



Gingerbread Preschool Classroom Guide

4-year-old



4333 Black Avenue Pleasanton, CA 94566
925-931-3430



Teachers for the 4-year-old classes



Ms. Andrea Burnham
(925) 931-3430
aburnham@ci.pleasanton.ca.us

10 years of service

Education: Interior Design Degree and Early Childhood Education Certificate Las Positas College, Livermore.

Personal Information: Ms. Andrea and her husband William have 2 boys, Dominick and Miles. Andrea is originally from Germany. She likes hiking, biking and spending time with her family.



Ms. Sharon Wong
(925) 931-3430
swong@ci.pleasanton.ca.us

12 years of service

Education: 12 units Early Childhood Education, Las Positas College, Livermore.

Personal Information: Ms. Sharon and her husband Terry have a son, Ryan. She likes to read and spend time outside with her family.



Ms. Janice (Jan) Zolfarelli
(925) 931-3430
jzolfarelli@ci.pleasanton.ca.us

15 years of service

Education: Associate of Arts Degree in Developmentally Disabled Education and Therapeutic Recreation, Bachelor of Arts Degree, Liberal Studies-California State University, Hayward.

Personal Information: Ms. Jan and her husband Paul have three children, Darrin, Victoria and Evan. Ms. Jan enjoys shopping at craft fairs, reading and anything Disney.

Our Classroom

Our curriculum and classroom routine have been carefully designed to help facilitate your child's growth and development. The class presents a fun hands-on learning experience and supports each child in building competency in social and learning skills.

The four-year-old curriculum is presented through thematic units. Presenting ideas and concepts thematically helps the brain to understand complete concepts. Thematic material is presented and reinforced through a classroom routine which includes activities such as: gathering time, learning activities, outdoor play and snack time. A classroom routine helps children gain skills in a variety of areas which assist them when they enter kindergarten. Each child will find success in these areas throughout the school year. Our primary goal for all children who attend Gingerbread is that they gain a love of learning.

The four-year-old class continues the Gingerbread tradition of a warm and loving learning environment. During this year routines and activities are added that will further ready children for their entry into the elementary education system. Skills and concepts introduced are: time, day, month - calendar, weather, community helpers, letter and number recognition, following directions, positive social interactions and self-regulation. Fine motor skills introduced are cutting, gluing and coloring. These skills are pre-writing skills. When a child is ready to learn to write, staff present proper pencil grip and letter formation to the children.

Our goal for the four-year-olds is to be able to successfully participate in the classroom routine and have a positive working relationship with their teachers and classmates at the end of the school year.

The four-year-old classes follow the primary caregiver system for each child. With three staff members in the room, the children are divided equally amongst the staff. By using this system, each staff member has the opportunity to make close connections with "their" children and "their" families.

Dress Code

Please send your child in PLAY CLOTHES. We do a lot of outdoor activities that include running, jumping and stretching which can be inhibited by the child's clothing. In addition to outdoor play, your child will be working with materials like paint, markers, play dough and other "messy" items that could end up on their clothes. This should be an environment where your child doesn't have to worry about getting "dirty". Please remember that children must wear closed-toed shoes.

Coming To / Leaving School

Upon entering the classroom at drop-off, your child will be asked to check in with their primary caregiver. This will consist of exchanging greetings with the staff and their peers, the child will be instructed to put their personal items in their cubby, turn their attendance card to the "HERE" position on the attendance chart and then proceed to the carpet with their primary group. During this drop-off time, it is also an opportunity for parents to share information with their child's primary caregiver that might be helpful for staff, such as if they had a difficult morning, didn't get enough sleep or if they did something special over the weekend. This information will allow staff to support your child throughout the day and engage in conversation with them about their life outside of school.

At pick-up, collect your child's file folder from the wall pocket located in the lobby and sign on the appropriate date. Proceed to the classroom and hand the file folder to the designated staff member. Your child should then say "good-bye" to the staff and collect any items in their cubby.

Learning Activities

Block Play

When children play with blocks, they learn concepts of shape, size, length, and location which are pre-reading and math skills. They also learn to use their imagination and cooperate with others.

Dramatic Play

In the dramatic play area children learn to improvise and use items in a symbolic way to represent something else - this is abstract thinking. They also try on different roles and work to solve social problems through negotiation with friends.

Sensory Activity

During sensory activities children learn new vocabulary, concepts of texture, color, weight and size and they learn to observe likenesses and differences. These are pre-reading, math and science skills.

Manipulatives

During manipulative play children learn hand-eye coordination, symmetry, shapes, order, design and they learn to make and repeat patterns. These are pre-math skills. They also use their fine motor skills to manipulate legos, beads etc., which helps to develop hand muscles that are critical for writing.

Science

During science children use fine motor skills and tactile senses. They learn about real-life situations and experiences, cause and effect, experimentation, questioning and logic.

Arts and Crafts

Children use their imagination, creativity and express feelings during this time. They interact with staff and learn to follow instructions. They learn relationships of space and size, concepts of symmetry, balance and design. These are foundational pre-math and pre-reading skills.

Me Binder

During learning activities your child may create something to place in their Me Binder. Me Binders stay at school and are sent home the last week of school. The Me Binder will serve to help you and your child reflect on their Gingerbread Preschool experience.

Letter/Number Recognition and Writing

One way in which children are exposed to letter/number recognition and pre-writing skills is through participating in reading, storytelling, coloring and cutting activities, play dough, Lego, and block play. These are all foundational skills.

In order for children to successfully write, their hand muscles need to be well developed and children need to have the appropriate level of visual perception and eye-hand coordination. When a child is ready, they will demonstrate an interest on their own to begin forming letters and words. Gingerbread uses Handwriting without Tears Curriculum to assist in providing pre-writing and writing skills. Children are exposed to important pre-writing skill concepts through a variety of activities including: music, use of wood pieces, chalk and slates, or paper and pencils. When ready, we present letter formation, emphasizing the capital letters. In conjunction with the writing of the letters, we have an Alphabet Book for the children where they are asked to work on a skill (patterning, cutting, gluing, tracing, etc.) in addition to learning about the letter of the week. Letter and number recognition are also presented in a variety of other activities times such as gathering time, snack time, games and art/craft projects. These are foundational skills for reading, writing, and math.

Learning Activities continued...

Buddy Days

On Buddy Day each child will be paired with a classmate for an activity. Learning how to foster friendships will be discussed at gathering time. This intentional time works on building social skills.

Gathering (Circle) Time

Gathering (circle) time is an intensive learning time for the children. Gathering time is held at the beginning and end of the class time. It is important to bring your child on time so they do not miss an opportunity to be assigned a special responsibility for the day. Children participate in a variety of learning activities as well as work on developing attention span. At the beginning of the school year, Gathering time is typically 10-15 minutes and by the end of the school year it is up to 30 minutes.

Group Discussion

Group discussion is a time when the teacher greets the children, discusses what they will be doing that day and possibly asks the children to respond to a question. This allows the children to practice raising their hand, waiting their turn, and having their comments be valued by the teacher and the group.

Story time

During story time children are presented literature in a variety of ways; reading, story telling, felt stories, story props and fingerplays. When being read to, children learn that letters on a page represent words, and pictures represent words and ideas. They learn to listen to spoken language and to follow the development of thoughts and ideas in the plot of a story. These are foundational skills for reading.

Music Time

During music time, children are exposed to a variety of songs, poems and musical instruments. They learn principles of music and rhythm, vocabulary, memory skills, sequencing, and auditory discrimination (recognizing different sounds) - these are foundational skills for reading and math.

Surprise Can (Sharing)

Sharing helps increase children's socialization and language skills. It provides an opportunity for children to share part of their world-what they like, what they know, what they found, and how they feel. As they share something of themselves with one another, they gain confidence in becoming the focus of the group's attention, develop speaking skills, and find others are interested in them. They discover there are things they know about and they learn to feel good about themselves. Sharing requires use of critical and creative thinking processes.

Teachers will set up a rotating schedule for the sharing can. Each child will have several opportunities to take the sharing can home.

Parent and child together put a "surprise" in the can and think of clues to help other children guess the contents. Clues are writing on a Surprise Can Clue form. The child will be asked to give their clues to the class and the class will try to guess what's in the can. Sometimes it is difficult for a child not to tell their friends what is in the can. The teacher will help children know how fun it is when no one knows the surprise. The group should be encouraged to ask questions. **Do not use the word "secret". We do not keep secrets from people, especially from parents.**

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO USE THE SHARING CAN

- Put an item in the can.
- Write 2 or 3 clues on Clue form.
- Tape clues to the outside top of the can.
- Bring to class on the next school day.

Gathering (Circle) Time continued...

Community Helpers

Community Helpers represents a variety of “jobs” that need to be completed by the children each day. Children are selected on a rotating basis; if a child is absent, they may miss their turn. Community Helper “jobs” include: Line Leader, Snack Helper, Weather Monitor, Calendar, and Flag Salute. As a Community Helper, children are able to take a leadership role in the class and feel successful for completing their task. This helps to develop their social and emotional skills, as well as establish positive self-esteem.

Attendance/Counter

A child is assigned to count all the children present. Then by looking at the attendance chart, the children are asked to determine who is here and who is absent. We are working on name recognition of not only their name but their classmates’ names as well. Math skills are used to determine the amount of children present for the day.

Calendar

The calendar is reviewed at each class period. The teacher, along with the community helper, leads the class in reviewing the name of the month and days of the week, counting the number of days that have already passed and determining the current day of the week and date. The children are learning number and letter recognition, sequencing and memory skills. These are foundational skills for math and reading.

Weather

The community helper, with the assistance of the teacher, determines what the weather is like on that day and then chooses a picture that represents the type of weather they have chosen. This requires the child to use their observation and critical thinking skills.

Pledge of Allegiance

The community helper holds the flag and leads the class in saying the Pledge of Allegiance. This requires the children to use memorization skills. Throughout the year, teachers also discuss with the children the meaning of the pledge. It is our hope that this will instill a pride in their country and help the children understand that they are part of a larger community.

Yoga

Yoga is used during transition times such as coming in from our time outside, we wash hands and gather on the carpet. This is a time to focus on breathing and calming the body to help each child learn the skill of self-regulation.

Outside Play

We view outside play as an extension of the classroom. Children will be able to self select their own play activity as well as experience group games such as relay races and parachute play.

Snack Time

At snack time your child will practice their social, language and communication skills. Occasionally children will have the opportunity to assemble their own snack. This activity introduces “cooking” at a preschool level. Through this experience children are practicing pre-math (measuring), pre-reading (sequencing), and science skills (cause and effect).

Snacks are primarily healthy foods that children enjoy such as oranges, apples and a variety of crackers. Occasionally sweets will be served during special celebrations and if it relates to the curriculum. Water is served at each snack time. If your child has a food allergy or restriction, please notify staff and we will do our best to find an appropriate substitute snack.

Clean-up Time

Each child is expected to participate in clean-up time. Children learn that they are a member of a classroom community, and as such have a responsibility to participate with the group to accomplish this task. Children learn cooperation as they work together and practice their communication skills.

Visiting Your Child's Class

Parents are welcome at any time to visit their child's class. The purpose of a classroom visit is to observe your child in the classroom setting. We ask that visits be kept to an appropriate length, up to 30 minutes, so as not to interfere with your child's participation in activities. Parents may begin visiting classes after the second week of class of each quarter. Please make an appointment with your child's teacher and remember to check-in at the preschool office.

Volunteering in Your Child's Class

Parents are invited to volunteer in their child's classroom. It is our hope that through your experience you will gain a better understanding of how your child participates in the classroom and provide you with an opportunity to ask more specific questions of your child about their day.

Parents are asked to volunteer for the entire class session. Parents will be interacting with all children in the classroom and assisting with a variety of activities, such as crafts, reading books, building blocks. Parents will not be responsible for dealing with toileting, injuries/illness, or "discipline". Parents may not bring another child with them while volunteering without the teachers permission.

Once the staff feels that the routine for both the children and the teachers is established, we will welcome volunteers into the classroom. This will usually occur sometime in January. A calendar will be posted in the classroom listing the time and dates that we would like you to come in. You will be asked to work at a table doing an activity with a small group of children or to come in to read a book to the entire class. Please sign up for whatever activity you feel most comfortable doing.

Parent/Teacher Communication

Keeping an open line of communication between the classroom and the home is one way to insure the success of your child in the class. The staff is always willing to discuss any concerns or comments that you have about your child or the program. The teacher will make available her email address at the start of the school year so that you have a couple of options to communicate, either face to face or with your computer.

Since we do follow the primary caregiver model, not everyone will talk with the head teacher on a daily basis, but this does not mean that you cannot approach her to discuss an issue. We do work as a team within the room, so the assistants will always keep the teacher informed whenever there is an issue with a child.

Special Activities

Holiday Funday

During the fall the four-year-olds host their parents at a Holiday Funday. This is a half hour event at the beginning of your child's class. Children make Gingerbread Houses with their parents. The GB Press Newsletter will list the date for your child's Holiday Funday.

Visiting Readers

During Read to Your Child Week (January), parents are welcome to sign up in their child's classroom to be a visiting reader. This is on a first-come, first-serve basis. You may bring one of your child's favorite books to share or your child's teacher will select one for you.