

Summary of the Toddler Curriculum

The toddler class is specifically designed to address the interest and abilities of children ages 20-36 months. It is a unique Montessori environment that fosters the development of order, concentration, coordination, and independence in a gentle atmosphere of respect, accomplished through providing work that is developmentally appropriate for this age group. Since development is so rapid at this young age, the toddler environment has the same qualities associated with traditional Montessori mixed-age classrooms in the smaller age range between the youngest and oldest members of the class.

Each year begins with an orientation period that allows for the child's smooth transition away from a primary giver into what is often the child's first community of peers. During this period, children have the freedom to explore their new school environment with a loved one present to provide reassurance as needed. At this time, materials offered are simple and the environment is elegantly sparse. This simplicity prevents over-stimulation and encourages children to begin to engage in concentrated activity in the new environment. It also allows teachers and children to be successful in caring for the environment. This success gives the children confidence and supports their view that the environment is their own, which leads to pride and further independence.

As the students' abilities and interests evolve, work is chosen based on the teacher's observations of the children and materials are replaced often with more complex and challenging work. The environment is rich with materials to stimulate conversation and the development of language, and also contains work for sensory exploration, manipulatives, pre-math materials, science and nature exploration, and activities involving gross motor movement. Children are introduced to art and music from various cultures and have many opportunities for creative expression. Practical life skills, which relate to care of self and the environment, are a cornerstone of Montessori philosophy and play an important role in the toddler classroom. Work often has a multidimensional aspect, addressing several skills at the same time. A table washing work, for example, involves both large and fine motor skills, memory recall, logical sequencing of steps, and language.

The need to explore with all senses is encouraged and the natural desire of young children to do things for themselves is respected and assisted. Each day follows the same routine, consisting of a work period, individual and group lessons, gathering time with stories and singing, snack, and outdoor play. Changes in the schedule are discussed with the children beforehand, to prepare them for a new routine.

As this is a very strong age of imitation, adults model grace and courtesy, care of self and the environment, and sincere consideration for others. Children develop social skills such as cooperation through practice, and learn to use words to express the emotions they experience and see being experienced by others. Undesirable behaviors are addressed with consistency, understanding, and redirection towards a successful experience. Children develop confidence, concentration, coordination, and a true love of learning that evolves naturally from their individual exploration and action in this specially prepared environment.