



Toddlers on the Hill

Settling In

We are now entering the 10th week of school, and as promised, your children are all starting to settle in. Have you noticed that your child cries less when you say goodbye? Or maybe he's walking right in with a huge smile on his face and forgetting to say goodbye to you at all because his friends are waiting? All children, no matter how daunting the beginning of school, eventually settle in. ToTH is a safe and loving environment and the children feel it. Friendships are being made, names are remembered, new favorite works are starting to take place of puzzles, orange and black play dough is available, and a healthy dynamic of curiosity, friendship, and routine gives the adults and students alike a security and confidence that goes nicely with the colorful change of season. Scarves and hats are out and we are inspired by pumpkins, colorful corn, and blustery days at the park. This has always been my favorite time at school and I find that the weeks between Halloween and Winter Break are those of growth in maturity and stability.



Fall Friendship

At ToTH, the children see the same classmates and volunteers routinely, and friendships begin to form. It's about this time in the year that your child begins to name the classmates she will see at school. Some kids have an affinity for one another right away and other friendships take some time to develop. This is a dynamic environment where we allow children to test boundaries, make choices, manage time, sit where they want, eat with whom they want, etc., and like a baby bird stretching wings for the first time, it can be shaky and awkward! *"My child never bit before, and now after starting school, she's biting"*, is something you will either say, or hear someone else say while your child is in preschool. The trained Montessori guides at ToTH, as well as our loving parent volunteers, are here to patiently guide the children during this time.



What to expect this fall:

We have refined our skills enough to enjoy pumpkin sorting, native corn pinching, sponge painting, apple sauce making, mum planting, and of course, the mastering of coats! It is around week ten that the children can handle more practical life materials as well. We are already polishing glass and dusting the shelves. Soon we will be sweeping and mopping our own floors. Toddlers love to care for their environment so if you do not have a small dustpan and broom at home, please invest in one and let your toddler practice sweeping up crumbs. Between now and winter break we will concentrate on putting our work away and using one material at a time. Please follow through at home by asking your child to put activities away after use.

“The Tag to Toes Method”

It's true! a 2 year old can put on her own coat! Ask your child to place her jacket in front of her body on the floor and put the tag right in front of her toes. Now get on your knees making sure tag is correctly placed like this photo. Ask child to slide her hands and arms about halfway into the sleeves and then FLIP the coat back over the head. If you practice this a few times on your own and if this is how the adults put on their coats, children will follow. Within a week your child will be putting on her own coat. We will also practice at school.

“The essence of independence is to be able to do something for one's self.”

— *Maria Montessori*

Postive Discipline and Toddler Aggression

Maria Montessori observed that the skills of problem solving and peace making are within reach of the very young child. We often hear from other parents or specialists that during the “terrible twos” children are especially challenging and they need constant intervention and assistance. Montessori guides have found the opposite. When given an opportunity to exercise trial and error, to experiment with boundaries, to express likes and dislikes, and to look for guidance from a loving and trusted guide, toddlers can acquire the same grace and courtesy we see in older children. The predominant need is simply **more joy.** *And then some practice.* Yes their bodies and brains are still coming into order and sometimes what we observe is aggressive. But with time and patience, toddlers can learn to wait patiently, take turns, check on a hurt friend, use words to express a desire, and even apologize sincerely if a mistake was made. I once asked a Montessori trainer with 40 years experience, *“What happens when you show a child the proper way one thousand times and they still don't get it.”* She laughed and said, *“You show them one thousand and one”.* It's hard work being a toddler and making new friends and learning to sit and eat, and wait, and share space. However, I believe the hardest lessons of all actually fall on the adults who attempt to practice nonjudgmental observation of life itself, which is what must happen if we aim to practice nonjudgemental observation of the children, a necessity in an authentic Montessori environment.

“It is not enough for the teacher to love the child. She must first love and understand the universe. She must prepare herself, and truly work at it.”

— *Maria Montessori*



Reminders:

- please pack a snugly fitting fleece or knit hat for our outdoor time as well as fingered mittens that will allow your child to still play safely
- please arrive for pick-up 2-4 minutes before dismissal so that you are in the greeting area when we open the doors
- please label all items, even individual string cheese and raisin boxes, as well as tags on coats and hats
- please touch base with me if you have anything new in your routine, like visiting family, a vacation, a new dog, a new baby, etc., you would be amazed at how the smallest change is in fact a *VERY BIG DEAL*...I will do a better caring for your child if I know what challenges you are facing.



Introducing our newest work and the funnest thing ever! The children now have an appropriate way to wiggle out that excess energy since *we walk indoors* and *we run on the playground*. The only ground rule is “*screaming children are not invited onto the trampoline*”. This is because we scream outside so the noise can go up to the blue sky instead of bouncing off the ceiling, obviously. What other reason is there?

**Concentration and Toddlers**

In the Montessori environment, we do not force sharing, nor do we time how long a child gets to use an activity. There is an important rationale for this and it's based on the observation that concentration and time are critical experiences on the road to mastery. Let's imagine Albert Einstein at his desk using his notebook and a pencil. I wonder if he would have accomplished his work in relativity and general relativity if there were allotted times that he was given the desk and the pencil? Imagine if two time Nobel Laureate Marie Curie would have had to share her lab materials? Or if Michael Jordan had to share the ball? What if we ask Emi (pictured left) to walk away from her picture matching work because she'd already spent 10 minutes working on it and it was someone else's turn? Research tell us that concentration, follow-through, practice, and time are the ways to master our tasks and fields. Work and learning requires uninterrupted time.

“The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences.” - Maria Montessori

— Maria Montessori