

Toddler Community Orientation

Welcome! This information is specifically pertinent to the children and families who are transitioning into the Toddler Community at Childpeace Montessori.

What happens after you are offered a space?

The child's classroom will be determined by available spaces in each group and by your toddler's age and gender. The guide in your child's classroom will contact you to set up a time to meet with you and your child. (There is also the option of setting up an observation time in the classroom for parents only, before your child begins his/her transition into the community.) When you bring your child in for that first visit with the guide, no children will be in the environment and your child will be free to explore the room on their own. Please bring any questions and/or concerns to discuss with the guide. The exact start date for your child will be confirmed at this point. This meeting usually lasts about 30 minutes.

The Transition Process:

The transition of a child into the Toddler Community usually begins on a Monday and continues through that week.

- * Monday-The child visits the environment for 1 - 1 1/2 hours (9:00-10:00 or 10:30). A parent or guardian should be available during this time should they be needed.
- * Tuesday-The child visits for 2 - 2 1/2 hours (9:00-11:00 or 11:30).
- * Wednesday-The child visits through lunch (8:30-12:00).
- * Thursday- The child stays to nap. A parent or guardian should be available to pick up the child when he/she wakes.
- * Friday-The child will stay 3/4 day (8:30-2:45). If the child has a full-day schedule, his/her first full day will begin on the following Monday.

This schedule is a guideline and can be rearranged to facilitate a smooth transition for your toddler. The guide's and your expectations for this transition will be discussed when you meet. During this process, the guide will share her observations with you. Please discuss your observations with her as well.

T.C. Daily Schedule:

*****This may change*****

7:15 - 8:30 Early Morning Care option

Breakfast available 7:30-8:10.

8:30 - 10:00 Snack and Classroom work time with Montessori materials

10:00 - 10:30 Bathroom break and dressing to go outside for a walk
10:30 - 11:25 Walk, playground, and/or playroom, depending on weather
11:25 - 11:35 Undressing and bathroom break
11:35 - 12:10 Lunch
12:10 - 2:45 Nap (children awakening earlier have bathroom break,
dress, and go to the clubroom)
2:45 - 3:00 3/4 day children depart
3:00 – 5:45 After care option
Full day children choose activities in the TC clubroom, have snack, have time on
the playground and/or in the playroom, sing and read books.

Supply List:

- two photographs of your child
- recent photographs of your child with the family (everyone the child lives with; pets also)
- sun hat for hot days
- 10-15 pairs of training pants as needed
- change of clothes including: 3-4 shirts, 3-4 pair of pants, 3-4 pairs of socks, and 1 pair of rubber soled slippers or indoor shoes
- rain gear including a coat, hat, and boots during rainy season
- diapers for nap time and to go home in
- nap blanket

All items must be clearly labeled with your child's name in permanent ink. This includes bags, boots, sweaters, jackets, mittens, hats, blankets, etc. Please check your child's belongings on a regular basis to assure an adequate supply of items and also to assure appropriateness of clothing for the current season and current size of your child.

Toilet Training:

The staff at Childpeace Montessori uses an approach to toilet “learning” that we believe is the most advantageous to the child. All of the children, as soon as they enter the environment, wear cotton training pants, all day, except at naptime. The theory behind our approach is that it is the normal human condition to keep all body parts clean and dry. Therefore, it is imperative that we help the child change into clean pants after urinating or having a bowel movement. When a child stays in wet diapers/pants, she receives the incorrect message that wet is the normal state of being and that there is no need to change this.

Another point is that in learning anything new, there is a period of absorption of information before it can be constructively used. The length of time involved in absorption varies in every circumstance. We must give the child whatever time is necessary without being judgmental. It is counter-productive if we allow freedom of

movement and refinement of physical control of all body parts, with the exception of the elimination parts. If the child is kept in diapers she can become physically and mentally detached from that part of her body. As the rest of her body becomes more controlled and mobile, the child who is kept in diapers will find it more difficult and require much more conscious effort to toilet train than the child who has worn underwear from an early age. (Infants who are changed immediately upon elimination will soon cry after elimination, indicating discomfort at the unnatural condition. If the proper information is given at an early age, and the child is allowed the time it takes her to control all body parts, the awareness and control will come naturally and without a great deal of conscious work.)

As soon as possible when a child begins to show interest, she may begin to use underwear. Underwear is easier to change than diapers and gives the child an opportunity to assist in dressing herself at an early age. She can quickly become proficient at pulling her pants up and down, which will greatly aid in her self-confidence and independence. In the Toddler Community, underpants and a warm over-shirt and slippers are sufficient while weather permits. We want to make it as easy as possible for the child to succeed in her personal care.

We also carefully consider our reaction at the time of the child's elimination. We must remember that it is a natural action, just as breathing is. It is important not to give undue response or commotion at this time because the child would think that we attach too much importance to this occasion. All she would see is that she has caused a strong reaction by something she has done. She would perhaps want to repeat the action just to elicit a strong response again. We do not say, "you're dirty" or "you're stinky" or complain, "you're wet again". A child should be helped to feel at ease about something that occurs naturally. Likewise, an exaggerated display of celebration at the child's accomplishment can inhibit the child's attitude toward this process. A moderate word of encouragement to the child can satisfy the adult's need to celebrate the child's feat, while giving the child the opportunity to continue this "learning" without requiring praise in order to "perform".

If you choose to put your child in training pants at home, these suggestions may ease the transition from diapers to underpants. When the child wets her pants and the floor, the first thing to do is to stay calm in the situation. There is no need to say "uh-oh". It is not a mistake or an accident, it is a natural act. The child simply needs to learn where and how to perform it. Invite the child to go to the bathroom with you to sit on the toilet. As soon as she wants to get up, let her get up and get some dry pants, which are preferably kept in the bathroom.

The child can sit on the potty chair or on a small stool in the bathroom and dress herself. The child then goes with the adult to observe cleaning the urine from the floor. It is nice to have a small child's size bucket and mop in case he wants to participate.

Part of the reason for substituting underwear for diapers is the fact that underwear is much less bulky and allows the child to stand straighter and have more freedom of movement. The legs of the underwear must be loose enough not to bind and restrict free

movement. It is important to not give the child a large quantity of liquid before going to bed. It is also important to establish the routine of taking the child to the bathroom immediately before nap and bedtimes and upon waking.

Clothing:

Gaining control, coordination and balance are critical aspects of development at this time in the child's life. For this reason, clothing is important in the Toddler Community in affecting the range and potential effectiveness of the child's movements. Freedom of movement is crucial to this developmental process and to the child's use of the materials and participation in activities throughout the day. Specifically, proper fit avoids discouraging movement from tight, binding clothes or frustration at having to push aside or trip on large or baggy clothing; in either case, the child receives the message that a great deal of effort must be expended for little or painful results when clothing fits improperly.

Clothing also affects the child's independence and ability to practice basic self care in dressing and undressing throughout the day; one-piece outfits or those with difficult fastenings simply discourage the child from doing things for himself, as he is not successful.

Similarly, these factors also influence the child's toilet learning and ability to manage this process for himself. Since the child is just learning to make the connection between the physical sensations in his body and the need to use the toilet, timing becomes crucial and affects the child's potential for feeling successful and in control of this process. When a child is just beginning to make this connection and runs to the bathroom, only to have to remove overalls or pants with a snap and zipper, this presents a major impediment and can become quite frustrating for the child to contend with.

Natural fibers are preferred to synthetics because of their "breathability" and allowance for the body to regulate temperature. In addition, children at this age explore and absorb information through their senses; the textures of natural fiber clothing offer greater quality and variety of tactile sensation. For these reasons, natural fiber clothing (i.e. cotton, wool) with simple fastenings (comfortable elastic openings, zippers, Velcro, a few large buttons) is preferable for children at this age.

Parent Conferences:

Parent conferences are scheduled twice a year: in late fall and mid-spring. Parents are given an opportunity (and strongly encouraged) to sign up for a convenient time and date. Your child's guide will typically share about your child's progress, curriculum, Montessori theory and answer your questions during these 30-minute conferences.

Birthdays:

Birthdays for toddlers can be overwhelming. We do celebrate birthdays in the classroom by lighting a special candle and singing happy birthday. Parents are encouraged to bring a photo of their child as a newborn and a one-year-old (and a two-year-old if the child is turning 3). Parents may also bring a nutritious snack for the children to share, if they would like.

Food:

Foods are selected in the Toddler Community for nutritional balance throughout the day and for enabling the children to participate as much as possible in their preparation. The children's occasional involvement in preparing their own snacks and lunch is very important because when they help prepare the food, they are learning a process in which they can develop a sense of capability in caring for themselves.

In addition to food preparation, the children are guided in how to set and clear their own place for snack and lunch. Sitting at a table while eating provides structure to mealtimes and sets the stage for mealtimes as occasions for the coming together of family and community.

Snacks and Lunch:

Snacks are served twice a day for children with a 3/4 day schedule (in the morning and after nap) and again during after care (around 4:00 pm). The snacks are provided by Childpeace and include a grain, a protein, and a fruit or vegetable. The children very rarely eat sweet treats at school. We serve only vegetarian foods, organic dairy products, mostly organic produce and no trans fats. We emphasize "home-cooked" meals over foods with preservatives.

The guides establish a structure to lunchtime by singing a particular song and greeting each child as they return to the classroom for lunch (typically from a walk outdoors or from the playroom.) Each child enters the classroom and walks to the shelf to obtain a lunch basket, which contains a tablecloth, bib, napkin, pitcher, glass, plate, fork and spoon. The child carries this lunch basket to a table of their choosing and proceeds to lay out the tablecloth, which has a pattern corresponding to the shape of each item, to provide the child with a guide for this process of table setting.

After they have set their table, the child carries the basket back to the shelf and then returns to their table. When most of the children have completed this process, the staff and children sing a grace song, give thanks and then the staff offer a serving of the main dish and vegetable to each child. The children always have the option of refusing lunch entirely, or any particular selection. Similarly, each child can always choose additional

servings of any and all foods offered for lunch. After the initial serving by the staff, the remaining food is set on the table so that it is available to each child if and when they would like additional helpings (within the time allotted for lunch). Toward the end of the lunch period, staff offers fruit to each child. The main dish and vegetable are then removed from the serving table and it is announced that lunchtime is over and that the children can finish the food remaining on their plate.

When a child finishes her lunch, she carries her plate to a container and scrapes any remaining food off her plate with a small spatula, then places her plate in the center bin of the dish cart. The child returns to her table and repeats this process with each item, placing the glass and pitcher in the top bin of the cart, the silverware in the lower bin, and the napkin, bib and tablecloth in the laundry basket. Moistened washcloths are provided on the top tray of the cart so that each child may wipe their face and hands after clearing the table. The child may carry the washcloth to a wall mirror and look at her face while cleaning, then place the washcloth in the laundry basket. All of the dishes and cloths are washed daily and arranged in baskets for the next day's use.

The purpose of this entire process is to provide structure to mealtimes and to offer a sense of security and community. It also enhances the child's development of independence in caring for themselves, fostering their self confidence and natural joy in accomplishment.

Please give your child's guide written notice of any specific food requirements particular to your child. It is equally important to us that your child avoids food that cause her difficulty or foods that are not allowed in your family's culture.

Illness In The Community:

If your child has clearly developed a COMMUNICABLE disease, please make other arrangements for his/her care. Any child who has had an elevated fever, vomiting, or diarrhea is required by Oregon law to be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school. Do not bring the child to school where the disease will be spread to other children. The school does not have facilities to care for a sick child for more than a short period of time.

If you suspect your child is ill and have made a doctor's appointment, please do not bring your child in until your pediatrician has cleared them. If your child has been to a doctor and needs medication, they are not to be returned to school until the medication is "active" (usually after 2 doses).

Please phone the school and advise us of any communicable diseases so that we may alert all families to look for symptoms. Communicable diseases will be publicized on a Health Alert notice at the security door.

Illness certainly can be depressing, as flu-bugs fly and noses run. In a group setting like Childpeace, we have come to a comfortable consensus about what health conditions are

acceptable at school. Working together in the classroom, the children tend to infect and reinfect each other. The staff also suffers from the infection game; we usually plan a substitute for new staff during their second week, as they are invariably ill. Believe it or not, in all this your child's immune system is getting stronger. It is not unusual for a toddler to have a chronic runny nose or cough. If in doubt, please have them checked by your pediatrician to rule out a more serious illness. As long as your child just has a bit of a cold or is just a little under the weather, we'll try to keep them involved in the program. Our staff is sensitive to the limitations of parents with regard to sick leave and the pressure parents feel to not miss work.

On the other hand, it is a very unhappy experience to try to comfort a sick or uncomfortable child when you can't offer them your undivided attention. When young children are sick or trying to regain strength after an illness, they may be fine at home, exhibiting all the signs of health - but put them in a group setting with requirements to walk, eat or sleep and you simply put them over the edge and ultimately they stay sick longer.

Beyond the basic Health Department guidelines, we want your child to be well enough at school to take care of their own physical needs, (as appropriate for their age), and contribute as a member of their group(s) throughout the day. Please do not ask us to keep your child inside during play periods. If your child is well enough to attend school and is appropriately dressed, he should be well enough to go outside as well. If we must send a child home due to illness, our request is for the child to be given restful time at home to recuperate.

When your child will be absent due to illness or vacation, please notify the school staff. Daily plans need to consider the correct children-to-staff ratio.

Should any of this information raise questions or comments, as always, please discuss them with your child's classroom guide. We are looking forward to your family joining our community.