

Dear Families of the Toddler Community,

We are 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. We would like to invite you to the **Toddler Parent Orientation on Wednesday, September 1st at 5:30 p.m.** This meeting is for parents/caregivers only. We will have the chance to go over this information below, as well as get to know each other a little better. We will talk about the best ways that we can all support your child as they join our toddler community. It's a great night to ask all of your questions. On **Thursday and Friday (Sept 2nd and 3rd)** we will have **Toddler Classroom Visits** so that we can get to know your child a little bit better. Students who have been with us for Summer Camp or Bumper Weeks do not need to come for a Toddler Visit, but they are more than welcome if they would like to join!

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 our classroom 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, but the more confident you are in saying good-bye and knowing their tears will be short lived will better 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.

If you arrive after 8:30, you will have to bring your child to the office and drop your child off with the front office receptionist, who will walk your child over to our class. After 8:30, my assistants and myself will not be able to leave the classroom to answer the door in order to remain within the student/ teacher ratio. We will have also already begun our morning work cycle at this point and

will be in the middle of lessons, cooking lunch, or in the bathroom with other students. Please do your best to arrive on time as this shows respect to your child's need for order and consistency. It is hard for late children to acclimate to an already working environment. Of course, we understand that tardiness happens on occasion with young children! Please call the school and let us know if you are running late and we will do our best to help your child ease into the 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 from 3:00-3:30 from the toddler gate. If you arrive after 3:30 to pick up your child, you will be charged for our aftercare program. 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 in correlation with a toddler's 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 with putting them 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. It is important to label all of your toddlers' clothing.

We have a dressing area set up in our classroom to practice dressing and undressing. It has simple cotton clothing 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 it 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. Please send in at least two reusable bags to send wet clothes home, and return the bag the next day. Consistency, patience, and unconditional support 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 cloth diapers or double layer cotton underwear. If these two options do not work for your family, then send pull ups (no diapers, please).

Your child will still be encouraged to help with the process of pushing down and pulling up their 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. When you or I observe toilet learning readiness with your child, we will have a parent/ teacher conference to discuss this important process in your toddler's life.

We ask that all families, even with toilet trained children, send in one package of disposable wipes at the beginning of the year. We encourage the use of cloth diapers, or training pants, for your children and we will send home your child's soiled cloth diapers at the end of every day. If your child is in pull-ups, and you are choosing not to use cloth, 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 around 15 pull-ups 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. Also send a wet bag that will go home daily. Please, send this wet bag to school every morning.

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 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. There is no need to send in a water bottle as your children will have the opportunity to practice pouring their own water to drink as part of the morning work cycle.

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.

Nap Time:

After your toddler's hard work in the morning, they will be ready for nap time. Full day toddlers will nap from 12:15-2:30 pm every afternoon. Your toddler will need a crib sized sheet and blanket to use at nap time. Toddlers enjoy helping with the classroom laundry. Each week, nap time blankets and sheets will be washed with our classroom laundry.

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 toddler's 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 play dates.

Art:

Self-directed art is an important part of our curriculum. Your children will be receiving many lessons on how to use different art mediums. Art is different from craft making. Crafts focus on the end product rather than the process of creation. Your children are learning how to express themselves artistically at this age and are exploring the sensory feedback from chalk, paint, glue, and scissors. Once your children are given a lesson on how to use the art material, they will be free to create art based on their own volition. This will also give me insight on their fine motor skills, hand strength, motivation, initiative, and self-image. All art will be stored in a folder until our parent- teacher conferences so we can go over your child's self-expression together.

Important Dates and Invitations:

Throughout the year you will be receiving an electronic MLMS newsletter with school wide information. We invite all of you to attend our school events to create the 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!

Sunday, August 29th 1 - 4:00 p.m. - Campus Beautification Day - Come join teachers and families in the classroom and on campus to get the school ready for the beginning of the year.

Wednesday, September 1, 5:30 p.m. - Toddler Parent Orientation

Thursday and Friday, Sept. 2 and 3 - Toddler Classroom Visits

Monday, September 6 - NO SCHOOL - Labor Day

Tuesday, September 7 - First Full Day for returning students, shorter days for new students just acclimating to the environment

You will receive a message from your toddler's classroom teacher in the next few days, so be sure to keep looking for exciting notes from the toddler community!

Sincerely,
Sarah Veitenthal & Valentina Craft
Toddler Lead Teachers