

# 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.

Our mission is to provide a nurturing environment that is responsive to each child's stage of development through an innovative "hands-on" approach to learning.

At Gingerbread School, we understand the importance in providing a solid educational program. Experiences during the first five years of a child's life are extremely important as 90% of the brain is developing during that time.

To nurture the whole child, we offer a variety of learning experiences in all areas that are critical for healthy development and future academic success. Building this foundation requires a cohesive approach integrating gross and fine motor development, social-emotional development, language development, and creative expression.

Because children are active learners, they flourish in an environment that is nurturing and rich. Developing each child's curiosity and desire to learn is best achieved when their daily activities stem from exploration and discovery.

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! And

although it may all look like child's play; it's also learning in action! Additionally, we spend a lot of time listening to and talking with the children making meaningful connections. 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.

## Accreditation

Gingerbread is committed to offer the assurance of an accredited program to the families we serve. All schools are accredited through Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) which is recognized by the State of Florida as a Gold Seal Accrediting Agency. Accreditation is a system that encourages excellence in preschool programs. Since it is voluntary; preschools choose to become accredited because it is evidence of their quality. All components of a program are examined including Administration, classroom environment, parent and community involvement, advocacy on behalf of children and childcare, staffing credentials, staff to child ratios, teacher/child interaction, literacy, and curriculum. You can obtain additional information on the accreditation standards at [www.facccm.org](http://www.facccm.org).

# 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 you 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. CHILD ENROLLMENT RECORD
2. GINGERBREAD INFORMATION FORM
3. EMERGENCY MEDICAL RELEASE FORM  
Form must be notarized
4. HRS STUDENT HEALTH FORM DH3040  
Provided by child’s doctor
5. FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CERTIFICATE OF IMMUNIZATION FORM DH680\*  
Provided by child’s doctor
6. FINANCIAL AGREEMENT
7. REGISTRATION PAYMENT
8. FOOD EXPERIENCE PERMISSION FORM
9. FLU BROCHURE
10. DISTRACTED ADULT/DRIVER BROCHURE

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

\*Some children in our care may not have current immunizations. Parents must provide the required form (DH680) or the Religious Exemption form (DH681) at the time of enrollment.

# Notification of Changes

It is extremely important that you notify the school office 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 we are prepared to deal with any changes in behavior that may result.

## 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](mailto:lhoch@gingerbreadschool.com)

1. All registration fees are non-refundable. This includes the portion of the VPK registration that is applied as tuition for the final week of the VPK Wrap Program.
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. There is no reduction in tuition when school is closed for in-service days, holidays, or weather/environmental conditions
5. There is no reduction in tuition when a child is absent for any reason including illness and vacations.

6. Families receiving funding through Early Learning Coalition (ELC) and Voluntary Pre- Kindergarten Program (VPK) are responsible for any fees which remain unpaid due to failure to comply with any and all standards and policies.
7. The fee for children picked up late is \$1.00 per minute.
8. Parents will be charged a twenty (\$20.00) 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.



## 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: 59-2841501  
Gingerbread School Business Office  
PO Box 49269  
St. Petersburg, FL 33743

## Hours of Operation

The hours of operation are from 7:00 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.

## 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 school's attendance and sign in/out policies as stated in the Parent Handbook

## Arrival/Departure Procedures

Upon arrival accompany your child into the school, take him/her to the staff member on duty and follow the sign-in procedure. Licensing requires that children are signed in by their guardian with accurate arrival and dismissal times and parent's 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.

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.

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.

If you wish to authorize someone new to pick up, please send a note or email 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.

Families with a court mandated parenting plan are required to submit a copy to the school. Please be sure to submit a new one if changes are made by the court.

Smoking including e cigarettes on school grounds is prohibited.

## Cell Phones

We respectfully request that you refrain from cell phone use when dropping off or picking up your child. Use your arrival at the end of the day to transition your attention from your busy day to your child, taking some time to communicate and connect. Children thrive when they



receive consistent, focused, loving attention. Try not to let technology get in the way.

## Required Supplies

The following items must be provided for your child on his/her first day of school:

- ✓ Lunch
- ✓ Child sized cup with top for water
- ✓ Two fitted crib sheets
- ✓ Two or more family pictures
- ✓ Child sized pillow (optional)
- ✓ Child sized blanket
- ✓ Two changes of clothes
- ✓ Tote bag or back pack
- ✓ Diapers & Lunch wipes (if needed)

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

## 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

# Dress to Play!

Children should be dressed in sturdy, washable clothing which will allow them to play freely and participate 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 rubber-soled shoes and socks. Please do not send children to school in sandals, flip-flops, dress shoes, crocs, cowboy boots, or any shoes that expose their toes ...OUCH! They are not safe to wear 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.

# 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 the teacher and parent. Consistency, routines, and positive guidance are essential during the toilet training phase of a child's life.

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.

## 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

It probably doesn't come as a surprise to many of you when we say that preschool age children can be very particular about what they will eat. We know that what and how parents feed their children is influenced by many things and having the familiar tastes from home can help them feel more comfortable at school.

Parents are encouraged to follow sound nutritional guidelines regarding the food that is packed for lunch. Keep in mind that the children lay down for naptime after eating and may feel restless if they just consumed sugary foods.

Gingerbread uses the USDA MyPlate to assist us in determining what food groups to serve for snack. It's a helpful resource for parents looking for nutritional information and meal ideas. Copies of the MyPlate guidelines can be obtained from the USDA website at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>.

Foods that are associated with young children's choking incidents will not be served to children under 4 years of age. These foods include whole/round hot dogs, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, whole grapes, nuts, cheese cubes and any food that is of similar shape and size of the trachea/windpipe. Please keep this in mind as you pack your child's lunchbox.

#### Lunch Check List:

- ✓ Please send your child's lunch box and food containers labeled with his/her full name. Unlabeled pieces can be easily lost or mixed up.
- ✓ Consider your child's appetite in determining appropriate portion sizes as well as the 20-25-minute lunchtime schedule.
- ✓ We will offer assistance in opening boxes and packages, but would be unable to peel oranges, etc.... so be sure he/she can eat the food unaided.
- ✓ Please include two (2) napkins and any cutlery that is needed. We practice our manners every time we eat!
- ✓ Due to limited refrigerator space, please include an ice pack to keep your child's food cold until lunchtime arrives.
- ✓ Peanut and tree nut foods are not permitted.
- ✓ Carbonated beverages, candy, and gum are not permitted.

- ✓ The school will charge a fee of \$2 if it is necessary to supply or supplement your child's 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.

## 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.

## Peanut & Nut Allergies

In keeping with our commitment to provide a safe environment for our children, and peace-of-mind for their families, we have implemented a nut free lunch and snack policy. All the families at our school play an important role to ensure the safety of those children with peanut and/or tree nut allergies are safe. All food items at school must be nut-free. This includes all peanut and tree nut products (i.e., peanut butter, products containing nut oils, nut cookies).

## Pizza

Pizza is offered on Fridays as an alternative to bringing lunch from home. The lunch includes pizza, fresh vegetables and dip, milk and fruit. Pizza is \$2.50 for one slice and \$3.00 for two slices. If your child will be participating, please send the payment in cash by Thursday morning so the order can be placed.

# Milk

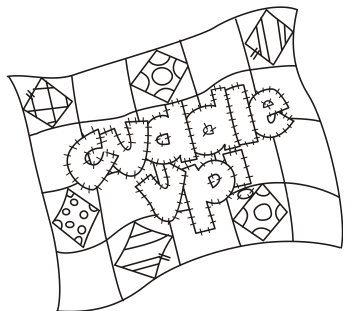
Milk is available at the school for \$.25 per day. If you wish to use this service, please send \$1.25 in cash on Monday for the week. Payment by the week will aid us in our planning. Milk will still be available by the day for those who only wish to use the service occasionally. Simply place \$.25 cents in your child's lunch box. 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, other than a disability, non-dairy nutritional beverages may be served in lieu of milk. Parents or guardians may wish to provide milk substitutions. Please inform the Director and your child's teacher in writing of any allergies or special dietary restrictions.

# 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.

# 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.

## 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. Toy guns or other warfare objects are not permitted at our school.

## 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.

# Birthdays & Other Celebrations

One of children`s favorite celebrations is their birthday. They love to be recognized and celebrated so we have some special traditions that are sure to make their day extra festive!

We begin by decorating the classroom with a birthday banner. A special cape and crown can be worn as the children create a birthday book and play games. Another highlight occurs when puppets join in on the celebration!

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 a few occasions throughout the year where our nutritional policy will be excused. Sign-up lists will be posted on your child`s classroom door. We are only able to serve either whole fruit or commercially prepared items that are sealed and packaged in its original container.

## 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” and interactive.

## Sunscreen

Please apply sunscreen to your child in the morning as part of your routine.



# 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 so that they only require morning and evening administration. If your child needs diaper cream, License Board requirements state that the School must have a medical form.

# 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. Our staff makes sure that regular hand washing occurs constantly throughout the day and toys and equipment are cleaned and disinfected regularly.

Below we have listed the guidelines we follow to maintain a healthy environment. Please contact the school if your child becomes ill. Let us know what the symptoms are and if your child has seen a doctor. Please remember it is **IMPERATIVE** to keep your child home if the following conditions exist.

- Fever, irritability, lethargy, persistent crying, or difficulty breathing. All can be signs of illness.
- An upper respiratory illness such as bronchiolitis or influenza. Green or bloody discharge from the nose.
- Diarrhea.
- Bloody stools or stools containing mucus. These could be the sign of a viral or bacterial infection.
- Vomiting within 12 hours

- A contagious or unidentified rash such as the following.
  - **Chicken pox.** Your child is no longer contagious once all the sores have dried and crusted over.
  - **Impetigo.** Kids with this skin disease are no longer contagious after 24 hours of antibiotics.
  - **Scabies.** Once treated with a topical insecticide, it's no longer contagious.
- Bacterial conjunctivitis (pinkeye) and yellow discharge from the eye. Red, watery eyes from allergies are not contagious
- Strep throat. May return after 24 hours of antibiotics.
- Mouth sores that cause excessive drooling. Check with your child's doctor to determine if they are contagious
- Head lice.

When a child becomes ill at school, he/she is separated in a comfortable space while parents are notified. Families are expected to pick up their child as quickly as possible. If the parents of an ill child are unable to be reached the staff member will contact the person listed as the emergency contact. Parents are expected to ensure that the emergency contact is available if necessary. Parents may be asked to supply the school with a physician's note before returning to the school after an illness.

## 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.

# 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

Accidents and unusual incidents will be recorded on our school report forms. The form will be signed by the attending staff member as well as the parent or guardian. A copy will be sent home with the child.

# Guidance/Expulsion 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. We are currently in our third year of implementing a very comprehensive program called Conscious Discipline. The program calls for establishing the core components which are safety, connection, and problem solving. Once established, teachers are able to build classrooms where everyday events and conflicts become opportunities to teach important life skills. Children are encouraged to develop language skills that help them to communicate their needs and feelings. Clear, consistent expectations, positive guidance, and logical consequences help to guide children to become problem solvers.

In order to minimize conflict, much effort is taken to provide appropriate activities, create an inviting environment, and meet the individual needs of children. Still, conflicts are a natural occurrence as children try to relate to one another in a group setting. Rest assured, absolutely no corporal punishment is ever condoned. Children are treated respectfully and only positive avenues are utilized in the development of appropriate behavior. We strive to create an environment where children are safe and where they know they will be cared for and listened to, not just by their teachers, but by one another as well.

The following techniques are used regularly:

- *Limit Setting*- In order for children to build trusting relationships and feel confident to explore, they must clearly know what is expected of them. Rules are kept few, basic, clear and concise. Boundaries and expectations expand in keeping with the abilities of the children.
- *Consistency*- So that children know what to expect (and from that can anticipate, predict and change their own behavior accordingly), limits and expectations are consistent throughout the classrooms. All staff members respond in a consistent manner to conflict situations.
- *Tone*- The message a child receives from an adult intervening is: you are safe, the situation is under control, and we can work it out. A firm, kind, serious tone with a relaxed demeanor reinforces this message.
- *Modeling*- The staff members set an example of compassionate, caring individuals who are able to

express their own feelings and needs clearly and calmly.

- *Passive Intervention*- Children are given time to work through their own problems. If a situation does not escalate to destructive or aggressive behavior, a teacher may choose to simply observe as the children seek a solution, or their presence can serve as a gentle reminder to use words instead of action. Teachers trust children to 'figure it out' but are there to help if they should need it. When additional intervention is necessary to facilitate the resolution process, it is as non-intrusive as possible.
- *Physical Intervention*- Children will be physically stopped when hurting each other. The focus will then turn to resolving the conflict at hand.
- *Identifying/Interpreting*- "You both want the truck." Such a simple statement can clarify the problem, diffuse tension and help the problem solving begin. Children also need help to consider other's emotions or needs especially when they are upset themselves. For example, "Look, he is crying. It really hurt when you hit him."
- *Validating Feelings*- Constructive thinking is virtually impossible when a child is overcome by an emotion such as anger, sadness, fear or frustration. Acknowledging the emotion is imperative before any other learning can occur. "I will not let you hit her. Tell me why you are so angry." It is important that all children in a conflict be honestly listened to. Children are not told to say "I'm sorry," but rather, to actively comfort or offer help to the child they hurt or upset.

Teachers may say, "I'm sorry you got hurt" and at some point, children will spontaneously do the same.

- *Giving Choices/Offering solutions*- Staff members offer choices and possible solutions to children who are having a difficult time finding them on their own.
- *Redirection*- A request to stop a negative behavior is accompanied by a suggestion for an appropriate behavior with which to replace it..."You may not climb on the fence; if you would like to climb you can use the climber."
- *Consequences*- Consequences for behavior are those that are logical to children. "If you are not able to stop throwing the sand, then you will need to leave the sand table." When children are able to understand the results of their own behavior, they are better able to modify it.

#### When More is Needed

Occasionally a child's behavior is excessively disruptive or harmful to individual children or the class. If the teacher and director concur that they need additional support and expertise to best meet a child's needs, some or all of the following steps will be required of the family:

- *Additional parent/teacher conferences* will be held. The purpose of the conference is to clearly define the problem, re-examine possible causes, brainstorm any changes the staff and/or family can make and reinforce consistency between home and school.
- *Community Resources*- Professional support from a specialist may be sought. In the event that this happens, the director will facilitate the referral

process and work cooperatively with parents, staff, and specialists.

It is our firm belief that the school and the parents must be a trusting and cooperative team. Consideration of an expulsion 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 a child's behavior compromises the safety of the other children, the teacher, or themselves an expulsion will be necessary. When this occurs, the staff will offer recommendations to the parents in identifying a more suitable environment.

## Biting

One of the most upsetting yet age-appropriate behaviors of early childhood is biting. When this happens, we try to identify the stressor by considering the circumstances:

- When and where the incident happened.
- What precipitated the bite
- Who was involved
- Is the child tired or hungry

Parents will be notified if their child has been bitten and of the procedure's teachers have taken. The name of the child who did the biting will not be included when informing the parent of the incident. If the bite has broken the skin, it will be washed with soap and water. Both parents will be notified immediately and requested to call their child's physician for further instructions.

If biting becomes an ongoing behavior, the director and the child's teachers will talk with parents and together and carefully analyze the circumstances. Information noting when the incident happened, where it happened,

what precipitated the bite, who was involved, and the times of day the biting occurs will be recorded to identify triggers.

## Communications

Please call the school by 9:00 am if your child will be absent or late. When your child is absent, please let us know the specific reason for the absence. (fever or stomach flu, not simply “sick”).

Yellow notes are sent home daily. These notes are intended to communicate your child’s experiences throughout the day. Parents of pre-kindergarten children will receive mini reports on a monthly basis.

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](mailto:sbaraybar@gingerbreadschool.com)  
Phone: (727) 409-6331

## 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!

Occasionally, fundraising activities are held primarily to purchase items for the school that would not be available without the generosity and commitment of our parents.

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. We will typically communicate these needs on the parent board or yellow notes. 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!

## Photographs and Publicity

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

## Babysitting Policy

In an effort to maintain professional teacher-child and parent-teacher relationships at school, it is strongly recommended that parents not request our staff to baby-sit for current preschool children or their siblings. Gingerbread School cannot be held responsible for the working arrangements of either party if entering into an agreement to provide care or services independently.

## 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 typically 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:

- Building conditions (such as if we have power)
- If whether precipitation is continuing
- 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 check our website and stay tuned to local news announcements regarding school closures.  
[www.gingerbreadschool.com](http://www.gingerbreadschool.com)
- A weather alert radio is kept on at all times during the school operating hours to keep us informed of potentially 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 the Hilton Hotel 950 Lake Carillon Drive (727) 540-0050 as an evacuation site. Should an event require an emergency evacuation, the children will be walked to the evacuation site.
- 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 potentially 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 & Toxic/Air Borne Irritants

- In the event of a chemical leak or toxic/air borne irritant, 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.

## Civil Disturbances & Armed Intruder

- In the event of a civil disturbance or armed intruder, the children will remain indoors and follow lockdown procedures.

## Gingerbread School Lockdown

- The purpose of a lockdown is to keep children and staff safe inside the building by staying inside a classroom or other secure safe area due to a possible or immediate threat inside or near the school. These procedures will be used in situations that may result in harm to the people inside the building, such as a shooting, hostage incident, intruder, trespassing, disturbance, or at the discretion of the director or school administration.
- Soft lockdown: Utilized when a possible threat exists. Operations can take place as usual and parents and families can come and go as normal.
- Hard lockdown: A lockdown where there is an immediate threat to the safety of the children. Doors are locked and no one is allowed to enter or exit.

## Withdrawing



Parents may withdraw a child from the Gingerbread program at any time. 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.

# 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,

Michelle Espaillet  
Director

Ildi McGinness  
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.