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PARENT HANDBOOK: PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

## WELCOME

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The staff of Growing Tree Learning Center welcomes you. We are delighted that your child will be participating in our program. We look forward to building a warm and sharing relationship with you and your child during your tenure with us. We consider it a privilege to share with you these precious and important years of your child's development.

This handbook has been prepared to introduce each family to our program and to acquaint you with our policies and procedures. Please discuss any questions you may have with members of the staff.

## PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

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At Growing Tree Learning Center, our goal is to foster social, cognitive, physical, and emotional growth by providing an environment which facilitates the development of:

- self-confidence, initiative, and a positive self-image
- a feeling of belonging, love, and respect
- consideration for others
- enthusiasm for learning
- ability to solve problems

Our teachers arrange the environment and implement activities which center around a child directed, hands on approach to learning with free exploration and open discussion. The curriculums of the classroom are designed to meet the individual needs of each child's development.

Activities of each day are flexible and varied, including art, science, blocks, dramatic play, literature, music, sensory, manipulatives, and large and small motor activities.

## DISCIPLINE

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Growing Tree Learning Center integrates the philosophy of positive guidance, which helps children develop self-discipline and self-control over their actions with teacher involvement and instruction. It is based on mutual respect and an understanding of children's needs and developmental level. It is individualized and consistent and utilizes consistency, acceptance of feelings, firmness, teaching positive behaviors, and fairness. Children are encouraged to express their feelings verbally as well as discuss and resolve conflicts rather than "act out" their feelings.

Techniques used in guiding children's behavior include: Limit setting and consistent maintenance of limits, anticipating behaviors, modeling, redirecting, problem solving, offering choices, and the use of natural and logical consequences. We do not use "time out" but a children may take a break from the group if their body is unsafe or they need a brief period to calm down before they are ready to talk about the issue.

The following types of discipline are strictly prohibited: any harsh, cruel or unusual treatment including

corporal punishment, punishment associated with food, naps or toilet training, pinching, shaking, biting, hitting, putting anything in or on a child's mouth, humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting or yelling at a child, subjecting a child to inappropriate language, placing a child in a room with the door closed, and requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for long periods of time.

Growing Tree does not have the policy of expelling or suspending children from school.

## ENROLLMENT

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Children may be enrolled for existing openings when they complete the enrollment forms and submit the child's immunization record and required fees. The center requires one month's written notice for a change in schedule (based on availability) or withdrawal. Growing Tree offers three schedules: Monday-Friday, Monday/Wednesday/Friday and Tuesday/Thursday. We cannot accommodate requests for alternative schedules. Re-enrollment for the next school year will start in March. The re-enrollment form along with the re-enrollment fee of \$50.00 (due in May) will be required to secure your child's spot for the next school year. Since the center is year round, changes to your child's schedule for the summer can affect the availability of your child's spot for the fall if the spot is filled by another child in the summer. The only way to secure your spot is to continue on your desired schedule through the summer.

## TUITION AND FEES

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Tuition is paid in advance on the first day of each month. Please place tuition payments in the envelope located in the kitchen under the clock. A late charge of \$25.00 per tuition due is incurred if payment is received after the fifth of each month. Enrollment is cancelled if payment is not received by the tenth of the month. A fee of \$25.00 will be charged for returned checks.

Tuition rates may be changed by the center upon thirty days written notice.

A Materials fee of \$60.00 will be billed each August to be due September 1<sup>st</sup>. If enrollment occurs after September a pro-rated materials fee will be due.

A re-enrollment fee of \$50.00 will be billed each April to be due May 1<sup>st</sup>.

If a child **leaves the center after 6:00 pm for any reason**, a Late Pick-Up Charge of \$1.00 per minute will be due calculated to the time the child actually leaves the center.

There are no refunds, credits, or make-up days for time missed from school for any reason.

## CANCELLATION OF ENROLLMENT

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Enrollment will be cancelled if:

- The parents give the center one full month written advance notice of withdrawal;
- Payment is not received by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month;

- The parents fail to comply with the enrollment agreement, the Parent Handbook, or any other rules of the center;
- The center determines it is unable to meet the needs of the child, or that it is not in the best interest of the center or other children enrolled to have the child continue attending the center.

## CALENDAR AND HOURS

Growing Tree Learning Center is open year round from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Nap or rest time, which lasts approximately 2 hours, is scheduled after lunch. Outdoor play is scheduled three times a day. Please dress appropriately for the weather. Outside time is only cancelled for rain.

The center will be closed for the following holidays:

New Year's Day	MLK Jr. Day	Presidents' Day	Spring Break
Memorial Day	Independence Day	Teacher Work Day (August)	Labor Day
Columbus Day	Thanksgiving (3 Days)	Christmas (5 days)	New Year's Eve

There is no tuition credit or discount for holidays and closings.

Summer break is July 17-31. Tuition for the month of July will be half the regular tuition rate.

The center will also close whenever A.I.S.D. Elementary closes due to weather conditions. In the event of bad weather during the day, please monitor the broadcast stations or call us, as we will close if A.I.S.D. closes, and children must be picked up immediately. Following a closing due to weather, the center will re-open when A.I.S.D. Elementary opens. We are also required to close in the event that the center does not have electricity. Please call and check the outgoing message if there is any question that the center may be closed.

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Children must enter and leave the center accompanied by an adult through the classroom doors or the playground gate. Please bring your child no later than 9:30 am so he/she can take part in the vital acclimation period of the morning routine. This also allows for a personal greeting from the teacher. Once planned activities and group times are underway, teachers must devote their attention to the other children in the class. Due to the difficulty it makes the transition to school for the child and the class, children may not arrive after 11:00 am and may not be picked up then brought back to school later in the day. Also, please let us know if your child is going to be absent.

Departing children will normally be released only to parents or other persons shown on the Child Release list. Any person not known to the staff must show a picture I.D. when they arrive.

Licensing regulations require the center to maintain Sign "In" and "Out" sheets and daily attendance records. Please be sure to sign your child "In" and "Out" each day on the attendance list for the class. The list is also used during evacuation drills to make sure all children present are safe and accounted for.

## LUNCH

All children must bring lunch from home in a small, labeled lunch box or bag. Please make sure all individual containers are labeled with your child's name. Lunches may include items to be warmed up, if you wish. Please pack a re-freezable ice pack if the lunch needs to be kept cold. The center is not responsible for your child's lunch's nutritional value or for meeting your child's daily food needs. If your child does not bring a lunch, a \$5.00 lunch fee will be assessed. Notify the Director of any special dietary restrictions.

Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come and nurse their child during the school day. A comfortable place will be provided. Please discuss your preferred nursing schedule with your child's teacher.

## CLOTHING/ITEMS FROM HOME

Clothing should be comfortable, washable, and suitable for activities which may be messy or active. Since accidents and spills occur, a complete change of clothes should be kept at the center. Please label each item with your child's name and place in his/her box or bag.

Shoes should be comfortable and practical. Flip-flops and cowboy boots have slick soles which can cause accidents during active play.

For nap time the center will provide each child with a mat and sheet. Your child may also bring a blanket, and/or stuffed toy to use for nap, if you wish.

Because young children often find sharing difficult, and there is potential for damage or loss, children should leave personal possessions at home. "Security objects" such as blankets or a stuffed animal are sometimes needed to ease the transition from home. In the event that your child brings an item from home, the center will not be responsible for lost or damaged items. Everything you bring to school should be permanently labeled.

## HEALTH & SAFETY

Texas state laws require that children enrolled in day care have received the following immunizations: DTaP, Polio, Hib, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A, Varicella, PCV, and MMR. The conscientious exemption form will not be accepted for DTaP, MMR, or Varicella. The center is required to have a physician's statement of good health and current immunization record for each child. In addition, the State of Texas requires vision and hearing screening for children four and older.

An ill child must not be admitted for care if the child has one or more of the following: 1) an oral temperature 100.4 or greater, armpit temperature 99.4 or greater, or rectal temperature 101.4 or greater 2) symptoms and signs of possible illness (such as lethargy, diarrhea, vomiting, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, wheezing, behavior change, or other unusual signs until medical evaluation indicates the child can be included in

the facility's activities 3) a diagnosis of a communicable disease, until medical evaluation determines the child is no longer communicable 4) the illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in center activities including outdoor play

Children with an illness must remain home for 24 hours after the last appearance of the symptom(s) to watch for further developments. Children with fever must be fever-free without the use of medicinal fever reducers for 24 hours before returning to school.

Upon arrival, children are to be checked for any sign of illness. If a child becomes ill while at the center, the teacher will isolate the child from the group, and the parents will be asked to pick up the child immediately. **An ill child sent home from school may not return to school the following day; the child must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school.**

Parents are asked to report any illness to the center for the protection of other children. Parents are also asked to notify the center immediately when their child is exposed to a communicable disease so other parents can be alerted to the possibility of exposure. Guidelines issued by the Texas Department of Health dictate re-admission criteria. Children exposed to a communicable disease must have a written statement from a physician stating approval for readmission before the child may return to school.

Parents are encouraged to administer medication outside the center. If necessary, a staff member may administer medication on a "best efforts" basis. **The center and its staff accept no responsibility or liability for any error or omission regarding administration of medication.** All medication must be furnished in the original prescription container, with appropriate dispenser, marked with the child's name, date, directions for use, placed in a labeled zipper-lock plastic bag, and given to a staff member with a fully completed Medication Authorization Form.

In the event of a minor medical emergency (i.e., bee sting) parents will be contacted immediately while staff administers first aid. In the event of a major medical emergency (i.e. broken bone), EMS will be called while staff administers first aid, then parents will be contacted.

**Gang Free Zone:** Any area within 1000 feet of a child care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

## CLASSROOMS

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Growing Tree has three classrooms in the preschool program. The Toddler Room includes children 18 months through 2 years. The Younger Class includes children 2 through 3 years, and the Older Class includes children 3 through 5 years. Children are placed in their class based on their birthday. To keep in accordance with entrance requirements of the public school system, children must be 2 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup> to be in the Younger Class, and 3 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup> for the Older Classroom. Classrooms are changed throughout the year to reflect the changing development of the children in the class.

## OUR PLAYGROUND

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We are proud that our playground is a safe and inviting place for children to play. We recognize that parents and children would often like to take advantage of this play space. However, we must restrict playground use to class time under the supervision of our staff. Also, please do not lift your child over the playground fence. Always use the gate for entering and exiting and make sure your child is not opening the latch. Thank you for your cooperation.

## PARENT CONCERNS

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If a problem or concern exists, the center wants it corrected as quickly as possible. Please first bring concerns to the lead teacher of your child's class. If the lead teacher cannot resolve the concern, the matter will be brought to the director. If together, they cannot arrive at a solution, the director will request a conference with the parents.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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Parents are welcome to visit the center. Please pre-arrange with the lead teacher of your child's class if you would like to participate in a special activity. Brief conversations with the teacher are always welcome, while longer discussions should be arranged by appointment. Teachers will invite you to participate in a conference twice a year to discuss your child's development. A parent or teacher may request an additional conference any time a need arises. Parental notifications will be sent via email. Please make sure we have an email address that you check frequently. Feel free to contact your child's teacher directly during the day or email the director at [growingtreeaustin@gmail.com](mailto:growingtreeaustin@gmail.com).

If you have any questions or concerns about these policies and procedures, please contact the director. Parents will be notified in writing thirty days in advance of any policy changes. The director has copies of the most recent inspection report and minimum standards for review. Below you will find contact information for Protective and Regulatory Services.

Licensing: 512-834-3189    PRS Website: [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)    Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

Your feedback is important to the successful function of the center. We truly welcome your involvement.

Growing Tree Contact Information:

2807 Robinson Avenue

Austin, TX 78722

T: 512-472-4899

Email: [growingtreeaustin@gmail.com](mailto:growingtreeaustin@gmail.com)

Website: [www.growingtreeaustin.com](http://www.growingtreeaustin.com)

Owner/Director: Amber Dawkins

Director: Katie Ehrhardt

