



## Letter from the Chief of Jewish Education

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As Chief of Jewish Education at the Evelyn Rubenstein JCC (the J), my vision is to foster a collaborative approach where our directors and dedicated teachers work together to create an environment grounded in the belief that every child is created in the image of God—B'tzelem Elohim. This powerful concept serves as a reminder of each child's inherent dignity, potential and worth, and is woven through the curriculum and classroom environments at the Bertha Alyce and Ellen Boniuk Early Childhood Schools, cultivating an atmosphere of love, respect, inclusivity and curiosity.

Judaism encourages us to ask questions, and this process of inquiry—asking questions and then seeking answers—lies at the heart of our early childhood curriculum. For example, children playing with flashlights inside the classroom might notice their shadow moving alongside them and wonder why that happens. With the teacher's guidance, they may then measure their shadow, compare its size and explore it outside on the playground, wondering why they can see their shadow on a sunny day but not a cloudy one. What begins as a simple observation evolves into an engaging investigation, incorporating science, mathematics, fine art, gross motor activities, language and literacy. This integrated approach deepens their understanding and nurtures their problem-solving skills.

This can be seen in our Shabbat challah baking on Fridays as well. As children work with the dough, they're not just playing—they're problem-solving. They add more flour to make the dough less sticky and easier to mold, enhancing their fine motor skills as they knead, pat, tear, pull and braid. Through this hands-on process, they create a beautiful challah that symbolizes interconnectedness and Kehillah (community).

The sense of community and our "one heart, two schools" mindset are driven by the passion, dedication and expertise of our experienced early childhood directors, Rene Kariel and Meredith Sakowitz. With a deep understanding that a strong community fosters remarkable outcomes, they lead with the belief that each child, family and teacher contribute to making a meaningful, lasting impact on the journey of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world).

At the J, we offer an early childhood program like no other—one where we live our Jewish values daily in a vibrant, engaging, safe and supportive environment reflecting our commitment to nurturing every child's individual growth. Each day at our schools is a Shechechianu moment filled with endless possibilities for learning, ruach and joy.

Thank you for choosing our school. We look forward to our journey together.

**Zoe Miller**

Chief of Jewish Education

Evelyn Rubenstein JCC of Houston

*Zoe Miller grew up in Los Angeles, California. An experienced Jewish educator and leader for learners of all ages, she has years of Jewish early childhood experience as an educator and director with a strong passion for Jewish living and learning. Miller holds two master's degrees, the most recent in innovative early childhood education from University of Denver-Colorado. She also serves on the Early Childhood Educators of Reform Judaism board as vice president of learning.*



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