

# This Is How A Preschool Should Be

By Brooke Amo

I take a deep breath and inhale. Immediately my senses are overwhelmed with pleasure. The smell of finger paint, fresh baked cookies, and play dough fill the air. In the hallways, the sound of cheerful acoustics on the guitar and children gleefully singing can be heard. The vision of child painted creations blanket the walls. gain, I retreat to my senses as I move the halls and quietly decide that this is what a preschool should be like.



Brooke Amo with daughter Nora.

children. I quickly removed my educator hat and switched into mommy hat. I sighed in relief and comfort knowing my daughter will be in a preschool that can give her so many opportunities. I was so excited that my family is now a part of the CJP.

In Hillary Clinton's book, *It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us*, she discusses her vision for developing well balanced children. She talks about the importance of community and the impact of individuals and groups outside the family have on a child's development. She believes in a more communal approach along with strong positive role models can help in the successful development of children. Her philosophy came to mind as I was introduced to Shalom Park. A good preschool will go beyond letting you in, it will encourage you to be a part of a community. It



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will encourage reaching out, giving back, and creating positive relationships with each other. The CJP is much more than a preschool, it is a piece of an entire concept that facilitates the idea "these are our children."

You might ask what makes a good preschool? I assure you if you ask that question to five different people you will receive five different answers. Qualified teachers? Small class sizes? The curriculum? How many "stars" you have? Well, it depends on your personal priorities and what aspirations you have for your

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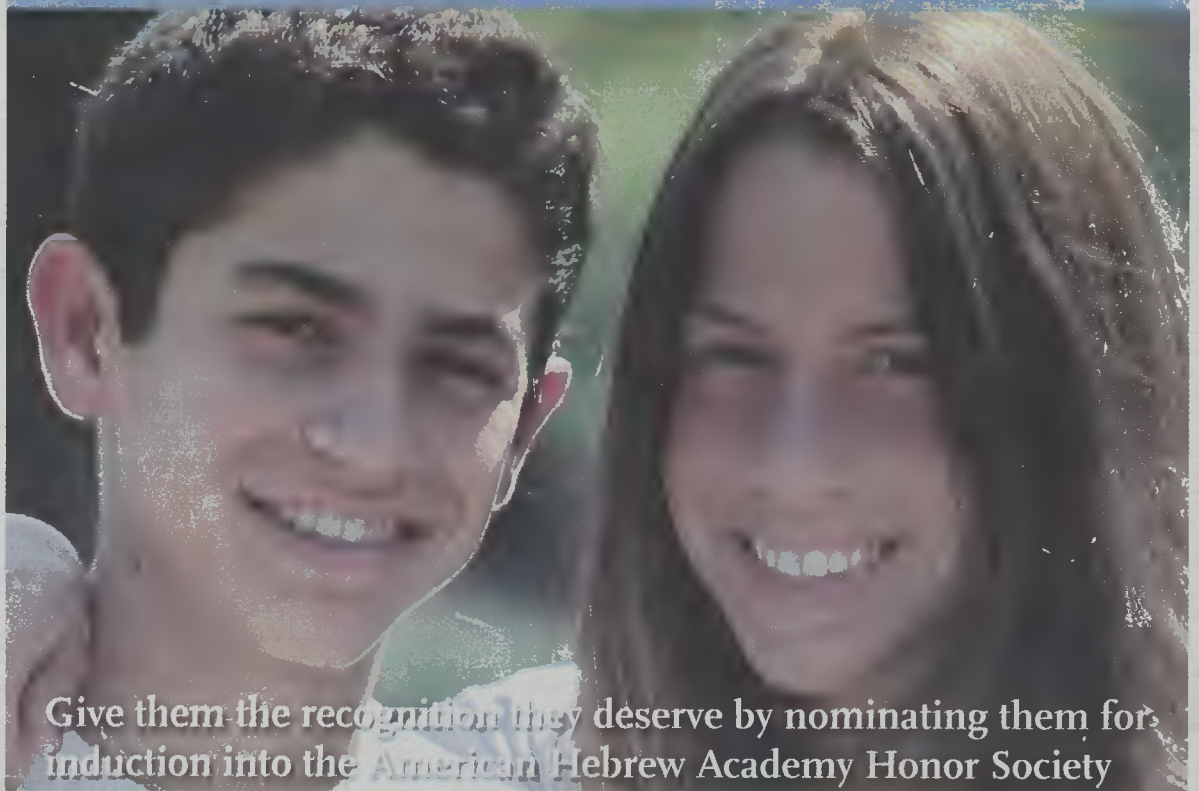
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As I moved steadily through the halls, I steal glimpses into a classroom. I saw a princess pouring tea, a knight brandishing his sword, engineers diligently building the tallest and sturdiest buildings, and artists eagerly coating their canvas with their big dripping paintbrushes. Captivated in what the children were doing, I was drawn deeper into the classroom. I was warmly greeted by the teacher and the children who were extremely excited to share what they were doing. I stayed and watched the morning develop. As the teacher effectively transitioned the children into circle time, I noticed the looks on the faces of the children. Just by observing, I could tell they felt happy, secure, and excited about learning and being at school.

Students gathered to learn about Rosh Hashanah. As veterans of the school (four year olds), they talked about apples and honey, saying sorry, and the earth's birthday with confidence. As the teacher gathered the previous knowledge of the children, her wheels upstairs began to roll. She laid out various materials to engage the children and actively incorporate all of their intelligences. She was determined to teach the concept at hand. After an engaging lesson, she sent the children to explore and initiate learning in centers. The children carefully chose designed and differentiated centers that reinforced the concept taught. This learning environment was equally as nurturing as it was stimulating. As a newbie I wondered could this education be happening throughout the entire building? Are all the teachers this strong, knowledgeable, prepared, caring? Does every classroom have endless amounts of materials to maximize each learning experiences? Throughout the school, the same standards were evident. I wandered room to room astonished by the level of teaching and in awe of the building and resources available to the teachers and more importantly, the

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