read to individual classes. This fall we started Enrichments that the afternoon staff are doing with the full time kids. It started out strong, and then due to low numbers from recent quarantines there were fewer kids to do a group activity. Amazing Athletes is running and remains a hit in aftercare.
- **Judaics.** Rabbi Dan has been able to join us weekly for Shabbat. He now goes into the individual three- and four-year-old classrooms for about 15-20 minutes. Beth and I still consistently teach Hebrew vocabulary through songs, holidays and lesson plans. Beth also goes to each classroom for each Jewish holiday to do projects and read stories and assists the staff with any help they need for

planning. Our music Hannukah program with Bracha was cancelled due to her being ill; I will see if she can do another program for Purim or Passover.

- **NY State Office of Child and Family Services.** We are currently at the midpoint for re-licensing process, which will happen this August. I'm trying to get together all of the inspections as well as staff and children files for them to review. As of now we have no violations and just recently had an inspection from the Health Dept. and Albany Fire Dept., which found no issues. Our licensor has not been here since before Covid started but has kept in touch monthly and as needed with questions. Prior to Covid, we had no violations. All of our staff have completed their yearly training requirements.
- **Capital District Beginnings.** Beginnings is going well. We were recently approved for an additional integrated classroom, which is starting shortly. We had a few toddlers currently here that came in needing a lot more support than we can provide who will transition to the new integrated room. This new room will be an increase to 3 integrated classrooms from Beginnings. The classroom is a younger 3-year-old typical room. Our younger 3-year-old typical class will also benefit from the added classroom, as the additional teaching staff will allow me to increase it above the 6 kids currently enrolled.
- **Fundraising/Grants.** This fall we received and continue to receive an OCFS Stabilization Grant for \$78K. Some of the funds have been used for much needed new furniture, more cleaning products, new supplies, a new shed for our outdoor equipment, and new shades in all the classrooms. The cordless shades look awesome, and we don't have to worry about choking cords or broken blinds. We also did 2 fundraisers that went well: school photos, kosher cookie dough and popcorn. The profit was a little over \$500 combined. We received an \$1,800 donation from an appreciative family that was used for staff appreciation gifts and lunch. We thanked the donor by having some of the kids make nice cards.