



## PEARENT MANUAL

132 West 112<sup>th</sup> Street; New York, NY 10026 | 347-514.6001 | [info@peartreenyc.com](mailto:info@peartreenyc.com)

**Dear Parent:**

Welcome! to Peartree Preschool!

We are very excited about the upcoming year! We truly believe that you and your child will be happy with what we have planned. The staff is looking forward to providing your child with a positive and rewarding school experience. We hope to form a partnership with you and your family during the coming year.

Our mission to provide a place where children learn the wonders of the world and teachers prepare the next generation of community leaders and citizens. Peartree Preschool's philosophy is learning through play, which we believe is essential in child development. The curriculum is guided by Bank Street's Developmental Interactive approach to early childhood and New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene standards. Our curriculum provides a balanced program for all preschoolers.

The school showcases a community's commitment to its children and their future, who in turn learn from an early age the importance of being responsible stewards of their community and the larger world. Peartree was constructed in a way that provides ample clean air and sunlight, along with zero toxic materials and harmful chemicals.

Enclosed in this manual, you will find some very important information about our school. Please read this handbook and save it to consult throughout the year, as it will answer many of your questions about the philosophy, policies and procedures at Peartree.

Again, the entire staff is eagerly awaiting your child's arrival. We are excited about our new school!

Sincerely,

*Denise Adusei*

Denise Adusei  
Founder and Executive Director

## **MISSION**

Our mission is to provide a place where children learn the wonders of the world and teachers prepare the next generation for future success.

### **Philosophy**

We focus on the individual child and how she/he lives within a group, and believe in strong connections with each child's family. We seek to create a partnership with you. While we seek to provide a place for children where they can explore their interests and maximize their potential, these goals differ for each child at different times in his/her development. We strongly believe that each day in the child's life is important not just for the future, but for the here and now.

We believe that everything children touch can be a learning experience. We create a setting in which children find warmth, comfort, and gentleness as well as an abundance of opportunities for movement, exploration, and self-discovery. We nurture the imaginations as well as promote the physical intellectual development of children through play.

We value collaboration with everyone and lead by example. Peartree aspires to create an atmosphere where school is an extension of the family: a school environment where teacher, parent, and student interactions involve strong connections, enriching experiences, and responsibility on the part of all three participants. Educating children, and working in partnership with families, combined with highly qualified teachers, will provide children with experiences that will help them grow and develop as individuals and prepare them for future success.

It is our belief, learning in a center that focuses on healthy living can only further enhance and improve the lives of our children, their families, and our teachers creating an experience that is unique and vital for a 21<sup>st</sup> century program. Throughout our program Peartree will instill healthy choices and character building.

The curriculum is a dynamic, interactive experience that builds and impacts on the interests of young children in developmentally appropriate ways. We address the development of the whole child. Our curriculum addresses the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, language/communication and self-help skills of children.

## **CURRICULUM**

### **Developmental Interaction Approach**

Our educational philosophy is the “developmental interaction” approach. “Developmental” means we work on the assumption that children learn best when they are ready for new experiences and that these experiences build on earlier ones. What children are learning, what they are interested in and what they are capable of learning is intricately tied to their development. Particular experiences are determined by an individual child’s interests and abilities.

Teachers follow the children’s lead in planning and implementing a varied program of play-based, exploratory activities. The repetition and perfecting of skills is important and respected. When children have done thoroughly what they need to do as a two year old, a three year old, or four-year old, they will be prepared to move on to new experiences and learn new skills. Each stage is an essential building block in the growth of the child.

“Interaction” refers to the idea that experiences lead to learning when they occur in a socially, physically and emotionally responsive environment. A carefully planned environment encourages safe, spontaneous, hands-on exploration and supports the development of curiosity, problem-solving, language and social growth. Preschoolers learn best when they have interaction with the people and materials in their world. Through these kinds of experiences, preschoolers learn that they have an impact on the world. We endeavor to create an atmosphere which nurtures self-esteem through positive relationships with others along with respect and acknowledgment of each child’s individuality and competence.

Children are makers of meaning; they construct knowledge, through their interaction with the human world, and with materials. Therefore, the environment is designed to support and develop the active energy, challenges and experiences that introduce and engage them with the world. Our classrooms provide opportunities for them to explore, inquire, experiment, question and make hypotheses.

Significantly, at this age preschoolers need developmental tasks and opportunities that assist them in acquiring and becoming socially competent. They need environments that foster and encourage the kind of experiences that promote cognitive and language development. Our program emphasizes emerging literacy and mathematically skills, as well as the integration of science, music, social studies, arts and physical development.

A program of integrated activities meets the developmental needs of each age group. Because young children learn through rich, varied play, an important time of the day is activity/free-play time, when each child chooses from areas such as blocks, dramatic play, art, books, manipulative toys,

water or sand table play and group activities such as cooking or planting. Each group has an active play period on the playground as well as several group times for story, snack, music and movement and discussion. Special teachers join us for music, art and creative movement.

## **ADULT ROLES IN THE PROGRAM**

Peartree's staff consists of early childhood professionals who have varying levels of degrees in the field of family and child development. They have been chosen for their dedication to, interest in and experience with infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Each classroom has a Lead Teacher who has or is pursuing a master's degree in early childhood education or a related field. Each group also has an assistant teachers or aide - who have a Bachelors degree or an Associates degree in early childhood education or a related field.

The **Executive Director**: Since children are the most important and most precious aspect of parents' lives, it is very important for our director to keep the children's health and well being first and foremost in considerations. Prior to founding Peartree our Executive Director worked for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the agency that regulates childcare centers in New York City. Her responsibility is to ensure the safe and caring management of all the children entrusted to our facility

The **Educational Director** is credentialed according to the NYC Department of Health and NYS Department of Education. This individual is certified in Early Childhood and has 13 years of preschool experience. The Educational Director manages our compassionate, trained and high caliber staff, monitors the children in our program, setting schedules and lesson plans, meeting with parents and keeping all parents informed of policies and procedures at our center.

**Lead Teachers** are certified in Early Childhood Education and responsible for communicating with parents and designing and implementing curriculum, assessing the child's individual development, management of program needs, building facilities and following safety and health procedures.

**Assistant Teachers** are responsible for assisting the Lead Teacher with classroom preparation, working with children implementing the program and contributing to their evaluation.

**Volunteers**: We have several college students and other responsible adults who are in the classroom each week in order to observe the children for their college courses. Please be assured they are required to fill out volunteer forms, and pass the New York City Department of Health background and security check. Volunteers are never left in the classroom unsupervised. This is a great learning experience for the children as well as the college students and we welcome their participation, knowledge, support, and contribution.

## **PEARENT PARTICIPATION**

**Parents:** Once your child is enrolled at Peartree, you become a Pearent. Pearents are invited to participate as much as they can in the lives of their children while at the Peartree. Pearents should feel free to spend time in their child's room, call to check on their children, have lunch with the group, go on outings, read to children or do special projects, such as:

- **Room Breakfasts:** Rooms will sponsor room breakfasts throughout the year, sometimes with pearents volunteering to bring in a special food from home. Pearents and teachers are also welcome to organize lunch or dinner potlucks.
- **Room Parents:** For each classroom, Peartree asks for one or two parents to volunteer to be a Room Pearent. Room parents help in communication between Peartree, the Pearents Association, teachers, administration and families, help be "in touch" with Pearents' questions, concerns and ideas and share them with the director and help create community spirit by raising awareness of the Pearents. If you are interested in becoming a room parent, please speak with the education director.

**Pearent Association:** All parents with children at Peartree are members of the Pearents Association. The Pearents Association Board will be made up of members elected by the whole parent body. The board will meet regularly. The minutes from the meetings are emailed to all parents. It sponsors numerous special activities for parents and children.

The mission of the Pearent Association is:

1. To foster and encourage parent participation in the Peartree by making parents aware of opportunities for involvement in the Center.
2. To promote community-building and communication among parents, teachers, and administrators, through regular Pearents Association Board meetings, discussions with administrators, distribution of board meeting minutes, and regular reports in newsletters.
3. To raise funds to enrich and enhance the educational experiences of the children or support selected programs.

## **THE DAY AT PEARTREE**

**Arrival:** Although some families have opted for early drop off, the day begins at 9:00 AM at Peartree with parents bringing their children to their rooms. It is important that you be on time as activities begin promptly at 9:15 AM. Children should arrive no later than 9:00 AM. Often children who arrive late can have a difficult time moving into the group and miss a good portion of the morning activity period.

*Activities:* Each group has a regular daily schedule of activities. The activities alternate between more and less teacher-directed ones. There are times when the children function as a group: story time, music, movement, snacks and there are times when the children make their own choices: activity/free-play period, outside playtime. Some of the activities among which the children can choose include art, block building, puzzles, dramatic play, water play, and cooking.

The teachers are aware of each child throughout the day, so they have a picture of how the child's day flows. The teachers will let children figure things out for themselves whenever it is constructive to do so, becoming more actively involved when it seems appropriate. We are helping the child learn to exert control over him or herself and to solve his or her own problems. This applies to social skills as well as to academic and physical ones. Children feel good when they know they have some control over themselves and their environment.

At Peartree, the environment includes a warm, creative room experience, an outdoor classroom and an excellent music and creative movement program. In the classroom, teachers will help the children discover changes and experiences happening around them: the seasons, nature and animal life, friendship, families, themselves and more through art materials, books and activities. They will be helped to see more fully, to ask more questions and to guess at the answers.

In the outdoor space, they create their own worlds in and around the sandbox and with large, hollow wood blocks and wheel toys. The Peartree's Garden is a on-going way for children to experience the rhythms of nature and the life cycle through planting seeds and tending plants, harvesting and preparing fruits and vegetables, exploring the many insects and worms that live above and below ground and turning the soil to prepare it for the next season. Time in the garden is extended by cooking projects using harvested vegetables, reading books and making drawings of what is observed there.

*Meals and Snacks:* Children at Peartree bring their lunches and a small snack for the morning or contract with My Red Rabbit. The school provides water and an afternoon snack. Please print your child's name clearly on his or her lunch box and any food containers. Please include protein (sandwich, cheese, yogurt, meat, etc.), vegetables, and fruit. Please send healthy food only, no "junk food". We define "junk food" as any food that is high in fat, sugar and/or salt and low in nutritional value. Some examples include candy, cookies, chips, doughnuts, cake or any deep fried foods such as French fries. We encourage healthy eating habits throughout the day.

Chocolate and nuts are not allowed in Peartree for the children on any occasion, including birthdays. Do prepare your child's lunch in small, manageable portions that your child can eat on his or her own.

Because it is important that children not learn to associate healthy food with a reward, no food is considered dessert. At Peartree, some or all the food you send will be served and your child will be allowed to eat foods in the order they choose.

*Rest Time:* Each group has a rest time after lunch. Teachers promote rest time in a variety of ways: turning off the lights, reading to children, playing quiet music or story tapes. According to New York City Department of Health regulations, Peartree is required to have each child rest for at least one hour every day. Children are not required to sleep but are expected to stay on their cots or mats and use quiet voices when speaking so as not to disturb those who do sleep. The children who stay for the Full Day program often sleep and have a more productive afternoon when they do.

Parents supply sheets and blankets for rest time. They will be sent home weekly to be laundered. After rest time the children may have another activity or story time before some leave in the afternoon. Children staying for the Full Day will have another activity time, outdoor time and snack in the afternoon.

*Bathroom Time:* Being able to handle one's bodily functions is an important learning experience. Children who have learned to use the toilet on their own will be encouraged to continue to do so. If children are using diapers, parents are required to send diapers and wipes to school clearly marked with their child's name. Please work with your child's teacher when you feel your child is ready to start the process. We both need to have a planned effort in supporting your child in toilet learning. Your child's teacher can be a source of information and guidance in the toilet learning process.

Children enrolled who are three years old must be potty trained. Children must be wearing underwear with very few accidents. A child having accidents daily would not be considered potty trained. Please note that wearing pull ups isn't considered being potty trained.

## **ADMISSION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Eligibility**

We are licensed to serve children between the ages of two to five years old. All children who have reached the ages of two years to five years of age by December 31 are eligible to register for Peartree Preschool. Children under 24 months or already attending Kindergarten are not eligible to enroll.

### **Children with Special Needs**

Peartree Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability. Peartree is dedicated to supporting the Americans with Disabilities Act. If your child may require special accommodations for participation, please call us to discuss how we can support your family.

Class placement is based on the developmental needs of the individual child. Upon admission all health records, background forms, emergency contact forms, and authorization forms must be submitted.

## **REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

- To reduce paper waste, all applications are submitted online at [www.peartreenyc.com](http://www.peartreenyc.com)
- Upon submission, a non-refundable online payment of \$50 is charged
- Once applications are received and reviewed, our staff will contact families for an admissions visit. Faculty will meet with families and assess the child(ren) and how we could possibly partner with families.
- Before we can finalize admission, parents/guardians must submit all health records, birth certificates, emergency contact forms, and authorization forms as required by the Bureau of Child Care.
- We will send out notifications within three weeks after the admissions visit and receipt of completed enrollment forms, we will confirm the commencement date for the child(ren).
- Upon notification that a child has been accepted to our preschool, a \$200 registration fee and a security deposit equivalent to one month's tuition is due. This deposit must be paid two weeks after notification in order to hold the child's position in our program. IF no deposit is submitted within two weeks, the family forfeits enrollment.
- The tuition deposit is nonrefundable. If a family goes ahead and enrolls with us and later withdraws, we will apply that deposit to the last month.
- Registration for the preschool carries over each year. Each summer, registration will be open for newcomers to the program, based on space availability. Class curriculum will remain age appropriate. There is no need to switch classes when a child has a birthday.
- All fees for program students will be due the first of each month in order to remain continuously enrolled for the following session.

- If payment is not received within one-week, enrollment for subsequent sessions will be cancelled and new applicants will be accepted.

## **HEALTH FORMS**

The Department of Health's Bureau of Childcare which is our licensing agency, requires that every child in the center has a physical examination prior to entering the Peartree and at regular intervals thereafter. The completed health form must be in our files by the first day of the year. No child will be admitted until this form is received with complete immunization information.

Parents are also required to submit medical forms to Peartree after every "well visit" for your child and each time your child is immunized throughout the year. Children are not allowed to attend Peartree until their records are up to date. If your child is under a physician's care for any special health problem, is taking medication, or has any allergies, be sure that these items are noted.

## **SCHOOL SCHEDULE**

We follow New York City's Department of Education's schedule (DOE). We are closed for the following holidays; New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Please see DOE's website or [click here for](#) the specific dates for fall, spring and winter breaks. Any other closures will be posted two weeks in advance.

PearTree will be closed when NYC public elementary schools are closed for snow, transit or other city emergencies. For any other unscheduled closings, you will be notified by the school.

## **HOURS OF OPERATION**

Peartree will be open Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We offer full-time and part-time preschool options as well as extended care services. Our program includes 2-day, 3-day, and 5-day options for part- and full-time programs. Please see our online [Admissions](#) page for the program and fee schedule. Tuition varies per option. Peartree's regular preschool program runs from September through June, with special Summer Camp options available from July-September.

## **STARTING THE YEAR**

At Peartree, our emphasis begins with the development of strong, warm, trusting relationships. The social environment paves the way for the children to get the most out of the physical environment, as well as our routines and activities.

For every child, the first days of the school are filled with new experiences, new people and new expectations. We try to make this adjustment period as smooth and comfortable as it can be for each child because it serves as a foundation for a happy year at the center and for future separations and transitions. We ask parents to cooperate in creating a bridge from home to school and help your children to establish trusting relationships with their new teachers. Therefore, during the first short days, we expect that you will stay in your child's room or in the building, depending on your child's readiness to let you go.

Transitional articles (blanket, teddy bear or doll) are sometimes needed by a child starting school or by a child having a stressful time. If possible, however, it is best to leave treasured objects at home since they are not easily shared and are particularly missed if they get lost at school. If a special object is brought to school, it will be safeguarded by being kept in a special basket or cubby. Please cooperate with the school policy of not having toy guns, weapons, or masks in school. We welcome stuffed or soft animals or soft dolls and blankets. We have found that TV or movie character toys that are hard and/or based on aggressive and violent stories can lead to the same kind of behavior in the classroom. We ask that these toys remain at home.

## **THINGS TO BRING**

### **First Day**

- Photo(s) of child, child with parents, parents alone, anything or anyone important to your child (grandparents, siblings, sitters, relatives, friends, and pets).
- Extra clothes (pants, shirts, sweater, two pairs of socks and underwear). *Everything must be fully labeled.* You can use a laundry pen or "Sharpie" indelible pen.
- A blanket and a small sheet for a cot. Please do not bring a pillow.
- 

### **Optional Items**

- "Comfort" toy or object (i.e., teddy bear, doll, cloth diaper, or any other toy or object which will help your child feel at home at Peartree).

## **SEPARATION AND PHASE-IN**

It is common for young children to experience anxiety about separating from and leaving their parents. Your child may be anxious about you leaving when coming to preschool. Sometimes this concern appears the first day, sometimes later, and sometimes not at all. We want to work with you to help your child make a smooth and enjoyable transition from home to new social environments. r.

Helping children to separate (say good-bye) from their parents is a key component in the program. This may be your family's first experience with separation and we are sensitive to individual needs and feelings. In order to ease the process, parents and teachers work together to create a bridge

between home and our program. It is in your child's best interest that we allow for an opening schedule which eases children into a school routine. Once school begins, we ask that parents allow at least one week for gradual transitioning. This may vary with some children. The staff, having worked with children in this situation previously, will make every effort to ease both you and your child into the program.

We have found that when a parent feels comfortable in the environment, often the child will as well. The building of a relationship between parents and teachers is the foundation for the child's positive experiences in school. For this reason, we ask parents to spend time with their child in their room during the first week of the child's start at the school. The amount of time will depend on the child's development, previous experience with separations and the parent's feelings about leaving the child at Peartree.

During this phase-in period, children come in small groups with their parents (a phase-in schedule for your child will be sent to you). Parents spend time in the classroom playing with their child, assisting their child with the daily routines and helping the child establish relationships with the teachers.

Children begin to feel comfortable with separation as parents and teachers work together. While you are still with your child in the room, teachers will observe and ask questions to enable them to better know your child after the separation has occurred.

Initially you will stay with your child for an amount of time in a small group. You will receive an adjustable phase-in schedule on your child's first day. On your child's second day, you may be able to leave the room for a short time, coming back as promised so your child can trust yours and the teachers word. **YOU MAY NOT SNEAK OUT OF THE ROOM!** Children will be added to the group as the week progresses and the school day will be extended. While you are in the room with your child, be attentive but keep your interaction to a minimum. Introduce him/her to the teachers and refer all of his requests to the teacher (if she/he will allow).

**All parents must say "good-bye" to their children and tell them when they will return. Parents may NOT sneak out in order to prevent the child from crying at that moment.** Leaving without saying good-bye may be easier for the parents than leaving while a child is crying, but it truly isn't easier for the child. Their tears and cries are symbols of their healthy attachment to you. It is necessary and healthy for children to be allowed to express their emotions. Children will be helped and comforted by a teacher. **Leaving without saying good-bye can also make separations more difficult because a child will fear the unexpected departure and try to keep a close eye on his/her parent.**

This vigilance prevents him or her from engaging in play or interacting with teachers or children. Sneaking out of the room is in direct opposition to the trust that you are trying to build with your child. They will better trust that you will return when they see that you are clear about when you leave. We encourage you to talk openly with the teachers in order to establish positive relationships. Expressing your feelings and needs at this time and all through the year is vital to the success of you and your child's experiences at Peartree. It is also one of the most important things you can do to establish a working relationship with the staff. Please speak with the teachers after the children have left or arrange for a phone conversation. The Director of the school can be notified for consultation or if a problem arises.

**The following are suggestions for ensuring a comfortable, supportive phase-in period:**

- **Show your child around the center** and introduce him or her to the staff.
- **Sit on the side of the room** and be available for your child.
- **Familiarize yourself with the materials** available for the children and don't hesitate to encourage your child to use them.
- **Do not push your child to separate** or to participate. Your child will let you know when he or she is ready. If you have any concerns or questions about how the process is going, please speak with the teachers. They will arrange for a time to talk.
- **Share information about your child** with the teachers. They will ask a lot of questions about your child's routines at home for meals, sleeping and being with you. They are not being nosy; they want to be able to understand your child better. *Please inform them of any changes that have happened recently before beginning at the center (ex; moving, visitors, new sibling, a parent traveling) or are expected in the near future. Changes that may seem routine or ordinary to an adult may be regarded as unusual by a young child who has not had as many years of experience in dealing with changes.*
- **Discuss your time needs** for the separation with the teachers. (Do you need to be at work at a certain time?) We will try to accommodate them, but we may not be able to assure that your child will be ready to stay without you yet.
- **Special sitters or relatives may assist** you in being in the room with your child if you absolutely cannot stay. But remember, children separate differently from each person. It can be very confusing and even prolong the phase-in process for the child to be with a different person every day.

## **ARRIVAL**

**We ask that you arrive by 9:00am.** All children should be checked in and prepared to start their day within 15 minutes of the start of the program. When you bring your child to school, please bring him/her into the classroom and are sure the teacher knows she/he is there. You may not drop him/her off at the curb or the door nor send him in the classroom by himself/herself.

It is extremely important that he/she come to school on time so that his/her day begins at the child's pace and she/he leaves you in a non-pressured and relaxed manner. It is difficult for a child to come into school during or after an activity he/she enjoys.

Your family's arrival and your leaving your child in the morning can be facilitated with the establishment of a regular routine for saying good-bye that you will use every day. Planning to stay for a few minutes before you leave for work can make the leave-taking a little easier for some children. You can make reading a book to your child or helping him or her to get involved in an activity a part of the morning routine.

Then, when it's time for you to leave, you can have a usual good-bye place (for example: by the door) and plan for a wave at the window afterwards. Some parents may go to the door with their child and teacher and sing a good-bye song.

Your child may need help from a teacher; you may have to give your child to a teacher to hold as you depart. Your child may cry when you leave. If you are uncomfortable, you can call the room when you get to your office/lab to see how your child is faring. Usually children stop crying and get involved in an activity fairly soon after a parent leaves. Even children who are happy throughout the day may have a hard time saying good-bye to a parent in the morning. It is normal for children to protest when a parent leaves, and some may protest for many, many mornings.

Many children, though they greatly enjoy their friends and the activities, would find it a perfect world if they had it all – you and Peartree! Your leaving may also be difficult on days when there have been changes at home: a parent traveling, discussion about the arrival of a new sibling, discussion about moving, actually moving, etc. Again, it's important that you keep the teachers aware of any changes at home that may affect your child's day with us.

### **Late Arrivals and Doctor or Dentist Appointments**

We understand that there will be days when your child has a doctor or other appointment that means arriving late or leaving early from school. We strongly urge that you make your appointments for early or late in the day. When children arrive at transitions, lunch or nap time, or are taken out and returned in the middle of the day, it often negatively affects the rest of their day. Therefore, we require that children are dropped off by 10:30 am. Otherwise, we will not be able to accept the child.

Children are aware of what they have missed and have difficulty with the rest of their day. You can speak with your health care provider and request appointments at the end of the day to make your child's day easier. However

you choose to make appointments, please inform your child's teacher the day before the appointment so that we can incorporate the information into our planning. Please be aware that children who are brought back in the middle of the day may have such a difficult time that you may be called to come get them. Children may not be brought back after 4:00pm.

### **PICK-UP TIME**

Remember that Peartree closes promptly at 6:00pm. Please come into the classroom for your child and be sure the teacher knows he is leaving with you. We expect that all children and parents will leave Peartree by 6:00pm. There is an additional charge of \$50 per 15 minutes for late pick-up. Continuous late pick-up will result in termination of your child's contract.

A transition that frequently gets overlooked is pick-up time. Children must now make the transition from Peartree back to Mom, Dad or other care. They often greet their parents with confused emotions: "I'm so happy to see you," is expressed along with "I'm angry that you left me," or "Why did you come so early?" These emotions can be manifested in tantrums, refusal to cooperate, indifference to parents, a sudden need to do all the puzzles again, etc.

Parents often feel confused and upset by their child's behavior, especially if they expected the child to race into their arms and tell them happily what fun they had and how much their child missed them. This can be a difficult part of the day and needs to be given thought and planning.

Teachers are more than willing to help you with this transition. Children do not have the same emotional agenda with the teachers as they do with their parents. They tend to make the biggest fuss (and reserve the most love) for their parents. Sometimes when emotions are high and everyone is tired at the end of the day, it is easier if the teachers help you get your child ready to leave. Please talk to the teachers if you need help or feel uncomfortable with what is happening at the end of the day.

**The following are some things to think about for enhancing a smooth departure:**

- **Since the Peartree closes promptly at 6:00pm, it is important that you arrive before 6:00pm in order to ensure ample time for a smooth transition home.** Please be on time! *Even a short delay can seem endless to a child who is waiting.*
- **The classrooms and the common rooms are not available for children to play in after 6:00pm.** The teachers have straightened up, cleaned and prepared the rooms for the next day. Please do not bring your child back to his/her room to play after you have picked up.
- **Come 5-10 minutes early to sit down and spend time with your child and talk to the teachers before leaving.** If you arrive right at closing time, the teacher will not be able to discuss your child's day with you or help facilitate your child's transition home.

- **Work with your child's teachers to develop a routine at pick up time that works for both you and your child.** The children don't have any choice or control over attending the center. Devising ways for them to have control over the departure often helps. For example, let them pick one activity to do with you before you leave. *Again, if you come right before 6:00pm, you will not be able to give your child choices, as we will need for you to leave quickly.*
- **Give your child some undivided attention before engaging in conversations with other adults in the room.** Parents often enjoy talking with each other at the end of the day. However, many children require a parent's full attention at departure and may act out or become upset if they don't have it.
- **Remember that you are responsible for your child at pick-up time.** If your child leaves the room without you, please follow and bring him or her back.
- **If you are going to have someone else pick up your child, please let the teachers know in-person or in writing.** We cannot send a child home with anyone we do not know. Please introduce us personally to any babysitters, friends or relatives who will be picking up your child. We will not allow children to leave with anyone who does not have clear permission to pick him/her up.

The teachers have commitments and responsibilities outside of Peartree just as you do. Please respect the pick-up and drop-off times. In the morning, the teachers arrive early to prepare and set up rooms and to gather their thoughts. For many of the teachers, this is an essential part of the day. If you arrive early, please wait with your child in the hallway, rather than coming into the room. The teachers need uninterrupted time to finish their preparations so that they are able to greet you properly and give you their full attention when the day begins

If someone else is picking up your child, the school must be informed in person (by mentioning it to the teacher) and in writing. All escorts must be 18 years or older. We cannot accept telephone authorization since we cannot identify the caller. We will not send a child home with anyone we do not know. Please introduce us personally to any babysitter or relatives who may be picking up your child, in the future, in addition to notifying the teacher on the day of the alternate arrangements.

Although the above procedure may, at times, seem like inconveniences, they are for your child's protection.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Continuity between home and Peartree is essential for providing a meaningful experience for your child. It is important that you tell us about any change or special activities in the home. The more familiar we are with your family, the more understanding, supportive and helpful we can be. It is of utmost

importance that you notify the office staff of any changes of address, phone numbers (at home and at work), caregivers, and emergency phone numbers.

Likewise, teachers need to have up-to-date information relating to your child's health. Sharing information about allergies, illness, asthma-like conditions, and medications (both prescription and over the counter) will allow us to provide optimal care for your child. Examples of such medications/treatments include: nebulizers, inhalers, antibiotics, Tylenol, Benedryl and Pedialite.

### **PARENTS ARE WELCOME TO VISIT**

Parents are welcome to visit their child's room at any time once the phase-in period is completed. We encourage parents to spend time at Peartree. By spending time here, you communicate to your child that it is a place for your whole family and not just for your child. As parents build relationships with each other, the staff, and other children, we become a kind of extended family for each other. This is one of the benefits of on-site child care, so please feel free to join us for lunch or just come for a visit.

For some children, it can be confusing to see a parent unexpectedly. For this reason, we ask that you let the teachers know in advance when you are planning to stop by. There also may be some children who cannot tolerate a parent visit at certain times of the day. If this is the case, your child's caregivers will speak to you about other times of the day that will work better for you and your child.

We encourage parents to observe and participate in activities with their children. We especially enjoy parents sharing a talent, occupation, or hobby with the group. **If you need to bring siblings to preschool, please ask the teacher first.** Our environment and activities are specifically designed for the age and number of children enrolled in our program and may be inappropriate or even unsafe for younger or older children. Likewise, if you are asked to accompany us on a trip, please do not bring siblings. We are counting on your complete attention to care for the class and besides it is a treat for your child.

### **General Safety Information**

Peartree expects that when a parent is in a room that they are in charge of their child. Parents are not responsible for other children in the room, except when they have agreed to help after being explicitly asked. *In general, the teacher assumes you will care for your own child while in the room, but if for some reason you wish the teacher to do so, please make sure this is clearly communicated.*

## **HOME TO SCHOOL COMMUNICATION**

The family is the most important factor in young children's lives. Building a strong bond between home and school allows children to feel confident as their world expands. Parents and families are an important part of our program. We will do our best to keep parents informed of a child's growth and development as well as their activities at preschool.

It is important all through the year that you inform the teachers of any changes, (ex. One parent has to take a trip, illness in the family, moving, even a short distance, parents changing jobs, et cetera) *before* they happen. Changes that may seem routine or ordinary to an adult are regarded as unusual by a young child who has not had as many years of experience in dealing with changes. These changes and others often lead to different behavior in the room. We can teach and work better with your child if we are aware of the changes at home.

On the Emergency Card parents are given the opportunity to indicate if they do not want their child to participate in a certain activity. An alternate activity will be provided.

On occasion we may ask parents to provide some necessary materials for our preschool. Notices will be sent home indicating what snack food or general supplies we would like you to contribute. Parents should let us know if unable to provide a requested item.

## **PEARENT/STAFF CONFERENCES**

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held twice per year. We strongly recommend that all parents attend. This is a time to exchange information, touch base and set goals as well as report on the child's activities in the room. Please feel free to arrange additional meetings with your child's teacher as needed.

## **INFORMAL COMMUNICATION**

Arrival and departure times are great opportunities to exchange quick information between parents and preschool teacher however it is not a good time for lengthy conversations, since the Teacher's first priority is the supervision of the children.

Teachers will be happy to talk with you on the phone at a time when they can be away from the children. If you wish to speak with the teachers about your own child, please do so out of earshot of your child and the other children. Often, it is best to schedule a time to meet with the teacher out of the classroom or to talk on the phone. Notes, occasional phone calls, emails are also an easy way for parents and staff to communicate.

## **PEARENT NEWSLETTER**

The monthly newsletter is another source of communication between the school and families. A parent newsletter will be emailed home each month. We tell you about upcoming school-related events as well as interesting community events for children and families. Included on Peartree's website is a calendar for the year. *Please note on your personal calendar any holidays or early school closings or special school events.* School closings and events will also be noted in the school newsletter.

We encourage all parents and/or caregivers to read the newsletter and discuss it with your child. Children may have difficulty answering general questions such as "How was preschool today?" By asking about a specific activity listed on the schedule, you are more likely to get a more in-depth response.

## **CUBBY MAIL POLICY**

We use children's cubbies to communicate with parents. You may find notes from the teacher to parents, children to parents, or children to children in the child's cubby. In addition, you may find an occasional article, information about community events, or book order forms.

If you wish to distribute materials in cubbies, please get teachers permission. To avoid hurt feelings, party invitations will only be permitted if they include every child in the class. We need to have each child clear his or her cubby every day since there are other classes using these cubbies. Please remember to check your child's cubby every day. **You never know what exciting information is awaiting you!**

## **RESPECTING CHILDREN**

We offer children the same courtesies and respect we offer adults. Children are very alert to what is being said even if it appears they are not listening. Comments adults make about a child's character or behavior tells that child what we think of him or her, helping shape their self-image. Teachers and parents should carefully consider any statements they make in front of the children.

We want to talk to parents about your child. If present, we will include your child in the conservation and make every effort to respect his or her feelings. For some questions, concerns, and/or comments, you may want to talk to the teacher when your child is not present. We will arrange such a discussion whenever needed.

## **GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE**

Young children have powerful feelings and need our help in learning to express them appropriately. We see problems and conflict as learning

opportunities and view discipline as a way to guide children to respect themselves and others. Here at Peartree we partner with families to explore how to best help children manage their behaviors and feelings and become a friend to others.

Our goal in providing guidance and discipline is to encourage the development of children's self-control and executive function. We help children negotiate conflicts through the use of words and problem-solving strategies. We use constructive language by phrasing guidelines for behavior positively: "walk in this room", instead of "Don't run". We especially encourage children to verbalize their feelings.

**Our discipline goals include:**

- Helping children establish internal controls. The ultimate goal is self-discipline.
- Helping children recognize, name and verbalize their feelings and needs rather than withdrawing or acting them out physically
- Helping to foster a comfortable and safe environment

A helpful guide for parents is Love and Learn, Discipline for Young Children, by Alice S. Honig. You can pick up a copy from the pamphlet packets in the hall.

**Some positive discipline strategies:**

- Setting clear, consistent rules helps children learn what is expected of them (i.e. "Blocks are for building, balls are for throwing").
- Using short, simple phrases helps children to focus on what is important (i.e. "indoor voices," "Chairs are for sitting").
- Establishing reasonable, predictable routines helps children to feel secure and to begin to manage their own behavior (i.e. "First we clean up the blocks and then we can read a story").
- Giving limited choices supports children's independence and can reduce power struggles (i.e. "Do you want to put your coat on by yourself, or do you want me to help you?"). Too many choices can be overwhelming and actually increase frustration for young children.
- Using natural consequences helps children better understand cause and effect relationships (i.e. "If you throw sand again, you will need to leave the sandbox"). Arbitrary consequences can lead to resentment rather than learning.
- Teaching children problem-solving skills supports their creativity and independence (i.e. "I see two children who both want the same stroller. What can we do? Hmm, maybe we can find another stroller!"). When adults model these skills by thinking aloud, older toddlers can be encouraged to make suggestions and to thus begin to learn how to solve problems by using their words.
- Acknowledging children's feelings can help to defuse conflicts and develop empathy (i.e. "Hitting hurts. I can see that you want the truck, but I can't let you hurt Tania."). A good rule of thumb is to limit behaviors not feelings.

- Addressing the behavior, not the child, helps children learn what is and is not acceptable without damaging their self-esteem (i.e. children are never “bad” even when a particular action might not be appropriate).
- Praising desired behaviors motivates children to keep on trying since they know that we are paying attention to their efforts (i.e. “You really used your words to ask for a turn with the bike!”).
- Gentle redirection keeps the focus on the positive and reduces the risk of a power struggle.

**Some useful techniques include:**

- Distraction: “Let’s go look at the fish.”
- Humor: Appealing to children’s sense of humor can quickly reduce tensions and help lay the foundation for creative problem-solving.
- Motivation: “Where does your coat go?” rather than “Hang up your coat.” Pretending you forgot where the coat goes often thrills young children.
- Novelty: Singing, whispering or using a silly voice to get children’s attention can work wonders.
- Ignoring temper tantrums and waiting until the child is calm enough to talk will help both adult and child find a more effective way to address the problem. When children are completely upset, they will not understand rational arguments or consequences. By modeling self-control, adults help children learn to better regulate their own emotions.
- Anticipating problems is often the best way to avoid potentially difficult situations. Noticing patterns of behavior and examining potential triggers can help parents and teachers develop an effective intervention. Regular, on-going communication between the parents and the teaching team makes it possible to address concerns as soon as they arise.

**We never:**

- Use threats or bribery
- Use physical punishment
- Belittle children, use sarcasm or otherwise attack a child’s self-esteem
- Isolate children or make them feel unsafe
- Associate discipline with eating, diapering/toileting, or sleeping. No child is ever confined in any way.

Discipline is deciding which things you are going to insist on. Discipline helps children to cope with the challenges of daily living, to interpret their world and learn social skills. Discipline is also intricately tied to a child’s development and temperament. Learning how to self-regulate takes time and practice. By focusing on the process, rather than perfection, we help children develop the skills to become capable, caring friends. Your child’s teachers are excellent resources for you to help figure out what expectations are appropriate for your child at any given point in their development.

Children, who are motivated and engaged in activities throughout the day, rarely pose major discipline problems, but minor conflicts do arise periodically. We encourage children to handle these on their own whenever possible or practical. If a child is behaving in a way which is potentially harmful to self, others, or property, adults will intervene. Although each problem that arises calls for a unique solution, we use these guidelines to provide clear boundaries and guidance for children.

- **Step One:** Know the child. Is this behavior unusual for this child?
- **Step Two:** Stop the behavior. Use a gentle look, shake of the head, or words to indicate the behavior is inappropriate.
- **Step Three:** Describe appropriate behavior, give rationale, and remind the child of the consequences. For example, "Move the sand carefully. If you throw sand it might get in someone's eyes. You will have to leave the sand area if you throw sand."
- **Step Four:** Warn only once. If the inappropriate behavior continues, remove the child from the situation. Help the child describe his or her feelings and realize the feelings of others. Restate the appropriate behavior and discuss strategies the child can use successfully in that situation.
- **Step Five:** The child stays with the teacher or staff member until he or she feels ready to return to the activity. The responsibility for behaving appropriately is placed on the child.
- **Step Six:** Help the child return to the activity successfully. Offer support and acknowledgment of the appropriate behavior.
- **Step Seven:** If inappropriate behavior continues, the child loses the privilege of working in that area. Repeat steps four through six, having the child choose a different activity. If behavior problems persist, the teacher will discuss them with the child's parents. Together they will come up with strategies to help the child overcome his or her difficulties. In the interest of providing an environment that is conducive to learning, we reserve the right to dismiss a child from preschool if repeated behavior continues to be a threat to the safety of the other children.

## ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an ongoing, everyday process. Teachers are committed to observing, documenting and charting a child's development and growth-cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally. When an issue arises regarding a child's progress and the staff feels he or she needs additional assistance, the school has a list of agencies that might be better able to address the child's practical needs. If parents are interested, referrals can be made for evaluation and therapy.

## HEALTH MATTERS

The Department of Health's Bureau of Childcare which is our licensing agency, requires that every child in the center has a physical examination

prior to entering the Peartree and at regular intervals thereafter. The completed health form must be in our files by the first day of the year. No child will be admitted until this form is received with complete immunization information.

Parents are also required to submit medical forms to Peartree after every "well visit" for your child and each time your child is immunized throughout the year. Children are not allowed to attend Peartree until their records are up to date. If your child is under a physician's care for any special health problem, is taking medication, or has any allergies, be sure that these items are noted.

## **CONTROL OF COMMUNICABLE ILLNESS**

Hand washing is the most effective way of cutting down on the spreading of germs in the center. The teachers wash their hands often, especially before preparing and serving food. Preschoolers are encouraged to wash their hands upon arrival at Peartree in the morning, after toileting and before meals.

When a parent notifies the preschool program that their child has been diagnosed with a communicable illness the teacher must notify the Educational Director. The Educational Director will notify the local Health Department, staff members, and all parents of preschool participants. The child's confidentiality will be maintained at all costs.

### **When is a child too sick to be brought to Peartree?**

- **The illness, or child's reaction to it, requires more care than staff can provide or compromises the health and safety of other children.**
- Signs and symptoms of possible illness such as: low grade fever (99-100), unusual lethargy or irritability, unusual clinginess, persistent crying, constant runny nose, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing, persistent abdominal pain, lack of appetite or other signs of illness which require a higher level of care than staff can provide in a group setting and/or which compromise the health and safety of staff and other children.
- Child has persistent diarrhea (3 or more in last 24 hrs or if uncontained in diaper or underpants).
- Children should be excluded and referred to the child's pediatrician whenever a child has a significant fever. A significant fever is:
  - Oral temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or above;
  - Rectal temperature of 102 degrees Fahrenheit or above; or
  - Axillary (armpit) temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or above
- Child has a new-onset, undiagnosed rash with fever and/or behavioral change.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) until symptoms have resolved, or until 24 hours after medications have been administered, and approved for inclusion by your child's pediatrician

- Untreated infestations, such as scabies or lice; child must be free of nits before returning to Peartree
- Vomiting two or more times in a previous 24-hour period, or any vomiting accompanied by symptoms of dehydration or other signs of illness
- Contagious stages of chicken pox, until six days after the onset of rash or until all sores have dried and crusted, unless children are grouped in a room only with other children with chicken pox
- Any of the following illnesses until approved for inclusion by your child's pediatrician:
  - Mouth sores with drooling, or Herpetic gingivostomatitis, an infection caused by the Herpes simplex virus
  - Diarrhea due to Shigella, Salmonella, Campylobacter, Giardia, E.coli type 0157:H7, Versinia, Cryptosporidium, until there is one negative stool test obtained at least 48 hours after treatment (if prescribed) is completed; or unless a plan for grouping children has been approved by the local or State Health Department
  - Active tuberculosis, until treatment has been initiated and readmission has been approved by the local health unit
  - Impetigo, until 24 hours after medical treatment has been initiated unless there is only a small patch of impetigo that can be cleaned and covered so no other children can come into contact with the sore
  - Strep throat, or other streptococcal infections elsewhere in the body until 24 hours after the initial antibiotic treatment
  - Mumps, until nine days after onset of gland swelling
  - Rubella (German measles) and measles, until five days after onset of the rash
  - Hepatitis A viral infection (infectious hepatitis), until one week after onset of illness, and until immunoglobulin has been administered to appropriate children and staff, or as directed by the local health unit
  - Shingles, if sores cannot be covered by clothing or a dressing or until sores become crusted
  - Pertussis (whooping cough), until five days of a total course of 14 days of antibiotic treatment has been completed
  - Diphtheria, until readmission has been approved by the local health unit
  - Hepatitis B, until readmission has been approved by the local health unit
  - Meningitis or meningococcal disease, until readmission has been approved by the local health unit
  - Other illness or symptoms of illness as determined by the program

If your doctor places your child on an antibiotic, for an ear or throat infection for example, the child should not be brought to the center until he/she has

been on the medication for at least 24 hours and is fever-free without over-the-counter medication.

**Since we do not have the facilities to care for sick children at Peartree, you will be called to come and take your child home immediately if he/she becomes sick during the day.** If you cannot be reached, we will call the emergency numbers that you have provided. Please be sure to give us several alternatives.

**If your child is sent home sick, he/she will not be admitted the following day unless the child's pediatrician approves the child's return.** Because many highly contagious childhood illnesses are often preceded by fevers, all children must maintain a temperature under 101 degrees and have no other symptoms, *without medication*, before returning to Peartree.

**If your child is too ill to play outdoors, then he/she is too ill to be here.** Exceptions for certain medical conditions will be made.

If your child is ill and will not be attending Peartree, please call your child's room by 10:00 a.m. Children and teachers are concerned when a child is absent. We also notify other parents if the group has been exposed to a contagious disease. The Department of Health monitors the existence of contagious diseases in the city and asks us to report any instance of them. If you take your child to the pediatrician ask when he/she can return to group care and request a written note for Peartree.

With most childhood diseases, children who have been exposed but are not symptomatic are not excluded from the center, but everyone is alerted to watch for signs and symptoms. When children are in the center, they must be able to participate in all activities, including water and outdoor play. In the long run, less time is missed if early signs of a cold are heeded and the child remains at home to rest.

## **MEDICATION**

**IMPORTANT: Presently, Peartree is not certified to administer medication to children. Only parents are allowed to administer medications. If your child requires medication during the school day, then you must come to the center to administer it.**

**We ARE able to administer emergency medications such as an epi-pen, an asthma inhaler or a nebulizer as long as we have the proper paperwork filled out by the child's pediatrician and by you and we have been trained in how to properly administer the emergency medication. The forms are on Peartree's website.**

We can apply topical, over-the-counter medication such as diaper cream or sunblock on your child as long as you have signed a permission form. These permission forms have to be renewed every time you change medication and every six months.

**We will inform you when the Peartree is certified to administer medication. At that time the following policy will once again be in effect:**

Prescription medication may be administered by teachers after parents have filled out a medication permission form. Teachers keep track of medications administered in a medication log.

If the medication needs to be refrigerated it should be placed in the small refrigerator in the Director's.

We can apply topical, over-the-counter medication such as diaper cream or sunblock on your child as long as you have signed a permission form. These permission forms have to be renewed every time you change medication and every six months.

All other medication, including over-the-counter oral medication such as Tylenol, can only be given to a child by us with written permission from a parent and written permission from your child's pediatrician. There is a specific form that must be filled out; a prescription alone is not adequate. We will keep extra copies of the forms in the classroom for you to take to your child's pediatrician should you need it, as well as place the form on the website for you to print yourself if that is easier.

When you have the pediatrician fill out the form, they need to be very specific about which medication is permitted and the exact symptoms or circumstances under which we would give the medication. If the medication is given to your child on an as-needed basis (such as an epi-pen for allergies), you and your child's pediatrician need to fill out a new form every six months.

**It is imperative to notify your child's teacher of all medications your child is taking. We rely on your cooperation and full disclosure about medications that your child is taking so that we can respond appropriately and safely to your child's needs and can determine whether or not your child is healthy enough to be at the center and not contagious to the other children or teachers.**

Also, not knowing if a child is on a medication results in the teacher's inability to provide correct information to emergency responders when needed, causing possible serious reaction to the medication administered by the emergency responders to the child.

## **IMMUNIZATION**

All children in our program must be immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella, and Haemophilus influenza (HIB) at appropriate ages. This information must be turned in to staff prior to any preschool attendance. We follow the State of New York Regulations. We do not grant exemptions.

## **FOOD POLICY**

Good nutrition is essential to a child's cognitive and physical development. Although families are free to prepare their own meals, our school partners with My Red Rabbit, a NYC-based healthy school meal provider, to provide lunch to our students. We are pleased to partner with Red Rabbit to provide our children with locally-sourced fruits, vegetables, and dairy products prepared daily from scratch. If you are interested in this option, please contact us for more information.

Preschoolers can also bring their own lunches and a simple snacks. This ensures that your child is being served foods that she or he prefers. Please print your child's name clearly on his/her lunch containers, and include protein/calcium (meats, cheese, yogurt, eggs, etc.), carbohydrates (bread, pasta, rice, quinoa, etc.) and fresh vegetables and fruits.

Because of allergies, **nut products are strictly forbidden** in the children's or adults' food at all times. Chocolate is not allowed in the center, even for birthdays.

**Please send healthy food only, no "junk food". We define junk food as any food that is high in fat, sugar and/or salt and low in nutritional value including highly processed foods or prepackaged meals. Some examples include candy, chips, cookies, cake, doughnuts, McDonald's, Lunchables or deep fried foods such as French fries.**

**Check labels on foods such as yogurt and granola bars and which can be high in sugar and fillers.** Children under four should not be given hotdogs (sliced into rounds), whole grapes, hard candy, nuts, seeds, raw peas, dried fruit, pretzels, chips, peanuts, popcorn, marshmallows, spoonfuls of nut butter or chunks of meat larger than can be swallowed whole – they are a choking hazard.

We expect the children to feed themselves. Parents provide lunches that are prepared in the way that is easiest for their child to handle independently. Please offer foods for your child in small, manageable portions. Offering variety will often encourage eating. All foods should be prepared so that they are ready to eat (i.e., cut into small pieces, peeled, etc.). Some children prefer only a few foods. Send food that they have eaten at home and indicated that they enjoy.

Do not send food that they have rejected or never eaten before. New food should always be tried at home first before being sent for lunch. Children will learn to like new and different foods more when they are offered more than once, in small amounts, if they see you eating them and offered frequently in a calm and relaxed meal setting.

Once food has been served to a child, it is unsafe to re-serve that food at a later time. We will send home leftovers only so you can see how much was eaten that day. This food should be discarded.

Please send in a fork and spoon daily that we will send home with lunch containers. We wish to be more ecologically conscious and use less plastic ware. ALL PERSONAL ITEMS - CONTAINERS, UTENSILS, ETC. MUST BE LABELED with your child's first and last names.

### **ALLERGIES AND FOOD SHARING**

Please be aware that some of the children in the center have allergies and other children may have allergies we don't know about. Food of an unknown source should never be given to any child, and foods, in general, should not be shared because of the risk of serious problems.

We prefer that children not share food. Parents must ask the teacher in the room if it is okay for a child, who is not their own, to try a food before offering it to them. Sharing of utensils cups, bottles, or plates is never acceptable.

### **PARTICIPANTS' PERSONAL HYGIENE**

Each child must wash hands with soap and running water before snacks and after using toilet facilities. Each child must be provided a disposable towel to dry hands. All toilet articles, such as combs/hairbrushes must be labeled with the child's name and shall not be shared with other participants. A child's wet or soiled clothing must be changed promptly. Parents will be called to supply a change of clothing if needed.

### **PERSONAL ITEMS/CLOTHING**

Our program is filled with "hands-on" learning opportunities that can sometimes be messy. We recommend that you dress your children in casual, washable clothing that is appropriate for all types of play and activities. Do not send them in "good" clothes. It inhibits them from climbing, painting, sitting on the floor, etc. We do not want children to feel that they can't get dirty. Comfortable shoes, with non slip soles, that are safe for large motor activities are also recommended. Children will spend time out of doors each day, barring terrible weather. They may have opportunities to go to neighborhood parks or on field trips (in which case you will receive special notification). Please be aware of the weather and send your child with

appropriate clothing. All of your child's clothing (under, over, indoor, outdoor) and other belongings should be clearly marked with your child's name.

A complete set of clothing (clearly labeled), including shirt, pants, underwear or diapers, socks and wipes should be kept in your child's cubby in a shoe box. If your child is being or has just been toilet trained, 3 changes of clothing is advisable. The clothes will be returned to you each day.

A specific place is designated in the classroom for personal belongings to be stored. Although the Peartree Staff makes an effort to monitor the children's belongings, we cannot guarantee the security of a child's belongings. Peartree Preschool provides activities and equipment for children. Children should not bring expensive or valuable items to the program. Personal toys, games or valuables should not be brought to the program. Neither teachers nor Peartree Preschool are responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged items, including money.

In classes that have show and tell as part of their schedule, parents must supply a bag labeled with the child's name to store their belongings.

## **SAFETY/SECURITY**

Peartree follows the NYC Department of Health regulations regarding safety/security. During preschool sessions, we strive to provide a safe environment for your child. Children are always within view and earshot of an adult. The school is equipped with first aid kits in the office and in every classroom. Fire drills are conducted as mandated. All forms must be filled out and returned before child may start school. (Please inform the school as changes occur) Everyone is required to enter and leave the building through the main entrance. You need to be buzzed in and stop at the office to discuss your reason for coming. All escorts must be listed on the "Authorized Escort" form and should have been introduced to the teacher before picking up the child for the first time. If your pick-up assignments change, the school must be notified in writing. If it is a one day authorization, please notify the office in person and fill out a "daily authorized pick-up sheet" obtained from office. When picking up your child, the escort will be required to show a photo I.D. before we will release him/her.

## **MANDATED REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE**

New York State law requires that any suspicion of child abuse or neglect be reported to a central hotline. All teachers, as part of their NYC Dept. of Health requirements, take a course in child abuse and neglect. Peartree staff has an annual training session on the detection and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Child abuse is defined as when a parent or guardian inflicts serious physical injury upon a child, creates a substantial risk or serious physical injury or commits a sex offense against a child.

Abuse also includes situations where a parent or guardian knowingly allows someone else to inflict such harm on a child. Maltreatment (including neglect) means that a child's physical, mental or emotional condition has been impaired or placed in imminent danger of impairment by a parent or guardian:

- failing to provide sufficient food, clothing, shelter, education; or
- failing to provide proper supervision, guardianship, or medical care (refers to all medical issues, including dental, optometric or surgical care); or
- inflicting excessive corporal punishment, abandoning the child, or misusing alcohol or other drugs to the extent that the child was placed in imminent danger

## **ACCIDENTS/INCIDENTS**

In case of minor accidents (cuts, bruises, scrapes, falls) the teacher will tell you when you pick-up your child. All classrooms and the office are equipped with First Aid Kits and the staff is certified in First Aid. A First Aid kit is taken on all outdoor trips.

In case of a more serious accident or if your child becomes ill, we will try to contact you at a phone number you have given us. That is why it is so important that the information on all of your child's forms is up to date. If you cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be called. We follow all mandated and recommended New York City Department of Health procedures.

## **TOILET TRAINING/DIAPERING**

If your child is not toilet trained, please speak with the teacher prior to the first class. The teacher, staff and volunteers will refrain from touching children's bodies generally covered by a swimsuit. However, teachers will provide assistance with toileting hygiene. Parents should let us know what a child's toileting needs are on the Child Information Sheet. **The law requires teachers to notify Children's Protective Services if we observe any suspicious injuries or symptoms of possible child abuse.**

When a child is ready to begin toilet training, we recommend that the process begins at home. We will then follow through and encourage the child to do the same while at school. Because it is common for a child to be distracted with various activities at school they should continue to wear a diaper/pull up until they can control his/her bladder and bowels for a few minutes beyond that announcement.

Please keep in mind that children will not be able to wear panties or underwear full time until they have also acquired full naptime/bedtime control.

Children enrolled who are three years old must be potty trained. Children must be wearing underwear with very few accidents. A child having accidents daily would not be considered potty trained. Please note that wearing pull ups isn't considered being potty trained.

Why do children have to be potty trained before turning three?

There are strict standards and health codes for changing and disposing of wet or soiled diapers. The threes classrooms are not equipped for diaper changing. When an adult is busy changing a child's diaper or soiled clothing, it is taking away from learning time for all students and it removes one adult from the direct supervision of and interaction with the rest of the class.

We do understand that even potty trained children will occasionally have toileting accidents. By definition, "accidents" are unusual incidents and should happen infrequently. In these instances, the teachers will help children to change their clothes, encouraging independence as much as possible.

A potty trained child is a child who can do the following:

1. Communicate to the teachers that s/he needs to go to the restroom before they need to go.
2. Alert him/herself to stop what he/she is doing, to go and use the bathroom.
3. Pull down his/her clothes and get them back up without assistance.
4. Wipe him/herself after using the toilet. (With minimal assistance for 3 year olds.)
5. Get on/off the toilet by him/herself.
6. Wash and dry hands.
7. Postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom or if we are away from the classroom.
8. Awaken during nap time should they need to use the bathroom.

We certainly will ask your child many times throughout the day and always before nap time if they need to use the bathroom. A teacher will assist children as needed, but children should be able to complete toileting activities independently. This is an issue which protects all concerned.

It is not uncommon for a child who is fully toilet trained to have a setback when he/she is in a new environment. Our teachers are aware of this and will assist the children when necessary. Please dress your child in clothing that can be undone and changed easily. Please send a complete change of clothes appropriate for the season. These will be left at school in case of accidents, and returned at the end of the school year. Parents will be notified if a child has a toileting accident.

We understand that each child arrives at this milestone differently, therefore we will allow 6 weeks from a child's third birthday for your child to demonstrate accomplishment of this goal. However, if the situation is not manageable within the classroom environment, we will discuss the issue with

the parents and reserve the right to suspend attendance of the child at such time.

## **HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS**

Holidays and celebrations at Peartree are small in scale, like the children. We celebrate the holidays by emphasizing those aspects that are appropriate to all children and that relate to overall program goals.

Family and cultural traditions greatly influence the ways in which people celebrate holidays. Ours is a community rich in cultural and family diversity. It would be close to impossible for us to meet each family's unique and wondrous holiday rituals and needs. We support the idea that families will celebrate holidays in their own ways. At the Peartree Center, our celebrations are generic and focus on family and community.

Halloween can be a frightening time for young children. We celebrate without commercial masks or costumes. Please do not send masks or costumes on Halloween. Teachers incorporate appropriate aspects of the holiday in their plans for group discussions, art activities, music and movement and creative dramatics.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Birthday celebrations at Peartree are different from the kind of parties you may want to plan for home. The emphasis at Peartree is on celebrating your child's special day in a way that is consistent with other things we do here. Specifically, the fun is in being together and acknowledging the excitement that children of this age feel about their birthdays.

Each class will have their own special ritual to mark the day – perhaps the birthday child picks a special story, makes a special hat or uses a special birthday placemat or table cloth or has a special banner made by his or her friends. It is important that birthday celebrations at Peartree feel predictable to the children so they know what to look forward to on their special day and enjoy celebrating with their friends.

We will be happy to celebrate your child's birthday at school and invite you to join us. You may send in a healthy snack for all of the children, but it must have prior approval of the Director (food and allergies must be considered). Party favors or goody bags are not allowed. Instead, we ask that your child bring a gift book for the classroom, with a dedication from the parents and child (for example: a short message to the class, including the child's name, birth date and age). (A suggested list can be provided). After sharing the book with the children, it then becomes a treasured addition to our class library. We will be glad to celebrate summer birthdays before the school year is over. Making a tape of each child and family favorite songs, is another way of celebrating every child's rich culture.

Our goal at Peartree is to be able to include all children in our birthday and other room celebrations. For this reason, foods brought for celebrations must be something all children, including those with allergies, can have. Some rooms will not be able to serve all foods. Before planning to bring food to your child's room, please speak with your child's teacher about acceptable options.

The following foods are excellent for Peartree celebrations: plain cupcakes, mini-muffins, Jell-O, ice cream, sorbet, fruit salad, banana bread or plain cake (sheet cake with no commercial characters on it). However, please avoid chocolate in any form (some children are highly allergic to it) and be sure that there are no peanuts or peanut products in whatever you choose (again, because of allergies). A pizza lunch is also an option for preschoolers. Any food offered at the celebration should be for both children and adults (no separate food for adults).

PLEASE DO NOT BRING PARTY HATS, TABLE CLOTHS, PLATES, CUPS, FANCY CAKES, CUPCAKES WITH CHARACTERS AND/OR THICK ICING ON IT, PARTY FAVORS, GOODIE BAGS OR BANNERS! THESE ARE ALL GREAT TO HAVE AT AN "AT HOME" PARTY. Balloons are not allowed under any circumstances. If they break they pose a serious choking hazard to young children.

You will be asked to fill out a *Birthday Celebration Planner* a week or so before your child's birthday so that the room will know what to expect on your child's special day.

If you are planning a party outside of the center, we must insist that invitations are not distributed at school, nor should the party be scheduled so that children go directly to a party from school – UNLESS THE ENTIRE GROUP IS INCLUDED.

Children are aware of the mail that is put in the mail pouches outside their classrooms. It can be extremely painful to a child to realize that others have been invited to a party and he or she has not. We encourage children not to discuss their out-of-school parties for just this reason. If you do not wish to invite the entire group to a party, please consider how to divide the group so you are not excluding only one or two children.

If your child cannot attend an out-of-center birthday party for a friend and you have a gift for the birthday child, please give the gift to the child's parent or caregiver at the end of the day. It's hard for children who don't have gifts to see one in a friend's cubby. Please follow these guidelines