

August 2024

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 want to invite you to a few events to get to know us, become familiar with Montessori education, and ask questions.

**Toddler Parent Orientation on Wednesday, August 27th at 5:00 p.m.**

This meeting is for parents/caregivers only. We will have the chance to go over the 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, and what to expect as a parent.

**Thursday, August 28th and Friday, August 29th** we will have Toddler Classroom Visits by appointment 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! Please reach out to us and schedule your time to come in and visit.

**First Week Of School**

**Monday, September 2nd- Closed to Students**

**Tuesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> and Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>** - Returning and previously enrolled students attend for their full scheduled day

**Thursday, September 5th and Friday, September 6th** - All toddler students are welcome for their full scheduled day

**Arrival and Departure**

Families should arrive for drop-off between 8:15-8:30 am. All toddler families are invited to park their car and walk with their child to our classroom door. Please wait patiently for the Primary car line to advance until you approach the parking area; it is not safe to pass cars with unloading children. Once you have parked, please hold your child's hand to walk up to the courtyard gate. It's more helpful to have your child hold your hand and walk than carry them. Learning to walk on their own helps your toddler foster a sense of independence and boosts 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 over the threshold into school. At this time please give a confident 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!) the more you help your child feel capable of separating. 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, please bring your child to the office and drop your child off with the front office staff, who will walk your child over to our class. **After 8:30, teachers will not be able to leave the classroom to answer the door in order to remain within the student/teacher ratio.** Please do your best to arrive on time as this shows respect to your child's need for order and consistency. Tardy arrivals can interrupt important work we begin in the classroom upon arrival and it can be difficult for children to acclimate to an already working environment. We do 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.

### **Dismissal**

All half-day toddlers will be dismissed at **11:45 am** from the toddler courtyard gate. Please wait outside of the gate (on the parking lot side) to allow your child to walk down their classroom steps and greet you. All full day toddlers will be dismissed from **3:00-3:30 pm** from the toddler gate. Please wait outside of the gate (on the parking lot side) to allow your child greet you. If you arrive after 3:30 to pick up your child, you will be charged for our after school Laurel Club program. **Please do not allow your child to open and close the lock, or the gate itself.** While we do want to foster independence, this is firmly "adult work" to keep the children safe.

### **Clothing**

Learning how to dress themselves is important, meaningful work for a toddler. We want to help toddlers become successful with dressing and toileting. Learning how to get dressed and undressed is a lifelong skill that we encourage daily. Practicing dressing skills also helps with toilet awareness, which we practice from day one in our classrooms.

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 simply slip on, or 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 pull on with minimal fasteners. 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. Please try them on with your child before sending them to school, to ensure a good fit.

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, food prep, and vigorous outdoor play! Your child will need five full changes of clothing the first day of school that we will arrange in their cubby.

It is important to label all of your toddlers' clothing, including outerwear, underwear, shoes, slippers, and socks.

### **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 they experience a wet event or bowel movement, we will assist them in changing into dry clothes and encourage the appreciation of staying clean and dry. Please send in at least one reusable "wet bag" to send wet or soiled clothes home, and return the bag in the child's backpack the next day.

Consistency, patience, and collaborative support is key to toileting success. If you or your child are 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 diapers. We have found that pull-ups are so absorbent that they often hamper the toileting process. Our preference is to use inexpensive side-tab diapers if you choose not to use cloth.

Your child will be encouraged from day one to help with the process of pushing down and pulling up their pants to pave the way for successful independence while toilet training. When we observe toilet 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 send in two packages of disposable wipes the first week. If you are choosing not to use cloth diapers, please send in a jumbo pack of inexpensive diapers such as Luvs or Parent's Choice. Children wearing diapers will go through around 15-20 diapers a week, and at least one pack of wipes. These items can be brought to your classroom visit or

Orientation, to prevent many large bags on the first day of school. 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 under the guidance of the teacher or assistant. There is always a snack activity for children 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, and knead dough.

Each week, different families provide the week's groceries for snacks and lunches for the entire class. Your family's turn to provide groceries will happen a few times per year. A rotation schedule will be provided along with a shopping list on the Friday before your assigned week. 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!

We also ask that you provide a very small bouquet of flowers 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.

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! On your child's birthday you may send in a simple cookie or muffin 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 treats 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. Teachers cannot facilitate private gatherings or parties, including distributing invitations or passing along information to other families.

### **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. Art will be sent home each day in your child's backpack for you to exclaim over and discuss with your child at home.

### **Toddler Toy Vehicles**

If you would like your child to ride any of the toy vehicles, you will need to bring a helmet that will remain at the school. Please be sure to mark the helmet with your child's name. It will be worn exclusively by your child.

### **MLMS Events 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!

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! Also feel free to reach out to your child's teacher by email to schedule your classroom visit.

Sincerely,

Ingrid Patterson and Michelle Fitzhugh

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### **Important Dates**

Sunday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 - 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, August 27<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 p.m. - Toddler Parent Orientation

Thursday, August 28<sup>th</sup> & Friday, August 29<sup>th</sup> - Toddler Classroom Visits By Appointment

Monday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> - NO SCHOOL - Labor Day

Tuesday and Wednesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> - Full program days for returning students

Thursday and Friday, September 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> - New Toddler Students Begin their full program days

Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 3:00-5:00 p.m. - Back-to-School Potluck Picnic

### **List of Items To Bring When You Visit, or on your First Day:**

- Five Tops
- Five Bottoms (Please no Onesies, rompers, or overalls) Five pairs of underwear
- Five pairs of socks
- Large pack of diapers
- Two packs of wipes
- Slippers
- "Wet Diaper Bag" for wet and soiled clothing
- Bicycle Helmet

### **Full Day Students only:**

- Crib Size fitted Sheet
- Blanket for Naptime (Recommended 42" or 47" to cover your toddler completely at naptime) Small noise free Lovey/Stuffie to keep at school

### **Daily List To Bring:**

- Backpack
- Water Bottle
- Wet Bag returned in backpack