

# Montessori of the Village Toddler Curriculum

## Curriculum Objectives

Children engage in the following curriculum objectives when they are developmentally ready to do so. The teacher's role at this level is to "follow the child" and to take cues from the child's interests and mental and physical development. This varies with each child.

## Social Development

1. Slowly acclimating children into the environment.
2. Promoting security and independence through clear and consistent boundaries and respect for children and their needs
3. Developing social values, independence, follow-through, group acceptance, cooperation, respect for self and others, and respect for the environment.
4. Developing self-confidence and self-esteem in an environment that promotes independence.
5. Providing opportunities to converse spontaneously with teachers and peers.
6. Developing trust in the classroom community.
7. Developing appropriate interactions with teachers and peers.
8. Developing an awareness of the individual's contribution to the group.

## Language Development

1. Linguistic development
  - a. Promoting listening skills through stories, poems, nursery rhymes, songs, spoken social graces, and conversation.
  - b. Building communication skills through exposure to language and opportunities for expressive speech.
2. Auditory development
  - a. Auditory discrimination: loud/quiet, same/different sounds of nature, daily life, and animals, etc.
  - b. Receptive language: recognizing sounds, following directions, following a sequence of two different directions
  - c. Phonemic awareness: discriminating beginning sounds in words, rhyming words, syllables, etc.

### **3. Visual development**

- a. Visual memory and discrimination: recognizing colors, shapes, sizes, patterns, parts of a whole, and beginning letter and number recognition (symbols)
- b. Visual motor skills: cutting, stringing large beads, catching a ball, etc.

### **Math Readiness**

1. Exploring spatial relationships such as long/short, big/little, etc.
2. Recognizing quantity
3. Using finger plays and songs involving math concepts
4. Matching of number symbols to objects
5. Recognizing that symbols represent quantities
6. Growing awareness of one to one correspondence
7. Working with manipulatives to explore concrete concepts

### **Science**

1. Real-world opportunities to become aware of the natural world
2. Hands-on experience with weather, plants, seashells, etc.
3. Opportunities to care for plants
4. Experiences demonstrating our relationship to the natural environment

### **Social Studies**

1. Beginning awareness of community helpers
2. Beginning awareness of self and family
3. Celebration of holidays, seasons, cultures, and birthdays with songs, stories, etc.

### **Tactile development**

1. Materials providing sensory experiences, for example:
  - a. Sand play
  - b. Water play
  - c. Texture
  - d. Temperature

### **Music**

1. Singing
2. Rhythmic activities
3. Musical games
4. Instruments
5. Music through body movement

### **Arts Development**

1. Art appreciation experiences
2. Exposure to various media such as clay, paint, chalk, crayons, pencils

### **Physical Development**

1. Gross motor exercise: free play and planned activities in running, walking, climbing, jumping, rolling, and throwing
2. Fine motor exercise: pouring, spooning, bead-stringing, pasting, cutting
3. Activities and language of body parts awareness
4. Discussions focused on health, nutrition, exercise, safety, etc.

### **Care of Self**

1. Assisting with diapering and toileting skills, developing dressing skills
2. Body care such as blowing nose and washing hands
3. Storing and retrieving personal belongings in cubby
4. Respect for body and personal space of self and others
5. Body awareness
6. Appropriate methods of communication and defense of body, space and work

### **Care of the Environment**

1. Completing the cycle of activity (e.g., replacing items from shelves, rolling rugs, cleaning spills)
2. Care of outdoor environment: raking, gardening, etc.
3. Self-awareness of impact on the environment and ability for positive impact (e.g., use of trash receptacles, recycling bins, turning off lights, etc.)
4. Being responsible for the consequences of one's own actions

## **TODDLER MORAL AND ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT**

In the Toddler program we establish clear and consistent boundaries which show respect for children and their needs. Respect for self, others, and the environment are of utmost importance.

These values are modeled by teachers and discussed during group times. Children develop trust in the classroom community through respectful and appropriate interactions with teachers and peers, and moral and ethical behaviors develop naturally.

## **TODDLER CONFERENCES AND PROGRESS REPORTS**

Toddler progress reports are completed two times per year, and Parent-Teacher conferences are held twice per year (in conjunction with the progress reports). Additional conferences may be held as needed. Assessments are based on close observations by teachers throughout the year.

## **TODDLER EDUCATIONAL BEST PRACTICES**

Teachers use anecdotal observations to monitor student progress. Based on these observations, decisions regarding materials and curriculum are made. We make very individualized educational decisions at the Toddler level, based on age and ability.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Specific goals for the Toddler Program are as follows:

1. To assist the child in a positive separation from parents in order to facilitate individualization.
2. To provide an orderly environment in which Toddlers may explore and experience concepts and skills through manipulation and the use of all of their senses.
3. To provide a language rich environment through precise nomenclature, music, materials, and activities.
4. To give the child opportunities for practical life experiences, care of the self and environment, so that the child understands that each person has an important function. This encourages a positive self-concept and confidence.
5. To provide a social environment for the fostering of community and respect.
6. To create an aesthetically pleasing environment through objects from nature that call to the child's love of beauty.
7. To provide a supportive community for parents in the school-wide community.

## **TODDLER INSTRUCTIONAL AIDES**

Montessori Toddler classrooms are foremost designed to promote independence, concentration, and a sense of order. Toddlers have open access to the areas of the classroom they need and the materials they need in order to engage in daily activities in an autonomous fashion. They are able to access their personal belongings in a low-lying cubby area, in order to change their clothes as needed (e.g., after a toileting accident or a spill). Furniture is fit to the proper proportions for children to use (e.g., tables and chairs, shelves). There is a place for everything, and everything has its place. Young children, especially, need the reliability and consistency of knowing where materials are located, and where to find what they need. They build a cognitive map of the environment as a whole and the individual materials in particular, which guides their daily actions within the environment.

The Toddler environment, which is calm, simple, quiet, and safe, aid children in developing focus and sustained attention. They are beautiful and encourage the child's exploration. There is not an excess of materials, as these only serve as a distraction. There are a variety of activities that interest and challenge children. The teachers carefully and frequently observe the children in order to decide when materials need to be removed, replaced, or extended upon. Materials increase in challenge as children become older and more capable. They need to meet the child's needs, which change with each developmental stage. Less is more in a Montessori classroom because repetition leads to the development of focus. The materials move from concrete to increasingly abstract and generally isolate one concept to be mastered at a time.

### **Each Toddler classroom contains the following:**

- The shelves hold clay work and other elements to explore, design, and experience basic motor skills (cutting, gluing, painting, using stickers, etc.)
- The manipulative shelves provide opportunities to explore shapes and textures and to manipulate objects through posting, stringing, stacking, and sorting.
- The language shelves contain materials designed to assist children in classifying and identifying objects. They also provide opportunities for music, rhymes, and enhance language acquisition.

- The practical life shelves hold activities for the care of the classroom as well as activities to practice daily living skills such as spooning and pouring.
- All materials on the shelves are rotated regularly, according to the children's interests and developmental needs. They are kept clean and safe by way of daily cleaning and checking for broken or missing parts. Children are encouraged to carry activities either to tables with sturdy chairs or to mats unrolled for use on the floor. Other inside areas include puzzles and a snack area.

Each classroom has pillows for resting, reading, and a library area. An open space in the middle of the classroom serves as space for group circle time and group lessons. The kitchen area contains sink and counter space for the teachers' use. The child-sized tables and chairs used for snack time and lunch are also located in the kitchen area.

The room is also set up to foster independence, with an a step stool to assist children in reaching the sink, changing table with stairs which allows the child to climb on and off for diapering, and a diaper pail.

The outdoor environment invites the children to connect with the world of nature and to practice their developing gross motor skills. There are sunny and shady areas and an open space for free movement and group games.

### **Practical life**

This area of the classroom contains materials which provide tasks the child sees in everyday life. Their familiarity draws the child to work. All the tools are child-sized to aid the child in performing the tasks successfully. Practical life exercises are designed to help the child gain independence, self-confidence, coordination, concentration and a sense of order.

#### **Some practical life activities include:**

Mirror washing  
Spoonng  
Serving  
Tonging  
Dish washing  
Plant dusting  
Pouring  
Doll baby washing

Scooping  
Toileting  
Scrubbing  
Putting on shoes and socks  
Putting on jackets  
Hand washing  
Ladling  
Water transfer with sponges

## Movement

Maria Montessori asserted that the growth of intelligence is dependent on the young child's interaction with his environment. Toddlers are encouraged to choose from endless opportunities for both fine and gross motor development in our supervised indoor and outdoor environments. The psychological aspects of movement include the growth of self-confidence and self-esteem, a sense of independence and autonomy, social participation, and a basic faith in oneself.

Movement activities inside include:

Sit and spin Circle time activities

Rocking ladybug

Balance beam

The outdoor environment encourages running, hopping, jumping, balancing, climbing, sliding, hauling, throwing, and catching. The specific activities available outdoors are:

Sweeping

Plant watering

Basket of assorted balls

Bubbles

Digging for insects

Cognitive exploration

We see the growth of intelligence as Toddlers experience causality through hands-on exploration of manipulatives, such as:

Nesting boxes

Shapes

Blocks

Tracking activities

Puzzles

Inclined planes

Puzzles aid in developing perceptual skills. We start with the simple and move to the more complex to ensure success and challenge. There are opportunities for one-to-one classification, matching, and sorting to aid the development of the mathematical mind.

The stereognostic sense is engaged with activities using the "mystery bag."

All activities are grounded in order, which means that the adults model, encourage, and assist children in completing the cycle of choosing an activity, working on it as long as necessary, and finally returning it to the shelf.

### Language

Maria Montessori stated that "the child must be exposed to language during this sensitive period or it will not develop" (Montessori: A Modern Approach).

The Toddler community offers diverse opportunities for clear, precise, accurate, descriptive language modeled by adults for the toddlers to absorb and express. The adults are careful to model absolute courtesy at all times.

The classroom is full of interesting objects and activities which encourage expressive language. In addition, the classrooms have language areas and items are regularly rotated. At any given time one might find shell sorting and matching, sea animal identification, color recognition work, insect matching, the mystery bag, and more on the shelves.

Our daily circle time is an opportunity to share music, finger plays, poetry books, rhymes, language lessons, color recognition. We play silence games in order to differentiate silence from the sounds of the environment. Also, toileting is an important one-on-one opportunity to model appropriate language: wet, dry, clean. It is also an opportune time to have the child follow simple directions. For example, "Please bring a shirt from your cubby."

The purpose of this emphasis on language is to give the child an awareness of its power and an appreciation of the beauty that language can express.

We internalize Dr. Montessori's belief that language is a window to the universe and to the soul. No one can teach language to the child, as the ability to acquire language is innate. The classroom materials are designed to give order and form to the experience necessary for language acquisition.