



**MENACHEM MENDEL ACADEMY**  
**Early Learning Center | Early Primary**  
**Family Handbook**

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# Table of Contents

<b>MMA Philosophies</b>	4
Mission	4
Vision	4
Core Values	4
The MMA Experience	5
<b>Enrollment</b>	6
<b>Objectives &amp; Goals for Children</b>	6
<b>MMA EduCare Team</b>	6
<b>General Curriculum Information</b>	7
Infants: Emet	7
Toddlers: Simcha	8
Preschool: Ahava	9
Kindergarten-1st Grade: Emuna	11
<b>Role of Parents</b>	12
<b>Hours of Operation</b>	13
Check-in and Check-out	13
Late Pick-up Policy	13
Attendance Policy	14
<b>Tuition and Fees</b>	14
Payment Policy	14
Discounts	14
Referrals	15
Vacation Policy	15
Scholarships	15
Fees	15
<b>Withdrawal</b>	15
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	16
Open Door Policy	16
Donation of Time	16
Donation of Supplies	16
Parent-Teacher Conferences	16
<b>Dress and Rest Time Supplies</b>	16
Infants, Toddlers, and Preschool	17
Kindergarten and First Grade	17
<b>Discipline</b>	18

<b>Termination</b>	19
<b>Transportation</b>	19
<b>Health Policies</b>	20
Sun & Water Safety Policy	20
Medical Freedoms Philosophy	20
Mask Policy	20
Medical Records	20
Medication	20
Allergies	21
Emergency Procedures	21
<b>Illness and Infectious Diseases</b>	21
COVID-19 Policy	22
<b>Special Needs</b>	22
SMART Support	22
<b>Toys and Pets from Home</b>	23
<b>Breakfast/Snacks/Lunch</b>	23
<b>General Food Philosophy</b>	23
<b>Infant/Toddler Programs</b>	23
Baby Formula	23
Expressed Milk	24
Solid Foods	24
<b>Preschool and K-1 Programs</b>	24
<b>Special Meals from Home</b>	24
Food/Drink Guidelines	25
Packaging Guidelines	25
<b>Celebrations</b>	25
Birthday Celebrations	25
Patriotic Days	25
Vacation, Holidays, & No School Days	26
<b>EduCare Professional Development Days</b>	26
<b>Safety</b>	26
<b>Pesticides</b>	26
<b>Questions, Comments, Concerns</b>	27
<b>School Leadership Contact Information</b>	27
<b>Why is Ongoing Professional Development for MMA Educators so Important?</b>	28
<b>MMA Family Handbook Acknowledgement &amp; Understanding Form</b>	29

# Menachem Mendel Academy Philosophies

## ***Mission***

Our mission is to revolutionize Jewish education by equipping awesome young neshamas to become happy, compassionate and solutions-driven leaders, who are empowered to elevate the world.

We do this by combining best practices in child-centered academics, holistic wellness, environmental responsibility, and cutting-edge technology, with good old-fashioned FUN.

## ***Vision***

We believe that every child in the world should have access to the type of education that Menachem Mendel Academy provides. Therefore, we don't plan to stop with just one school. In fact, we have a global vision. Our dream is to have a school like MMA in every city in the world, whether it means opening a new school or partnering with existing schools. And, we are using the same pattern to create similar school systems for children of other faiths as well.

## ***Core Values***

### **1. Torah is Life**

- Knowledge is power. To know G-d's way is to connect with G-d's essence in the deepest way possible. Torah is the looking-glass with which we view the world.
- All knowledge stems from Torah. At MMA, math, science, history, social studies, reading, writing, and the arts are all taught through a Torah perspective.
- MMA focuses on educating happy, refined, solutions-oriented leaders, who are accomplished, loyal, proud, and compassionate Jews.
- The same way a soul is connected to the body, Jews are tied to each other and the Land of Israel. We strive to instill our students with a loving attachment to the Land of Israel, the Jewish people, and a sense of responsibility for their welfare.

### **2. Skills are Crucial**

- The wise King Solomon described the Torah saying, "its ways are pleasant ways (*darchei noam*) and all its paths are peace (*shalom*)." At MMA we seek to model a courteous and gentle approach.
- We believe that every child is good and will do good if s/he can.
- Life-skills like critical thinking, problem solving, communication, leadership, emotional-management, time-management, and goal setting are equally important as textbook data.

### **3. Holistic Happiness**

- The word *Shalom* is from the root word *shalem*, which means, **to be whole**. We nurture the *whole* child – their physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual well-being.
- We teach our students self-control and healthy boundaries; guiding and developing students to have respect for themselves, others, and the property of others. We focus on building character traits (*middot*), including gratitude and modesty (*tzniut*). Consequences for poor choices and behavior are learning experiences for the future, not punishment.
- Art, music, sports, gardening, and teamwork are essential parts of the curriculum and make learning fun.
- MMA proudly promotes true health for a lifetime! Students learn how happiness, nutrition, exercise, and being proactive with their health are the essential keys to longevity.

#### **4. World-Class Academics through Customized Education**

- Students often learn faster and perform better in smaller classrooms. At MMA, we help our students strive for excellence by utilizing a curriculum designed specifically for each child.
- Frequent evaluations help us monitor and understand the individual learning curve of each student, to encourage advancement in their success without excessive tests.
- Outstanding teachers make our model possible. We insist on excellent pay, a supportive environment, and fulfilling roles for our MMA Team.
- Parental partnership is also key to student success. MMA encourages parents to share their passions, contribute to school activities, and model life-long learning.

#### **5. Goodness and Kindness**

- Kindness and concern for the welfare of others are a hallmark of the Jewish people.
- Frequent *chesed* projects and field trips allow MMA students the opportunity to develop compassion and give back to the community by volunteering at elderly homes, food banks, animal shelters, and helping children with disabilities.
- As Jews, we work hard to protect the environment and sustain Hashem's resources for future generations.

## **The MMA Experience**

MMA Education is a way of life. We nurture and educate the whole child, including their physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual wellness. Menachem Mendel Academy is built and developed around the needs of each individual child. MMA's approach is the opposite of a one-size-fits-all approach to education, therefore, no two classrooms or academic school years will be exactly the same. We provide freedom and independence while keeping a structured environment to respect the natural development and success of each child while helping them feel safe and confident to grow. Our program incorporates

world-class academics through project-based learning, dual-language integration, holistic plant-based nutrition, strong character development, and flourishing Jewish life.

## **Enrollment**

The MMA Early Learning Center (MMA ELC) lovingly accepts infants starting from six-weeks to six-years old. Babies stay in our Infant Program until they are 12-months old and walking. Our Toddler Program is for children 12-months and walking until 36-months and potty trained. Children entering our Preschool Program must be 3 years old and **completely potty-trained** by their first day of school. Children entering the Kindergarten-First Grade Program must be 5 years old by the first day of school, however, early entrance for kindergarten students may be considered after appropriate assessment is administered by MMA Early Learning Center. All immunizations must be up to date and medical forms completed (religious belief exemptions are welcomed.) Prior to admission, all prospective student families will go through an interview process. In addition, children entering kindergarten or first grade will be assessed for readiness at this level.

## **Objectives & Goals for Children**

1. To develop a sense of identity, self-confidence, and worth as a creation of Hashem.
2. To develop independence, curiosity, and resourcefulness as a foundation for future learning.
3. To learn to interact with peers, be a member of a group away from home, respect other people and property, adapt to routine, and follow directions.
4. To develop creative self-expression, linguistic and perceptual abilities, and large and small motor skills.
5. To build strong social-emotional skills and learn to accept and express emotions in a healthy manner.
6. To develop the love of learning, a good self-concept, and a true sense of caring for others.

## **Our EduCare Team**

Our Project Based Learning Curriculum is designed for our Educare Team to create an interactive learning environment that supports children's curiosity and develops thinking, problem solving, and 21st century skills. Our children are the agents of their own learning, and our loving EduCare Team guides them along this journey. We strategically engage children so that they can lead and take an active role in their own learning. Our EduCare Team is provided with Professional Coaching and Development in the ages and stages of child

development pedagogy, including brain development research. With your child's optimal learning in mind, the EduCare Team collaborates to create exciting research-based units of study and prepare rich resources that enable them to effectively implement our Project Based-Learning Curriculum which is age appropriate, fun, stimulating, and always safe.

The EduCare Team is key in providing our children with an educational experience unparalleled to any other. We support our EduCare Team by providing extensive ongoing professional development. We believe in developing strong teachers who are able to inspire our children's hunger for learning beyond the classroom.

Our Curriculum and Leadership Development Director leads ongoing research-based professional development and provides consistent guidance to the EduCare Team on a regular basis, including:

- Monitoring the EduCare's Team implementation of the curriculum
- Mentoring and coaching for effective teaching strategies
- Coaching interactions between child and teacher, peers, other trusted adults, and the learning environment
- Assessing the EduCare Team's progress and capacity to meet the desired goals for each child

At MMA ELC, we celebrate each child's learning everyday! In addition, we hold an exhibition and/or presentation of learning at the end of each project-based learning unit. We invite all parents, families and members of the community to appreciate, enjoy, and support our children's accomplishments. With the guidance of our EduCare Team, each child will create a portfolio of their learning and discovery to document their successes and progress. The Educare Team also records and documents each child's milestone using a Child Assessment Portfolio.

## **General Curriculum Information**

### ***Infants: Emet (Truth)***

Our Infant classroom, called Emet, lovingly serves children starting at six weeks of age. Our Infants stay in this program until they are 12 months old and walking.

Here at MMA ELC, our Emet Program takes an intelligent approach to early child development and recognizes that the first 12-months of a child's life are extremely important to their physical growth and mental cognition. Skills such as crawling, taking a first step, and smiling for the first time are all developmental milestones. Children reach those milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act, and move. We have created an environment that is engaging and stimulating to your baby's development that promotes curiosity, a focus on attachment, social relationships, fine and gross motor development and community. Individual weekly lesson plans for our infants focus on each child's uniqueness and developmental stage.

Our EduCare Team is highly trained and educated in the field of infant and brain development and adheres to developing appropriate practices and activities. Infant activities

promote and develop social engagement and responsiveness, speaking and listening skills through language and music, an exploratory environment both inside the classroom and out on the infant playground.

*Our Emet Program Includes:*

- Our EduCare Team providing nurturing, individualized **ATTENTION** and care
- **BONDING** between the teacher and child for security and learning
- Individualized sleeping and eating schedules that follow home patterns
- Language rich environment with enriched EduCare Team interaction and baby sign language to help foster pre-verbal skills
- Activities focused on fostering infant brain development with attention, bonding and communication
- Daily **COMMUNICATION** about the child's day (both verbal and written)
- Open door policy - parents welcome at all time
- Happy, loving Jewish foundation

***Toddlers: Simcha (Happiness)***

Our Toddler Program, called Simcha, caters to children from 12- to 36-months **who are fully walking**. We provide a safe and loving environment, with a team that is experienced in toddler development. Our Simcha classroom is designed to allow your child to explore more freely, moving from activity to activity while guided by their EduCare provider. It is designed to support the increased independence and curiosity that every toddler experiences.

The journey toward self-mastery continues as your child enters the toddler years. Promoting healthy brain development through positive relationships and responsive environments is the focus of MMA's Simcha Program. Our Toddlers will experience a curriculum that is based on the growth of the child, with the EduCare provider offering warm, loving and supportive interactions to enhance learning. The activities engage the child in the areas of language, creative expression, physical, social and emotional development. Our Simcha Curriculum sets the stage for the young developing child to experience positive learning and establish a strong self-image.

*Our Simcha Program Features:*

- Environments filled with tactile materials, books and creative supplies
- Literature used on a daily basis to open the child's mind and imagination
- Primary care groups providing individualized **ATTENTION** and care
- Enriching environments to stimulate language
- Gross motor activities to build muscle development and motor skills
- EduCare providers building the child's security and self development through nurturing, **BONDING** and verbal **COMMUNICATION**
- Open learning centers that encourage children to learn at their own pace
- An introduction to Project-Based Learning
- Daily opportunities for the child to demonstrate independence

- Parental partnership with our EduCare Team to support each child in reaching their full potential
- Nurturing their tender Jewish spirits

### ***Preschool: Ahava (Love)***

Our Preschool Program, called Ahava, nurtures children to bridge from our Toddler program to Kindergarten readiness. Children entering this program must be 3-years old by their first day of school and **completely potty-trained**. Academic emphasis includes increased autonomy like following routines, problem-solving, language use and social interactions. Pre-academic skills begin to emerge and are practiced in an individualized and hands-on way to prepare for kindergarten.

Our programs are designed to encourage your preschooler to investigate and develop a love of learning, fostering first-hand experiences in a safe, nurturing environment. Our Ahava curriculum helps children explore, question, solve, and discover, which provides mastery in readiness skill areas and builds self-esteem.

As they grow, we expand their curriculum to feature learning activities that emphasize academic readiness for Kindergarten. The focus includes language, literacy, writing, math, science, and social skills designed to teach letter names and sounds, correctly writing letters, vocabulary building, math concepts, scientific exploration, and inquiry working as a community and much more.

At MMA, our EduCare providers complete a thorough Professional Development program to ensure your child's preschool experience prepares them for kindergarten success. Positive, engaging interactions and discovery with children and adults foster your children's learning.

Beginning in our Ahava Program, our curriculum includes a leadership development component that is fully integrated into their daily activities. It is designed to equip our students to thrive in today's world, while simultaneously preparing them to be the Leaders of Tomorrow. In addition to world-class academics, we are passionate about infusing the critically important, but grossly overlooked life skills that every human needs to thrive in the modern world, all within a child-focused, creative learning environment.

#### *Our Ahava Program Features:*

- **Jewish Studies**

To develop age appropriate understanding of Ahavas Yisroel, the weekly Parsha, Davening, Festivals, and basic Jewish observances (Shabbos, Kosher, etc.)

- **Social Skills**

To develop age-appropriate behavior and life-skills

- **Language Arts**

To demonstrate reading readiness (preschool) and to develop and master reading and writing

skills and oral competency (kindergarten)

- **Social Studies**

To introduce the student to his or her community, and to the peoples and cultures who first lived in America

- **Mathematics**

To recognize, use, and master basic mathematical concepts

- **Science**

To foster an understanding of the natural world around the student

- **Gardening**

Students will learn the importance of composting, how to plant, the cycle of growth for plants, and how to care for a garden

[\(Click here for a list of brain benefits that come from gardening!\)](#)

- **Comprehensive, Holistic Health**

To encourage attitudes and behaviors that promote lifelong health of the body, mind, and soul

- **Motor Skills and Physical Activity**

To develop gross and fine motor skills

- **Fine Arts**

To impart a love and appreciation of art, music, theater, and dance

- **Leadership, Character Development, & Life Skills**

At MMA, we know that kids can learn leadership, character development and life skills from a young age. This helps them experience an excellent head start in life even if they have personalities that are not automatically predisposed to leading other children. Leadership skills give opportunities for children to be empowered in their own lives and the ability to make things happen. Leadership, character development, and learning 21st century life skills instill confidence, help children to solve problems creatively, work in a team, work collaboratively with others, and also improves their overall mental well-being. Our Project Based-Learning Curriculum integrates all these skills into our children's daily activities. In addition, our Ahava Students begin the inspiring Heroes' Journey Program where each child's leadership and character milestones are celebrated by the whole community.

- **Hebrew Language**

To introduce a basic knowledge of Hebrew through vocabulary and alphabet. [Click here for an overview of the benefits of dual-language learning programs with young children.](#)

## ***Kindergarten-1st Grade: Emuna (Faith)***

Our K-1 Program, called Emuna, supports students as they navigate through the world and take on new complexities in primary school. Children at this age are even more eager to investigate, ponder and comprehend everything, even as their world is expanding in every direction. Our proprietary K-1 program is aligned with national and international standards, providing a solid foundation for your child's future, no matter where life's journey takes them.

### ***The Emuna Program Includes:***

#### **Language Arts:**

Menachem Mendel Academy utilizes a researched-based, interdisciplinary reading and language program which includes reading, writing, listening and speaking, viewing and presenting. Our Project-Based Learning Curriculum is specifically designed with the cognitive needs and the current developmental levels of our students in mind. Our objective is to develop the 21st Century skills in all of our students to communicate effectively, both in speaking and in writing. Using the Power Standards in Language and Literacy, this program provides instructions in reading and helps build the skills needed to be a fluent and independent reader. The program also consists of writing instructions, which include teaching the six traits of writing and the writing process, writing elements, and purposeful writing. This program practices the following principles:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Read Aloud
- Comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Assessment
- Writing
- Listening and Speaking
- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving

#### **Mathematics:**

Menachem Mendel Academy has a well-designed, differentiated Math Program that addresses the individual needs of our learners. Our interdisciplinary Math Program is based on the standards set by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. We advocate for high-quality mathematics instruction and learning for each and every student. We conduct ongoing assessments and use hands-on and mental math in our Project-Based, researched-backed curriculum. Throughout the program students apply 21st Century skills in problem solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.

#### **Social Studies:**

In our Emuna (K-1) Social Studies program, students learn about themselves, their school

and their community. We believe that our students are the agents of their own learning. We observe, listen and facilitate their learning.

*I Am Unique and I Am Special:* This unit focuses on what makes each child unique. Students learn about the similarities, differences, and diversities between people, even within their own families.

### **Science:**

Menachem Mendel Academy's exciting Science Program provides our students the opportunity to think and act like scientists. They solve authentic problems, research for solutions, perform investigations, plan and conduct presentations.

### **Project Based Learning in the K-1 Primary Years:**

Project-Based Learning engages all the children in the classroom because there is a real world problem to solve and an interesting activity for everyone. Project-Based Learning is a student led approach to learning and the kids point the teachers to what is interesting and important to them. Using the topics that they want to investigate and learn, the class launches a project using the interdisciplinary approach beyond grade level standards in different subject areas. They get the depth and the breadth through research and consulting with experts, and then they become young experts in what it is they happen to be studying. All throughout their project studies, children learn the following 21st Century Employable Skills:

- Collaboration
- Organization
- Creativity and Resourcefulness
- Problem Solving
- Growth Mindset
- Critical Thinking
- Agency
- Effective Speaking and Written Communication

*In addition to all of the above, our Emuna Program Features:*

A continuation of the programs started in Preschool (Jewish Studies, Social and Life Skills, Gardening, Holistic Health, Physical Activity, Fine Arts, Leadership, Character Development through our Heroes' Journey, and an increased fluency of the Hebrew Language), all scaled and expounded upon at a higher age and development level.

## **Role of Parents**

### **1. Become actively involved in your child's school**

You are welcome any time to visit the classroom. We encourage you to help in the classroom, share a snack with your child, help on "special" days, and attend parent-teacher conferences.

## **2. Communicate with your child’s teachers**

Feel free to share any concerns you may have about your child’s school experience. Please let us know of any changes that may occur in the family such as death, divorce, illness, a new sibling, etc.

## **3. Have your child attend on scheduled school days.**

Regular attendance and punctuality is an excellent preparation and routine for students, and it shows your child that school is very important.

## **4. Talk about your child’s school day with him or her.**

Encourage your child to share events from their day with you. Save special projects your child has made and date them; these memories will last a lifetime!

## **Hours of Operation**

MMA ELC is open for students Monday - Friday, from 7:30 AM- 5:30 PM. Infants & Toddlers operate for the full day, and parents are welcome to customize their child’s schedule as needed.

Preschool, Kindergarten & First Grade Hours are 8:30 AM - 3 PM. Before Care and After Care is available for an additional fee. Before Care is from 7:30 - 8:30 AM, and After Care is available from 3 - 5:30 PM.

Our Friday Dismissal for Preschool and K-1 is 3 PM from April - September and 2 PM from October - March.

\*DES enrollment may affect the requirements on check-in/check-out times.

### ***Check-in and Check-out***

**All MMA ELC students must** be accompanied to and from their classroom by a parent or designated adult. They must also be officially “checked-in” and “checked-out” by signing the Sign-In and Sign-Out book. Under no circumstances will a child be released to anyone other than a parent or previously designated adult of age 18 years and older. A photo I.D. may be required for anyone other than a parent and must be on the child’s **Emergency Information and Immunization Record Card**, unless other arrangements are made in advance.

### ***Late Pick-up Policy***

When parents are late, children become frightened about being left, and teachers become concerned about after-school commitments they might not be able to keep. If you know you are going to be late, call the school office as soon as possible and let us know what alternate plans you have made. If there is no one in the office, call the MMA extension directly. A late fee of \$5.00 will be charged for the first five minutes after 5:30 PM and \$1.00 for each minute

thereafter. Excessive late pick ups may result in termination of your child(ren)'s enrollment.

### ***Attendance Policy***

To ensure that all children are safe and accounted for, it is necessary to notify the school office by 8:30 AM if your child will be late or cannot attend school due to illness, doctor's appointment, family trip, etc. Unreported absences will be followed up by the MMA office. For a planned absence, please give the school at least one week's prior notice.

The office staff can be notified by phone at 480-591-1770 or by email at [info@mmafamilly.org](mailto:info@mmafamilly.org).

Enrichment programs (Art, Fitness and Wellness, Music, Gardening), special presentations, special activities, and field trips are all considered to be a *mandatory* part of the school day. Choosing not to attend any of the preceding parts of the school day will be considered a tardy or an absence. Chronic tardiness or absences will need to be addressed with the administration.

## **Tuition and Fees**

### ***Payment Policy***

MMA ELC offers the following options for tuition payment. MMA tuition fees are charged monthly or annually, depending on your arranged payment plan. The tuition fee will automatically be deducted from the checking account, savings account, or credit/debit card as provided on the Authorization for Automatic Deduction Form. Automating your payments frees up time and resources, allowing MMA the opportunity to focus on Educational Programs for the benefit of our children. Checks will also be accepted and should be made out to: MMA. There are no discounts or reimbursements for days missed due to illness, absences, vacation, severe weather, emergencies, or during the holidays when school is closed.

Regardless of payment option, selected tuition must be kept current. Any family who does not have their first tuition payment paid by the first date of attendance, will lose their registration fee and their child(ren)'s name will be removed from class lists to accommodate new registrations. To have their child(ren) put back on class lists, they must pay \$150 per child to re-register their child(ren).

Tuition is paid monthly. All tuition payments are due the 1st day of each month and will be considered late after the 5th day from the due date. Any payment received after the 5th day from the due date will result in a \$25.00 late fee.

***Parents who have not kept current on tuition payments will receive a letter to communicate with the school by the 5th day from the due date, or children will be excluded from school. It is not the intent of the Administration to exclude children from school, but to emphasize to parents the need for them to contact the school office to make other arrangements when they cannot make their***

***tuition payments on time.***

### ***Discounts***

For families with multiple children enrolled at MMA , a 10% tuition discount will be allowed for each sibling after the first in the same school year.

### ***Referrals***

The trust and confidence of our families means a great deal, and the best way we can grow our school with like-minded families is by word of mouth. In appreciation, MMA offers a referral program. Existing families will receive \$100 off of their next month's tuition for every new enrollment as a result of their referral. In order to receive this tuition credit, the newly enrolled family must remain enrolled with MMA for at least 4 weeks.

### ***Vacation Policy***

After six (6) months of continuous enrollment, children enrolled for attendance qualify for a maximum of two (2) weeks of vacation credit in any calendar year. The Executive Admin Team must be notified in writing at least two (2) weeks prior to the vacation in order to receive the vacation credit. Please stop by the office to complete a Vacation Credit Form. Vacation credit will be given only if tuition is current at the time the vacation credit is taken.

### ***Scholarships***

MMA School for Leadership Arts works with a number of Scholarship Tuition Organizations (STO's) that offer preschoolers a scholarship if their child has a recorded Individual Education Program (IEP) or a parent serves in the military. Proof of IEP and active military status is required.

**Students who receive more than 50% of their tuition through scholarship (STO) will not be eligible for discounts. In addition, students who receive 50% of their tuition through scholarship (STO) will not be included in the count of multiple children from a single family.**

For those families who have applied for STO scholarship, tuition must be paid until MMA has received distribution of funds from the STO. MMA will reimburse you for any tuition payments that have been paid which are later funded by the STO.

In addition, MMA partners with state and local agencies to provide tuition subsidies to preschool families who qualify for assistance. Additional information is required to receive this subsidy. [Click here for more info.](#)

### ***Fees***

**Registration:** MMA charges a one time, non-refundable \$150 registration fee per child enrolled.

Families who withdraw their child(ren) after having paid the first tuition payment will forfeit the first month's tuition payment. Exception: families who receive military orders, or move out of state.

Instructional Resource Fee and Material Fee (R & M Fee): An annual \$200 non-refundable R & M Fee for each MMA student is collected at the end of the school year on June 1 for the upcoming year. The fee covers books, instructional supplies, and additional programs.

***New families who register after June 1st, must pay both the registration fee and Resource and Materials fee at the time of registration.***

## **Withdrawal**

In the case of early withdrawal, two weeks' notice is required; payments made prior to the withdrawal will be applied to the two weeks' notice period. Tuition charges will continue whether or not the child is in school until written notice is received that the child is being withdrawn from school. In cases of extended absences, payments are non-refundable and may not be altered. No tuition refund will be made at any time if a student is dismissed or asked to withdraw from school for discipline or unacceptable attendance reasons.

## **Parent Involvement**

### ***Open Door Policy***

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit the school and their child's classroom. Parents of enrolled children shall have access to the facility during hours of operation. Be advised, however, that your child may act differently when you are present, and the natural learning process may be disrupted. To minimize disruptions, please schedule your visit in advance. Additionally, it is always advisable to keep your visits short and without unnecessary loitering.

### ***Donation of Time***

Schools such as ours are dependent upon volunteer help. Everyone has some talent that can be helpful to the school and that serves as a model for the students. Please consider responding to the requests for help when the call goes out!

### ***Donation of Supplies***

Upon acceptance of a student, a required Instructional Resource and Materials Fee will be collected. This fee goes toward classroom materials such as books and other learning tools. In addition, the school is always looking for further donations of helpful classroom supplies such as boxes of tissue, paper towels, hand soap, etc. Your child's teacher will distribute a list at the beginning of the year.

### ***Parent-Teacher Conferences / Student-Led Conference***

As an integral part of the program, parents are requested to participate in three regularly scheduled conferences per year, usually in October, January and March. Additional conferences are always possible and may be scheduled with the classroom teachers at a

mutually convenient time.

## **Dress and Rest Time Supplies**

### **Infants, Toddlers, and Preschool**

Children in our ELC (Emet, Simcha, and Ahava Classes) should be dressed in simple clothing that is free from complicated fastenings so that they can easily manage their bathroom needs. To account for weather changes, we advise easily removable layers. Remember that your child will enjoy a full day and that accidents can happen, so dress him or her accordingly. For your child's safety, we require that all shoes are closed toe. **No sandals, clogs, or flip-flops.**

Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers must have at school at all times:

- 2-crib sheets (these are used for Infant Cribs and Toddler/Preschool rest mats)
- Blanket for rest time
- 2-complete changes of clothes, including socks
- Sweater and/or jacket to accommodate indoor/outdoor temperature changes.

Parents are responsible for:

- Taking home all sheets and blankets each Friday to be laundered and returned Monday
- Taking home any soiled clothing daily to be laundered
- Labeling all clothing, sheets, blankets, and any other personal items with your child's FIRST AND LAST NAME. Initials are not sufficient.

### **Kindergarten and First Grade**

As our students get a bit older, we transition into a higher standard of conduct and more dignified attire. The elevated dress code differentiates a playful home environment from a respectful learning atmosphere. A smart-looking dress code raises students' expectations of themselves. When dressed neatly and presentably, students tend to conduct themselves more responsibly. Oftentimes, teachers find calmer, more respectful and attentive students. When students feel more confident in the way they look, their behavior tends to reflect the same confidence.

At MMA, we do not require a set uniform. We encourage a dress code that allows our children to express their unique individuality while maintaining an environment that promotes excellence. As a direct example from the "real world", most workplace and professional settings have a uniform or dress code policy that sets the tone for the group culture.

Students are expected to maintain the highest possible standards of personal hygiene. This includes personal cleanliness, as well as wearing clean clothing. If this is a challenge for any individual family, please contact the Executive Admin Office for confidential assistance.

### *Dress Code for Boys:*

- A Kippah/Yarmulke and tzitzit is encouraged at all times
- Pants or shorts can be nice slacks in any solid color (*e.g. grey, black, dark green, khaki, navy, etc.*)
- No jeans, torn pants, or skin-tight pants should be worn
- Shirts should have a collar and can be polos or button downs, in any solid color (*e.g. white, cream, blue, light blue, green, red, etc.*) with no large logos
- Shirts should ideally be tucked in at all times (*except during play time*)
- Long sleeve and short sleeves shirts are acceptable
- No T-shirts or collarless shirts
- Tracksuit pants are acceptable on gym days only
- White shirts are encouraged on Rosh Chodesh and other special days ([See MMA School Calendar](#)).
- MMA sweatshirts or a plain sweater may be worn on cool days
- Closed-toe shoes should be worn with socks at all times
- No sandals, Crocs or Heelies.
- Payos/Peyot should be recognizable and at a minimum reach the cheekbone.

### *Dress Code for Girls:*

- Skirts, Dresses, or Jumpers should reach the knee area and can be worn in any solid color or pinstripe; respectful in color (*e.g. grey, black, dark green, navy, etc.*)
- Blouses can be polo or button-down with a collar and can be any solid color or pinstripe; respectful in color (*e.g. white, pink, purple, navy, etc.*)
- No T-shirts, large logos, collarless shirts, or open backs
- All shirts should have sleeves; no tank tops
- White shirts are encouraged on *Rosh Chodesh* and other special days ([See MMA School Calendar](#)).
- MMA sweatshirts or a plain sweater may be worn on cool days
- Pants or shorts may be worn under dresses or skirts for sports and outdoor activities
- Closed-toe shoes should be worn at all times
- No sandals, Crocs or Heelies.
- Tights or socks should be worn at all times, in any solid color or pinstripe; respectful in color (*e.g. navy, black, white, brown, etc.*)
- Hair longer than shoulder length should be tied back and not worn loose/down for safety reasons and to keep it out of the face when doing school work.
- Stud earrings and earrings worn close to the earlobe are acceptable
- No hoops or dangling earrings for safety

*NOTE: All students are expected to comply with the dress code. Dressing in a manner that distracts other children from learning may result in sending your child home. Students who*

*do not meet the dress code will not be allowed to attend class until appropriate clothing is provided by their parent/guardian.*

## **Discipline**

An important part of our program and curriculum is positive guidance. At MMA , we utilize the highly acclaimed and effective behavioral model, “Conscious Discipline” in our school.

This method transforms daily conflicts into opportunities to teach critical life skills to children. Children are taught the importance of emotional awareness, self-regulation, respect, and treating others with care. It is our belief that the goal of discipline is to help young children identify their feelings and gain inner self-control, so that they learn and become aware of what is and what isn’t acceptable behavior. For a brief introduction to Conscious Discipline, [please click here](#).

In addition, the rules listed below are intended for the safety of all children attending MMA :

1. Children will learn to respect the rights and feelings of others.
2. Children will learn to protect and respect school property.
3. Children will leave classrooms only when accompanied by an authorized adult.
4. Children may not engage in any activities that are harmful to themselves or others.

Teachers will enforce these rules consistently using positive techniques of guidance, redirection, plus anticipation and elimination of potential problems. When a quiet word from the teacher or diversion to another activity does not adequately modify or correct unacceptable behavior, a break, such as a short time away from the group, is used. Children are never left alone, and physical or verbal abuse from anyone is not tolerated.

## **Termination**

Occasionally, we may find that our program does not fit the needs of all children, and behaviors may develop that exceed our professional expertise. In such cases, we will meet with the parents and consider each situation on an individual basis. On rare occasions, we may find it necessary to recommend a child’s removal from the program. This would happen only after several consultations with the parents. Termination is rare, but can occur for any reason listed below:

1. Failure to pay tuition or consistently late with tuition
2. Refusal to cooperate with school policy by parent or child
3. Child is disruptive to the point of being a detriment to other children
4. Any problem that has been discussed with the MMA Executive Administration Team and continues to work against the good of the school, the child, or the other children.

## **Transportation**

MMA provides no transportation. In the event of a field trip, parents will be notified and written permission slips will be required for the child to participate. Parents will then provide, or make arrangements for, the child's transportation to the event.

## **Health Policies**

### ***Sun & Water Safety Policy***

MMA follows the Arizona Department of Health Services guidelines on Sun, Heat, & Water Safety procedures. [Click here for the detailed information.](#)

Children do not play outdoors once temperatures reach 100 degrees F or if the air quality is poor. Children are advised to wear hats, protective sunwear, and breathable fabrics during the warm months. Per our Sun Safety waiver, any sunscreens must be provided by the parents and written on the enrollment paperwork. If parents want to add a new sunscreen, it must first be updated on the form in the MMA main office.

During the summer months, children do frequently participate in supervised water activities during operational hours, in compliance with standard water safety guidelines.

### ***Medical Freedoms Philosophy***

MMA honors and upholds the United States Constitution and the democratic system of which this country is so justly proud. As with religion and other personal beliefs, we leave medical decisions in the hands of each individual family. We do not require or prohibit families from taking or using vaccines. Due to privacy law, we do not share the medical status of any family. We respect each family's right to do their own due diligence and choose what is best for their bodies and their children.

### ***Mask Policy***

Under normal circumstances, teachers are not permitted to wear masks in the classroom, due to the emotional and academic impairments that can be caused. If a teacher is not well enough to come to teach without a mask, they will be asked to remain home. Only in extreme circumstances would a teacher be allowed in the classroom with a mask, and only with the approval of Executive Administrators. Students may wear masks if they choose to do so.

All students and faculty are expected and encouraged to maintain high standards of cleanliness and hygiene to keep everyone as healthy as possible.

### ***Medical Records***

Your child's Health Record form must be completed and returned by the first day of school. Arizona state law requires that a special Certificate for Immunization be on file before a child can be admitted to any school. **We are required by law to refuse admission to any**

**child whose Health and Immunization forms are not complete.** The exception to this is the Religious Belief Exemption form for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

### ***Medication***

The Leadership Team of MMA will administer medication on an emergent basis only with prior doctor and parental consent. All medication must be labeled with the child's name and a current prescription date.

### ***Allergies***

If your child suffers from an allergy of any kind, please notify the school in writing via the enrollment paperwork. If an allergy emerges after enrollment, please contact the school to update the paperwork.

### ***Emergency Procedures***

In the event of a medical emergency, 911 will be called immediately. Parents will then be telephoned. If the parents are unavailable, the person listed as the child's emergency contact will be called.

## **Illness and Infectious Diseases**

Please keep your child at home if he or she exhibits any of the symptoms listed below. If a child should develop any of these symptoms during the school day, his or her parents will be contacted and expected to come and pick up their child within one hour of notification. Parents must inform the school Administration if their child has contracted any contagious disease so that the school can notify other parents that their children have been exposed. The school will also make parents aware of any pertinent information provided by the Maricopa County Health Department.

- Nausea or abdominal pain
- Unusual drowsiness or tiredness
- Sore throat, acute cold, or persistent cough
- Red, inflamed, or discharging eyes
- Swollen glands around jaws, ears, or neck
- Suspected impetigo
- Any skin sore oozing of fluid, yellow pus in blisters, or pus which has an odor
- Earache
- Rash
- Fever: Children with an oral temperature over 99°F (100.4°F, rectal) should stay home for 24 hours after their temperature has returned to normal.

- Chicken Pox: Children should stay home 7-10 days or until all pox are scabbed over.
- Strep Throat: Children can return to school after they have been on medication for at least 24 hours.
- Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis): Children can return to school after they have been on medication for at least 24 hours.
- Diarrhea or Vomiting: Children may return to school when symptoms have not appeared for 24 hours.
- Lice: Children may not return to school until treatment is complete and all nits are removed.

### ***COVID-19 Policy***

*For the health and safety of the children and staff at MMA, our facility will follow the following guidelines:*

- Laboratory positive COVID-19 cases within the immediate family should be immediately reported to the school.
- Team members and children should be excluded from the childcare facility if ill.
- If a team member or children has tested positive for COVID-19, they should remain under home isolation precautions for 5 days from specimen collection and until 24 hours after fever is gone and symptoms of acute infection resolve, whichever is longer.
- If staff or children have fever with cough or shortness of breath and have tested negative for COVID-19, they should stay home away from others until 24 hours after fever is gone and symptoms of acute infection resolve.
- If staff or children have fever with cough or shortness of breath and have not been tested for COVID-19, they should stay home away from others until 24 hours after fever is gone and symptoms of acute infection resolve.
- If staff or children have other non-compatible symptoms and have not been tested for COVID-19, they should stay home until 24 hours after all symptoms are gone without the use of medicine.
- Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

## **Special Needs**

### ***SMART Support***

MMA ELC is served by a program called SMART Support. This program provides mental health consultation, training, and resources for ADHS (Arizona Department of Health Services) licensed child care centers to provide greater opportunities for all children five and under in Arizona to grow up ready to succeed.

Funded by an AZ State Initiative called *First things First*, SMART Support primarily works with our teachers, coaching and collaborating with them in a professional development capacity. Their goal is to work with staff to enhance communication skills and discuss solutions for challenging behaviors. You may see the consultant in the classroom or with the children throughout the day, and you can always ask to set up a time to meet confidentially with the consultant. Any individual work with your child will only take place with your knowledge and specific consent.

The goal of SMART Support is to support the social and emotional needs of young children so that they can thrive in their current environment. These goals are met by implementing classroom strategies, training, and resources or referrals for specific children or situations. We believe that our involvement with this valuable program will assist us in our mission to support the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of your child.

## **Toys and Pets from Home**

**Please do not allow your child to bring toys from home unless requested by the EduCare Provider (i.e. Show and Tell).** Toys from home are a distraction to the learning process and are often fragile, unable to be shared, and can be lost or broken. The school will provide developmentally appropriate educational materials and toys.

Pets can be an integral part of a child's learning to share and to care. However, for practical, safety, insurance, and health considerations, pets may not be brought to school without the permission of the Executive Administration Team.

## **Breakfast/Snacks/Lunch**

### ***General Food Philosophy***

MMA provides all meals and snacks throughout the day, which are included in the tuition. All of our food is prepared from scratch using fresh ingredients daily. We do not use processed chemicals (found in most store-bought foods), and we use organic ingredients whenever possible.

Please do not bring in outside foods unless there is a medical reason with a note from your doctor, ie allergies or severe food sensitivities. One of the main goals of our food program is exposing children to a wide variety of diverse foods for lifelong, well-balanced health. Unfortunately, having a few students with home lunches in the room detracts from the other children's excitement and willingness to explore the new foods provided.

Research shows that it often takes up to 8 attempts of exposure to a new food for a child's taste buds to acclimate. Our Cuisine Team and Educators work hard to lovingly make new foods fun and adventurous for children while still offering plain and familiar foods as options to help their palette grow. If you *do* need to bring in outside foods with a doctor's note, please

adhere to the outside food guidelines as listed in the [Special Meals from Home](#) section below.

## ***Infant (Pioneers) / Toddler (Innovators) Programs***

### **Baby Formula**

MMA supplies the highest quality of plant-based, organic, non-soy formulas available on the market. At the beginning of each month, formula-eaters will be sent home with cans of formula. If you prefer a different type of formula for your child, you are welcome to use it. In order to ensure proper nutrient provisions to your child's individual needs, you will be required to pre-mix the bottles and send them to school ready for consumption. Individual compartments in our classroom fridge will be labeled with your child's name for bottle storage. These bottles will be removed from the fridge and safely heated to room temperature at feeding time. All feeding times and quantities will be logged for your records. To ensure highest levels of cleanliness and sanitation, used bottles will be sent home at the end of each day to be washed and sent back to school for fresh use.

### **Expressed Milk**

MMA welcomes your use of breast milk with your baby! If you are using breast milk, you will need to send it to school in pre-made bottles, with enough bottles to last throughout your child's school day. Individual compartments in our classroom fridge will be labeled with your child's name for bottle storage. These bottles will be removed from the fridge and safely heated to room temperature at feeding time. All feeding times and quantities will be logged for your records. To ensure highest levels of cleanliness and sanitation, used bottles will be sent home at the end of each day to be washed and sent back to school for fresh use.

### **Solid Foods**

As your child transitions to solid foods, we work very hard to provide the highest quality of nutrient-dense foods, prepared and offered in age- and developmentally-appropriate stages. Our certified in-house chef works to prepare scrumptious, kid-friendly foods that encourage children to explore the world of solid foods and set them up for healthy eating patterns for life. The school menu will be provided weekly, and we will work with each family individually to ensure happy, healthy, wholesome mealtime experiences for each child.

MMA follows the Baby-Led Weaning approach to transitioning Infants and Toddlers to solid foods. For more information on BLW, [please click here](#).

## ***Preschool, Kindergarten, & First Grade Programs***

Meal and snack time is a special time for all of us to enjoy together at the MMA family table. Starting in the Preschool (Visionaries) Program, we feature family style meals where the children learn table manners, self-regulation, social emotional development, and healthy relationships with food. As they progress through the older programs, they begin to contribute and participate in more in-depth ways.

### ***Special Meals from Home***

Occasionally throughout the year, MMA may host or participate in events that allow or require children to bring their own food. MMA fosters awareness of our planet and the need

for children to take care of it. Therefore, it is important that when children bring their own food, they reflect this value in the meals they bring with them.

We ask that you follow our guidelines when preparing special meals.

### **Food/Drink Guidelines:**

- Kosher Parve
- Preferably no meat or dairy products
- No disposable water bottles
- No candy or artificial food dyes
- No soda
- No Lunchables
- Meals should be healthy and balanced
  - Homemade sandwiches, pasta, quinoa, etc.
  - Lots of fruits & vegetables
  - Minimal sweets

### **Packaging Guidelines:**

- Pack lunch in a reusable sack or lunchbox
- Pack snacks in reusable containers
- Send drinks in a reusable metal or BPA-free bottle
- Reusable thermos/containers are allowed
- Include eating utensils

## **Celebrations**

### ***Birthday Celebrations***

Birthdays are special, children naturally want to celebrate their special day, and we want to make sure that happens! Please talk with the Executive Administration to coordinate the plans in advance. At MMA, we have special birthday celebration customs, and we would love you to join us on your child's birthday.

### ***Patriotic Days***

Jewish and American patriotic days will be celebrated if they fall on a scheduled school day.

### ***Vacation, Holidays, & No School Days***

Menachem Mendel Academy is closed in observance of the Jewish Holidays, including major holidays in which work is forbidden. Adequate vacation time has been scheduled around the holidays to ensure MMA Students along with the MMA Leadership Team can enjoy quality time with their families. We do offer optional attendance camps during Chol haMoed and other minor Jewish festivals.

Please see the [MMA School Calendar](#) for more information about vacation, holidays, and other 'no school' days.

### ***EduCare Professional Development Days***

We believe that our students deserve the best! Early learning education is as much a learning experience for our teachers as it is for our wonderful students.

It matters to have teachers with a love of learning. During the school year at MMA, we set aside special days for our teachers to step outside their classrooms, plan and work together with other educators to focus on their own learning through self-reflection, collaboration, professional development, growth, and the knowledge of how to assess themselves as learners. Our goal is to create a culture of passionate, lifelong and inspiring educators in our professional learning community. Research says that if the teachers are excited about learning, our students will follow. It is a win-win for all!

During these Professional Development days, school will be closed. We provide our teachers and families with the school calendar upon enrollment for students, so we ask that you carefully check the calendar for the PD schedule and plan early for these closure dates. PD Days will give our teachers and the leadership team the much needed time and opportunity to reflect on our students' learning needs, our professional practice, and our current and future capacity to create developmentally appropriate project-based learning curriculum. Our teachers are expected to return to their classrooms rejuvenated, more informed, and excited to implement newly learned skills and deliver instruction in a fun and engaging fashion that our children will daily look forward to and love!

**[For more information, please read “Why Ongoing Professional Development for Teachers is Critical and Important” located at the end of this handbook.](#)**

## **Safety**

A school Crisis Plan booklet has been assembled and is practiced by the staff in order to facilitate the planning and implementation of school emergency procedures. The booklet is available in the office, and all parents are encouraged to read it and to become familiar with its policies and procedures. Fire drills are performed monthly so children will know what to do in case of an emergency.

## **Pesticides**

MMA parents will be notified 48-hours in advance of pesticides being applied in the building. A notice with written information about the pesticide applications will be posted on the front

entrance licensing board and posted in each activity area on the parent board. All pesticide information is on site and made available to parents in the director's office.

## **Questions, Comments, Concerns**

If, at any time, you have questions, suggestions, or concerns about your child, EduCare Provider, Administrative Team, or anything else regarding the program, we encourage you to speak directly to the person involved.

MMA is licensed and inspected by the Arizona Department of Health Services (AZDHS). Inspection reports are available upon request from the Executive Administrative Team . This facility is regulated by AZDHS Office, Division of Licensing Services,

150 N. 18<sup>th</sup> Ave., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602.364.2539 or online at <http://www.hs.state.az.us/als>. This facility carries liability insurance as required by AZDHS.

**We are thrilled to partner with you in creating an outstanding educational experience for your children as part of our MMA School Family.**

## **Senior Executive Team**

### **Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer**

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Mrs. Chaya Mushka Ben-Shabat | [chaya@mmafamilly.org](mailto:chaya@mmafamilly.org)

### **Co-Founder, Chief Operating Officer & Chief Financial Officer**

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Mr. Mordechai Ben-Shabat | [moty@mmafamilly.org](mailto:moty@mmafamilly.org)

### **Executive Director**

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Ms. Theresa Flynn | [theresa@mmafamilly.org](mailto:theresa@mmafamilly.org)

### **Director of Curriculum and Leadership Development**

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Ms. Vicky Perez | [vicky@mmafamilly.org](mailto:vicky@mmafamilly.org)

## **Connect with Us!**

General School Email Address: [info@mmafamilly.org](mailto:info@mmafamilly.org)

[www.facebook.com/MenachemMendelAcademy](http://www.facebook.com/MenachemMendelAcademy)

[www.instagram.com/menachem\\_mendel\\_academy](http://www.instagram.com/menachem_mendel_academy)

## Why is Ongoing Professional Development for MMA Educators So Critical and Important?

**Because our students deserve the BEST!** Great teachers help create great students. In fact, research shows that an inspiring and informed teacher is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement, so it is critical to pay close attention to how we train and support both our new and experienced educators at MMA.

It is so critical for young and experienced teachers to have ongoing and regular opportunities to learn from each other and build a strong Professional Learning Community. Ongoing professional development keeps teachers up-to-date on new research on how children learn, emerging technology tools for the classroom, reflection, collaboration, new curriculum resources, and more. The best professional development is ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture. *Edutopia March 16, 2008*

### Five Reasons why MMA Has Ongoing Professional Development for Our Educators

Professional development for educators is an indispensable process without which schools cannot hope to prepare our young people for local and global citizenship and a productive future.

- **HELP improve student outcomes:** Teachers who constantly seek and attend ongoing professional development with their peers stay on top of the latest changes and findings and tend to be more successful and inspirational not only in the classroom, but to the entire professional learning community as well. Our world is constantly evolving, and our teaching methods should too, to meet the needs and learning styles of our students.
- **DEMONSTRATE commitment to the profession:** Learning new ways to facilitate learning and the most current skills needed for teachers to address the needs of the students to succeed demonstrates dedication and commitment as an educator. Consistently attending ongoing professional development and collaboration demonstrates a growth mindset!
- **IMPROVE digital literacy and technology:** Understanding and effectively implementing technology in the classroom is a very crucial skill in today's world. While there are countless digital tools and resources available to teachers for the early learners, our educators must first build a solid understanding of how they function to choose the best option to integrate them into our project-based learning curriculum and daily learning activities.
- **REFRESH and update delivery of instruction:** Ongoing professional development offers time for reflection and paves the way for innovative teaching strategies that are tailored or customized to the needs of our individual learners at MMA. Even if our teachers spend time relearning previous teaching strategies, they may likely discover a new perspective, which may only be able to be discovered after having gained some experience.
- **GAIN key professional insights:** Professional development plans and programs allow teachers to learn about a new topic, perhaps outside the realm of their known subject area. Expanding their knowledge will allow them to further inquire, research, and connect with more students, fellow educators, and the entire

learning community to provide access and develop new insights for a wealth of impactful information to increase student outcomes.

**Menachem Mendel Academy**  
**Early Learning Center | Early Primary**  
**Family Handbook**  
**Acknowledgement & Understanding Form**

I have read the MMA Early Learning Center | Early Primary Family Handbook *in its entirety*, and I understand and agree to abide by the policies and procedures described therein.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_