

Welcome!

Our staff wishes to extend a warm welcome to you and your child. We know, before long, you will feel as excited about our program as we do. It is our aim to provide your child with a warm, happy environment in which he or she will discover a world of excitement and enrichment.

The Gingerbread School curriculum is based on the philosophy that young children learn best in an environment that affords them the opportunity to explore, discover, and enjoy the learning process. Our goal is to enhance the development of readiness skills through an enriched learning environment, promoting family involvement through program activities, and encouraging the development of creativity; all of which helps to build a successful foundation for early learning.

What makes our program successful? It's more than great curriculum, it's the fact that we approach every day with imagination, innovation and, most of all, fun! Studies have found that learning improves when children are engaged in an enjoyable and meaningful activity. That's why our teachers provide a variety of intriguing activities that stimulate early brain development with a focus on creative play. And although it may all look like kids having fun, it's also learning in action! Additionally, we spend a lot of time just listening and talking with the children. This type of positive interaction encourages the development of emotional, language, and social skills and enhances the development of a positive self-esteem.

This handbook is intended to be a guide to answer some of the many questions you may have. Please be assured that it is after much thought that the policies and procedures that you will find on the following pages have been formed. Our intention is to operate the school as smoothly as possible with your child's best interest as our main consideration.

We urge you to take the time to read this handbook and keep it handy for future reference.

Introduction to Preschool

Adjustment to change is a new experience for many preschool age children. There are a few simple steps that we take to help them, and you, adjust during their introduction to school.

Your child will be assigned to a primary teacher who is responsible for your child's care most of the day. This person will also get to know your child personally. They will learn behavior trends, likes and dislikes and so on. Because of staff and children's schedules, other staff members will also be involved in caring for your child during a portion of his/her day.

We suggest that you take time to tour the school with your child and spend some time in the classroom prior to his/her first day of school. Your child will feel more comfortable exploring this new environment if you are present. It is also helpful to arrive early on your child's first day.

We ask that you share with us information concerning your child's preferences and needs. This will help us to facilitate his/her adjustment more quickly.

Adjustment to the preschool environment is important for the parent, also. When you leave your child at school for the first few days you can expect some crying. It is hard, but try not to let this behavior make you feel guilty about leaving. Please establish a morning routine from the time your get up until you wave good-bye in the classroom. This will help your child know what's going to happen and give him/her a feeling of security. Keep good-byes cheerful, positive and with a reassuring, "I will be back." Maintain your positive attitude even through the tears. If you believe in us, your child will too. Please, please, no sneaking out! Parents are welcome to call the school to check on children who are experiencing separation anxiety. It will provide you peace of mind. Please note that we have an open door policy and parents are always welcome to visit.

Registration Information

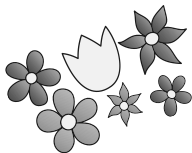
Children must be two years of age at the time of enrollment. Each child must have a completed registration packet on file with all signatures to be accepted into our program. The registration packet includes:

1. Application form
2. Gingerbread form
3. A notarized hospital release form
4. HRS Student Health Exam form (gold form provided by child's doctor)
5. Florida Department of Health Certification of Immunization (blue form provided by child's doctor)
6. Doctor's name and contact information
7. A signed financial agreement
8. Food experience form

The health exam and immunization forms must be kept current while your child is enrolled.

All children will be accepted on a trial two-week probationary period.

Gingerbread School teachers and administrators treat children of all races, religions, family backgrounds, and cultures with equal respect and consideration. Children of both sexes are provided with equal opportunities to take part in all activities. Gingerbread does not discriminate on the basis of any of the above in the administration of educational or admissions policies.



Notification of Changes

It is extremely important that you notify the Director immediately of any changes in home address, employment phone numbers, etc. Emergency phone numbers are critically important. We also ask that any changes at home be communicated so that the staff will be prepared to deal with any changes in behavior that may result.

Required Supplies

The following items must be provided for your child:

Two fitted crib sheets	Diapers & wipes (if needed)
Child sized blanket	Child sized pillow
Two changes of clothes	Tote bag or back pack

Please be sure all items fit in the tote bag or back pack and are labeled with your child's name!

Dress to Play!

Children should be dressed in sturdy, washable clothing which will allow them to play freely and to permit participation in all art and playground activities during a busy (and sometimes messy) day at preschool.



Clothing needs to be easy for your child to get on and off for bathroom independence. Overalls, leotards, belts and buttons positioned at the shoulder are all difficult to unfasten. Children must wear well-fitted athletic shoes or closed in rubber-soled shoes and socks. Please do not send children to school in sandals, flip-flops, dress shoes, crocs, or cowboy boots, as they are not safe on the playground.

Parents are asked to check their child's cubby daily to be sure it is stocked with an extra set of clothes. Please remember to send a jacket or sweater if the weather is cool and label all articles of clothing sent to school, as we cannot be responsible for unmarked items or clothing.

Hours of Operation

The hours of operation are from 6:30 am until 6:00 pm. The school closes promptly at 6:00 pm and all children must be picked up prior to this time. We realize that sometimes emergencies arise. If this should happen, please call us as soon as possible. We will reassure your child that you are coming. The fee for children picked up late is \$1.00 per minute.

Summary of Financial Terms

Additional terms are listed on the reverse side of the financial agreement. If you have any questions about your account, please contact Lisa Hoch at lhoch@gingerbreadschool.com

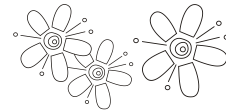
1. The registration fee is non-refundable.
2. All accounts are due in advance on Monday morning of each week. Please write your child's name in the memo section of your check. If your child is part-time and does not attend school on Mondays, please submit tuition on the last day of attendance for the following week.
3. A late fee of five (\$5.00) dollars will be charged to accounts that are past due.
4. Tuition paid by the month will be calculated by counting the number of Mondays in the month.

5. There is no reduction in tuition when school is closed for in-service days or holidays.
6. There is no reduction in tuition when a child is absent for any reason including illness and vacations.
7. Families receiving funding through Early Learning Coalition (ELC) are responsible for any fees which remain unpaid due to failure to comply with any and all ELC procedures.
8. Parents are responsible to comply with Voluntary Pre- Kindergarten Program (VPK) standards and policies if child is enrolled in the VPK Program. Parents are responsible for any fees which remain unpaid due to failure to comply with any and all VPK standards and policies.
9. The fee for children picked up late is \$1.00 per minute.
10. The school reserves the right to dismiss a child from the school if an account becomes delinquent
11. If a child damages or destroys school property, parents will assume full responsibility.
12. Parents will be charged a fifteen (\$15.00) dollar fee for all checks that are returned from the bank.

Vacation Policy

The school will close for one week during the winter holiday, as specified in the school calendar. There is no tuition due during this week. If you choose to take additional vacations, you will be responsible for tuition for those weeks.

Withdrawing



Parents may withdraw a child from the Gingerbread program at anytime. A two-week written notice is required when a child is withdrawn. Parents wishing to withdraw their child, who fail to provide a two-week written notice, will still be responsible for the last two weeks of tuition.

Income Tax Information

To claim childcare on your taxes you will need to complete the IRS form titled "Credit for Child Care Expenses" form #2441. When completing this form you will need the following information:

Tax I.D. Number: 59-1710755
Gingerbread School Business Office
PO Box 49269
St. Petersburg, FL 33743

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program (VPK)

Gingerbread School continues to be a VPK program provider. Some of the benefits parents can expect include reduced fees, lower student/teacher ratios, and additional classroom materials.

The following requirements will apply:

- ✓ Parents will need to register with the State. Applications and instructions are available on the Pinellas Early Learning Coalition website.
- ✓ Follow the VPK program attendance policy which requires that participants not miss more than 20% of the VPK program hours. Gingerbread School may dismiss a child for excessive absences.
- ✓ Abide by the schools attendance and sign in/out policies as stated in the Parent Handbook

Arrival/Departure Procedures

To insure your child's safety, upon arrival accompany your child into the school, take him/her to the staff member on duty and follow the sign-in procedure. We are required to have parents sign in and out with accurate arrival and dismissal times and parents initials. Please **DO NOT** drop children off in front of the school and allow them to enter on their own. If you will be arriving at school after 9:30 am, we ask that you call the office so that the teachers can be prepared for a late arrival.

Please assist your child to the sink and have them wash their hands upon arrival and departure. This will help prevent the spreading of germs between home and school.

In consideration of the children and staff, we ask that parents refrain from using their cell phones during arrival and departure times.

No child shall be released to anyone less than 16 years of age or who is not authorized in writing by the custodial parent. We will not release a child to an intoxicated or impaired individual. Persons not known by the staff who are picking up children will be asked to show picture identification. It is sometimes necessary for a parent to show identification if a substitute or other new staff person is supervising during pick up times.

If you wish to authorize someone new to pick up, please send a note to the office. If it becomes necessary to remove someone from the authorized list of people who may pick up your child, please let us know immediately.

Smoking on school grounds is prohibited.

LET'S GROW HEALTHY CHILDREN!

As you know, your child burns a lot of energy each and every day. Many things contribute in helping them function at their highest level. Among these are a good night's sleep, adequate exercise and a variety of healthy foods. The best way to help young children begin to develop healthy eating habits is to serve them the types of foods that will provide them with the nutrition they need.

Lunches

If you will be opting out of the school provided lunch program, the following guidelines and policies apply.



Please send your child's lunch in a lunch box clearly labeled with his/her name. Remember to label all pieces of the food containers as they can be easily lost or mixed up. Please send appropriate portions, consider your child's appetite, the 20-25 minute lunchtime and keep in mind that non nutritious fast food is not permitted in the classroom.

A good lunch might consist of half of a high protein sandwich, a raw vegetable, fresh or dried fruit, and a glass of milk. Children are encouraged to eat the most nutritious part of their lunch first. Carbonated beverages are definitely not permitted in the lunch boxes. Please include two (2) napkins. We practice our manners every time we eat. Whatever you send for your child's lunch, please be sure he/she can eat the food unaided. We can offer assistance in opening boxes and packages, but would be unable to peel oranges, etc. Don't forget to include any cutlery your child will need to eat his/her lunch.

If you find it difficult to come up with healthy, exciting lunches, please feel free to stop by the office for some great ideas on nutritious lunches.

Milk

Gingerbread serves only pasteurized fat-free or 1% reduced fat milk as whole milk and 2% reduced-fat milk is not recommended for children over the age of two. In the case that your child cannot consume milk due to medical or other special dietary needs, non-dairy nutritional beverages may be served in lieu of milk. Parents or guardians may wish to provide milk substitutions. We ask that you inform the Director and your child's teacher in writing of any allergies or special dietary restrictions. Please remember we are a peanut/nut free school.

Snack

Each day the children will be given a nutritious morning and afternoon snack. Snacks contain items from two of the food groups. For example, a typical snack would include apple juice and wheat crackers. These are, however, only snacks and should in no way be thought of as a substitute for a meal.

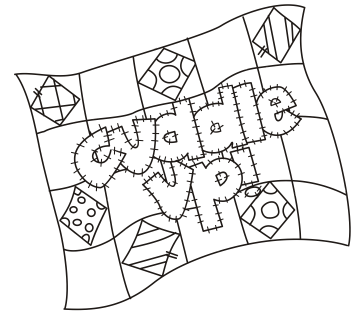
Birthdays & Other Celebrations

With your cooperation your child's birthday will be a special time of recognition. Our focus is on celebrating the child. Each classroom has a special non-food tradition that is used to celebrate and recognize each child on their birthday. Due to allergies and our nutrition policy, parents are not permitted to bring any food related birthday treats.

So as not to exclude some of the favorite festivities and traditions that go along with holiday celebrations, we have chosen four occasions where our nutritional policy will be excused. Holiday sign-up lists will be posted on your child's classroom door.

Naptime

Naptime is a restful time in which the children lie quietly on their cot without disturbing others. For the comfort of your child and to fulfill the requirements of the Pinellas County License Board, it is necessary for each child to have a fitted crib sheet every day at school. Two sheets will be required on the first day of school so that a spare is on hand for any future need. The cot sheets will be sent home with your child on Friday for laundering. Please be sure to return them on Monday morning. Standard size crib sheets fit our cots perfectly. Please label your child's sheets with a permanent marker or sewn in label.



Some children adopt a “cuddly” toy as a familiar comfort object to use during naptime. These objects take on a very real and emotional importance to children and our staff is sensitive to this need. You are welcome to bring a stuffed toy like this for your child.

The two year old classroom's naptime lasts two hours, the three's nap one and a half hours and the four's nap one hour.

Potty Training

At Gingerbread, we work with parents by assisting them in toilet training their child. It is important that we know at the time of enrollment if your child is not toilet trained.

Potty training is a process, which requires the cooperation and patience of both teacher and parent. A routine is essential during the toilet training phase of a child's life. For successful results we ask that you continue this routine at home.

Children being toilet trained must have at least two complete sets of clothing, a box of baby wipes and any other necessary items. Please be sure to label all of your child's belongings.

During the toilet training process, children require more individualized assistance. It is sometimes necessary to have additional help on hand throughout the day to accommodate these needs.

Show & Tell

Show & Tell is integrated into the Gingerbread curriculum. Your child's teacher will let you know about the Show & Tell procedures for his/her classroom. Please do not bring items, which have small pieces that can become detached and be a choking hazard.

Treasures From Home

We strive to provide a variety of appropriate (and sturdy!) toys in all of our classrooms. Please do not allow your child to bring toys to school, as we cannot be responsible for loss or damage.

Television and Video Viewing

Occasionally a video may be viewed to enhance a theme or concept. This is not a regular occurrence as we promote activities that are more "hands-on".

Violent Toys

Toy guns or other warfare objects are not permitted at our school. This includes squirt guns, destruction or super-hero action figures.

Health

Childhood illnesses and diseases, unfortunately, are part of growing up. Keeping preschoolers healthy is a job that needs everyone's assistance – parents, teachers and children.

In the event of an illness or communicable disease, please contact the school. Let us know what the child's symptoms are and how long it may be before he/she returns.

Please remember it is **IMPERATIVE** to keep your child home if the following conditions exist.

1. A temperature within the last 24 hours.
2. Diarrhea.
3. If a child is recovering from chicken pox and all areas are not completely dry.
4. Dizziness, nausea or unexplained rashes.
5. Vomiting at any time in the past 12 hours.
6. Green or bloody discharge from the nose or ears.
7. Pink, watery eyes with discharge.

When a child becomes ill at school, he/she is separated in a comfortable space while parents are notified and arrangements are made for pick-up. Parents may be asked to supply the school with a physician's note before returning to the school after an illness.

Medication

The Board of Health strongly discourages schools from dispensing medication of any kind. Allergic reactions can happen suddenly and can result in severe consequences. Many times, medication and doses can be prescribed that require morning and evening administration. If your child needs diaper cream, License Board requirements state that the School must have a medical form.

Allergies

It is not unusual for young children to have allergies. Please be sure to discuss any allergies your child might have with the Director. An allergy list is posted in the classroom at all times. It contains the names of students with their known allergies. Substitutions will be made for children with food allergies during snack time.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency and/or accident, we shall contact the parents of the child immediately. If we cannot reach the parents and medical treatment is necessary, 911 will be called. 911 will be called for any extreme emergency care situations regardless of parental contact.

Accident/Incident Reports

All unusual incidents that occur will be recorded on an Accident/Incident Report form. This form is signed by the attending staff member and the parent/guardian. Minor injuries will be recorded on a "Boo Boo Bear Report" which will be sent home with the child.

Emergency Preparedness



We understand that our decision to open or close our school has a big effect on the families we serve. We recognize that many businesses and occupations do continue to operate when the threat of serious weather looms. The result is that many parents must still report to work, make other child care arrangements or take time off of work.

Please understand that we make the decision to open or close the schools in accordance with the Pinellas County School System. They base their decision on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- Information on road conditions from transportation staff and from the police. We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in our area. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the county may be dangerous.
- Whether precipitation is continuing.
- Building conditions (such as whether we have power).
- Dangers due to high wind speeds.
- Weather predictions.
- What other school districts are doing.

As always, our top priority is the safety of our students. We hope you understand should the need arise for our school to close for this purpose. Let's all hope for an uneventful season.

- In the event of a weather emergency we ask that you follow the guidelines of the Pinellas County School System. In the event that the Pinellas County School system closes due to another type of emergency, we ask that you stay tuned to local news announcements regarding school closures.
- A weather alert radio is kept on at all times during the school operating hours to keep us informed of potential dangerous weather systems.
- A parent contact system is in place in each classroom to facilitate communication to parents in the event of an emergency.
- Arrangements have been secured with Wellington School, 8000 Starkey Rd. as an evacuation site. In the event of an evacuation, your child will be brought there.
- An "emergency-to-go box" is fully supplied with many items that would be needed in the event of an evacuation.

Hurricanes

- We ask that you follow the guidelines of the Pinellas County School System. If a mandatory evacuation order is issued, parents will need to pick their children up immediately.

Tornados

- If the weather alert radio indicates that there is potential dangerous weather system the Director/Assistant Director will closely monitor the weather.
- Each classroom has a designated safe zone which is away from the windows by a load-bearing wall. This area is identified on the evacuation diagram in each classroom. Children will remain in the safe zone until the threat has passed.
- If damage has occurred to the building and is posing a safety threat, the evacuation procedures will be followed.

Fires

- In the event of a fire, the alarm will alert the staff that the school will need to be evacuated.
- The fire department is automatically dispatched and will identify if evacuation from the school property is necessary.

Floods & Storms

- Children will remain indoors during any rain or stormy conditions.

Bomb Threats & Mandated Evacuation

- In the event that the school is issued a mandated evacuation or bomb threat, the evacuation procedures will be followed.

Chemical Leaks & Air Borne Irritants

- In the event of a chemical leak or air borne irritants, the children will remain indoors.
- All windows will be checked to be sure they are closed.
- If applicable, the Director will reposition the children in classrooms that will provide a buffer to the outside and the doors will be locked from the outside.
- Access to the classrooms will be re-routed through the buffer rooms to limit exposure.

Child Abuse

The State of Florida requires all members of child care institutions to be on the lookout for, and report to the State, any and all cases of abuse to a child. Gingerbread is, therefore, obligated to report to the State any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect.

Sunscreen & Insect Repellant

Due to studies on sun exposure and how it affects children, we recommend the use of sunscreen. Please apply sunscreen before coming to school, as the children will be outside for a portion of the day.

Communications

Yellow notes are sent home daily with the exception of the three hour VPK students. These notes are intended to communicate your child's experiences throughout the day. Parents of pre-kindergarten children will receive mini reports three times per year.

Ongoing communication is essential to help ensure that we are meeting each child's needs and potential. Parents are encouraged to share goals and expectations throughout their child's enrollment. Conferences are held annually but can be scheduled more often upon request.

In an effort to build trust and ensure satisfaction, parents are encouraged to communicate any concerns or suggestions that arise to the Center Director. In addition, parents are welcome to communicate using the suggestion box located in the school office.

A Family Questionnaire is sent out annually to obtain information from parents about how well the school is meeting each family's needs and goals. We appreciate your efforts in helping to complete this process. Our ongoing reflection is what allows us to be on the leading edge of our field.

Should a concern or matter arise outside the scope of the on-site management, please feel free to contact Susan Baraybar, legal responsible party Gingerbread School.

Address: PO Box 49269 St. Petersburg, FL 33743

Email: sbaraybar@gingerbreadschool.com

Phone: (727) 409-6331

Newsletters

Newsletters will be sent home with your child on a monthly basis. Our newsletters detail different activities and concepts that your child will be experiencing during their day, as well as noteworthy accomplishments and upcoming events.

Photographs and Publicity

Photographs are taken of the children for use in the classroom. Parents who do not want their child's photograph to be used for publicity purposes should indicate this on the Gingerbread Form.

Babysitting Policy

In an effort to maintain the professional status of the Gingerbread School Staff and prevent a potential conflict of interest, it is strongly recommended that parents not request our staff to baby-sit for current preschool children or their siblings. Our staff immensely enjoys spending time with your children but it is difficult for staff to accommodate all families who ask for their babysitting services as well as maintain teacher-child and parent-teacher relationships at school. Gingerbread School cannot be held responsible for the working arrangements of either party when entering into an agreement to provide care or services independently.

Guidance Policy

All staff are given extensive in-service training to help them implement effective, appropriate, developmental guidance and discipline plans for their classrooms. Your child's teacher will familiarize you with this plan. In the event a child misbehaves, absolutely no corporal punishment is ever condoned. In addition, discipline is never tied to food or toileting. Children are treated respectfully and only positive avenues are utilized in the development of appropriate behavior.

The following positive actions are our policy in problem solving:

- ✓ Prevention
- ✓ Encourage verbal expressions
- ✓ Re-direction
- ✓ Clear, direct explanation
- ✓ Diversion
- ✓ Explanation of responsibility for his/her actions
- ✓ Suggest alternate solution for problem
- ✓ Removal from situation



There may be times when a child has ongoing difficulties observing the rules and his / her behavior is causing a disruption in the classroom. If this type of behavior continues to pose a problem, the Director will observe the classroom and the parents will be notified. At this point the Teacher, Director and Parent must work together to modify the child's behavior into more appropriate interaction with his / her environment.

It is our firm belief that the school and the parents must be a trusting and cooperative team. Gingerbread School is committed to provide a pleasant and safe environment. Consideration of a disenrollment must be in the best interest of the child and/or the common good of the other children in our care. In the event that disenrollment is decided, the staff will offer recommendations to the parents in identifying a more suitable environment.

Biting is perceived as the most common behavior problem among children under the age of three. Therefore, it merits discussion in this section of the handbook. It is very important that both parents and teachers understand that there are developmental reasons involved when children bite. This does not mean that a child is "bad", but usually indicates a lack of language and social skills. As these skills are developed the frequency of biting usually diminishes.

Although Gingerbread teachers are taught prevention and anticipation of biting, this is sometimes not enough. It is the policy of the Gingerbread Schools to notify parents of any biting incident. This includes the parents of the child who had been bitten. If a child bites more than

two times, it will be necessary for that child's parents to come to the school to correct this behavior in the future. If, after the conference a child continues to bite, the parents may be asked to remove their child from the school until the child's social and language skills have developed beyond this stage.

Assessments

Pre and post assessments are conducted on each child to assist teachers in implementing the curriculum as they cover all areas and levels of learning, including the following:

- language development
- emerging literacy
- math
- science
- creativity and the arts
- social skills
- physical development
- reasoning
- problem solving

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is well recognized as an important ingredient in a successful preschool experience. We plan several family / parent events throughout the school year. We find these to be special, enjoyable times and we encourage you to take part in them. We have an open door policy and parents are always welcome to visit!

Each year fundraising activities are held primarily to purchase items for the school that would not be available without the generosity and commitment of our parents. Through these efforts we have purchased many items that have enhanced our classrooms.

We have various events throughout the school year that offer you a chance to bring in items from home for special art, science, and holiday projects. Please consider signing up or volunteering to assist in this way.

Please note that we appreciate recycled donations such as toilet paper rolls, buttons, bows, ribbon, yarn, shoeboxes, baby wipes containers, baby food jars, bottle caps, old magazines, and scrap paper. Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

Bulletin Boards

There are many bulletin boards around the school and in the classrooms. These boards display some of the children's creations, as well as posting news and announcements. We hope you will find them informative and enjoyable!

In Closing

Once again, we would like to welcome you to the Gingerbread family. A child's education is an exciting and personal challenge to teachers and parents, alike. It calls forth our best efforts. At Gingerbread we proudly acknowledge our responsibility to your child's education.

The Gingerbread staff looks forward to providing your child an enriching preschool experience!

Warmest Regards,

Liz Craig

Director

Marianne Pineros

Assistant Director

Gingerbread School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, age, religion, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or veteran status. This policy is applied in the enrollment process in regard to parents and their children, hiring of staff, and in the administration of all programs and policies. Admissions are based on the availability of space in a developmentally appropriate class and the individual needs of the children. Gingerbread adheres to The Americans with Disabilities Act in serving children with special needs or disabilities