Mrs. Veitenthal’s Class Notes

March 2020

March 17, 2020

Dear Families,

I hope this email finds you well and safe. I am sure by now you are all settling into being home more than usual and practicing social distancing. As this present way of life creates many challenges and stress for adults, our little ones can also be affected by this abrupt change in routine. One way to help offset the disruption in toddlers lives is to create a balance in their daily schedule. It is important to wake up around the same time every morning, eat all meals roughly around the same time, follow usual bedtime routines, and go to bed at the same time each night. What happens in between sleeping and eating schedules can change daily and should be a balance of things your toddler can do on their own without your direct attention and some activities done together. Here are some ideas to help you make the most of this time with your little ones.

\*Outdoor time can be a life saver. Go outside between breakfast and lunchtime and then again after nap if possible! Spring is popping up all around us. Explore your yard, name flowers, trees, and all the various parts of each variety. Fill a bucket with soil or dirt and give your toddler various cups, pots, and shovels so they can transfer dirt as they see fit. Or fill a basin or bucket with water and offer various cups, pitchers, or watering cans so they can water flowers that are popping up. Bring little cars or trucks outdoors and create a path. Go for a walk and skip the stroller, toddlers can walk for a surprisingly long time. Blow bubbles (you can make your own) or draw with chalk or water colors on a patio or sidewalk. Give your child a handled basket so she/he can collect rocks, leaves, flowers, pinecones, or other nature objects. You can bring the basket inside for further exploration. The idea is that once you provide the necessary materials for your toddlers exploration, you can sit back and let them explore independently.

\*Art and crafts are not one in the same. Children of this age thrive on self creation, freely using art materials provided for them. So save yourself the headache and skip the crafts! Offer one or two markers, 5-6 crayons, one or two water colors with a small jar of water, one color of clay with a few tools, a small jar of liquid paint and cut out shapes, or two colors of washable paint. By minimizing the amount of materials you offer, less mess will occur and your child will explore the process of making various strokes more deeply. After you show your child how to use the various materials you can step back and allow your child to concentrate....or you can create art next to your child... this can be very therapeutic. It is also fun to make homemade play-doh.

\*Cook together! Steam carrots, potatoes, or other veggies and have your child chop them for a soup or side dish. Your child has been working hard to slice all sorts of fruits and veggies for their snacks at school and you can prepare the food in a way where they can help meet their own needs. Your children can spoon beans, corn, berries, or granola into a bowl. If you are feeling brave you can also make muffins, bread, or pancakes together! Cooking with children activates all of their senses and strengthens their impulse control. There are lots of ideas for cooking with toddlers online.

\*Take advantage of nap time and allow yourself to take moments alone throughout the day. Your mental/ physical health and wellbeing is the most important aspect for your child during this stressful time. This extra time at home does not mean that you have to do more or constantly entertain your child. Allow yourself to breathe, color, meditate, do yoga, read, go on walks, watch a movie, or whatever helps you relax and feel calm. If possible, take turns with your partner or a grandparent when it comes to the eating and sleeping routine of your child. If your child is being particularly needy or you are feeling frustrated it is okay to take a break, allow your child to watch a little TV, or encourage some quiet time in their room. Be kind to yourselves, we are all in this together!

If anyone needs or wants specific ideas for learning at home, or creating a Montessori work shelf for your toddler, please feel free to email me and I will guide you through a more detailed process. I hope everyone remains healthy and I look forward to seeing all of you and your little ones once we return to school!

Warmly,

Sarah

March 22, 2020

Hi Families,

I hope you all are doing well. I have gotten a response from most of you that you would like additional suggestions on how to prepare a Montessori work shelf at home. Many of you were also hopeful for suggestions on how to get your little one to take a nap successfully as well. I thought it was easiest to email all of you so I can share my thoughts in one place. Feel free to connect and email one another too, or share pictures of your home activities, to continue our loving sense of community at MLMS.

Montessori Work Shelf:

Start by clearing a small shelf in your home. You can turn a small, upright, vertical shelf horizontally and remove the inner shelf dividers. The shelf should be completely accessible to the child. Having things higher up in the shelf that the child cannot reach can frustrate the child or prompt unsafe climbing.

Depending on size, place about 8-10 different materials on the shelf for your child to choose. Unlike in the classroom, there can be mixed materials on your shelf that encourage all areas of development. Each material should be stored in a basket or on a tray so your child can move to to his/her work table or a floor mat successfully. Cloth napkins and table placemats make great floor mats you can store next to the shelf.

Here are some ideas for your baskets:

1. Language materials: Each basket should have 5-7 items of classified objects. Kitchen items (spoon, spatula, bowl, whisk, small pan or skillet, various kitchen tools or utensils). Bathroom items (brush, comb, small mirror, empty shampoo bottles, washcloth, rubber duck). Gardening items (shovel, hand rake, pot, seed packets, gardening gloves). Groups of like toys such as: safari animals, barnyard animals, various construction trucks, or various modes of transportation. The idea behind these baskets is to encourage language development, classification, and the abstract mind.

2. Fine motor work: Building blocks, stringing beads, peg boards, lacing boards, dropping coins in a piggy bank, shape sorters, mailboxes, and puzzles. These should all be stored in their own container. Present only one or two on the shelf at a time and keep the others in a closet to rotate work when your child seems bored or has mastered the activity.

3. Language cards or books: Have a small basket with two or three books you can rotate weekly. Cut out pictures from magazines or calendar and paste them onto a square of cardboard. These pictures should also be categorized, such as water animals or different kinds of flowers. Place 5-7 cards in a basket and rotate when necessary.

4. A small chalkboard with 2 pieces of chalk on a tray, liquid glue in a small twist jar (the short spice jars work great for this, with small squares of construction paper and small shapes for gluing and one small paintbrush for spreading glue, one piece of paper on a tray with a small box of three crayons, a jar that contains clay on a tray with three clay tools, one piece of paper on a tray with one water color tab and a small jar of water with a paintbrush. You should have one or two art materials on your shelf and you can rotate them out weekly.

5. On the side of your shelf you can add a command hook to store a cloth or dustpan/ dust broom to help with any spills or messes that occur. You can also place a small empty basket on the floor for your child to place finished artwork.You can also have a small plant with a pitcher that they can water. Flowers can certainly be placed on the shelf for language work and exploration.

Observe your child. If he/she is not gravitating towards certain things switch them out for something you have stashed in the closet. Designate specific times in the morning or afternoon for working. The idea is for your child to choose things off of the shelf, one at a time, work until content, and then replace the iterm once finished before a new basket is chosen. It's a good idea to place the shelf in a more local area of the house so you can do your own work while keeping an eye on your child. Once your child understands how to use the material, you do not need to "work" with your child all of the time. Step in when your child seems frustrated or needs guidance.

Nap time:

For successful nap times, make sure your after lunch routine is the same every day. Lunch should be eaten at the same time every day too. Have your child help clean up after lunch by taking his/her dirty dish to the sink or a basin on the floor. Have your child wash her hands, wash her face, and use the toilet. Next, walk with your child to their room and read a quiet book together, sing a song, ask your child to lay in their bed, quick kiss goodnight, and leave the room. We do listen to a lovely harp and flute instrumental CD at school for our nappers. It helps calm them and feel connected to their rest time without direct adult interaction. If your child continues to rise from the bed, simply walk them back each time, remind them it is nap time, quick kiss, and leave the room. If your child is not napping at all right now, you can encourage one hour of quiet time in their room on their bed with no technological stimulation. Limiting TV time in the morning will also help with naptime... you can save the TV for the long afternoon hours!

Please feel free to send pictures of your littles working or playing! I can share them with the group so all of your children can see their friends. I am also in the process of creating a circle time that I will record and share with you all in the next week with some familiar poems and songs your children love.

With love and peace,

Sarah

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IMPORTANT: When replying to this message only reply to the sender. Using 'Reply All' in your email client will result in a delivery failure message. Thank you.



