

GINGERBREAD HOUSE PRESCHOOL

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



WELCOME VOLUNTEER

Welcome and sincere thanks to you, the volunteer, who is willing to donate time to help us at Gingerbread House Preschool. YOU are an important part of YOUR preschool. We want you to feel that your time with us is a rewarding and a challenging part of your volunteer experience.

Even though you may have experience, it is natural to feel some uneasiness about how you will get along in the classroom and with the children, or in the area in which you choose to work.

The teacher will clarify any questions you may have. This handbook will provide some information and should be helpful as you begin your work.

Training videos are available for people who would like to volunteer.



FIRST DAYS IN THE CENTER

You will find your preschool staff to welcome you at the center. They will get you off to a good start. Read the lesson plan for the week day. Note the curriculum for the day.

Your first day will probably be one of active participation. Please join in when there are group activities like games, books, finger plays, or songs. Later you may enjoy sharing your special talents with the class.

As a volunteer, you will need to fill out the form below. This is a state requirement for all volunteers in the classroom.

VOLUNTEER STATEMENT

I, _____ have never been convicted of any crime in any state, nor have I, _____ ever had any record of any founded child abuse or dependent adult abuse in any state.

OR

I, _____ have been convicted or have a founded child abuse or dependent adult abuse report. The crime (other than minor traffic offenses such as speeding, stop sign violation, parking tickets) or founded child abuse or dependent adult was for _____ and was committed _____ (city, county or state), approximately _____ (date). I feel the following information should be considered when reviewing this information. (Circumstances or issues surrounding the crime or founded report, treatment or rehabilitation following the crime or report, steps taken to correct the matter). Please feel free to provide this information on the back of the form or attach pages as needed. I understand this matter will be held in strict confidence by the agency.

AND

I, _____ shall respect the privacy of the people served by New Opportunities, Inc., through its program, and shall hold in confidence all information obtained.

AND

If after signing the above statements I, _____ am convicted of any crime in any state or have any record of founded child abuse or dependent adult abuse report in any state, it's my responsibility to report this information immediately to supervisor prior to reporting for volunteering again in the center.

AND

I, _____ understand as a volunteer I am a mandatory reporter of child abuse, but I am exempt from having to complete the minimum of two hours of Iowa's Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse training. I understand my responsibilities and have read the child abuse reporting policy.

AND

I, _____ indicate I have no communicable diseases or other health concerns that would pose a threat to the children or other staff in the center.

Signature of Volunteer

Date

PRESCHOOL - 12 VOLUNTEER TIPS

1. **INFORM** your center of the day you want to volunteer. Call if you can't make it.
2. **WEAR** comfortable clothing that you don't mind getting dirty.
3. If you have any **QUESTIONS** about what to do or if you need **HELP** with the children, ask a teacher.
4. We encourage volunteers to **GET DOWN ON THE FLOOR** with the children and **GET INVOLVED WITH THE ACTIVITIES**.
5. When **TALKING** with a child, get down at the child's eye level.
6. Always **PRAISE AND ENCOURAGE** a child's work. **ASK** children **QUESTIONS**, get involved with the activities and listen to them – **DON'T DIRECT** them.
7. **NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN ALONE**.
8. If a child **MISBEHAVES**, ask a teacher what to do until you are familiar with how situations are handled.
9. If you **DISAGREE** with a procedure, wait until the end of the day to discuss it with the teachers. Don't disagree with a teacher in front of children.
10. Don't **DISCUSS** children's behavior or appearance in front of them.
11. Never **SHARE** information about a child with anyone other than the Preschool Staff.
12. At the **END OF THE DAY**, meet briefly with the teacher to **DISCUSS** how your day went, sign the **VOLUNTEER SHEET AND SIGN-UP** for another day to volunteer.



GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH CHILDREN

It takes time for young children to know new people well enough to be sure of them. When they are not sure, they show this in different ways. Some may be shy and not want you to help them; others may be "silly" and look for teasing ways to get your attention. Volunteers can make it easier for children to know them when they first start work by trying to do the following:

When you are volunteering:

1. If you are a parent/relative, prepare your child before you come so he/she will not expect you to devote all your time to him/her.
2. Dress comfortably in something you aren't worried about soiling, and wear comfortable shoes.
3. Be friendly, smile and use the children's names as soon as you can. Say "hello" when you come each day.
4. Be alert to potentially dangerous situations at your site. It may be doors that swing easily or particular play equipment. **KNOW WHERE THE FIRST AID KIT IS** and the directions for fire and tornado drills.
5. If you have a specific assignment, **BE RESPONSIBLE AND STAY WITH IT**.

6. Keep attention on children. Choose a good area for observation so you can see children at all times.

7. Any questions or disagreement with procedures, techniques, etc., should be discussed with the teacher and not in front of the children or other parents. You are encouraged to express your feelings to the teacher whose position requires that she resolve any conflicts or difference of opinion. The final decision rests with her.

8. Help children learn to be proud of themselves and feel good about themselves. State what you want children to do in a positive way. (Say "Walk, please." instead of "Don't run." Or "Keep the puzzle on the floor." Instead of "Don't dump the puzzle on the floor.") Making fun of a child, comparing him to others, name calling or shaming the child only reinforces a child's idea that he is not as good as others.

9. Use VOICE as a learning tool. Keep it low and talk with the child on the child's level. Avoid calling loudly across a room or showing your anger in tone of voice. The most effective speech is simple and direct, perhaps somewhat slow. Decreasing speed is more effective than raising pitch.

10. OFFER A CHOICE WHEN YOU CAN REALLY GIVE ONE. "Do you want to use red or green paint? is a true choice; "Do you want lunch now? is not. Try not to end directions with – OK?

11. Treat each child with the same respect.

12. NEVER DISAPPROVE OF A CHILD even though you may be showing disapproval of what he does. You may say, "That is not a good thing to do", but avoid saying, "You are a bad boy for doing that". A child needs to know you still like him even though he hurt another child or did something he should not have done.

13. Give the child maximum opportunity to grow in independence. Help the child work out his problem rather than solving it for him, but respond to his request for help. Examples: help children find out that boards must be placed in the wagon in a certain way; let children put on coats, sweaters, boots, etc. by themselves with little or no help; what they are learning is more important than meeting a schedule.

14. Familiarize yourself with the rules of the classroom.

15. Use the most effective position for observing. Enrichment of experience will come when an adult is observing several children and their interests, not just one child. For example, the adult who is reading to children may encourage a shy child who is ready for a change in activity by encouraging him to leave the group before his lack of attention disrupts others.

16. Familiarize yourself with the 50 objectives of the Creative Curriculum used to write observation notes based on child's learning. Write notes on the children you observe.

REMINDER: INDOOR AND OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS ARE SMOKE-FREE AREAS



BLOCK AND BUILDING CENTER

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR THE CHILD:

1. Expands children's vocabulary and language by talking about their buildings.
2. Give sensory pleasure - smooth, hard, heavy.
3. Helps children learn shapes, relative sizes, balance and methods of construction.
4. Encourages children to explore patterns and relationships when teachers point out patterns children have made in their constructions.
5. Improves small muscle coordination.
6. Can be a social experience, drawing in a number of children.
7. Teaches number concepts by suggesting that children put away blocks in sets ("Everyone takes three blocks at a time to put away").
8. Teaches representational concepts when teachers ask children to draw what has been created.

PROCEDURES FOR ASSISTANTS:

1. Watch closely to avert dangerous situations.
2. Pile up a few blocks to start child who seems to want activity but cannot start.
3. Help the child protect his structure if he wishes – some children derive great satisfaction from solitary building.
4. Talk with children about the different shapes and how many blocks they need.
5. Help children find and return blocks to their designated place.
6. Suggest props like people, animals or child-created signs a child might like to use.



OUTDOOR AREA

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR THE CHILD:

1. Children's health and well-being are nurtured as they run, jump, and create.
2. Children can learn about nature firsthand.
3. Children develop their large muscle skills and coordination.
4. Social skills are developed at games are play in small groups or dramatic play situations are reenacted.

PROCEDURE FOR ASSISTANTS:

1. Help supervise children at play
2. Play a game with children
3. Take an interest in discoveries (e.g., watching a caterpillar, collecting leaves.)
4. Share a special skill or interest (e.g., woodworking, gardening, basketball, ring toss).
5. Teach children jump rope rhythms and clapping games to promote phonological awareness. Have them tune into the sounds and sights around them: how the horn on a car sounds vs. the horn on a truck or bus; identifying animal sounds-crickets, birds, mosquitoes, frogs, and dogs.
6. Expand children's vocabulary and language by asking questions and encouraging them to describe what they see. Use a variety of adjectives when you observe with children; slimy, bright, bold, glowing, rough, furry, prickly, and so on.
7. Teach children about print and letters and words by providing traffic signs for wheeled toys. Provide clipboards for children to record observations, cardboard to make signs to identify plants in the garden, or paper to leave a message for the custodian.
8. Promote problem solving by guiding children to find solutions to problems they encounter (e.g., what can we do to keep the balls from going over the fence?)
9. Expose children to physical science concepts by offering them balls, ramps, tubes, water wheels, funnels, and sifters and by taking an interest in how they use these materials.
10. Guide children's development of process skills by posing questions such as: "What would happen if...? How can you find out? What did you learn? Encourage children to be good observers by showing them that you too are interested in finding out what is waiting for you each day outdoors.



COMPUTER CENTER

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR THE CHILD:

1. Children are aware of technology when computers are in your everyday classroom life, Children start regarding them as natural tools.
2. The software selected engages children in active learning.
3. Social skills are developed when two children work together on the computer.

PROCEDURE FOR ASSISTANTS:

1. Assist children in following the procedures for using computers.
2. Help children find programs they want and learn how to use them.

3. Participate in playing a game on the computer.
4. Expand children's vocabulary and language development by introducing them to software that labels vocabulary with pictures, written words, and the spoken word.
5. Help children develop phonological awareness with interactive software that plays with language.
6. Increase children's understanding of books and enjoyment of literacy by exposing them to electronic books.
7. Enhance children's knowledge of print by recording their responses on a word processing/reading program. Some programs give children hints on reading words and use pictures to show how words combine to form sentences.
8. Offer children practice in learning about letters and words with a program that matches pictures to their beginning letters.

ABC/WRITING CENTER

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR THE CHILD:

1. Develops finger muscles as tools are used for writing and drawing.
2. Makes and interprets representations
3. Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
4. Uses emerging reading skills to make meaning from print.
5. Understands the purpose of writing.
6. Writes letters and words.

PROCEDURE FOR ASSISTANTS:

1. Help children gain knowledge of print by recording their experiences and their discoveries on charts. Draw their attention to letters and words used in the Discovery Area (e.g., "Puffy's name starts with a "P", just like yours.>").
2. Build children's vocabulary and language by talking with them about their discoveries. Use every opportunity to introduce new vocabulary as they touch, feel, taste, hear, and observe objects and living things (e.g., "The caterpillar has spun a cocoon." "This sap from the wood is very sticky".) Encourage them to describe what they are doing, for example, "I can make the Ping-pong ball move fast when I blow into the straw really hard".
3. Offer children opportunities to use print by setting up a message board of mailboxes. Teach children about letters and words by talking about them as they read and write.
4. Enhance children's understanding of books and other texts by drawing their attention to the different forms of print in their environment.
5. Strengthen children's knowledge of print by encouraging them to draw and write (using scribbles or transitional spelling) about the designs and constructions they make.
6. Help children learn about letters and words by talking with them as they manipulate magnetic letters, letter blocks, and letter tiles. Describe what you see happening as children arrange letters, (e.g., "You made a word! You put an m, and a, and a t together and spelled mat!")



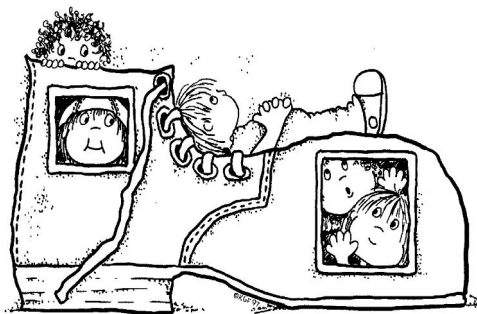
DRAMATIC PLAY AREA

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR THE CHILD:

1. Helps child feel at ease in school because it is almost 100% familiar – a good link between home and school.
2. Permits him to play out family experiences and try different family roles- father, mother, baby, etc.
3. Stimulates imagination.
4. Encourages languages & vocabulary by introducing & teaching children the names of props.
5. Guides problem solving by helping children to find solutions to problems they encounter.

PROCEDURE FOR ASSISTANTS:

1. Participate very little unless invited to join.
2. If a child seems to be having difficulty entering the group, suggest roles to him and help him ease into it.
3. Suggest ideas to extend make-believe play.
4. Be sure materials are returned to storage areas by the children using them when they are finished.



MANIPULATIVE AREA

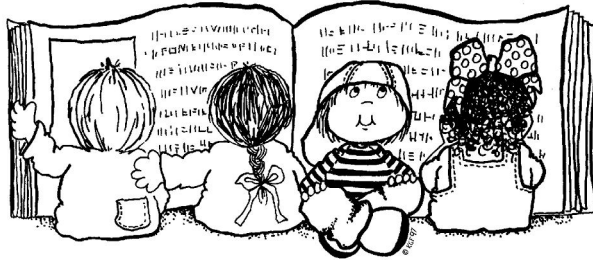
WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR CHILD:

1. These materials teach math skills, develops eye-hand coordination, and promote small muscle skills.
2. Allows freedom of use of activities which allows child to make choices and be creative.

PROCEDURE FOR ASSISTANTS

1. Help children to develop problem-solving skills as they construct, design, and assemble materials. Encourage them to put puzzles together, make designs with parquetry and pattern blocks, sort and classify collections, or construct a building with Lego blocks.
2. Help children to develop number concepts as they count beads, blocks, and teddy bear counters. Use mathematical terminology as you compare quantities – more than, less than, the same as.

3. Encourage child to put activity away when finished.
4. Enhance children's vocabulary and language by talking with them as they play with toys and games.



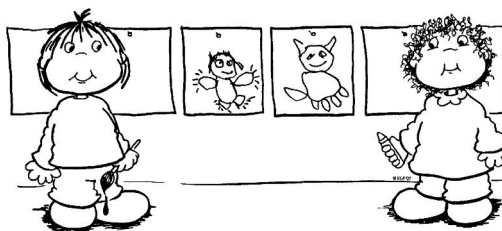
BOOKS AND STORY CENTER

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR THE CHILD:

1. Children develop valuable literacy skills and a love for books.
2. It is a quiet place to get away and enjoy books.
3. Introduces children to new words.
4. The most important letters are the ones in children's names.
5. Develops children's phonological awareness by reading stories that play with language with as Dr. Seuss books and other rhyming books.

PROCEDURE FOR ASSISTANTS:

1. If a child asks you to read to him, do so.
2. Hold books right side up so children are able to see pictures and print.
3. Increase their knowledge of print by sweeping your hand under the words as you read by demonstrating top-to-bottom and left-to-right on a chart.
4. Develop their comprehension skills by using open-ended questions during storybook reading. Encourage children to retell familiar stories using props to gain a sense of story.



ART CENTER

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR THE CHILD:

1. Children need time to explore and experiment with different materials.
2. Creative art is the way children express their own ideas and feelings. Can be messy but this is OK!
4. Develops small motor skills.
5. There are predictable stages in children's artwork.
6. Increases literacy skills when teachers writes child's dictation about the artwork

PROCEDURES FOR ASSISTANTS:

1. Encourage children to experiment with paint, markers, clay, dough, and collage materials.
2. Refrain from asking child what his picture "is"- talk with the child about his picture. You might say "Tell me about this picture."
3. Help with a special activity such as making play dough.
4. Teach knowledge of print by having children sign their names to the picture or post their names next to sculptures, mobiles, and assemblages. With their permission, write children's descriptions of their work directly on their artwork or on an accompanying sentence strip.
5. Encourage children to observe patterns in art such stripes or alternating.
6. Help children develop an understanding of one-to-one correspondence as they place one paintbrush in each paint pot or replace a cap on each marker.
7. Introduce children to physical science by conducting experiments with different art media. As they add water to clay or mix paints together, encourage children to observe changes.
8. Adults should not impose their own ideas on children artwork.

SAND/WATER TABLE

WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DOES FOR CHILD:

1. These are soothing materials that calm children.
2. There are scientific and mathematical discoveries children can make.
3. Offers children varied opportunities to learn about the earth and the environment through their everyday observations of sand and water in the outdoors.

PROCEDURE FOR ASSISTANTS:

1. Make sure the sand and water stays in the tub.
2. Offer props and talk about what children are discovering.
3. Help with a special activity like blowing bubbles, testing what floats/sinks.
4. Ask open-ended questions that not only encourage children to experiment, but also provide opportunities to express the way they feel when playing with sand and water.
5. Teach number concepts by having children count how many measuring cups of sand are needed to fill a pail.
6. Encourage children to make patterns in damp sand using objects like shells or cookie cutters.
7. Introduce children to firsthand experience of physical science by giving them props such as ramps, gutters, funnels, and sieves that they can explore with sand and water.

THANK YOU!

