



Gurim

An experiential,
child-centered
Junior Kindergarten



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Gurim (Cubs) is a school-based, early childhood program that balances academics and play in a developmentally appropriate setting.

The program focuses on real world experiences, structured fun, learning through play and song, and building community. The Gurim classroom promotes children's learning in all developmental domains, with a focus on the following elements:

- **Cognitive Development** – thinking, problem solving, exploration, discovery, creative and imaginative activities
- **Communication Development** – oral/spoken language, listening, multiple language development, non-verbal communication, technology use, written language and comprehension
- **Physical Development** – large and small muscle skills, perception and sensory awareness
- **Social and Emotional Development** – awareness of others and building relationships, social competence, self-awareness, and self-control
- **Ethical/moral development/Middot** – empathy, responsibility, respect, self-regulation, and decision making.

Gurim is for children who are age-appropriate for kindergarten but can benefit from an additional year of kindergarten readiness. Children who turn 5 in the Fall through early Spring are also eligible.

“We were looking for a program that was more academically enriching, but had a social-emotional focus and a nurturing environment for our two older children, both with Fall birthdays. Everything about the School spoke to us. Gurim students have access to an incredible number of resources that just don't exist in a traditional preschool environment--from participating in a division-wide musical, to being a part of Literacy Night, to working collaboratively during STEM Challenge Day, and learning a second language in an immersive environment. Both Zac and Gabby came out of Gurim with a genuine love of learning, a marked difference in their confidence, and a solid foundation that will serve them for years to come.”

– Amy and Ben Margolis, parents to Zac (Class of 2030, Gurim 2016-2017) and Gabby (Class of 2032, Gurim 2018-2019)

Learning Through Play

Students in the Gurim classroom learn through everyday experiences. This model allows for play-based and relevant learning to take place in a developmentally appropriate environment. Children quickly acquire new skills and develop a deep love of learning and excitement around coming to school each day.

Children are natural explorers, with a tendency to seek out patterns and ask relevant questions. Most importantly, young children are passionate problem-solvers. Our teachers harness this energy to lead students through challenging tasks, allowing them to grow, while providing the children with the necessary support and new skills along the way.

Purposeful play provides opportunities for students to develop the social-emotional vocabulary to express themselves. Through play, students learn how to navigate a variety of social situations in which they learn to build relationships with students of various learning and playing styles.

This type of play can be structured or unstructured; sometimes students engage in imaginative play, where they experiment with new materials and methods, as well as learn how to work cooperatively and explore different roles. Other times, play can be highly structured and academic, while still feeling like a game. For example, students may solve a puzzle with tangrams, create letters and numbers in English and Hebrew with manipulative materials, or build a structure with different shapes and blocks, all to reach a specific learning goal.

This structure of wrapping academic learning into purposeful play teaches our Gurim students how to engage in an academic classroom and prepares them to enter our Kindergarten program.

I like to push into the classroom and promote friendship building and work with children on growing their problem solving skills. When Gurim students come to us, their ability to navigate social situations and manage challenges are in the early development stages. Through Guidance support, we are able to facilitate the growth of these skills and strategies that will help them not only in school, but in all areas of their lives.

– Gayle Elster, Guidance Support Specialist

Highlights

LANGUAGE ARTS: Gurim students are immersed in language through a wide range of authentic and active learning experiences and imaginative play. They create puppet shows, build block structures, invent games, and explore nature. Children listen to stories and poems read aloud every day, and they begin to tell, dictate, and write their own stories. They learn to listen thoughtfully, and share ideas, questions, and information during group discussions. Gurim students will begin to organize ideas and to present events and information sequentially. Fluent language, a burgeoning vocabulary, and thoughtful listening build the foundation for reading and writing.

HEBREW: The children acquire the Hebrew language skills in an immersive setting for activities of daily living, such as introducing themselves, days of the week, weather, body parts, family members, types of food and clothing, and numbers. This research-based Proficiency Approach promotes oral language through the use of creative tools such as puppets, props, music, pictures, and authentic songs and books from Israel. Students are learning Hebrew, seeing it, hearing it, and using it every day in every subject, directly (e.g., prayer, song, books) and indirectly (e.g., praise, labels on classroom items).

MATHEMATICS: Teaching and learning in this area is focused on 1) Numbers and Operations 2) Geometry 3) Measurement. Gurim students will develop an understanding of whole numbers, including concepts of correspondence, counting, cardinality, and comparison. They will examine shapes and describe them in their own words, and identify measurable attributes such as length and weight. Learning Without Tears Pre-K Numbers and Math program serves as the primary Gurim Math curriculum.

STEM: Students have dedicated time and space for the exploration of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). They observe, wonder, question, theorize, and then test and modify their ideas. Our iLab promotes integrated exploration, and the Science Specialist leads weekly lessons. Curricular integration using the Next Generation Science Standards STEM Cross Cutting Concepts is a school-wide emphasis and is introduced in Gurim. Gurim students will explore Patterns, Cause and Effect, and Scale, Proportion, and Quantity.



Gurim helps build an exceptional foundation. They teach handwriting, math, Hebrew language, *t'filah* and more, in a classroom community that is joyous, supportive, inclusive, and confidence building. Shai thrived in Gurim, learning lifelong lessons of independence, friendship, and *menschlichkeit*.

– Mia and Lee Blecher, parents of Dara (Class of 2026) and Shai (Class of 2032, Gurim 2018-2019)

JUDAIC STUDIES: There is an immense amount of joy and pride around learning about the *Haggim* (Jewish Festivals), Shabbat, *T'filah*/Prayer, and Torah. Gurim students will develop a connection to Shabbat and Jewish festivals by exploring and experiencing them in class through prayer, song, cooking, and crafts. They will build a *t'filah* routine and learn blessings for holiday and food, discuss the values taught in Torah stories, and come to understand the centrality of Israel in Judaism as we associate it with events, prayer, language, the Bible, and days of celebration.



A Unique Program

What Sets Gurim Apart from a Traditional Pre-Kindergarten?

Gurim Junior Kindergarten is a one-of-a-kind program. Students are nurtured in a developmentally-appropriate, values-rich environment, while benefitting from a larger school.

SPECIALS

Gurim students engage in specials with dedicated instructors who are experts in their field.

- ART – twice every six days
- PHYSICAL EDUCATION – three times every six days
- SCIENCE LAB – twice every six days
- LIBRARY – once every six days
- JEWISH MUSIC AND *T'FILAH* – three times every six days

EMPHASIS ON VALUES AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social and emotional development includes children's experience, expression, and management of emotions; pro-social behaviors; classroom behaviors (e.g., paying attention); self-confidence; and their ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others. Given the opportunity to make choices concerning their activities, Gurim students will acquire knowledge, skills, and the ability to solve problems. We practice these skills daily through Jewish values/*Middot* lessons, Responsive Classroom, and through play.

All Gurim families (both students and parents) have access to a guidance counselor. This guidance counselor not only participates in direct community and friendship building with students in the classroom, but can also work one-on-one with students and their parents to discuss and work through challenges.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH OLDER STUDENTS

Gurim students are excited to interact with older students. CESJDS facilitates these relationships with both patrols and reading/STEM buddies. 5th grade safety patrols lead students to carpool and buses. Every Gurim student is paired with a 4th or 5th grade student who reads with them at designated points throughout the year, and engages in STEM and other projects. Some 5th grade students even spend their lunch period playing with Gurim students in the classroom.



A Day in the Life

The CESJDS school day starts at 8:15 AM and concludes at 3:30 PM. Each day is balanced with large group, small group, and individual learning; indoor and outdoor time; active and reflective time; and student-directed and teacher-directed lessons.



MORNING

8:00 - 8:30	Arrival and Structured Play
8:30 - 9:00	Morning Meeting
9:00 - 9:15	<i>T'filah</i>
9:15 - 9:45	Specials
9:45 - 10:15	Snack and Free Play (Inside or Outside)
10:15 - 10:45	Reading/Writing/Social Studies/Special
10:45 - 11:30	Math/Reading/Hebrew
11:45 - 12:15	Recess



AFTERNOON

12:15 - 12:45	Lunch
12:45 - 1:15	Centers
1:15 - 2:00	Judaic Studies
2:00 - 2:30	Rest Time
2:30 - 3:00	Community Social Time/Yoga/Special
3:00 - 3:30	Snack and Dismissal

AFTER SCHOOL

After-school coverage is provided at CESJDS through the Wonders extended day program. Students continuing home at 3:30 via carpool or bus will be escorted to their location by a 5th Grade patrol.



Hebrew in Gurim is immersive from day one. I'm not just teaching units, I am teaching students how to use the language through song, dance, and body language. All of the instructions are in Hebrew—including when we eat lunch or move from the classroom to specials. The kids are not sitting down and learning numbers and writing. It's challenging and fun, and they are so proud of themselves for adapting to a second language. There's no pressure here.

—Sivan Krowitz, Gurim General Studies Teacher



Setting Your Child Up for Kindergarten and Beyond

First introduced at CESJDS in 2016, the Gurim Junior Kindergarten program has prepared students not only for academic learning in Kindergarten and beyond, but also how to thrive as a student in a classroom and as part of a community. Students acquire pre-literacy and math reasoning skills, as well as the ability to engage positively with their peers.

There is a seamless transition from Gurim into Kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers are familiar with Gurim students, as the two grades share a hallway, as well as many speakers and activities together. Kindergarten students who have attended Gurim feel a sense of pride and responsibility to help their new classmates acclimate to the school.

“We are blown away by the incredible caring and knowledgeable teachers, the innovative curriculum and just how much our son has learned so far. One of the most important criteria to us when we were choosing a school was that it represented and exemplified the values we strive to teach at home. JDS is this and more.”

– Rene and Charl Marais, parents to Benjamin
(Class of 2032, Gurim 2018-2019)



Take the first step into the CESJDS community!



www.cesjds.org



Contact the Lower School
Admission team at 301.692.4870
or admission@cesjds.org to
schedule a tour and meeting.