

# **Gan Ami Framework for Early Education**



**Problem Solving Skills** 

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#### Gan Ami at Temple Beth Ami

#### Framework for Early Education

#### "The most important and decisive age in education is early childhood" - Yesodot ha Chinuch

At Gan Ami, children acquire skills in six areas of development which together allow them to establish the endurance, executive functioning and play abilities necessary for future academic and social success.

**Endurance:** The ability to do everything longer, including sitting, attending, writing, conversing and focusing.

**Executive Functioning:** The combination of effortful self-control, working memory, and flexible thinking that allows for organization, planning and the synthesis of information and ideas.

**Play:** The creativity and team-work required to learn with others, expand ideas, develop new concepts, and use one's body and mind to investigate the world.

#### "Teach Each Child According to His Way" - Proverbs 22:6

Throughout their years at Gan Ami, each child progresses along their own developmental paths in the areas of Communication, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills, Problem-Solving, Personal and Social Development. For each of these developmental areas, we expect there to be variation among the children as well as within each individual child. At Gan Ami, we know that every child develops at their own pace, and teachers support each child's path toward success.

#### "What is learned in early childhood is absorbed in the blood" - Avot de Rabbi Natan

The following pages illustrate the skills that children are working to attain in each area of development during their time at Gan Ami. Following are our overarching goals for each age group:

**Bet children** work to separate successfully from caregivers, adapt to classroom routines and expectations, and become independent learners.

**Gimel children** work to join with others in play, navigate through challenges, and interact as a good friend and helpful teammate.

**Dalet children** prepare for future academic, intellectual and social pursuits by becoming more self-sufficient, confident and able to manage multi-faceted environments.

#### "All your children shall be students of Adonai" - Isaiah 54:13

At Gan Ami, learning takes place within a joyful Jewish environment. Children engage with our fun, diverse culture and rich religion which encourages us to explore our faith, treat others with honor and respect, and make the world a better place for all. Children are introduced to the values and practices of Reform Judaism.

## **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Intentionally exchange verbal and nonverbal information, both as a sender and as a receiver.

Dalets

Gimels

"I'm part of a big world."

Bets

"It's all about me."

Know names of self and others in various settings

Follow directions with visual cues

State basic needs

Speak in multi-word phrases and/or simple sentences

Answer simple "wh" questions

Wait for a turn to participate

**Build vocabulary** 

"I'm part of a group."

Use a person's name to connect with them

Follow 2-3 step directions

Convey needs and wants in sentences or by asking questions

Speak in compound sentences and begin to participate in reciprocal conversations

Ask and answer "wh" questions

Attend to one person or thing at a time in a group setting

Apply and interpret pragmatic (social) language

See oneself as a member of multiple groups

Follow multi-step directions independently

Advocate for oneself

Engage in reciprocal conversations using complex sentences

Ask and answer abstract and open-ended questions

Listen actively and engage in group plans

Integrate language for literacy and mathematical concepts

## **GROSS MOTOR SKILLS**

Gain the agility and large-muscle control needed to maneuver around spaces with myriad physical obstacles and challenges.

Dalets

Gimels

"I can use my body to explore the world."

Bets

"I can stay upright and control my body."

Catch and throw a ball with both hands

Walk on tip toes, jump on 2 feet

Walk upstairs, holding the railing, not consistently alternating feet

Peddle a tricycle/bike

Run increasing distances with coordinated upper and lower body movements

"My body can be part of a group."

Catch and throw a small ball with one or both hands

Hop on alternating feet

Climb up and down the stairs, holding the railing, and alternating feet

Peddle and steer a tricycle/bike

Walk over varied surfaces without falling while holding hands at waist or holding an object with both hands

Catch, throw, and bounce a ball in preparation to play team ball sports

Do a somersault, skip, and trot

Climb up and down playground ladders independently

Pedal and steer a tricycle/bike around obstacles

Navigate an obstacle course while jumping over objects and making sharp turns; easily start and stop movements

## **FINE MOTOR SKILLS**

Use fingers and hands to hold and manipulate tools, utensils and small objects.

Dalets

Bets

"I use my hands to explore."

Scribble and fill a page with marks, including lines

Independently turn one page at a time in a book

Use scissors with assistance to snip paper

Complete puzzles using direct placement of pieces into specific holes

Hold utensils/crayons with whole hand (fisted grasp) and often changing grasps

Lace with large beads on a stiff string

"I use my hands to create."

Make lines and circles on paper with intent to represent an object

Attach large linking blocks

Use scissors with mild assistance to cut across the length of a paper

Complete puzzles of interlocking pieces using contextual clues to fit in a board

Consistently and independently hold pencils and utensils, evolving from a fisted grasp to a 3-finger grasp

Lace with small beads using flexible string

"I use my hands to be independent and engaged."

Form basic shapes, shapes that intersect and letters, and create representational art with comfort

Manipulate small objects and connect them to create representations

Use scissors independently with correct placement of hands to cut lines and shapes

Complete 24-48 piece complex puzzles without a board

Consistently use a 3-finger grasp with preferred/dominant hand

Interlace string on a lacing card

## PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

Identify and implement successful solutions to common interpersonal conflicts and physical challenges.

Dalets

Bets

"I am aware that there is a problem."

Recognize a problem and ask a teacher for help to solve it

Find simple solutions to basic physical obstacles

Agree to experience the unfamiliar when offered opportunities by a teacher

Know that there could be multiple solutions to problems

"I can describe a problem."

Practice resolving interpersonal conflicts with verbal communication

Choose and implement a solution given options to difficult challenges

Ask a teacher to try something new or different

Recognize and describe possible effective strategies for solving problems

"I can try to solve a problem."

Propose alternative solutions to interpersonal and physical problems

Predict cause and effect, manage unexpected changes, resolve basic conflicts or challenges

Initiate healthy experimentation or risk-taking

Reflect on the process and outcomes of problem solving and integrate knowledge for future use

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

Develop self-awareness and the ability to care for oneself regarding dressing, eating, cleaning, and toileting.

Dalets

Gimels

"I can take care of myself in school."

Bets
"I know me."

Recognize myself in the mirror, state name, and label body parts

Use a cup for drinking and a utensil for eating with minimal spilling

Recognize my own belongings

Be aware of and participate in basic hygiene routines

"I know what to do to take care of myself."

Name basic identifying characteristics of myself, and recognize several others

Open lunch boxes and packages with assistance, practice pouring, and eat independently

Dress and undress without fasteners

Initiate basic hygiene routines

List several characteristics of my self-identity

Independently serve and pour, eat, and clean up my own snacks and lunch

Dress and undress myself

Independently carry out basic hygiene routines

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

Make and keep friends, share classroom materials, show empathy and work as a team.

Dalets

Gimels

"My classmates are my friends."

Participate in parallel play (do a similar activity as a neighboring peer)

Role play a familiar personal reality

Take turns with peers when guided by a teacher

Follow teachers' directions for expected behaviors in school

Recognize the need for personal space and create space with adult guidance

Acknowledge and label others' emotions

"The person I'm playing with now is my friend."

Participate in associative play (interact with a neighboring peer using the same materials)

Imitate real and common fictional scenes

Take turns with peers independently, and share when guided by a teacher

Follow peers' modeling and teachers' guidance for expected behaviors in school

Maintain appropriate personal space whether sitting, standing, or moving

Connect an emotion (of self or other) to a possible cause

"I can make and keep friends, and work in a team with everyone."

Participate in collaborative play (share ideas and materials with negotiated rules and goals)

Act out complex scenarios, and figure out the lines between reality and fantasy

Share classroom materials to accomplish mutual goals

Understand and integrate behavioral expectations and how they vary by situation

Accept another person's perspective, especially when it's different from one's own

Self-regulate a range of emotions, and show empathy toward others' feelings



Gan Ami teachers are the best! Their knowledge of child development , understanding of the educational process, and openness to new ideas is exceptional. Their love of young children and passion for creating community exceeds everyone's dreams. And as we say at Gan Ami, "No one ever leaves!" We have incredibly dedicated educators who know what they're doing and how to do it. We give children what they need, and children leave Gan Ami prepared for the next steps in education and in life.

But none of this was ever put in writing. For many reasons, including new and increasing demands on young children and families, the time had clearly come to articulate our goals for Gan Ami students. We needed to express our priorities and be held accountable for our teaching. Creating such a written document would have to be a team effort and it would take a lot of time. We would pull from years of engrained experience, combine it with the most recent research on early education, and commit it to paper.

Five staff members accepted the challenge and worked diligently for six months to make this happen. The first step was to decide on a structure, then tackle each area of development, identifying the skills that children work to build as they progress through their years at Gan Ami. Then, we revisited, edited, and reflected on our ideas. We asked other staff members and parents for input and made revisions based on their feedback. We didn't stop until we were sure that we had covered all key aspects of early childhood Jewish education at Gan Ami and we had expressed our goals clearly in words and conveyed our pedagogical beliefs effectively in images.

We presented this final work to the full Gan Ami staff in June 2018, to Gan Ami parents in Summer 2018, and to the Temple Board of Directors in Fall 2018.

Thank you for your attention to Gan Ami Framework for Early Education.

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