

# MOMMY & ME

## Hillel Yeshiva's Early Learning Center Offers an Innovative, Creative Program

*Jennifer Aboudi*

**O**n the first day of Mommy & Me, I had no idea what to expect, but within minutes I knew I had found a second home for my children. We walked through the hallways of Hillel Yeshiva's Early Learning Center and saw so many cheerful classrooms filled with happy kids, smiling teachers and countless activities.

When we arrived at the Mommy & Me classroom, we entered a bright, open space filled with stimulating stations to meet all developmental levels. There were areas for the children to explore with their basic motor skills, tables with arts and crafts to help develop fine motor skills, play areas with an ample variety of toys to foster imagination, and quiet areas with books to stimulate reading.

The music program was so much fun that it inspired the children and parents to sing along, and interact with the large variety of instruments. We still love to sing the songs we learned in Mommy & Me.

The art projects were aimed at experimentation by exposing the children to new materials. It was nice to see each child getting acquainted with the materials in their own way, and I was so proud to hang all the colorful projects on our walls at home.

Reading time introduced the children to the idea of "circle time." This allowed them to get used to being in a group with other kids and it was also a nice time to sit and bond. The stories focused on the childrens' attention span and



*Elliot Dweck*



*Jackie Gindi and her son, Morris*

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*Norma Shamah*



*Music with Morah Yocheved*



*Morah Yocheved with Camille Mandil and Elliot Dweck*



*Richard Cellar*

encouraged a love of books.

The program is led by Morah Gila Fried, whose patience and kindness were the essential ingredients for a memorable year. Even though the room was packed with busy, excited parents and children, Morah Gila was able to spend time with everyone. She encouraged each child's potential and knew exactly how to bring out each child's strengths.

The social aspect of the program was a wonderful experience for my children. They had a chance to play with children that they already knew and met new children, each of them wonderful and unique.

As a mom, it meant a lot to meet the other mothers and their children. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet the students who will be sharing their future years in Hillel with my kids. The Mommy & Me program helped both my children and me learn that our children's education depends on a partnership between school and family. Most importantly, however, this program taught all of us that the Hillel Early Learning Center is a warm and loving environment. □

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*Jennifer has two Pre-N children attending Hillel Yeshiva and one child enrolled in the Mommy & Me Program.*