Toddler Environment Welcome Letter

Welcome to our toddler environment! Whether this is a new endeavor for your family or you have been part of our community in the past, we are thrilled to have you and your child with us here at OCC! In this letter you will find the answer to most of your questions when starting with us. School wide rules and processes can be found in the School Handbook, but we are hoping this offers a concise listing of how our transition into the room looks and what you will need to have for your child to be their most successful.

Our Goal

Our goal in the toddler environment is to foster independence in the children. We do this by offering many opportunities for children to learn to do things themselves. We often say we offer as much help as a child needs, without offering more. We will always be right by their side when things get a bit too difficult or frustrating, but we also allow room for confidence in themselves to grow. We also try to instill a sense of intrinsic motivation in the children. While you won't hear a lot of "good job!" or outward praise, you will hear a lot of "you did it!" or "look how proud you are!" when we see all that hard work get accomplished! We move about our room having freedom within limits. This environment belongs to the children and we treat it as such. They get to use whatever they would like in the classroom space. However, we also teach them ownership of the classroom and how to care for that environment, including treating others and the materials with respect. In the toddler room, that is accomplished with a lot of short phrases as reminders and teachers stepping in quickly when trouble arises.

Transitioning into the school year

The teachers in the toddler environment are highly aware of how difficult it is to entrust your child at this age with new people. We hold it as an incredible privilege that you choose us to care for your children. When we begin the school year we offer several opportunities to see the classroom and meet with teachers to provide more reassurance to your child (and you!).

Home Visits: We begin by offering home visits to new families. This is an opportunity to have one on one time with a toddler guide for roughly 20-30 minutes at your convenience. This gives time for a child to start seeing a new adult in their safe place with their safe people! It offers a moment of interaction and also time for any questions that may be on your mind. We bring an item to play with that the children will see again when they visit their new classroom. Please do not let this bring any anxiety to you, we have no cares if your house is messy or if you have that perfect montessori set up, this is fully for your child to feel their most comfortable in this new transition!

Parent Orientation: The Thursday evening before school starts for the year, we host a parent orientation evening. This covers everything from how things at OCC work and give you a chance to check out the toddler classrooms. You will have the opportunity to meet all the toddler teachers as well as learn a little bit about what we will be doing in our rooms. This is an event for just the grown-ups of the household to join in on.

Classroom Visits: The next day, there will be scheduled classroom visits (You will receive a link to a sign-up for time slots). This is a day to bring your child along with you to explore their new classroom. This offers another opportunity for children to have their safe people alongside them as they enter a brand new space and meet even more new people! We ask that you bring along all of your child's supplies at this time as well to prepare their cubby for their first day.

Small group visits: On the Monday school begins, we will host shorter time slots (roughly 1.5 hours) for students to visit with only half the class. This will be the first day of drop off and a great practice for those quick, confident goodbyes. The more confident you appear, the less nervous your child will feel! It's a great introduction for the children to get to know the room even more and what it is like with some other friends involved.

Supply List

We've included this supply list including links to some of our favorite products we find work best. Feel free to use the links or find your own items that fit the description! I have attempted to cover various price points to be as accessible as possible, but used items are also a great option! Locally we have both Kid to Kid and The Mommy Shoppe that often have great supplies second hand. The Mommy Shoppe also provides one free bag of items you are able to shop for once a month if you sign up. For clothes that often get messy at school, I find this a great resource to find extra clothing to send in. Please label ALL ITEMS. While you may not be too worried about things getting lost, we have many students and it can be difficult to ensure who has what, especially in those beginning months.

- **LABELS**- Our favorite is the label stamp because it works on socks too! Any label you choose is good. Last name stamps are fine as well to make it easier on future hand-me-downs in your family.
  Namestamp
  Mabel's Labels stamp
  Mabel's Labels Stickers
  Inchbug labels
- **Wet Bags**- used to transport soiled clothing home. We recommend having at least 2.
  Target wet bags
  Bumkins Bags
- **Shoes**- children will need both indoor and outdoor shoes. We aim for something they will be able to practice doing themselves with a firm heel and easy tongue to deal with. We recommend indoor shoes be a waterproof option such as crocs or a washable shoe due to all the toilet learning in the classroom.
  See Kai Run shoes -most shoes of this brand have easy straps and firm heels
  Ten Little Shoes
  Target toddler shoes

Kohls indoor shoe option
Crocs for indoor -any generic croc version also works!

- **Underwear**- all walking children will be in underwear throughout the day at school, we find the thicker underwear better for those beginning in toilet learning.
  Gerber white underwear -We find the 18mo size to be one of the smallest around for our littlest friends
  Thirsties underwear -One of our new favorites we've seen! They have snaps for those extra messy situations and contain moisture well
  -Plastic underwear covers are great for the carseat and avoiding big messes while toilet learning at home
- **Backpack-** While it may make sense to have a smaller backpack for a smaller child, toddlers come back and forth with a lot of stuff! (especially during toilet learning), so we request a backpack that is a little on the bigger side to accommodate all those items. Preferably one they can carry, but you'd be surprised at the way some of these children figure out how to transport big bags back and forth!
  -Hawlander 15in bag -as teachers, these are our absolute favorites! They are just the right size while able to hold everything they need.
  -Land's End small bag -often on sale!
- **Spare Clothing-** We prefer loose fitting clothing to help with the ease of independence in changing. Preferably no overalls, dresses, tight fitting pants, such as leggings, or onesies as these make it difficult to independently use the toilet. We ask for **5** spare changes of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) as our space is limited and ask that you send back the same amount of clothing that returns home. We will send reminders as supplies run low as well. If your child is enrolled in **extended day care** we ask that you send an additional 2 spare changes of clothing in a gallon ziplock bag to be kept in that area. Classrooms will refill these as needed.
- **Diapers for napping-** our nappers wear diapers unless they are unneeded during nap. Please refrain from pull ups and send diapers with tabs as they make our transition to nap much simpler. Cloth diapers are always a welcome choice.
- **Nap Items-** If your child is here for the full day, they will need a small (but big enough to cover their bodies) blanket and are welcome to bring a noiseless comfort item. We will provide a sheet that fits our cots and a nap bag for items to be returned on the weekends for washing.
- **Seasonal Gear-** Throughout the seasons, children will need to have seasonal items that stay at school. A raincoat and rainboots, as well as snowpants, winter coat, and snow boots (One piece snowsuit/jackets are a great option). Teachers will reach out during the time frame the items are needed to send them in.

Toilet Learning

Here in the toddler environment, as soon as children are confidently walking, we transition to using underwear at all times except napping. We look at toilet learning as just that, learning! Underwear allows the children to grow aware of the sensations around peeing and pooping, which helps build those connections in the brain. It also offers more normalcy around toileting, helping prevent the big push back that comes along later in years when children have a higher sense of will. We invite you to join in this process at home, if you need some time in that

transition, we can also inform you when your child is more successful at school so we can dive in together at that point. We do notice a significantly different time frame for those that join at home right away versus those waiting to join in, but either option is fine.

Preparing your child:

It can be difficult at this young age to fully prepare your child, but preparing yourself as an adult can be a huge help! We recommend getting ready with a quick, confident goodbye right from the start. Children really feed off of grown-ups anxiety, so a little bit of faking it, til you make it can be needed in those first first weeks. It can be so hard dropping your babies off to a new place! Our transition plan coming into the school year does help a lot with preparing the child. We also recommend talking about school in neutral terms, neither hyping it up too much, nor leading on that it may be a scary thing. The more neutrally we refer to things, the more we leave the children's minds open to draw their own conclusions!

All around, we know this can be a huge transition time for families! We are here for any questions, comments, or discussions you would like to have. We are thrilled you have chosen us to be a part of your parenting journey. There is never a question too small to reach out about. We know the anxieties that come along with parenting (most of us from experience) and we are happy to help ease those in any way we can.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you soon,

Abigail Pierre-Louis
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