

Welsh Hills School

Montessori Toddler Program



Parent Handbook

2008-2009

Welsh Hills School

VISION

We envision teaching every student to be confident, respectful, knowledgeable, and inquisitive, and inspiring them to become self-motivated lifelong learners.

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide children, during the critical years of their development, with a personalized education that creates a strong academic foundation, builds self-esteem, develops character, and promotes a life-long love of learning.

OUR TODDLER PROGRAM (18 months - 3 years)

The Toddler Program at Welsh Hills School is has been designed in harmony with the principles of early childhood education set forth by Maria Montessori. Dr. Montessori believed that each child has, within himself or herself, a unique self-potential that is revealed as the child grows and develops his or her interests and knowledge.

She identified that children have “sensitive periods” where they focus in on learning certain methods with eagerness and intensity. She also believed that learning is a natural process where children learn by doing. Thus, our classroom contains the elements necessary for children to follow their natural interests and to practice their skills.

YOUR TODDLER’S DAY

Our goal is for your toddler to feel as comfortable as he/she would at home. The class size is small and inviting to make it feel like home. It is a place where children will achieve independence, social awareness, and respect; and where they can develop their motor skills and language.

Students are free to choose activities and move at their own pace. Under the direction of a teacher the students will be presented with different activities/lessons. Once they have a sense of inner mastery in the activity they will be encouraged to move to the next level of difficulty and extend their knowledge.

Each day will include a work period where the children will explore their environment. The Montessori materials are designed specifically for their developmental stage. These activities help to promote and refine large and small motor skills and care of self skills such as toileting, eating, dressing, and washing. The day will also include outside play time, a snack and group activity time.

Our Curriculum Will Include Seven Main Areas Of Focus:

Practical Life: The children will experience real life situations and activities promoting motor activities, three finger grasp and eye-hand coordination and discrimination, as well as develop concentration and inner discipline. Self-discipline, care of self and of the environment, and grace & courtesy are also part of this area.

Sensorial : The children will discover color, size, shape, taste, smell, sound, sight, touch, discrimination and classification. In this area, there is much emphasis on "training of the senses", which is an essential tool for later learning processes such as focus and observation.

Language: Children begin laying the foundation for reading and writing with their senses, using the sandpaper letters and sound with sight objects to learn the phonemic sounds. The acquisition of the language is connected to the children's strength of observation and sensorial training. The process of reading and writing takes place at an individual pace, with minimal interruption by the teacher. Being in a "language rich" environment develops stronger auditory and verbal vocabularies.

Foreign Language: We expose children to Spanish by immersing them in it with our Spanish instructor. They are able to pick up an understanding of vocabulary and begin initial verbalization of it. The children will also learn about many languages with songs, games, and work in the cultural area.

Mathematics: Children are exposed to the concrete forms of number concepts in terms of symbols and quantities and work at an individual level in preparing for an abstract understanding of higher, more complex mathematics functions or operations.

Visual Arts: Art activities for all levels are important for the development of intellectual, social and spiritual stimulus and growth. There will be daily art activities set up for the students to help promote self expression and creativity.

Music & Movement: Group time is a wonderful time for songs, music, movement and group coordination games. There are also many materials in the environment to promote appreciation of music. Drama is introduced to the children with music, plays and games. These are fun and relaxing activities that also develop large motor skills and provides a wonderful opportunity to bring out a naturally creative flair through song and dance.

DAILY SNACKS

Daily snacks will be provided by the school for the Toddler Program. The daily snack is an exercise in independence for the children. They serve their own food and clean up after themselves. It is also a very social experience, with two or three children choosing a snack together or the whole class enjoying a snack as a group. We take this opportunity to reinforce good manners and to learn about nutrition.

The following food items are examples of what the Toddlers will be having for snack:

- Fresh fruit
- Fresh veggies sometimes with dips
- Cheese-cubed or sliced from chunk, not processed
- Dry carbohydrates (mini-muffins, crackers, pretzels, bagel chips, miniature bread or pitas)
- Trail mix (without candy)
- Milk or fruit juice (water is always available)

We try to avoid serving foods laden with sugar, salt, or fat.

BIRTHDAYS

We celebrate each child's birthday on the exact date, the half birth date if the birthday is during the summer months, or the closest day if the birthday is on a weekend. Parents are welcome to send in a special snack for their child's birthday. The following are the guidelines when sending the special snack. The birthday celebrations are not intended to be traditional birthday parties; rather, they are celebrated in such a way to enhance many aspects of the educational aims of the program, such as self esteem and the idea of the passage of time. To help the children understand the passage of time, we have a special activity when we observe each child's birthday. To help with this activity, please send in a photo of your child at birth and their current years of his/her life. Please label your child's name on the photo.



ALLERGIES

Please notify the school and the toddler teacher of any known food or environmental allergies. This is especially important for any child who has a known nut allergy.

ABSENCES AND ILLNESS

It is most important that children who are sick stay home. This is for the child's well being as for the welfare of the other children in the class. Sick children do not benefit from being in school. Children will not be admitted to school if they have the following symptoms:

Elevated temperature

Diarrhea

Vomiting

Pink Eye

Evidence of chicken pox

Head lice or nits

If such symptoms occur during school, we will contact you, or if we are unable to reach you, we will contact the persons listed on your child's Emergency Card. Children who exhibit such symptoms should return to school when they have been symptom-free for 24 hours. If your child is going to be absent for whatever reason, please let us know. It would be best if you let us know before 8:30. Please refer to the Family Handbook for additional information.

HOME AND SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

The school sends out a weekly "Monday Memo" via email. These "Monday Memos" are used to inform parents of upcoming events, policies, and request of assistance on current projects. We also send classroom information home about what we are doing in the classroom and in the school, plus ideas and suggestions for you to try with your children.

Backpack Notebooks

A notebook will be placed in and must stay in your child's backpack. This back & forth notebook is to help aid in open communication between teachers and the parents.

SHOES, SLIPPERS AND SOCKS

The Ohio Department of Health require students to cover bare feet at all times in the classroom. If your child does not feel comfortable in shoes you are welcome to bring slippers or socks for them to wear inside the classroom. All students must have a pair of appropriate seasonal shoes to wear outside.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL GUIDELINES

These guidelines are designed to help facilitate smooth transitions between home and school at the beginning and end of each child's day. Please help us coordinate those times and procedures by establishing a positive routine for your child.

REGULAR ARRIVAL 8:30 a.m.

Please bring your child into the toddler classroom through our far front entrance. **This will require that you park your car in an appropriate spot and walk in with your child. Please do not leave your car along the sidewalk where others are trying to get to the building to drop off their child and go.** A teacher will be at the door to greet you. This will be the perfect time to say goodbye to your child with a firm hug and kiss. This will help them start their day calm and positive. Many children will have separation difficulties at first (Very Normal!!) Separation anxiety usually ends quickly after parents leave and children get involved. Be assured that we will call you if your child continues to be upset.

REGULAR DISMISSAL 11:30

Please pull up in front of our entrance and wait in your car, a teacher will escort your child to your car. If your child is being picked up by a different person please put it in writing and give the note to the teacher at the beginning of the day. Children **will not** be released to any person until a parent/guardian has given the proper notification to the school.

* For children arriving into Stay & Play come into the front door of the school and into the kitchen. After School care will continue to be held in the classroom.

Questions & Answers

Does WHS close when bad weather arrives?

If conditions are hazardous to drive, the Head of School will make a decision very early in the morning to allow ample time for parents to be notified. Please keep an eye on the weather and road conditions if bad weather is predicted in the forecast. Listen to the T. V. or radio for school closings even during the day as we may close early to get the children and our staff members home safely.

What should my child wear to school?

Your child will be engaging in a variety of activities throughout the day that can be messy or involve outside play. Therefore, we highly recommend that your child wear comfortable play clothes and appropriate shoes with non-skid soles that allow them to move freely. Children should be dressed in clothes that can be soiled and are washable.

What about diapers and wipes for my child? What kind of diapers can I bring?

Parents are required to provide diapers and wipes for their children. Only disposable diapers are permitted, but any kind of baby wipes are fine. Reminder notes will be sent home as your child's supply runs low. Please clearly label each item.

Can I bring diaper ointment, creams, and/or powder?

Ointments and creams are also permitted. However, parents will be required to complete a *Permission to Administer Medication form* to have on file. Powders can be problematic for children with asthma, and are, therefore, not permitted.

Will teachers help me toilet train my toddler?

Yes, we will work with you in helping toilet train your child if he/she child is physically and emotionally ready. Toilet learning should be a positive experience. There is no "right" age to begin toilet training. Parents should continually encourage their children at home.

What other items will my child need?

Your child needs to have an extra full set of seasonal clothes stored in their cubby at all times. This includes a set of socks, underwear (If potty trained), pants, two shirts, and shoes. All items need to be clearly labeled with your child's name.

What if my child has difficulty being dropped off?

Separation anxiety is developmental and can be a difficult process for both children and parents. Typical reactions associated with separation anxiety are crying, clinging, and trying to follow. Every child is unique and responds to separations differently. However, children take cues from their parents. If a parent responds positively when dropping their child off, their child will pick up on this. The following is a list of helpful hints to make the separation process go smoother:

- Prepare your child and talk to them about what is going to happen beforehand, such as "Today is a school day!"
- Maintain a good relationship with your child's teacher and communicate with her when needed. This will make you more comfortable with leaving, and your child will sense this.

- Be sure to say good-bye to your child when you leave. Saying good-bye helps your child know what to expect and establish a healthy routine.
- Make your good-bye's definite. Do not come back if you hear your child crying. It can make the separation process even more difficult! Children typically regain their composure and start their daily routine shortly after their parent(s) leave.

Who can pick up my child after school?

Only parents/guardians and other *authorized* persons are allowed to pick up a child. If changes to the list are needed, please correct the information immediately. If a staff member does not recognize the person who comes to get your child, but whose name is on the list, they will ask to see a photo ID before they release your child. Children will not be released to anyone not listed on this form.

Is there a Parent Organization?

Yes. Parents, friends and staff members at the WHS have combined their efforts in the creation of P.I.E. (Partners In Education). This organization will meet during the academic year and will also sponsor activities targeted for WHS parents and their families. Meetings will be open to all parents and staff of WHS. Please look for meeting times in your Monday Memos or the monthly newsletter for your chance to become more active in the WHS PIE Organization.

How does WHS teacher handle discipline problems?

Difficulties with behavior are handled in a positive way by the teacher. A Montessori teacher does not believe in rewards or punishments. She approaches the situation swiftly, yet calmly, addresses the child at eye level, and tries to recognize his feelings, thoughts and action. She gives the child her attention and offers him suggestions for alternatives. We work to redirect children, to help them see logical consequences and make better choices.

What if I have a message for a teacher?

If you have a message for the teacher please write it down on paper and give it to the teacher. We prefer this over a conversation. Many times the arrival and dismissal times are very busy and therefore, not a good time for conversation. You could also call and leave a voice mail on ext. 17 or write an email. Whatever way you decide to leave a message, we will insure that we will be prompt in getting back with you.

Should my child bring a backpack?

Yes, each child is asked to bring a backpack or a school bag. Our goal is to develop responsibility and establish simple, early patterns to pave the way for homework later on.

Does the school offer parent education?

Yes. WHS offers Parent Seminars, T.A.P.P. classes and periodically there will be books and articles sent home to help you better understand the Montessori philosophy and method. Throughout the school year we will hold four Parent Seminars. These seminars are informative one-hour sessions to better help you understand your child's world and school environment. We also require that each Welsh Hills family complete the six-week class session of T.A.P.P. (The Art of Positive Parenting) that is presented by "Action For Children" out of Columbus. Parenting can be very tough and frustrating at times regardless of the age of the children. This class presents you with tools to become a more positive, effective, and constructive parent.



**We are excited to be sharing this beautiful and critical period of development in your child's life with you!
Thank you for the opportunity.**

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