Brickton
MONTESSORI

Toddler Curriculum Narrative (2-3 year olds)

Practical Life

Practical life in the Toddler environment encourages the children to refine their motor skills and help them to become independent. There are a wide variety of materials for the children to practice with to develop hand-eye coordination, like pouring water back and forth between two pitchers. Students also strengthen their fine motor skills through activities like transferring dry objects by grasping, spooning and using tongs as well as creating art with a wide variety of materials and media. Dressing frames are used to teach the children how to button, snap, and zip in order to manipulate their own clothing successfully. Children are encouraged to return classroom materials to the original location, which promotes a sense of order, enhancing their organizational skills. Toddlers are encouraged to take responsibility of their work area, for example, cleaning up spills, as they learn to care for the environment.

Practical life encompasses many areas for toddlers, including care of self and the environment. Caring for the environment begins when a child arrives and carefully enters the classroom, being sure to safely move around to select a material and carry the material to a table or rug. We treat the environment and our materials with respect. Care of self teaches the children to be mindful of their own bodies, which includes safe movement, as well as learning how to dress themselves, especially during the toileting process. The children are encouraged to remove their coats and hang them up after time outside. They are also asked to stand near a stable object to independently step into their shoes with minimal adult assistance. We provide the children with a vanity full of articles of clothing to continue practicing these skills. These are all appropriate developmental expectations created to aid in the child's ability to become a confident person, secure in the knowledge of their own capabilities.

Sensorial

The sensorial area promotes the refinement of the senses through the use of touch, sight and hearing, for example, through strengthening visual-spatial skills, such as gradation of size, identifying color and shape. One of the most loved Montessori materials is the Pink Tower, which uses the language of smallest and largest as the children retrieve the ten cubes and gradually build the tower from largest on the bottom to the smallest on top. In addition, there are materials to help the children to discern the difference between thinnest and thickest, shorter and taller, louder and softer, etc. The exploration of these concepts builds a foundation the child can refer back to when delving into more abstract ideas.

Language

Developmentally, toddlers are craving opportunities to learn the names of things all around them. Teachers assist in the children's language acquisition by introducing Montessori materials as well as novel items of interest to them. Toddlers continue building language skills through daily classroom interactions with peers and adults as they converse during lessons,

request to work with a friend, or ask to be excused from meals. Teachers provide opportunities to sing as a group, ask individual students to make song selections during community line time, and ask open-ended questions to allow independent problem solving. At this stage, they are also developing proper sentence structure, and are regularly encouraged to use grace and courtesy words when asking for something or making a request to a peer. Toddlers are also internalizing the intonation when a sentence ends with a lower or higher tone, depending on the usage.

The Toddler program is often the first formal exposure children have to writing. Toddlers will draw pictures and, at times, will offer explanations of the drawing, leading them to their first attempts at written communication. We use the Sandpaper Letters to introduce the proper formation of individual letters in conjunction with the sound of each. To reinforce name identification, the children have name cards in the coatroom to identify their coat hook as well as name cards for lunch. In some cases, children will also recognize their peer's names through regular exposure. Children of this age like to be read to and have the capacity to memorize the oral reading on each page from a book. This allows them to begin to see words in the context of expression, where written words give information and describe events. Toddler can often analyze pictures in a book and expand upon the imagery during teacher guided discussion.

Mathematics

In the Toddler program, children are introduced to mathematics through the Sandpaper Numerals and Spindle Boxes to develop an understanding of symbol recognition and one-to-one correspondence when counting. These mathematical concepts are then reinforced through classroom activities. For example, toddlers help set up the tables for meals and begin counting out the number of plates needed for the community to have lunch. Additionally, they may begin to match the amount of cups to the amount of plates set out, thereby recognizing simple equalities in their environment. Toddlers also begin to subscribe number meaning to events. For example, the teacher may say "We will sing two more songs", reinforcing the recognition of the quantity two to a number of items.

The recognition of shapes is a foundational mathematics concept for toddlers. In our environment, the children are introduced to shapes in a three-dimensional and two-dimensional format. Toddlers learn the proper nomenclature of three-dimensional shapes through direct instruction with the teachers and conversation with peers. Montessori materials, such as the Geometric Solids, provide students with an opportunity to learn names such as cube, cylinder, and prism. During these presentations, children are encouraged to find examples of each shape within other materials around the room. When shown a cube, they may recognize the Pink Tower as a series of graduated cubes, and when shown the square-based prism, may be reminded of another favorite material, the Brown Prisms. Similarly, the Geometric Demonstration Tray provides opportunities for finding two-dimensional shapes in the environment. This then carries over into their work, making shapes out of stickers, and naming shapes from puzzles, books and the environment.

Culture
The culture materials in the classroom cover social studies, science and art. The toddlers learn to internalize the routine of the day and recognize transitions. Each morning we review the day, month, date and year on the calendar during line time. We also discuss the weather outside, noting rain, wind, sun, clouds and temperature. The days of the week are sung in both English and Spanish. As they come to understand that Thursday is the day our music teacher visits, they often acknowledge that as we review the calendar. Community line time and outside activities are introduced to teach slow/fast, high/low, quiet/loud, etc. Various types of music are played in the classroom, with an emphasis on Spanish, as it is Brickton's secondary language program.

Within social studies, we also talk about and identify the three elements of the earth - land, air and water. A continent puzzle is available to facilitate identifying the continents which is reinforced with a song. During birthday celebrations, we use a model of the earth and sun to represent the passage of each year as the earth revolves around the sun. Toddlers are exposed to cultural holidays by participating in celebrations, such as Halloween and Valentine's Day classroom parties, as well as listening to stories and music from other cultures.

To encourage scientific thinking, we utilize three-part cards to identify and analyze subjects like animals and their footprints, human body parts and the inside and outside of various fruits and vegetables. There are classroom plants and a fish to care for, promoting an understanding of living things. When painting, they are often given a primary and secondary color, or two primary or two secondary colors, to observe what happens as the paints mix.

Spanish
At community line time, we begin the introduction of Spanish with songs to expose the ear and promote the pronunciation of words while the children are in a sensitive period for language acquisition. Songs include topics about colors, numerals, days of the week, body parts and other childhood favorites such as, "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" and "Down by the Station."

Music
The children have exposure to music and songs throughout the day as background music or during line time. In the classroom, there is always a selection of musical instruments available to the children, with a basket of instruments containing a bell, shakers, a drum, a triangle, a wood block and xylophone. During our community line time, the directress has the children take turns suggesting songs they would like to sing. The toddlers welcome our Orff music teacher one time each week for fifteen minutes, where they learn new songs and have the opportunity to work on rhythm. They are introduced to different instruments such as the wood block, drum, rhythm sticks, and shakers.

Art
In the classroom, the Toddler program maintains a shelf with various mediums for art, such as coloring, painting, gluing, punching, and stamping, as well as an easel or chalkboard. Different tools for painting are offered, such as water colors, marble painting, spray bottles, various paint brush sizes as well as types of paper. A variety of materials for gluing are available, such as

noodles, foam shapes, paper, or pom-poms. Stamping can be done with ink and paint and punching is completed with a push pin to punch holes around an image on a piece of paper or using a hand held stamper that punches out die-cut shapes.

Gym

While the Toddler environment does not have a formalized gym program, the children regularly have time outside to use the jungle gym, climb on the tires, corkscrew and slide, or play with push cars and balls. During inclement weather, the children utilize the Great Room where they are free to run, catch and kick balls, and use scooters. Daily, we lead gross motor activities during line time using songs that incorporate movement. In the classroom, there is a loft where the children can walk up and down the stairs and crawl underneath to sit quietly and socialize. We also have a rocking horse and balance beam, mini parachutes on which to bounce beanbags, and yoga cards to encourage movement throughout the day.