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The **Toddler Times**

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Toddlers Begin to Build a Sense of Community

Potty Training that Works: Follow the Child

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Toilet training has been happening later and later in the United States over the past 30 years, often not until 3 or 4 years of age. This trend coincides with the widespread use of disposable diapers instead of cloth. In a Montessori environment, early toileting is taught as a Practical Life, self care skill. The sensitive period for a child interest in using the toilet is 18-24 months of age. I personally have seen this confirmed in at least a half dozen children. I think an issue is awareness for parents.

Parents are typically told by their Pediatrician to "wait until your child is ready." There is really no research to guide parents to know "when". With all the new research on young children, attention is being paid to toddler's capabilities. Children develop their basic human capabilities during the first 3 years.

Cloth diapers are rarely used in today's society although they are better for a child's skin and let them feel the wetness unlike disposables. Children should be changed in a

bathroom - this is where it all happens. Put bowel movements in the toilet. Your child will see this and know where it belongs. Keep the experience pleasant. It's part of what we do like brushing their teeth and hair. Do not give any negative messages like icky or stinky. Don't keep the bathroom door closed or locked; this sends the message that this room is not for them.

When changing a diaper, kneel and face your child constantly verbalizing what you are doing. Once your child is 9-11 months old, change their diaper while they are standing up. It is a more independent, passive position and they can see what you are doing. Around 12-16 months a child will tug on his or her pants or lift their shirt. This is an early attempt at undressing that indicates they can begin to participate. Let them help remove their clothing and diaper. Provide clothing that allows independence: elastic waist pants, loose shirts and socks and Velcro or slip on shoes).

The most effective step toward toilet learning is to allow the child to wear underwear. Thick or waterproof training pants protect your carpet and furniture but thin cotton underwear allows the child to feel and see what is

happening. Give your child time out of diapers every day. They can be bare bottomed or wear cotton underwear. This increases awareness of bodily functions, helps with diaper rashes and enhances freedom of movement. If there is an accident, your child can help clean up with you as part of the natural consequence.

By 15 months, provide a potty. Children enjoy sitting in any little chair. At about two years of age they can use the toilet with the help of a toilet ring and stool. You will pay more attention to your child's eliminations schedule when they are in underwear or bare bottomed. Notice signs with facial expressions like hiding or grunting. Take the child to the potty according to these observations. By 16-18 months most toddlers are interested in the bathroom and they are gaining the necessary muscular control. Allow your child to follow you or a sibling to the bathroom.

Even though you may be thinking "this seems young to teach my child", you are actually doing them a disservice allowing them to stay in diapers for too long. Each child is different and it is work on the parents part. But if you talk with your child

and provide the environment and opportunity for toileting you are allowing the child to follow their own interest. At 18 months toddlers are imitating others and by age two a normal child is capable of bladder and bowel control. Delay will affect the functioning of those muscles.

Three year olds are not as imitative as toddlers. More conscious than imitative, the three year old an easily engage the adult in a battle over toileting. Opposition has replaced interest.

If we keep children in diapers too long, we are communicating that we don't think they are capable of caring for themselves in this way. Through adult actions they have been told "they can't". They feel proud when we allow them to care for themselves. This sense of accomplishment does not require rewards. The primary motivation is pride in caring for themselves. You can say "Yes, I see you used the toilet!"

See Summary of tips on page three of this newsletter.

Bringing Color to Light

February is when we formally introduce color to the children. We incorporate books, songs and experiment with color through art activities. We have been incorporating "color" into our circle time through discussion and songs.

We often see a profusion of bright colors in preschools, play materials, plastic bins and children's catalogues of things. They are generally the primary colors: red, yellow and blue, plus green and sometimes orange. It seems that these color choices are based on an assumption that children prefer bright colors and the desire for children to learn the names of the primary colors.

Pastel colors are usually reserved for infant toys, or possibly girl's toys. But

soft colors show children that they are capable of responding to their rich and diverse environment. In general, the colors of the rooms in our homes are more from nature and are earthy colors more than bright, bold primary colors.

The concept of color is something a child will absorb. Even though it is more abstract than identifying numbers and letters, children lean colors first. Many seem to learn color with little direct instruction while others need more exposure. Generally, children will be able to match colors before they know the names of colors. If your child is not yet picking up the concept, use color in your everyday conversations with them. "Would you like to wear the blue shirt or the yellow shirt"? We more naturally do this with opposites or adjectives like up and down or loud and soft. Make a point to do it with colors too.

There are color cards that I have made on the shelf for the children. Each one has a colorful picture with the color of the word underneath. For an example green has green grass. If you are looking at something green with your child you can say "it is green, like grass". This will give them something to relate to each time. We have blue for the sky and orange for an orange. This method is used in the primary classroom for initial sound recognition (one object per sound (a is for apple etc...)). This association will allow your child to relate to the color and they can reflect on a red apple the next time they see something red.

Each week at circle we sing the color song "Ela's wearing a pink shirt, pink shirt, pink shirt, Ela's wearing a pink shirt all day long". If you are not familiar with the tune, please let me know. We do this with each child also using the color cards and then asking them to find other pink things in the room. I have out a box with sections

of colored cards and objects the children can match to the colors. I made color grading cards so the children can grade a color from lightest to darkest. I will be happy to show you this material.

If your child knows the basic colors, why not introduce maroon, magenta and turquoise? This is actually telling them they are capable of learning unusual colors. How proud would you feel if your child came up to you and said, "That's not purple, it is lavender!" Also talk about shades of color to your child, such as light blue, navy and indigo. This will further their interest and help them to be more aware of color in their world. They are not too young...they are little sponges!

Toddler Circle Time

Shortly after snack we join together for circle time. I don't expect toddlers to sit with us but more likely than not if they aren't sitting right with us, they are right on the outskirts. As they get older they are more willing to sit. The children are definitely drawn towards us when they hear their name.

I bring the rug from the book corner to the floor area. First we sing a hello song singing a "sign" to each child (clapping, stomping, painting, twisting etc...). I have been singing a special song I use with puppets so the children can say their noises (chicken, sheep, frog, lion) which they love. We also sing our color song. This is a time we are able to gather as a community, besides snack. Young children thrive on consistency, they feel safe knowing what comes next. It also helps give them a sense of time.

Classroom Notes

Sippy Cups

If at all possible, try not to bring Sippy cups for your child. We have juice and

water at snack time. Children tend to walk around with their cup and another toddler will pick it up and drink from it. Also, I let them know that we sit down when we eat and drink.

Extra Clothing

You are welcome to bring a change of clothing each time or you can keep one here. Please bring a small backpack for your child's diapers/wipes each day. It may be big enough to hold a jacket, but should be small enough so your child can carry it on their back independently. This is the first step towards independence and self help skills.

Sneezing

We are showing the children how to use a tissue although I do help them. We also sneeze in our "Elbow". This is a very effective way to keep airborne sneezes from others. Using your hands transfers the sneeze.

Upcoming Fall Events

School Pictures

School pictures will be done by Acacia Graphics. It is scheduled for Friday, October 16th with a rain date of Friday, Oct. 23rd. We will do it at the end of the morning when the

children are outside. Pictures will be available on line after the photo sheet and price sheets will be available then. Please let us know if you do not want your child's picture taken.

Parent Resource Group Meeting

Our first meeting will be on Thursday, October 15th from 7:00-8:00. I will give a short presentation on a topic of the Montessori method. This is more geared toward the primary age classroom but toddler parents are more than welcome. We will also discuss up and coming school events (the primary classroom has Chinese class available, a United Nations day celebration etc...). It's also a time for parents to be part of what's going on in the program.

Small Hands Fundraiser

The second part of the meeting will be the Small Hands Catalog Fundraiser. A Montessori company offers a resource catalog for families each fall. It is filled with hundreds of Montessori items and materials that can be used at home with your child and support the Montessori curriculum. They also offer high quality, award winning developmental and educational toys and games. I will have many of the materials in the catalog on display for you to see

firsthand. I will hand the catalog out the week before.











This is a great opportunity to buy some high quality Montessori items for your child as well as holiday gifts for friends and relatives. The other wonderful things about this program is that Montessori of Greenwich Bay will receive 10%-15% of total sales as a credit toward their Main catalog. The past two years the sales have been high enough so that there were no shipping charges which saves 15%. There is no tax as well. Please mark your calendars with this date!

Fall Conferences

Fall conferences will be held on Wed. Nov. 18th. I will have a sign up at drop off and pick up. Please try to come this day if at all possible as it is specifically set aside for conferences. The primary children don't have school this day. Free child is available from 9:00-2:00. If you aren't able to make any of the times listed, please let me know so we can set up a time. Conferences are approximately 15 minutes.

POTTY LEARNING TIPS

SENSITIVE PERIOD- 18-24 MONTHS

-  No negative messages
-  Let them do the routine (*take diaper off, pull pants down, up*)
-  Change diaper standing up in bathroom
-  Verbalize what you are doing
-  Empty poop into toilet (*tell them that's where it goes*)
-  Observe/note elimination schedule
-  Change diaper promptly when wet or soiled
-  Notice signs (*facial expressions, grunting, hiding*)
-  Have no diaper time every day (*naked or underpants*)
-  Develop routine of using toilet (*AM, PM, after eating, before outside etc...*)