

JANE E. ARONSON

Jane recently moved from Connecticut back to her hometown of Newton, MA. She has been in education for over twenty years, managing youth and family programming in both Jewish and secular organizations.

She has a master's degree in Education from Harvard, with a concentration in Alternative Educational Settings. In college, Jane majored in both Child Development and Education, graduating with teaching certification for pre-k to 8th grade. She holds a Massachusetts Preschool Director II certification.

As Director of Education at a synagogue, Sunday School Teacher for K and 1st grade, Camp Director, Preschool Faculty Supervisor, and Preschool Lead Teacher in two temples, Jane brings a significant amount of experience. Her director responsibilities have included program development, enrollment, recruitment, communications, hiring, staff training, curriculum planning, budgeting, and growth. Her most recent positions have been in Greenwich, Connecticut, which is similar to the greater Lexington area in its demand for top notch programming and stellar customer service.

Over the years, the constant, sometimes unpredictable demands of daily operations, children, and families required that Jane be multi-task oriented, quick thinking, and efficient, while always maintaining a calm and professional manner. She has a demonstrated ability to maintain excellent oral and written communications and has developed strong, trusting relationships with families, community organizations, regulatory agencies, and vendors. A love of writing and time as Editor of the *Greenwich Jewish News* has honed her ability to write articles and communicate with the community.

Jane notes that, in regard to being the point of contact for medical conditions and emergencies, her training as a volunteer firefighter has been a benefit.

Statement of Philosophy

As part of her application, Jane provided the search committee with a statement of her educational philosophy:

*One morning when Pharoah awoke in his bed,
There were frogs in his bed, and frogs on his head
Frogs on his nose and frogs on his toes
Frogs here, frogs there
Frogs were jumping everywhere.*

Kids always get excited about the frog song during Passover, and I've been surprised to see that three and four year olds at our temple actually remember it from the year before. Children

love songs and nursery rhymes, and they learn a great deal from them. Action songs help develop gross motor skills, finger songs develop fine motor skills, and counting songs help develop mathematical skills. Songs and rhymes help them increase vocabulary, and also improve their auditory perception as they develop the ability to recognize rhymes and rhythms. Most importantly, children enjoy songs and rhymes that are fun and silly, engaging their understanding of pretend play.

I believe play is central to learning in early childhood, as it helps young children make sense of the world. Play helps them form friendships and learn social skills, such as sharing, cooperation, negotiation, non-verbal communication, listening, and empathy. Children manipulating blocks, art supplies, or other materials continually create and test hypotheses, the basis of scientific discovery. Play creates endless opportunities for creativity, curiosity, and discovery!

My path as an educator has been led by a passion for combining learning and fun. I graduated from college with a major in Child Development, a degree to teach pre-k through 8th grade, and a desire to help run children's programs that combine education with recreation. I followed this passion into Harvard Graduate School of Education, where I created my own Master's Degree concentration in Alternative Educational Settings.

At Harvard, I had the privilege of taking a course with Eleanor Duckworth, a former student of Jean Piaget, who has devoted her career to helping teachers understand and put his theories of intelligence into practice. From her course and writings, I learned the value of allowing children to reinvent knowledge. Her philosophy encourages teachers to talk less and observe more. This allows teachers to select materials for the classroom environment that engage students. For example, a teacher might see two students trying over and over again to build a rounded arch out of blocks. Rather than jumping in to help build it, the teacher might show them a book or some images with examples of real arches. When the children succeed on their own, they are far more likely to remember and apply their knowledge in the future.

Children are unique and diverse, so the materials and choices should be as well. Within the structure of a consistent daily routine, there ought to be new and interesting materials, books, activities, and events that help children engage in intellectual, social, and physical pursuits. These help preschoolers gain the skills, independence, and confidence they will need when they enter kindergarten. After all, don't we want our children to be independent, curious, creative explorers who don't give up easily?

In my experience, the best programs become both a community and a family. That doesn't happen by accident. Each child is unique, and parents begin to feel connected when they see that the school understands and loves their child for who they are, regardless of differences like skin color, religion, or gender.

Parents should be able to come in to observe (unseen by their child if necessary), volunteer, and enjoy special events. Most parents of preschoolers want to get to know their child's

teachers, classmates, and the other parents, so offering special days to enable these relationships helps build community.

I've worked with extremely affluent and educated populations for many years, so I know firsthand that a high standard of care and safety isn't enough. It's just as important to present them with excellent customer service and prompt, professional follow-up to questions or concerns. I never underestimate the importance of warm welcomes and regular emails. As a

director, I've learned that when I send regular communications to parents to keep them in-the-loop, they feel more connected and happier with the program. Written notes from teachers, in person conversations, and all the projects and photos sent home help parents keep up with and celebrate their child's achievements. Who doesn't love seeing projects or hearing fun anecdotes about the class?

I love being with little ones! They are so uninhibited and fun. One of the joys of my life is watching them learn, grow, and laugh!