

Dear Families of the Toddler Community,

Welcome to the 2018-2019 school year! I am excited to start the school year and to begin working with you and your children : )

I invite you to please join me in our new toddler classroom Wednesday, August 29th at 5:30 PM for orientation. We will go over any questions or concerns you may have about the start of the school year. There will also be a sign-up sheet available at orientation for you to set up your child's classroom visit. If you are not able to make it to orientation, please email me when you would like your child to visit the classroom. All visits will be approximately twenty minutes long and the first visit will begin at 8:30 am. If you would like to request a home visit with me, I will be doing those next Thursday and Friday afternoon and evening. Please email me with any additional questions about home visits or if you would like to set one up.

I would also like to invite you to our school this Sunday, August 26th, from 1-4 PM to join other parents and the staff of MLMS for our traditional campus beautification day. It is a wonderful way to help your child's school be ready for all of the students and to meet other families... all while earning volunteer hours!

Below is an important letter about specific details pertaining to your child's experience in the toddler community. We will go over it in detail during orientation but if you have any questions before then, please feel free to email me. I am looking forward to seeing everyone soon!

I am eagerly awaiting the start of the new school year and have been busy preparing a beautiful environment for your children. The information included in this letter is to help you and your little one transition smoothly into our loving environment. After orientation and reviewing this letter, if you still have questions feel free to email us at [sveithenthal@mlm-school.org](mailto:sveithenthal@mlm-school.org) or [dfritts@mlm-school.org](mailto:dfritts@mlm-school.org).

**Arrival and Departure:**

The arrival of all toddler students is between 8:15-8:30. All toddler families are invited to park their car and walk with their child to the toddler door. You will see the primary children getting out of a car line with a teacher, please wait patiently to maneuver your car into a parking spot as it is not safe to go around cars unloading children. Once you have parked, please allow your toddler to walk up the courtyard to the door. We ask that you refrain from carrying your child, as tempting as this is, to help your toddler foster a sense of independence and boost self confidence. Once you arrive at the door please show your toddler how to ring the bell and then allow them to have the opportunity to ring. I will then open the door and greet your child, welcoming them into school. At this time please give a quick goodbye to your child and walk down the stairs quickly. Some of your children may cry the first couple of weeks, as to be expected, but the more confident you are in saying good-bye and knowing their tears will be short lived will help your child feel confident. We will do our best to quickly ease your child's tears and get them involved in our delightful work period. All half-day toddlers will be dismissed at 11:45 from the toddler gate at the beginning of the courtyard. Please wait outside of the gate to allow your child to walk down the stairs and the courtyard to greet you. All full day toddlers will be dismissed at 3:30 from the toddler gate. For both dismissals, please park your car, even if you have older children, and meet your child at the courtyard gate. Your toddler's older siblings will join them at this gate so all of your children can be dismissed together.

**Clothing:**

Learning how to dress themselves is important, meaningful work for a toddler. We want to help our toddlers become successful with this work to encourage success in the toileting area and decrease frustration with a toddlers strong sense of independence. Please do not send your child in constricting clothes with fasteners they are not able to manipulate. Clothing should be soft, comfortable, loose fitting, and character-free. Outdoor shoes should be wide to accommodate chubby toddler feet and should have easy buckles or Velcro to encourage independence. We also go out in all weather conditions so please make sure your child's shoes

and outerwear are appropriate for the weather (rain boots, rain coats, snow boots, winter coats, mittens, hats, etc.).

To add to our warm, home-like environment please provide a pair of rubber-soled slippers for your child to wear in the classroom. The rubber soles help with preventing falls as our floor often becomes wet or slippery. The slippers should be easy to put on with a simple Velcro or zipper fastener. We also recommend buying a size larger than what your child is wearing now to help them foster independence putting it on and because toddler feet grow so quickly. These indoor shoes should be character free and have limited embellishments. Your child will also need a backpack to carry to and from school daily. Having a backpack provides a sense of pride for your toddler and they love having a school bag in which they are in complete control. Toddler work is very busy and often includes water, paint, soap, and various polishes. Your child will need several outfits in their backpack the first day of school that we will arrange in their cubby. All wet or soiled clothing will be sent home in their backpack. Please replenish with clean clothes when he/she is sent home with several soiled outfits.

I have set up a small closet in the bathroom with simple cotton clothes to encourage your child to practice and enjoy putting on weather appropriate clothes. This space will provide the toddler the opportunity to manipulate fasteners, practice dressing oneself, encourage self-care vocabulary, and have extra time to practice putting on shoes and slippers. I am hopeful that by giving the toddler plenty of time to dress oneself and manipulate fasteners this will lead to a more successful toddler while potty training or helping oneself to get ready in a rushed morning. If your child comes home with Mountain Laurel clothes, please wash them and return them at your earliest convenience.

#### **Toileting:**

Learning how to use a toilet is important work for toddlers and it is our goal to support their needs and efforts with this process. If your child is potty trained or in the process, please send them to school in soft cloth underpants. If there is an accident, we will assist them in changing into dry clothes and encourage the appreciation of staying dry. All soiled clothes will be sent home in plastic bags in your child's backpack. Consistency is key to toileting success so if you or your child is not quite ready to begin the process you may send them to school in pull-ups. Your child will still be encouraged to help with the process of pushing down and pulling up their paper pants to pave the way for successful independence while toilet training. All students will have the opportunity to use the toilet when they arrive at school, before they are dismissed, before nap, and several times throughout the morning.

We ask that all families, even with toilet trained children, to send in one package of disposable wipes at the beginning of the year. If your child is in pull-ups please send in a jumbo pack or larger of your preferred choice of pull-ups. In my experience children wearing pull-ups will go through between 12-15 a week. Both of these items can be brought to your classroom visit. If your child needs to have a cream or ointment applied due to a diaper rash, you will have to follow the school's medication policies that are stated in the handbook.

#### **Snacks and Lunch:**

Food preparation is one of our most beloved activities in the toddler community. Your child will have the opportunity to prepare their snacks and lunch under the guidance of the teacher or assistant. There is always a choice of two different snack activities to prepare throughout the morning such as slicing fruit or vegetables, slicing cheese, or spreading cream cheese or sunbutter on bagels or crackers. The children also actively help prepare our community lunch. Toddlers will have the opportunity to grind herbs, chop vegetables, grate cheese, drizzle olive oil, or knead dough. We provide water throughout the morning to have with snacks.

At the beginning of the week, a different family provides the week's groceries for snacks and lunches for the entire class. We also ask that you provide a very small bouquet of flowers (about ten stems) to grace our dining tables and allow your child the opportunity to have a lesson with flower arranging. We love wildflowers and fresh herbs that may be found in your yard or garden. Your family's turn to provide groceries

and flowers will happen a few times per year. A rotation schedule will be provided along with a shopping list. If your child has any allergies or dietary needs, please email me immediately and we will work together to provide a happy and healthy lunchtime!

Real, child sized kitchen utensils are used under the safety and care of your child's teacher. All children are required to wash their hands before and after handling food.

**Birthdays:**

Birthdays are such a fun celebration in your toddler's school environment but we do ask to keep it simple! On your child's birthday you may send in a simple cookie such as an oatmeal or small sugar cookie to share with your child's friends. We also invite you to make a poster highlighting special photos of your toddlers life. We will display this poster throughout the morning and share stories at our circle time to inspire wonderful conversations pertaining to your child! We will enjoy the cookies around our dining table, share our appreciation for the birthday student, and sing Happy Birthday.

If you are having a birthday party at your home, we ask that you distribute the invitations outside of school to avoid distractions during the day. You will receive a school directory and family list at the beginning of the year to help assist you when planning parties and playdates.

**Important Dates and Invitations:**

Throughout the year you will be receiving a MLMS newsletter with school wide information. We invite all of you to attend our school events to create a sense of a loving, strong community. As the year goes on, you and your child will make friends with other families and our school events are a wonderful way to be a part of your child's social life and to meet other parents! Be on the lookout for an events calendar for our toddler community, including our yearly field trips!

Sincerely,  
Sarah Veitenthal  
Debbi Fritts  
Valentina Craft  
Melissa Yount