

A vibrant, painterly illustration of a beach scene. In the foreground, a woman in a purple dress sits on a red checkered picnic blanket with a young girl in a pink shirt and a boy in a red shirt. They are surrounded by baskets of food and a large tree on the right. In the middle ground, a man in a red shirt and a woman in a yellow shirt are walking on a red path towards the beach. The beach is sandy with a white sailboat on the turquoise water. The background features a large tree on the right and a bright yellow sky with several birds flying. The entire scene is framed by a dark brown border.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is Singing Tree Located?

I do not advertise my exact location as a safety measure for the children. Singing Tree is located centrally within Port Townsend. Interested families who schedule a tour will receive the exact address at that time. Please contact me to schedule a visit.

Why do you not allow tours during the program day?

I understand why this request may be desired by interested families. In truth, a visitor would not get an authentic glimpse of our magical world during the program day, because the visitor's very presence disrupts the magic we are immersed in. A child has to experience the magic of Singing Tree as we co-create it together over time. Together, we build a sense of community, friendship and belonging. Over time, the children begin to deeply trust that their play time will be protected and not constantly disrupted, and so they are able to dive deep into their all important "work." I am holding space and protecting the crucial play time for ALL children. I am frequently requested for tours, and therefore the distractions would be constant. It would be unfair to children currently enrolled in my program. In addition, my focus must remain on the children during the day, and not the visitors. Thank you for understanding.

How much is tuition?

Tuition payments are due by the 25th of the proceeding month.

2-Day Enrollment Cost: \$325/month ;10 equal payments September- June

4-Day Enrollment Cost: \$625/month ; 10 equal payments September- June

I accept check or cash payment. Check payments made payable to "Mirandy Cook." I do not accept credit card payments.

How much is a late tuition fee?

Tuition payments received after the 25th of the proceeding month will incur an additional \$50 fee.

How much are the fees to secure my child's spot when I enroll my child?

2 Day Enrollment Fee is a one-time payment of \$120;

2 Day Supply Fee is a one-time payment of \$180;

(Total fees paid for 2 days for both enrollment fee and supply fee is **\$300**)

*These fees double as your child's security deposit and are Non-Refundable.

4 Day Enrollment Fee is a one-time payment of \$240

4 Day Supply Fee is a one-time payment of \$360

(Total fees paid for 4 days for both enrollment fee and supply fee is **\$600**)

*These fees double as your child's security deposit and are Non-Refundable.

How do I pay fees or monthly tuition payments?

Tuition payments are due by the 25th of the proceeding month (September - June). Your child's Enrollment Fee and Supply Fee will be paid by check and mailed to me (if your family is currently enrolled you may drop off in person at Singing Tree), and I will provide you with the address at that time. I accept monthly tuition payments made by either check or cash. I do not accept credit card payments. Once the program year begins, you may drop off your payment in person at either drop off time, or at pick up time, or you may continue to mail me check payments. For check payments, please make checks payable to "Mirandy Cook." Cash payments should be handed directly to me, and

you will be given a receipt that you may use for tax related purposes. For cash payments, please try to have the exact amount ready, but I am sometimes able to make change. Thank you for paying your tuition on time as this allows me to pay my expenses on time too.

What are the Admission Procedures?

It is important to me that families who enroll in my program do so because it is a good fit with their family. I understand that there is a lot of material to read and digest. My intent is to communicate with you as much as possible up front, and to give you an overall understanding of what Singing Tree has to offer. The purpose of my family handbook, policies, and procedures is to offer everyone clear communication, expectations, and boundaries, for harmonious engagement with each other. If anything still feels unclear, please reach out to me with any questions or clarifications you may have.

1. Singing Tree "Family Handbook," "About Me," "Frequently Asked Questions," and the 2 "Risk Competency" articles must be read and understood. I also invite you to read "Family Testimonials," "Magical Memories," and to peruse the "Singing Tree Photo Album" and the "Singing Tree Photo Tour."
2. Complete a "Singing Tree Interest Form" and email to me (unless you are a returning family).
3. Schedule and attend an in-person tour with me, parent/s, and your child (unless you are a returning family)
4. Enrollment paperwork completed in full
5. Enrollment fee paid - Non-Refundable
6. Supply fee paid- Non-Refundable

Why is the Singing Tree program mixed-age?

The practice of sorting children into separate groups by age for the majority of their youth is a fairly recent development, normalized and widespread as the practice has become. Age-mixed play has many benefits. Strict age cohorts, limits their exposure to accessible role models and their opportunities to teach skills they've acquired. In an age-mixed environment, older children learn patience and compassion while supporting the younger kids. Younger learners watch and emulate older kids. Everyone gets to practice both teaching and learning from people with varying skill levels, learning styles, and attention spans. The results tend to be awe-inspiring. In age-mixed play, the younger children are continuously learning new skills, and more advanced ways of thinking, through their observations of and interactions with those more experienced and more capable. At the same time, the older children acquire leadership and nurturing skills, and a sense of their own maturity, through interaction with the younger ones.

What is a "Child Led" learning environment?

Singing Tree is child-led learning environment. Child led is NOT the same as a chaotic "free for all" environment. Our learning environment is not unstructured nor hazardous. We hold gentle, but firm, boundaries and agreements to treat each other and materials with respect for emotional, physical and cognitive safety for all. A child's sense of safety is crucial for play to happen, and is a top priority. Children are given a lot of freedom within the bigger safety boundaries. Singing Tree is set up to honor and respect children by giving them ample choice throughout the day, and children grow to trust in that and flourish. Children come to learn over time that their choices and curiosities are valued, and therefore they generally act out in negative ways a lot less. Children are so deeply nourished by an environment that values their choices and voices. Children are

never passive in a child led environment, but rather are active participants. As a facilitator, I may present an activity, AND the children bring their ideas, their theories, their creativity to that activity. As a facilitator, I will stage the learning environment with provocations (provocation means to provoke play with quality materials, and with a beautiful set-up) to invite play. Each child will approach these provocations in many different ways- one child may explore a provocation through narrative play and tell a story with the loose parts, whereas another child may mathematically/scientifically approach this same provocation and sort, classify, count and name loose parts. There is no pre-determined way to explore and engage in the Singing Tree learning environment- all forms of play are welcomed and encouraged! Singing Tree is proud to be a "no worksheet" program. Through process art, clay/play dough work, sensory play, and hands-on materials, the children are building dexterity, fine motor skills, and pre-writing skills every single day. Singing Tree is also a screen-free program and the more time children spend off of screens, the more time they spend working with their hands, their bodies, their peers, and their imaginations! During our Community Circle there is the power of group discussions and an opportunity to express their own ideas to their peers, and to listen to another's point of view. Various group activities, such as sharing stories, discussions, singing, dancing, etc., will be initiated, but children are not forced to participate in these activities in a particular way. They are not forced to answer questions, forced to sing, or forced to dance like everyone else, etc. Some children may actively participate, whereas other children may simply witness. Witnessing/observing is a huge part of how children learn about their world, and so this is still valued and honored as a choice. In time, the children who more often choose to witness/observe during group activities, do tend to actively participate in their own way and their own time.

Why do you call yourself a “Facilitator” instead of a “Teacher”?

In many settings, people view education as something that is done to students by teachers. Teachers educate and students become educated. This comes from the perspective that children are a kind of empty vessel to be filled up with knowledge - a paradigm inherently untrusting of children's choices and intentions as a valid educative force. I believe that education is a whole-person, whole-life, experiential process. The motivating forces that make all of us learners include curiosity, playfulness, and sociability. I seek to nurture and support the individual uniqueness of each and every child, by celebrating multiple intelligences, modes of expression, and learning styles.

Facilitators witness.

Facilitators listen.

Facilitators observe.

Facilitators model.

Facilitators reflect.

Facilitators engage.

Facilitators facilitate.

Facilitators hold boundaries.

Facilitators hold space.

Facilitators provide an enriching environment.

Facilitators protect the meaningful time and space for creative play.

Facilitators support children in clarifying their intentions.

Facilitators connect children to the resources and materials they need.

Facilitators help a child reflect on their decisions.

Facilitators help children engage with the community.

Facilitators keep the space safe, and respectful.

Facilitators collaborate with children to develop a powerfully positive culture.

Facilitators model clear communication, collaboration, and authenticity.

Facilitators make sure we go outside every day to enjoy Mother Earth's gifts.

What do you mean by "holding space?"

I protect the children's time and space from outside distractions and disturbances so that the children are able to dive deeper into their play exploration. When I hold space for the children, I am making myself present to witness and support their journey, without judging and without attempting to control their path or outcomes.

I am worried about how my child may behave in their learning environment, because at home they...

How children behave at home is not necessarily how they will behave in their learning environment- this is oftentimes very surprising to parents! At home, a child feels unconditionally loved by their family members- as it should be! This can mean that your child feels safe enough to act out and/or melt-down when they are tired, hungry, or frustrated. They know you will still love them unconditionally!

And... Negative behaviors may certainly surface while your child is in their learning environment. Singing Tree is a safe place for children to learn and figure out all the things they need to figure out. Every child comes with natural strengths and natural areas that need more practice in mastering. They are given ample time and space to experiment, gently "fall" at times, process, learn, succeed, and most importantly build resilience! All of this is done within an overall container of physical, emotional and cognitive safety. The only way resilience can be learned is by allowing children to make "mistakes", and to take some age appropriate physical, social, and emotional "risks," and then to support them in practicing overcoming them. It's hard for many parents to see their young ones have hard days and moments, but if we shelter children from challenge they will not be given the time to practice and learn resilience. I am here to support this learning journey by allowing them to feel their authentic feelings, comfort them with a hug if they want that (or give them space if that is what they want), help them process their emotions when they are ready, validate their feelings, discuss and brainstorm, and direct them to the peace basket or otherwise if they need to re-regulate. Community circle time is often a great opportunity for me to introduce topics to the entire group that may especially benefit a particular child but in a less direct or "threatening" way. We oftentimes sing songs, read stories or have complex discussions about things that will support every child and of course a child who is having

a particularly hard time with something. Some days will be harder than others, but they will be allowed to be children and just be! The reward is worth it.

**I am concerned about my child always seeking adult's attention...
sometimes in negative ways.**

Seeking adult attention is completely normal for young children. As their facilitator, I set children up right from the start, by proactively connecting with each and every child one-on-one throughout the program day to ensure that they are receiving positive attention and awareness from me...Before they are actively seeking it. Everyone wants to be noticed and valued in the world, including children. I make sure each and every child feels "seen." I make sure to especially notice, and reflect to the child what I notice, when I observe something positive. This feeds and nourishes positive behaviors. And while I of course also notice the less glamorous behaviors, I do not bring a lot of attention to it (unless I need to intervene immediately for safety of course). Instead, I take a mental note to revisit this at an appropriate time with the child if needed. It may be that we need to talk together in a quiet spot (out of the spot light), it may be that we need to talk with that child and other children to problem solve a situation, it may be that a child needs the "peace" basket we have (full of calming self regulation tools), it may be that a picture book/ story/ or puppet play is needed to model something. The important thing is to "water" and "feed" as much of the positive behavior as I can. Staying calm as their facilitator is a powerfully positive way to NOT further "feed" negative behavior. Feeding the positive, oftentimes satisfies them upfront and, there is less "acting out." Children naturally crave attention and I provide them with quality attention. We also have many tools in the classroom available to children to help them tangibly navigate various challenges. I begin modeling how to use the various tools through their learning environment on the first day of our program, and I continue to

model them as needed, and periodically throughout the year as well. Children love to feel empowered and I love empowering them! For example, I have sand timers placed throughout the space which empowers children to manage turn-taking- whether for a cherished toy, a play theme idea, or for my full attention (ex. a child may want to perform something for me). Children absolutely love using these sand timers- it gives them an authentic sense of how long they must wait (they can watch the sand fall), and gives them something to focus their attention on as they practice and hone their skills in "waiting patiently." A child is also welcome to walk around with me as I witness and observe other children in their play. Some children like to periodically hold my hand, sit on my lap, or simply be with me- and that is great too. I always offer a comforting spot for children who may need that. I also always offer little "jobs" to kids who like to be helpers. They might assist me in setting up a project or an activity. This is again completely optional, and some kids love being helpers.

What are the benefits of learning within a preschool community?

There are many benefits...Cross pollination of ideas/theories/knowledge, complex and ongoing socialization, improved communication skills, extensive variety of learning materials, plus so much more!

Socializing is a part of life and the earlier your child becomes well versed at it, the better. You could take your child to the park where they play with new kids they've never met before (also wonderful for different reasons), but the unique thing about a preschool program is that your child plays generally with the same peers day after day. This promotes a different level of social skills than meeting strangers at the park, playing with them for an hour or so and then never seeing them again. Young children are not only making friends but they are learning how to keep friends. Preschool peers are bound to disagree and even argue, but this is all for the better because it helps children learn how

to deal with confrontation. The sometimes uncomfortable "challenges" your child will experience during their preschool years are crucial learning opportunities! Challenge is not necessarily a "bad" thing, but rather an opportunity to gain practice, knowledge, and skills that will set your child up for a lifetime of success. Help model for your child how to not "run" away or avoid disappointing or challenging situations, but instead to persevere through them :) Playtime is where children often encounter small problems... like perhaps there are 4 kids that want to play a game meant for 3-players, how will they work it out so everyone has a chance to participate? Or, perhaps they want to play a game but don't understand the rules. Sometimes these issues lead to an argument or someone's feelings getting hurt. Facing these sorts of struggles is great for children, as it teaches them early on how to move past issues and problem solve.

When your child is at home they don't necessarily have to use their words to get what they want, since siblings and family members tend to know what they need by just looking at them. At a preschool program, no one knows your child like their own family. This forces them to use language skills to communicate their needs and wants to others. Children must communicate with other children and work as a team in order to successfully enjoy playtime. Your child will quickly pick up important language skills in the process. Your child must also learn to be their own advocate in order to secure what they want in a situation. This involves developing a strong set of language skills that your child will use all throughout life.

A family can play games at home to help spur creativity (which is also wonderful for different reasons), and yet nothing compares to children interacting with other children during playtime. When children play together imaginations run wild as they come up with new scenarios and creative games. Children also love to role-play, taking on adult positions. This sort of play actually helps your child better understand where people are coming from, as they have stepped into someone else's shoes during playtime. All of this equates to a lot of fun for your child, but it also provides countless benefits that will

continue to show up over the long run. The beautiful cross-pollination process is simply wonderful to witness!

Can you give me some parenting/medical advice about.....

I understand firsthand that parenting can be challenging and humbling! I am a proud mother of two myself. AND, I have to be very careful to NOT give parenting advice, since parenting styles are of a very personal nature, and there are MANY successful ways to raise a child. I would recommend connecting with other families to use as a support system, and/or our local library has a huge selection of books on parenting topics.

In addition, Please DO NOT ask me for any medical advice of any kind with regards to your child. I am not a medical professional. If you have any concerns for your child's health, cognitive/social development, growth, eating habits/nutrition, nervous ticks, bodily functions, etc., please consult a medical professional. Thank you for understanding.

My child lost or left behind an item at Singing Tree...now what?

Please check the "Lost & Found" Basket at the front entranceway for these items. Anything that is found during or after the program day is placed in this basket. Please re-check regularly as well, because items often turn up later after found in unusual and sometimes surprising places.

Can I send in treats (cupcakes and such) for my child's birthday?

Birthdays are a very special day to be celebrated! Due to food sensitivities and food restrictions, however, I do not allow food treats to be sent in to be shared with all of the children. Some other ways you are invited to make your child feel extra special on their birthday while at Singing Tree: You may send them to school with an extra-special lunch (maybe their favorite foods, or "fancy" cut foods), send a special love note in their lunchbox, or perhaps they could wear a special birthday crown and/or cape. Please **DO NOT** send your child with high-sugar food treats, since this makes their blood sugar levels spike, and sets them up for mood swings while with peers. Thank you for understanding.

Our Singing Tree Birthday Ceremony celebrates children on (or near) their birthday. During our community circle, the birthday child gets to wear a very special rainbow and sunshine crown, that was lovingly hand felted by me from wool. We have a joyous birthday song we play to dance to with rainbow silks, and we enjoy our magical birthday story together. Then we bring out our beautiful wooden wheel of the seasons. We find where in the seasonal year their birthday is. We light a beeswax tea light candle and place it on their birthday month. Then we sing our very own special birthday song that is full of reverence and gratitude for the birthday child. The birthday child then blows out their candle and makes a silent wish. Then as a group, we "gather up" all of the love in our space and we send it out with whooshing hands to those who may need it in the world. We celebrate Summer birthdays during the beginning of the year or during the end of the year (whichever is closer) to ensure that every child is celebrated, even if their birthday is not during the actual program year.

Why is my child's snack/lunch coming home barely eaten? I am worried about them not eating enough during the program day.

This is completely normal, and try not to worry. It is only a four hour program day. At mealtime, children are excited to talk with peers, make plans, and share stories, which are also important social opportunities, so they are often distracted or too excited to eat as much. When I notice a child is not eating, I encourage (and remind) them to eat, but I of course cannot "force" a child to eat. They will eat when they are hungry. We talk a lot about listening to our body's needs, and taking the time to hydrate and nourish ourselves so that we feel good, and we will have energy to play more! After the "formal" mealtime, children are invited to stay at the table as long as they wish to finish eating if they are still hungry. It may help to send nutritious foods in their meal that they especially enjoy to entice them into eating more.

What should I do if my child is refusing to wear warm layers on a cold/wet day?

Young children want to feel independent, yearn to make choices for themselves, and are always testing boundaries! Allow your child to choose any clothes they want to wear to their learning environment that day. If the outfit is not suitable for cold/wet outdoor weather, simply send appropriate clothing along in their bag, for me to have on hand that day. When they get cold, they can layer up with the clothing that is in their cubby. They will quickly learn it does not feel good to be outside in cold weather with very little clothing on.

Why is my “potty-trained” child having toileting accidents after starting in a preschool community? Or later in the program year?

Toileting accidents and/or toilet regression is completely normal for children this age. All children have accidents sometimes, even well after they are “potty-trained.” This is completely normal and expected by professionals who work with young children. Accidents and toilet regression can occur for a variety of reasons such as (but not limited to): a child is coming down with a cold or sick, a child is unusually tired, changes to a child's diet (especially around holidays when more sugary foods are often consumed), a child consumes more liquid than usual, weaning from breastfeeding, experiencing changes in their home life or experiencing a new “stress” (new baby, starting a preschool program, divorce, nightmares, death in family, new job for parent, new sitter, changes to your child's regular routine, etc.), especially deep in play in their learning environment and ignoring their body cues, distraction, excitement, etc.

We have two built in times during the day where everyone is invited to “try” and use the potty. This helps children pause from their play to “listen” to their body's needs (and to not feel like they are missing out on something), and is reinforced by positive-peer role modeling. Children are also encouraged to go any other time they need to as well. If a child has an accident, I discreetly help them get cleaned up, changed into fresh clothes, and then we move on with our day. It is not something that is dwelled upon, and there is no shame about it. It truly is never a big deal, so do not feel bad about your child having accidents. If your child is experiencing other concerning symptoms in addition to toileting accidents, you may want to speak with their pediatrician or a medical professional to see if there might be something else going on.

Why does my child say they have no friends in their preschool community, or no one to play with?

It takes children a while sometimes before they will call someone a "friend" (just like adults). The children are getting used to their new learning environment AND each other AND me AND a new daily flow AND new boundaries perhaps...That is a lot to adjust to! Furthermore, children are still developing their emotional and social risk competency (please see the 2 risk competency articles on website). It's a huge emotional and social risk to ask to join a group of children who may have an established game they are playing. All children sometimes choose to play alone, and this is welcomed and encouraged to give themselves the space that they need to decompress. It can be exhausting learning how to communicate kindly with others, taking turns, negotiating what game to play and how, and cleaning up after themselves. Some children may not appear to be playing or "participating," but rather they are witnessing. Children observe and witness others as a way to process their world.

How quickly a child will make friendships with others will depend on many factors such as their temperament, personality, and if a child is the first and/or only child in a family (it can sometimes take them longer to bond with other children, because they often times have less practice). The preschool years will not always be easy, and nor should it be. This is a very important and safe learning time for young children to learn about and practice healthy social behavior. Every child comes to Singing Tree with various strengths and challenges with social behavior. I know firsthand how hard it is to watch our little one's learn through hard days, and the learning of how to get along with children that are not "fast/easy" made friends. Going to a preschool program will mean a lot of potential people to play with, but it will take time to learn how to make friends, how to keep friends, how to join in, and how to deal with the disappointment of unfriendly comments. Children are not born innately with these skills. Social play is a skill that develops over time, and this is one of the many crucial reasons why children go to

preschool programs. Playdates with other Singing Tree peers can help strengthen the bonding process. Please be patient in your child's development, and understand that everything will not be conquered or mastered in just one week, or just one one month, or even one year....it takes a lot of time, and a lot of practice for your little one to build a strong foundation of social skills. This strong foundation will set them up for success for their entire journey ahead.

Why does my child choose to play alone?

Basic stages of childhood play:

Solitary Play (In general, Birth-2 Years)- This is the stage when a child plays alone. They are not interested in playing with others quite yet.

Spectator/Onlooker Behavior (In general, 2 Years)- During this stage a child begins to watch other children playing but does not play with them.

Parallel Play (In general, 2+ Years)- When a child plays alongside or near others but does not play with them this stage is referred to as parallel play.

Associate Play (In general, 3-4 years old)- When a child starts to interact with others during play, but there is not a large amount of interaction at this stage. A child might be doing an activity related to the kids around him, but might not actually be interacting with another child. For example, kids might all be playing on the same piece of playground equipment but all doing different things like climbing, swinging, etc.

Cooperative Play (In general, 4+ years old)- When a child plays together with others and has interest in both the activity and other children involved in playing they are participating in cooperative play.

This is the general progression of the stages of play for children, and it is important to understand that how long a child is in each stage of play, will vary child to child. All stages of play are crucial and important for the development of the child. Play may not look like what you expect it to look like for your child, but try to be patient with the process of your child's development. At Singing Tree, children are invited to play alone when they want, and they are also continuously invited to join with a friend or a few. Children who play alone are still learning by observing, experimenting, and witnessing. Through observation, I can usually find a connection or starting point between children for a budding friendship when they seem ready for that stage. As a mixed age learning environment, various stages and phases do not "stand out." All children are celebrated and encouraged wherever they are on their own unique learning journey. And, children learn from other children so much through positive peer modeling! I often recommend families with children who are less inclined to play with other kids, to make connections with families outside of school to further support that child, and to give them more opportunities to practice their stage of play. If you have concerns about your child's overall development, I recommend discussing this with your child's pediatrician.

Why doesn't my child get along with... (another certain child)...

Every child is working on various social skills, and every child has hard days, and peers that are harder for them to get along with. Singing Tree is a safe place for everyone to learn together. We embody a culture of learning. It could be very tempting to shelter children from uncomfortable social situations, but this will only make things

more challenging for them as they grow into the real world where social situations become more complex and challenging to navigate. There will always be people that we have to encounter in life that we do not easily get along with, but if young children learn, and actually practice their skills of using their kind words to speak clearly what their needs are, they will have a strong foundation to build off as they grow. The most important part of a child going to a preschool program is to hone and develop these social skills. Even more important than the "hidden" academic skills. Children do not need "like" each other, but rather learn how to respectfully be with each other.

Why does my child say they do not want to come to their preschool community? - And/Or - Why is my child having separation anxiety later in the program year? They were not having a hard time with goodbyes before....

It could be for a variety of reasons...If a child is coming down with a cold or other physical ailment, a child is unusually tired (stayed up later than usual and/or holiday/visitor excitement), a child is experiencing changes in their home life or experiencing a new "stress" (new baby, divorce, moving into a new home, nightmares, death in family, new job for parent, new sitter, changes to your child's regular routine, etc.), a child had a difficult conflict with peer/s or a "hard" day previously, or a child may be grappling with the less "fun" and less glamorous things about going to their learning environment (such as cleaning up after oneself, not getting what they want exactly when they want it, taking turns, negotiating play-games with peers, and sharing). If your child is coming down with a cold, or excessively tired, then staying home may be what is best for them. If they are otherwise fine, then consistency is key: Stay positive, and stick with your morning routine of bringing them to their preschool program. Children need to know we have confidence in them, and if a parent is anxious, children are intuitive and

they will feel that too. If they know you are wavering on bringing them that day, it will likely spiral into a bigger problem for you the next time you try to get them to go. Feel free to let me know by an e-mail or text if your child is experiencing resistance to coming. I am always available to comfort the child at drop off if they are sad or crying with your departure. And of course, my 15-minute rule always applies- If your child cannot settle into the flow of the day approximately 15 minutes after the caregiver has left, I will let you know. I will never let a child be unhappy for the entire day. If you do not hear from me, that means they are doing well :)

During winter months, it is completely normal for children to feel more tired, and less motivated to do things, including getting motivated to go to their preschool learning environment. Furthermore, children often do not recognize, comprehend, and/or have the words to express why, and so they will search for an easy/tangible excuse to explain why they might not want to get up and start their day. Winter slumber coupled with post-holiday exertion affects all of us, including our children. I want to assure you that this is completely normal. Less sun makes us feel more sleepy. Sunlight is closely tied to human biology. Melatonin regulates sleep and wakefulness. When we are in the dark, our bodies produce more melatonin. Winter is a dark time, so our bodies produce more melatonin in response. This leads to excessive feelings of fatigue and tiredness. Sunlight is also our major source of vitamin D. Human skin creates significant amounts of vitamin D when it's exposed to sunlight. Those who live in northern latitudes tend to have lower vitamin D levels, especially during the winter months. When the weather is cold and the days are short, there are fewer opportunities to get outside. In addition, the Winter Holidays can be a time of excitement, celebration, traveling, and less structured bed-times/wake-times for many families (for wonderful reasons). Please understand that it can take children awhile to fully re-sink into a "normal" bedtime/wake-time routine after the Winter Holidays.

A few things that can help support your child through winter's slumber include eating lots colorful fruits and vegetables, getting outside as much as possible (especially

during sunny moments), exercise, good quality/consistent sleep, and loving encouragement.

Does Singing Tree have Parent Conferences, Report Cards, or Learning Assessments?

Parent conferences, report cards, and child learning "assessments," require children and teachers to "prepare" for such assessments by significantly shortening a child's play time in exchange for doing more formal academic learning (ex. Children doing worksheets at a desk to create a body of written work to demonstrate their skills.) This concept does not align with Singing Tree. Singing Tree is proud to be a "no worksheet" program. Through process art, clay/play dough work, sensory play, and hands-on materials, the children are building dexterity, fine motor skills, and pre-writing skills every single day. Singing Tree is also a screen-free program and the more time children spend off of screens, the more time they spend working with their hands, their bodies, their peers, and their imaginations! Children this age should be playing and enjoying their childhood- not preparing for assessments. Yes children are learning through a play based environment, but at their own pace and in their own ways. Children may perhaps have a lifetime of assessments ahead of them, but at this age, they should be allowed to be children in the most wonderful ways. Singing Tree has the view of the child as powerful, competent, and full of potential, and that are 100 languages (and more!) that are all important aspects to develop one into BECOMING. I accept, love, and nurture each child on their own unique learning journey.

I am, however, available to discuss your child with you if you have a specific concern. If at any time you would like to discuss anything regarding your child and/or Singing Tree, please e-mail me, or schedule a time for us to chat over the phone. Please schedule phone conversations to be at a time when your child/ren will not be present to

overhear our conversation, since children hear and absorb everything. If scheduling a phone conversation, please email me a brief description of what you would like to discuss a few days prior to your scheduled time, so that I have the necessary time to give it proper consideration and/or gather appropriate resources if applicable. Please understand that I do not give "parenting advice," "parenting consultations," and I do not "assess" nor "screen" children. Parents are encouraged to share any context that may be affecting your child/ren outside of the Singing Tree program, so that I can have a deeper understanding of how to best support your child. During the program day (drop-off and pick-up too), my focus must remain on the children, so please refrain from approaching me at that time to discuss your child. In addition, it may be that what we are discussing about your child is not appropriate to discuss in front of them.

What is Singing Tree's policy regarding personal electronics in the learning environment?

Singing Tree Preschool is committed to providing a safe, secure, and nurturing environment for ALL children. I respect the privacy rights of all children and families. To protect these rights, please understand that children may not bring, possess, or wear any personal belongings, or wear any personal electronic devices while at Singing Tree Preschool. This policy prohibits the unauthorized use of any device that captures video, audio, photographic images, or that provides real-time location tracking. Prohibited personal electronic devices include, and are not limited to: Trackers, Smartwatches (watches capable of recording, communication, or location tracking), hidden audio or video recording devices (ex. nanny cams, devices concealed in clothing, jewelry, or toys, etc.), personal cameras, mobile phones, tablet computers, etc. Children may not wear or possess prohibited devices while at Singing Tree Preschool, and parents must remove any such devices before children enter the premises. Please understand that I am unable to monitor which devices are in 'safe mode' or not, as my attention must remain on the

children I am in care of, therefore, I maintain a blanket ban on all such devices. Please understand that this policy is in place to create a safe environment for all of the children and families. Thank you for understanding.

How does the Singing Tree Sharing Library work?

Our Sing Tree Sharing Library is a resource for enrolled families, and is stocked full of children's picture books, baby board books, short children's chapter books, and parenting books.

* Books are taken and returned by honor system- they are not formally "checked out." There is no limit for the amount of books you may take home to borrow- just please use good judgment so that there is enough for other families to enjoy.

* All of the books will be labeled with a stamp logo as belonging to the "Singing Tree Sharing Library" so that you can easily distinguish these books from your own personal books or other library books. Check the outside cover and inside pages for this logo.

* There is no set amount of time for you to return them by, just please return the books whenever you are finished with them so that others may enjoy them. **Please return books by placing books right back into the sharing library.** If the Library is too full while returning books, you may then place them in the overflow basket located near the cubby/entrance area at drop-off in the morning, however, this is just an overflow option.

* Please do your best to take care of the books so that others may enjoy them, but I completely understand that this is a learning process for young children to learn how care for books, and that things happen! If a book becomes damaged or lost, DO NOT be

overly concerned or feel like you need to replace the book. This is not meant to add stress to your lives in any way. The bulk of books will be books I either purchased used or that were donated. This is a safe place for your children to learn to love and care for books. It could be helpful for me to know the title of the lost and/or damaged book so that I may be on the lookout for a replacement copy.

* If you would like to donate books, please give them to me first and I will sort through them and process them before adding them to the library. Please take into consideration the "audience" these books are for- please no books with gory or especially scary images or anything that could be potentially offensive or inappropriate in some way. Please only donate books that your family is completely done with since books could potentially become lost or damaged.

* Books in the Singing Tree Sharing Library are not necessarily books that I "endorse" or have even read. It is in my opinion that there are many successful ways to raise children, so any and all opinions that may be expressed in these books are not necessarily my own. A library is a resource for families to have access to information, but it is ultimately a parent's decision to choose what to read, and what to filter out etc. I will do my best to keep an eye on what books are in the collection to make sure they are in general ways appropriate. However, I will not always know what every books contains, and it is possible that books could slip into the collection, placed by others. If anyone notices a book that is offensive or inappropriate, please give that book to me so that it may be removed as needed.

