



A Montessori Learning Experience  
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# **Primary Parent Handbook**

**2017–2018**

# Welcome from the Head of School

Dear parents,

Welcome to the 2017–2018 school year, and to the current edition of the ToTH Montessori Primary *Parent Handbook*. I hope that you will find it both useful and accessible.

This is the inaugural year of what I hope is soon regarded as one of the strongest programs in the area. Our returning families and experienced teachers means that although this is a new class, this is not a start up class. Many of the children are normalized Montessori children who already know one another. The leadership structure at ToTH is unchanged and our teachers will have a restful, work-free summer. Our procedures are in place and the environment is new, well designed, and spacious. During the creation of this program, we saw the most gracious and enthusiastic outpouring of support that any school could hope for. These are just a few of the reasons I personally feel excited, motivated, and confident that this first year is going to be something quite extraordinary as we bring Montessori to the bold and innovative work at Capper.

We expect to see the Capper community and neighborhood embrace our Montessori family and in turn, we will become a positive and powerful group of stewards and friends at Capper and in Navy Yard. Our parent ed talks will be open to the community and we hope to have some guest speakers this year! Some will be whole school events and at other times, we will focus solely on the Primary experience.

Community is at our core and so of course, our new Lead will invite Primary parents to help organize things like social events, raising money for our scholarship program, hosting a Book Fair, and building a year book. But rather than preemptively building a plan for parent/teacher collaboration, I'd like to facilitate a careful beginning. Let's let our new community find it's rhythm before we decide what it is *we have to accomplish* in 2017-2018. The most important thing we can offer our new teachers this year is patience, space, and trust as they get to know one another and get to know the children.

Thank you for joining us,

Sincerely,

Natalie Baginski

Head of School

## Table of Contents

1. <a href="#">Purpose of this Handbook</a> .....	4
2. <a href="#">History of the School</a> .....	4
3. <a href="#">Mission Statement</a> .....	4
4. <a href="#">Who we are</a> .....	4
5. <a href="#">What We Believe</a> .....	4
6. <a href="#">Our Guiding Principles</a> .....	5
7. <a href="#">Desired Learner Outcomes Common in Montessori Education</a> .....	5
8. <a href="#">Calendar, Logistics, Daily Schedule</a> .....	7
a. Hours of operation	
b. Dates of operation	
c. Venue	
d. Closed parent google group	
e. Adult to child ratios	
f. Inclement weather and other unscheduled closings	
g. Make-up days	
9. <a href="#">Application, Enrollment and Participation</a> .....	7
a. Immunizations	
b. Applications	
c. Accepting a slot in ToTH	
d. Enrollment requirements	
e. ToTH anti-discrimination policy	
10. <a href="#">Programs Fees</a> .....	8
11. <a href="#">Refunds and Cancellations</a> .....	9
12. <a href="#">Management and Administration</a> .....	10
13. <a href="#">Parent Communication</a> .....	10
a. Preparation for new school year	

b. Newsletters	
c. Parent education talks	
d. Bi-annual narrative reports	
14. <a href="#">Grievances</a> .....	11
15. <a href="#">Supplies</a> .....	11
16. <a href="#">Dress Code</a> .....	12
17. <a href="#">Drop Off / Pick Up</a> .....	12
18. <a href="#">Support from Home to School</a> .....	13
19. <a href="#">Toileting</a> .....	14
20. <a href="#">Phase In / Back to School</a> .....	14
21. <a href="#">Behavior in the Classroom</a> .....	15
22. <a href="#">Ongoing Lack of Success</a> .....	16
23. <a href="#">Additional Help to Parents</a> .....	17
24. <a href="#">The Urban Playground</a> .....	18
25. <a href="#">Professional Conduct</a> .....	19
a. Faculty Development	
b. Babysitting and outside care policy	
c. Appropriate behaviors in the company of children	
d. Social media	
e. Cell phone policy	
26. <a href="#">Child Illness</a> .....	20
27. <a href="#">Snack, Lunches, and Allergies</a> .....	20
28. <a href="#">Emergency Contingency Plan and Fire Egress</a> .....	21

## **Purpose of This Handbook**

This handbook provides an overview for the community, parents, teachers, au pairs, nannies, board members, and other invested adults supporting children enrolled at ToTH, regarding policies, philosophies, and procedures. It is meant to be read in its entirety.

## **History of the School**

In 2011, co-founder Sara Agarwal pooled efforts with other families in the area to start a program for 1-3 year olds. Co-founders Joy Wilder and Anya Landau French joined the cause, along with a few other families in the area, and Toddlers on the Hill was born in October 2012. What started as a small, Montessori play group for toddlers is now an award winning, two classroom school that serves children ages 14 months to 5 years old in the Capitol Hill area and beyond.

## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to offer families in the DC Metro area an opportunity to give their young children a world-class, early learning Montessori experience while also supporting parents and caregivers with resources, discussions, and a Montessori community. We aim to make every day count and we prepare our environment to maximize the children's independence and success. Our hope is that joy, curiosity, creativity, and friendship are the predominant experiences.

## **Who We Are**

ToTH Primary is a Montessori School currently seeking licensure from the Office of the State Superintendent for Education. We engage children ages 3-5 years old in a Montessori learning environment lead by experienced, credentialed guides. We are families *on Capitol Hill* and beyond. We are passionate about giving the children in our community the best early learning experience possible and adhere to authentic Montessori principles and guidelines.

## **What We Believe**

We believe that children are worthy of deep respect. We believe that during this important developmental time, it is imperative that children are given a peaceful environment in which to explore their curiosities with self-correcting, multi-sensory materials through self-directed learning. We believe in uninterrupted work and play. We believe our children learn best when the school environment is a collaboration between teachers and children and parents, working together as a warm and supportive community.

## Our Guiding Principles

1. Children learn best in a child centered, multi-age environment.
2. Praise and extrinsic motivation are not necessary.
3. Early learning teachers must be spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually prepared to work with children.
4. All interactions between the child and adult should be positive, without reward or punishment.
5. We must not hurry development.
6. There is no average and each child has a right to be who she is and develop at her own pace.
7. What the children “learn” is not about a product. We refer to predicted educational outcomes for Montessori education and observe often to assess growth during the three year cycle.
8. The five curriculum areas should be available during the three year cycle and “work” should be presented by trained teacher; every aspect of the environment, including the adult, is an integral part of the program.
9. Routine, structure, organization, beauty, logic, choice, friendship, and predictability are essential components of any strong early childhood program.
10. Activity should be self-guided and the adults are there to assist.

## Desired Learner Outcomes Common to Montessori Education

Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator, developed a method of teaching based on her scientific observations of young children's behavior. Her first "Children's House" was established in Rome in 1907. She found young children learned best in a homelike environment filled with developmentally appropriate materials that provide experiences, which contribute to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners.

The outcomes we aspire to teach are lifelong developments that we can start to see as early as three years old:

**Independence:** Is the child able to choose his or her own work, apply energy to that work, complete it to a personal criterion of completion, take and return the work to the place it is customarily kept, in such a way that another child will be able to find the work ready to do? Is the child able to seek help? Is the child able to locate resources to continue the self-chosen task without necessarily involving the teacher?

**Confidence and Competence:** Are the child's self-perceived successes far more numerous than his or her self-perceived failures? Is the child capable of self-correcting work, upon observation, reflection, or discussion? Can the child manage the available array of "stuff" with a clear sense of purpose?

**Autonomy:** Can the child accept or reject inclusion in another child's work or work group with equanimity?

**Intrinsic Motivation:** Is the child drawn to continue working for the apparent pure pleasure of so doing? Is the child drawn to doing the right thing purely because it's the right thing to do?

**Ability to Handle External Authority:** Is the child able to accept the "ground rules" of the group as appropriate in his or her dealing with other children? Is the child, distant from the teacher, able to function as if the teacher were nearby?

**Social Responsibility:** Independent and autonomous persons are always a part of a group and must attain independence and autonomy through participation in group activity. The loss of these qualities by one of a group is a loss for all. Do students attain independence and autonomy and, at the same time, develop social responsibility?

**Academic Preparation:** Children, according to their interests and curiosities, are exploring all five curriculum areas and repeating work on the path to mastery. We see this regarding development of the senses, as well as in reading, writing, mathematics, biology, earth science, geography, art, cultural studies, and in practical daily life skills. Is the child curious about the environment and others? Does the child understand that activities can have a beginning, middle, and end? Does the child make observations and share thoughts with others? Has the child's body, mind, and spirit come into order (normalization) since beginning the program?

**Citizens of the World:** All children are part of both a world political system and a world ecological system. Both systems have their constitutions and all must learn to live by the letter and spirit of their laws. As a naturalist, Montessori knew about the laws of mind and of nature and understood the consequences of disobeying either of them. What are the citizenship outcomes of school experience? Are the children acquiring civic virtue? Are they acquiring dispositions to understand the natural world, to cherish it, and to live harmoniously within it?

## **Calendar, Logistics, and Daily Schedule**

**Hours of operation.** ToTH Primary meets from 8:15 AM to 2:45 PM

**Before and Aftercare.** The Aftercare Plan is currently under construction. When we are given the details we will share this with ToTH families.

**Dates of operation.** The first day of school is August 28, 2017 and runs through June 6, 2018. For dates of holidays and breaks please view our [calendar](#). The break in October is ONLY for toddlers; ToTH Primary will be in session that week.

**Venue.** We are housed in the upstairs classroom at the Capper Community Center (CCC) located in Navy Yard @ 1000 5th Street SE.

**Communication with parents.** ToTH maintains a closed Google Group for all current parents, and will use this group for communications from the administration. Parents must join this group and will be contacted by email at for any program updates

**Adult to child ratios.** ToTH Primary adheres to the standard Montessori adult/student ratio and currently, we have a classroom of 20-22 students with 2 trained teachers.

**Inclement weather and other unscheduled closings.** We will follow the DCPS calendar for emergency closings and weather.

### **Make-up Days**

In the event of inclement weather or other unavoidable circumstances that require canceling class, we are happy to offer make-up days when we can, but we do not guarantee the number of days, nor assure that the days scheduled will coincide with each family's availability.

## **Application, Enrollment, and Participation**

**Immunizations.** Each child must be current on immunizations, as a condition of enrollment. We must receive each child's up-to-date immunization record by the June 15 enrollment forms deadline. If your child is on a delayed vaccination schedule at the time of application or enrollment, but will be up to date on vaccinations by the time he or she will begin attending ToTH, please notify the Administrative Director (Ila Furman) at the time of application, and prepare to submit an up-to-date immunization record before your child starts. Please update us with immunization



records and new forms during the year. All other questions or requests related to the immunization requirement should be discussed with the Administrative Director.

**Applications.** We will begin considering complete applications for the 2017-18 program year on March 1st. Priority will be given to currently enrolled families, and then to siblings of former ToTH participants. All other applications will be considered together with attention paid to age and gender ratios in the classroom.

**Accepting an opening in ToTH.** Acceptance of an opening once offered and submission of a nonrefundable deposit equal to one month's program fees is required within 10 days of receiving an offer email. The deposit can only be credited towards the third and final payment of program fees (less any other fees owed), and cannot be returned for any reason.

**Enrollment requirements.** To complete enrollment for a child, ToTH requires the submission of the DC Health Certificate and an immunization report from his or her pediatrician. We also require a DC Registration Record (separate from the ToTH application form), a DC Medical Authorization form, and a DC Travel & Activity Authorization. All forms for children accepted in the initial intake must be received no later than July 1, 2017, our enrollment deadline. In the case of a child on a delayed vaccination schedule, parents should contact ToTH and prepare to submit an up-to-date immunization record by program start. No child may begin attending ToTH without all of the above forms on file.

**ToTH anti-discrimination policy.** ToTH does not discriminate in its admissions policies or in the administration of its educational policies on the basis of race, gender, national or ethnic origin, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.

### **Program Fees**

**Nonrefundable** application fee: \$75

**Nonrefundable** deposit (which can be credited toward the third and final payment of program fees, less any other fees charged): Equal to one month's program fees

**2017-2018 Primary program fees are as follows:**

- 2 days a week: \$7,920
- 3 days a week: \$11,880
- 5 days a week: \$19,800

**Payment schedule.** ToTH program fees are divided into three payments. Payment is due on the following dates:

- 1st payment due: July 1, 2017
- 2nd payment due: October 30, 2017
- 3rd payment due: February 27, 2018

Program fees are not pro-rated for illness, holidays, or emergency closure of the facilities.

**Late payments.** In the event that the payment is not received **in full** by 5 days after the deadline, it will be considered late and subject to a late fee in the amount of \$50.00. In the event that the payment has not been received by 10 days after the deadline, an additional late fee of \$100.00 will be applied. If payment has not been received within 14 days of the payment deadline, ToTH reserves the right to refuse to admit the child to the program and may offer the child's space to another family. If a check is returned by the bank for any reason, the parents will be subject to a returned check fee of \$35.00. If a check is returned due to insufficient funds, ToTH will only accept payment by money order or cashier's check for the remainder of the program year.

All checks must be payable to *Toddlers on the Hill*.

### **Refunds and Cancellations**

**Elective termination.** For elective termination or elective reduction of program days, ToTH requests that families give 30 days' notice prior to next session start. All application fees and deposits are nonrefundable. With the exception of families called away for active military duty, ToTH is unable to refund program fee payments already made for a given session. If a family reduces their number of program days before a session ends, ToTH cannot refund fees already paid for any unused days remaining and we reserve the right to fill any remaining unused days before the next session begins.

**Dropping days.** A \$100 administrative fee will be charged to families wishing to drop days. A refund can be given when that space is filled by another family and payment to ToTH has been received. We suggest giving us ample time to do so, so you can get your refund.

**Termination with cause.** The Head of School reserves the right to immediately de-enroll a child with due cause. In this case, refunds will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Any dispute or claim arising out of the de-enrollment of a child or any other related matter that cannot be re-

solved between the parent and the Head of School should first be elevated to the Board of Directors. If an agreement can still not be reached, it shall be submitted to non-binding mediation.

## **Management and Administration**

**Head of School and Center Director:** Natalie Baginski, M.Ed., responsible for the growth of ToTH's programs, collaboration with Lead Teacher concerning classroom policies and procedures, supervision and mentoring of teach staff, community presence and outreach, including social media and open house and parent education sessions. Natalie is credentialed with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) as ToTH's Center Director. Contact Natalie at [natalie@toddlersonthehill.org](mailto:natalie@toddlersonthehill.org).

Parents can learn more about all of our teaching staff, including our substitute teachers, on our website at <http://toddlersonthehill.org>.

**Admissions Director:** Ila Furman, responsible for admissions and general program administration. Parents may contact Ila at: [ila@toddlersonthehill.org](mailto:ila@toddlersonthehill.org).

**ToTH's Board of Trustees.** ToTH maintains a Board of Trustees to provide oversight and advice to the Leadership Team. In 2017-18, the Board will include ToTH's Head of School, Natalie Baginski, and founders Sara Agarwal, Joy Wilder and Anya Landau French. Families may contact all members of the ToTH Board by emailing [tothboardofdirectors@googlegroups.com](mailto:tothboardofdirectors@googlegroups.com).

**ToTH policies.** ToTH will review its policies at least once a year and make any necessary changes accordingly. Parents will be informed of any changes via email. *ToTH reserves the right to alter its policies and program at any time.*

## **Parent Communication**

ToTH is a neighborhood school. We believe in honesty, flexibility, kindness, and we have an open door policy when it comes to discussing the program, a family's needs, or a specific concern. If at any time a ToTH parent wants to share ideas or thoughts with the head of school, a lead teacher, a committee, or our Board, the parent should simply reach out and request some communication. Any immediate questions or concerns about a particular session should be directed to the lead teacher for that session. Any overall program/curriculum questions can be directed to the Lead Teacher, Mary Ann Bruno. Questions concerning tuition or enrollment should

be directed to Ila Furman. Lead teachers do not hold set office hours but will schedule meetings upon request.

### ***Preparation for a New School Year***

ToTH will provide dates for a parent-only welcome night and a *Meet and Greet* day when parents of brand new students can bring their children in for a meet and greet.

### ***Newsletters***

Parents will receive occasional newsletters highlighting activities at school, as well as discussions on rationale, Montessori philosophy, and practical information relevant to parents with children enrolled in a Montessori school. As ToTH grows this may evolve into a blog or other medium and we will keep parents abreast of any changes.

### ***Parent Education Sessions***

Parents and neighbors will be invited to attend free talks given by faculty at ToTH on relevant topics ranging from Montessori language, positive discipline, the development of personality, unstructured play, Montessori at home, Montessori curriculum, etc.

### ***Bi-annual Narrative Reports***

ToTH lead teachers will provide families with a narrative, ethnographic style report of observations twice each year. These narratives are not checklists or developmental milestones, but rather a more non-judgmental, broad exploration of a child's experience, development, challenges and successes.

## **Grievances**

### ***Parent Grievances***

The procedure for consideration and adjustment of grievances of any parent shall be as follows:

**The parent will consult with the child's lead teacher first.**

Failing to reach settlement in conference with the Teacher, the parent will consult with the Head of School. The Head of School will consult with the Board, as necessary, and help mediate a meeting between the Parent and Teacher.

## **Supplies**

**Parent-provided supplies.** Parents are requested to send the following supplies during a specific week of the year (dates will be given in August 2017)

- 1 large package of organic wipes for toileting incidences
- 3 boxes of tissue paper for noses
- 1 refill for hand soap, either Method brand or something free from phosphates and dye

## **Children's Daily Supplies**

It is our goal that the arrival and dismissal routines at ToTH are smooth for the children, and we encourage children to be independent with their belongings throughout the session. For this reason, we ask that parents send **only** the following items to school each day:

- 1 labeled backpack per child that contains a healthy, sugar free lunch
- 1 labeled Ziploc bag with one complete set of seasonally appropriate uniform, socks, undies, and shoes.

**We request that no toys, pacifiers, jewelry, electronics, or other non-essential items are in the backpack as children this age have difficulty with personal items at school.**

## **Dress Code**

It is our wish that children are not distracted by characters and cartoons on clothing, and also, that they are independent dressing and toileting. For this reason ToTH has a dress code policy.

**Please visit this approved website** to choose **any items** in your child's size that you like in **RED** (leggings and sweat pants are preferred). Dresses, sweaters, cardigans, shorts, skirts, leggings, yoga pants, t-shirts, tunics, hoodies, baseball t's, and polos are all welcome in RED. If you order with another family, there are discounts to be had for larger orders. If leggings are worn with a dress, they can be any kind of leggings and as colorful as you wish. Any child who is still having occasional accidents in the bathroom needs to be in leggings or elastic banded pants that can be pulled down independently.

## **Drop-off and Pick-up Policy**

It is important to ToTH that we be good neighbors. Most families stroller their child or children to ToTH. We strongly encourage this and other non-automobile forms of transportation. For those who drive, we ask that you make every effort to carpool. Please contact other parents from the contact list to coordinate a carpool. We have also implemented a Drop-off /Pick-up plan that ensures proper and safe drop-off and pick-up of children.

Some key points from the Drop-off /Pick-up plan include:

- ToTH is not responsible for transportation to or from the program.

- ToTH encourages parents to pick up and drop off children during designated times only (8:15-8:45am for drop-off and 2:45-3:00pm for pick-up)
- No double parking or idling;
- No blocking driveways or alleys;
- Parents should always hold their child's hand while crossing the street.

Parents who fail to abide by this Drop-off/Pick-up plan on two or more occasions may be fined \$30. Subsequent offenses may be grounds for suspension or expulsion from ToTH.

The Drop-off/ Pick-up plan may be updated or amended as necessary to better address neighborhood concerns or in response to changes in ToTH programming.

### ***Drop off Procedure***

ToTH Primary's classroom environment is child-centered. For the benefit of the children, we prefer that the only adults in the classroom are the teachers and parent volunteers. Parents coming inside the classroom during arrival is upsetting and disrupts routine. No parents will be invited to help their children settle in; children will walk up the stairs to class alone or with a teacher.

A teacher will be at the door of CCC to greet parent and child. A child with a backpack should be wearing her backpack. Any tears or fretting that you observe in the first week will quickly give way to excitement and joy!

### ***Pick Up Procedure***

Please be parked and approaching the playground to pick up your child at 2:45. Any children who are still on the playground at 3pm will be taken to aftercare.

## **Support from Home to School**

It is our hope that the majority of adult / child interactions at school are reserved for lessons, conversations, social/emotional support, and friendship. It is helpful for everyone in the session if children are mostly independent with their bodies and possessions. Autonomy and independence are predicted educational outcomes of Montessori education and the following will help us achieve these:

- No laces - Please send children to school with shoes that zip, snap, or velcro. Children cannot tie their shoes at this age and we prefer that children are not interrupted in their work and socialization for adult intervention for help with shoe laces. It's also a safety issue.
- No belts or suspenders - Please send children to school in sweatpants or leggings
- No toys, stuffed animals, jewelry, or security blankets - Please send children to school with only essential items, as toys and other precious items can cause frustration and tears.
- Label Everything. Socks, shoes, clothes, lunch, backpack, extra clothes.

### **Toileting**

Children must be out of diapers at the start of school. It is expected that young children will occasionally have accidents and teachers are available to help and support when necessary. Each child should have a change of clothes every day, just in case. In the event that a child is having multiple accidents each day, the teacher will meet with parents and solutions will be discussed.

### **Phase-In / Back to School**

Montessori schools have a phase in system to ensure that children new to school are welcomed in a very peaceful way and first impressions are positive. The “first day of school” is not necessarily the first day of school for everyone. It's important that our returning children are able to reintroduce themselves to school before we invite new friends. For this reason, we phase in students slowly for the first month of school. If your child has attended ToTH previously, your child will start on the very first date of your chosen session. If your child is starting the year new to ToTH, plan on **not** starting the first week. *Specific start dates for brand new children will be sent out during the summer.*

### ***Summer Preparations***

During the summer there are things you can do to help your child normalize in a Montessori environment. Aside from talking about school and coming to summer socials and the Barracks Row 4th of July parade with your new ToTH community, you can:

- Purchase a cartoon free lunchbox and serve your child snacks from it at home. Practice opening and closing the container with your child
- Include your child in the folding and hanging of new RED, UNIFORM school clothes and explain that certain clothes are choices for school.
- Eat snack and meals sitting down in preparation for the “eat sitting down” ground rule at school.
- Practice slipping velcro/snap shoes on and off at home (no laces please)

- When you go on an outing, use your child’s backpack and allow her to carry her own snack and water bottle.
- When a toy is no longer being used at home, model putting it back in its place.
- Support the ground rule that “we throw balls and frisbees”, but not random objects in the house. At school, we do not throw work inside; we only throw balls and frisbees outside.
- If your child likes to jump and run, offer opportunities for running and jumping outside and verbally reinforce that we jump and run outside. Inside we walk.
- Instead of using words like “good job” and “I like how you...”, practice offering a smile or a non-judgmental observation, such as, “What bright colors you used!”. If your child is reliant on extrinsic motivation at home she will seek for it at school, and intrinsic motivation is an important predicted educational outcome for Montessori programs.

### **Behavior in the Classroom**

**Discipline and behavior modification.** For minor misbehaviors, we entice the child toward work, which will re-engage the interest of the child, is often all that is necessary. An absorbed child is a happy, content child.

For recurring minor misbehaviors, the teacher may temporarily limit the child's choice of work-space and/or quietly state the impact of such behavior on class materials or on another child’s feelings. We also practice the grace and courtesy skills we are learning.

#### ***Persistent Disruption/Aggression***

When a young child persists in disruptive or aggressive behavior, the teacher will shadow the child until the child has calmed and can refocus his/her attention positively. Parents concerned about their child’s coping with their own or other children’s behavior—in or out of the program—are encouraged to consult the teacher for advice on behaviors that should be worrying versus those that are normal, young, social adjustment.

The following types of discipline will NEVER be used:

- Physical harm
- Fear or humiliation
- Derogatory remarks or profane language
- Confinement in a locked room or enclosed area
- Forced feeding or withholding of food, toilet, or outdoor activities or play.
- Restraints of any kind
- Criticism as Inspiration



We encourage parents to remember that we are all working together to encourage the children to learn social and emotional skills. Although we will have some bumps along the road, with encouragement and introduction to proper tools and coping skills, children will be able to express themselves effectively and appropriately.

### ***Ongoing Disruption/Lack of Success***

It can happen that a child's personality, in conjunction with developmental/sensorial issues, and/or something happening at home makes it hard for a child to normalize into a Montessori environment. Although this is rare and we believe Montessori works for most children, it is important that parents understand that not every child is ready for a seven hour day with 20+ children. Children who are lacking in autonomy and self-regulation, delayed in orderliness and maturity, introverted to the point of painful social anxiety, presenting with spectrum disorders, or experiencing a sensorial integration issue can sometimes find it overwhelming to be in a large group. They might find it overwhelming to have 150-175 choices on shelves at any one time.

Whatever the case may be in each individual circumstance, the lead teacher will make any and all adaptations she can to do everything possible so that the child can reap the benefits of the environment and gain independence, orderliness, autonomy, etc. She will inform parents of any issues/adaptations and also give recommendations for support from home.

It is ToTH's policy to be inclusive with any special needs when we can adequately meet the child's needs. **If a) adaptations have been made and b) parents have supported the teacher by following through with recommendations at home, and the child is still not gaining from the environment, the lead teacher and Head of School will meet with the parents and help them find a more suitable environment, or suggest the child shorten the school day, or take a break from school completely.** Under this circumstance whereby the criteria a) and b) have been met, ToTH will refund any money for tuition for the days not used and offer the space to another family. If any specific issue is detected and we feel a specialist is needed, we will recommend a specialist and are available to communicate with any specialists, even if the child is no longer at ToTH.

### ***The deeper philosophy behind the Montessori approach to discipline***

We believe that the people who work with young children on a regular basis must be sensitive, warm, caring, knowledgeable, and invested professionals. They must be able to identify individual qualities, to design and implement a program and an environment that will be conducive to

positive growth in all areas of development, and support the whole group while also tuning into children as individuals. Teachers must be authentic role models for interactions with others and display a sincere enthusiasm for peacefulness as well as meaningful activity.

The educational philosophy of ToTH is that real, effective discipline is one that comes from within a person. Developing this inner discipline is one of the objectives of ToTH. It is our belief that inner discipline develops in a child through active involvement in self-chosen tasks and the development of self-control. The development of inner discipline in a child is always the goal of a Montessori school. The clear organization of the physical environment; the structure, consistency, and predictability of daily school life; the indirect manner of teaching interpersonal skills through the lessons of "grace and courtesy"; the reliance on peer modeling and coaching channel positive behavior and appreciation and empathy help to limit difficulties.

### *Additional Help for Parents*

1. Please leave toys at home and don't fight with children over leaving them in the car at the school door. Children are grumpy when this happens and can take a long time to recover.
2. Please try to bring happy, relaxed children to school by allowing adequate time and a very slow pace in preparing for school. We would rather you text us and be late than rush.
3. Talk about ground rules with children in a "positive" manner, and practice talking quietly at home.
4. Encourage the ability to distinguish between appropriate indoor behavior and outdoor behavior. There is a difference.
5. Please serve snacks at home in the same lunch container used at school, and facilitate that your child sits while she eats.
6. Please avoid tangible rewards for accomplishments children naturally receive pleasure from.
7. Order is very important to children to give them a sense of security and peace.
8. Please offer observations and curiosity in place of rewards, praise, and "good jobs", as those are not used at school.

### ***Observations in the Classroom***

Parents who wish to observe a Montessori classroom at work may do so. Appointments can be arranged through the lead teacher. We usually do not invite parents to visit the classroom before mid-November. This gives students and teachers an opportunity to acclimate before visitors are present. Parents will be given an “observation guideline” handout before their appointment.

## **The Urban Playground**

When weather permits, the children go outside for about an hour each session. We aim to provide time for unstructured play each day, as this is an important part of our early childhood education program. Children who receive unstructured, outdoor play have better outcomes in their later student careers and we value this time as much as we do our indoor time. We are in an urban environment and travel 2.5 blocks to get the playground.

### ***Safety / Monitoring on the Playground***

Adults are strategically placed on the playground so that every area is visible by a teacher at any given time. Walky-talkies are used and children are counted continually.

## **Ground Rules for Teachers, Adults, and Substitute Teachers**

- **Voices are to be kept low and adult conversation needs to be at a minimum during classroom time.** Teachers are to speak respectfully to children, parents, and other staff. No ToTH staff may use inappropriate/unprofessional language, violate health codes, or put the class out of ratio.
- When talking with another adult in class or on the playground, it is important that adults have their eyes on the children at all times. Engaging in conversation with other adults in any way that leaves children unattended is grounds for dismissal. If the lead teacher feels an assistant is distracted she will immediately ask the adult to focus on the children.
- Leaving the playground to use the bathroom puts us out of ratio and is not safe. All adults are asked if they need to use the toilet before going to the park.
- ***Adult Dress Code*** - Comfortable clothing should be worn, but please remember that this is a professional environment. Jeans may not have holes. Clothing must be clean, fit well, be in good repair, and suitable for sitting comfortably on the floor. Crop tops, tops with low cleavage, or shirts that expose the back when bending over are not acceptable. Low, quiet shoes are to be worn for safety.

## **Professional Conduct**

### ***Faculty Development***

ToTH hires teachers with degrees in education and related fields, and supports constant growth through professional development, whether it be gaining a Montessori credential, taking a leadership or curriculum course, or attending a local or national conference.

### ***Babysitting and Outside Care Conflict of Interest***

It is inappropriate for parents to employ ToTH school faculty and staff for in-home child care. This policy is furnished in order to maintain the professional integrity of our school program. Employees of ToTH School may not provide babysitting or child care for ToTH School students at any time.

### ***Discussing School Outside of a Meeting***

Employees must refrain from discussing ToTH School's students or issues when they are in the company of ToTH parents before or after school hours, e.g., birthday parties, sports events, public encounters. **Mini-conferences must not occur away from school.** Teachers will request a parent make an appointment for a phone call or meeting at school.

### ***Appropriate Behaviors in the Company of Children***

There is no gum chewing in the classroom or on the playground. Teachers may eat during children's snack times and must always model proper eating habits, such as sitting at a table. **Food or drinks consumed in the presence of children must be appropriate choices—no canned soft drinks, candy, sweets, or foods we ask families not to send in children's snacks.**

### ***Social Media***

It is against school policy for classroom teachers to join parents on twitter and Facebook with personal accounts. For the purposes of maintaining professional integrity and negating the possibility of conflicts of interests we ask that parents do not invite ToTH teachers to join them on social media, and vice versa. We do however maintain a very active ToTH presence on social media and we encourage parents and teachers alike to join ToTH on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

### ***Cell Phone Policy***

#### ***Indoors:***

For all adults other than the lead teacher, except during breaks, phones must be put away and not in use during classroom hours. Using a cell phone for texting, placing or receiving a call during classroom hours and/or in the presence of children is not appropriate.

***Outdoors:***

Cell phone use while outdoors is restricted to school emergencies or for immediate contact with a parent or emergency provider.

When outdoors, both teachers will be responsible for carrying a phone and all parent cell numbers will be logged into teacher phones. ***This phone must remain on and accessible in order to send and receive emergency calls.***

**Illness Policy**

If a child is unwell, sick, or possibly contagious, ToTH asks that parents/caregivers keep them home so that they do not disrupt the program and/or make other children ill. When children are fighting an illness, overly tired, or recovering, they are often grumpy and sensitive, making a full school day a challenge. Please keep lice, fevers, excessive mucous, unsightly and worrisome rashes at home.

***Medicines.*** If a child requires medicine at ToTH, this should be discussed with the Leadership Team in advance. In general, our teachers do not administer medication (exceptions may include epi-pens or Benadryl). Please talk to your child's lead teacher if your child requires medication while at school.

**Snack, Lunch, and Allergies**

Montessori programs traditionally include parent support in the provisions of snack for children. Each family will be on the “snack schedule” and be responsible for providing snack for the group for the whole week. We will ensure that any allergies are communicated and those foods will not be invited into the room. Parents should inform the the Lead Teacher in writing and verbally if their child has any serious or life-threatening allergies. Specific policies that we ask all parents to observe are as follows:

- Parents should clearly label all lunch boxes and water bottles [label-land.com](http://label-land.com) and refrain from packing anything on the class’s allergy list.
- Parents should send child to school with a healthy lunch that contains dye and sugar free foods.
- If it is your snack week, please choose foods from the approved snack list and deliver everything either Monday (for the whole week) or each morning (for that day).

## Emergency Contingency Plan and Fire Egress

### **Safe haven:**

To Be Announced

### **Evacuation plan in case of fire or other emergencies:**

- Evacuate building.
- Take attendance sheet, rope, and first aid kit when leaving the building.
- Walk up K Street, toward Canal Park, away from the building.
- Call 911.
- If necessary, continue on to our safe haven (TBA)
- No children will be released to parents outside or on the way to the safe haven.
- No one may reenter the building until approved by the fire department or police.

### **Sheltering in place plan:**

- All doors will remain locked.
- No one will be admitted or allowed to leave the premises until the threat is alleviated.

**Parent notification.** All parents will be notified of any emergency as quickly as possible. It may be necessary to first escort the children to safety and then notify parents. Notification will be by cell phone or email. Children will only be released to people authorized to pick them up.

Non-Service Animals are not permitted at ToTH.