



PARENT HANDBOOK



WELCOME!

Welcome to Little Galaxy Childcare & Montessori! We hope that you find your child's Montessori education a rewarding experience.

The main objective of Little Galaxy Childcare & Montessori School is to provide planned and stimulating environments to assist children in developing within themselves the fundamental habits, aptitudes, and skills necessary to maximize their full potential.

Please use this handbook throughout the year for guidance and support to help you and your child get the most out of our program.

Settling In...

Settling in during the first week:

It is everyone's intention to make the transition from home to school as positive and as smooth as possible, for all involved. During the first week of school, we will stagger the children's arrival times so that there is time for each child to settle in. When you arrive at the school, we ask you to say a quick, sweet goodbye and leave your child at the door with a teacher. Children may cry upon seeing their parents leave, however, be assured that this crying will stop shortly once the child becomes involved in other activities. It is our experience that the more prolonged the goodbye, the more prolonged the crying. In the first few days of school your child will rely on you for reassurance. Your child's teacher will notify you of your child's drop off time for the first week.

Settling in after the first week:

Most toddler children have not attended school before, and it may take them some time to settle into their new environment. In order to allow the class to adjust as quickly as possible and to provide the happiest environment for all the children we ask you to observe the following points:

At the beginning of the school year, it is common for children to cry when being dropped off. The crying almost always stops as soon as the child's parents are out of sight. While we understand any reluctance to leave a crying child, your child will settle into the class more quickly and easily if you say a quick, sweet goodbye at the door and leave quietly. Please remain outside of the school and away from the playground until it is time for your child to be picked up. Although it may be comforting to you, it may be confusing and/or disturbing for the children to see parents during class time.

Children are very perceptive to nuance, and their impressions are influenced by their parents. Therefore, it is very important that you always display a positive and encouraging attitude towards school.

School Hours

School Regular Hours	7:00 am – 6:00 pm
School Program Timings	9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Pre-Casa (Toddler Program) Daily Routine

Regular Start Time (Arrival Time)	7:00 am – 9:00 am
Morning Breakfast/Snacks	8:30 am – 9:30 am

Circle Time Classes A&B	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Circle Time Class C&D	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Work Period # 1 – Classes C&D	10:00 am – 11:00 am
Outdoor Play Classes A&B	10:00 am – 11:00 am
Work Period # 1 – Classes A&B	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Outdoor Play Classes C&D	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Lunch/Break All Toddler Classes A-D	12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
Naptime for All Toddler Classes A-D	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Outdoor Play Classes A&B	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Work Period # 2 – Classes C&D	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Outdoor Play Classes C&D	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Work Period # 2 – Classes A&B	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Evening Snack/Break	5:00 pm – 5:30 pm
Circle Time All Toddler Classes A-D	5:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Casa (Pre-School) Program Daily Routine

Regular Start Time (Arrival Time)	7:00 am – 9:00 am
Morning Breakfast/Snacks	8:30 am – 9:30 am
Work Period # 1 Classes A&B	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Work Period # 1 Classes C&D	9:00 am – 10:00 am
Outdoor Play Classes A&B	10:00 am – 11:00 am
Work Period # 2 – Classes C&D	10:00 am – 11:00 am
Work Period # 2 – Classes A&B	11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Outdoor Play Classes C&D	11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Lunch/Break All Pre-School Classes A-D	12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
Naptime for All Pre-School Classes A-D	1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Outdoor Play Classes A&B	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Work Period # 3 – Classes C&D	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Outdoor Play Classes C&D	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Work Period # 3 – Classes A&B	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Evening Snack/Break	5:00 pm – 5:30 pm
Circle Time All Pre-School Classes A-D	5:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Pick Up Procedures

Only people listed on your child's emergency card and registration are permitted to pick up your child. If you need someone else to pick up your child, please notify the teacher in writing in advance.

What to Bring to School

Indoor Shoes

Outdoor Shoes

Diapers*

Wipes

Sunscreen (optional)

Diaper Ointments (optional)

Any Medicine, Medications or Inhalers**

Nap time necessities (crib-sized sheet, blanket)

Backpack (small enough for your child to carry but large enough to hold the items he/she will take to and from school)

Seasonally appropriate clothing (SCHOOL FRIENDLY PLEASE!)

Tops x 3

Bottoms x 3

Socks x 3

Underwear x 3

Outdoor Clothing

What Not to Bring to School

Toys

Pens or markers

Stickers

Anything that may disrupt the classroom routine

Please make sure that ALL of your children's items are clearly labeled

Frequently Asked Questions

Food from Home

At LGCM we do not allow any food from home, but we do ask our parents to inform us of all the dietary restrictions their child might have including allergies, lactose-free, vegan, halal etc.

Toilet Training

Children in the Toddler Program do not have to be toilet trained. As a part of the Toddler Program, we assist parents with the toilet training process. Parents need to discuss with the Head Teacher the stage of training your child is at. We will work together to make this transition as easy as possible.

Accidents and Injuries

While we take the utmost care with the children during their time with us, we also feel it is important to allow the children the opportunity to “play”. On occasion, if we do have any incidents involving injury of one child by another or injury by falling it will be notified and an accident incident report will be filed. In the case of minor accidents, you will be notified when you pick up your child.

Parent Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences will be held twice a year. Toddler students do not receive any written progress reports. We welcome parent observations after **January** when the settling in process for all the children is complete. If at any time you would like to discuss your child’s progress, please feel free to make an appointment with the Head Teacher.

Classroom Queries

Please address questions or concerns about your child or his/her classroom to the Head Teacher, as she will provide the best insights and complete information.

Birthday Celebrations

A child’s birthday is a time of celebration, and we welcome the opportunity to celebrate this occasion with your child in the classroom. The child is welcome to bring a special snack to share with the class.

Activities Off Premises

LGCM strongly believes, that children learning in different environments such as going on walks and field trips enhances their learning development. Therefore, field trips can be rich learning opportunities and meaningful to the children, during their crucial stage of development.

Procedure:

1. Staff/Child ratios will be maintained on all walks and field trips
2. First Aid kit and emergency cards with updated info and photo of the child will be brought on all field trips or walks.
3. An emergency plan must be developed prior to the trip, all staff and volunteers in attendance at the field trip must be familiar with the emergency plan. All emergency plans should contain the telephone numbers of the parents, and what actions are to be taken in the event of an emergency occurring.
4. Families are always welcomed to participate during field trips. Family members will be only responsible for their own child when on a trip unless a Vulnerable Sector Screening

has been completed, and a copy has been made available to the centers Manager as per the requirements of Ministry of Education.

5. At last, a signed informed consent form must be received from the parent/guardian of the child prior to any field trips. As given below:

WALKING/FIELD TRIP CONSENT FORM – 2022

Student's Name: _____

Age: _____

CHECK ONE:

I give consent for my child to participate in walking trips/activities throughout the school year.

I **DO NOT** give consent for my child to participate in walking/activities throughout the school year.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Illness Policy

The school places *extreme importance* on the health of the children, and it is the responsibility of all members of the school community (parents and teachers alike) to keep the children healthy. A child should not be brought to school if they show signs of illness or fever. Out of consideration for the health of the other students a child should not be sent to school if they have a heavy or persistent cough, severe runny nose, vomiting or diarrhea. **In the case of vomiting or diarrhea the child needs to remain symptom free for 24 hrs before returning to school.** If your child has pink eye they will be excluded from class until they have received prescription drops for **24hrs**. If you choose to treat with over-the-counter medication or natural solutions the child will be excluded until all symptoms have subsided. If many children are ill with the same symptoms a note will be sent home informing families that their children must remain healthy for **48 hrs** before returning to class.

Communicable Disease Exclusion Regulations

Disease	Quarantine of Patient
Chicken Pox	Scabs must be off
Measles	5 days from appearance of rash
German Measles (Rubella)	7 days from appearance of rash
Mumps	9 days or until swelling subsides
Meningitis	24hrs after starting antibiotics
Strep Throat	24 hrs after starting antibiotics
Conjunctivitis (pink eye)	24 hrs after starting prescription antibiotic drops
Whooping Cough	24-48 hrs after medication begins
Impetigo	5 days after treatment begins
Vomiting	Must be symptom free for 24 hrs
Diarrhea	Must be symptom free for 24 hrs and had 1 solid bowel movement
Fever	Must be fever-free without medication for 24 hrs
Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease	Must be fever-free without medication for 24 hrs

*** A Consent to Administer Medication Form must be filled out for every medication that we keep at the school for your child.*

CLASSROOM GOALS

CASA: Classroom Areas and Goals

Practical Life

- Independence
- Concentration level
- Organizing/sorting
- Fine motor development

Sensorial

- Visual/perceptual development
- Organizational development
- Sequencing

Art

- Creative expression
- Exploration of various colours and mediums

Language

- Spoken language
- Exposure to proper grammar structure
- Development of listening skills
- Vocabulary
- Learning everyone's name
- Pre-writing exercises
- Letters/Sounds

Personal Care

- Help to dress oneself
- Brush teeth
- Tidy toys

Eating

- Eating with a spoon, fork independently
- Using a regular cup
- Sit at a table with other members of the family

Verbal expression

- Express oneself through means other than crying/grunting/screaming
- First words, begin to put words together to convey thoughts
- Listen to stories
- Identifying objects in the environment
- Enjoy listening to music

Wave goodbye/greetings
Introduce, please and thank you

Gross Motor

Running, jumping
Roll or toss a ball
Climbing stairs independently

PRE-CASA: Classroom Areas and Goals

Arrival/Dismissal

Change shoes independently
Hanging up coat independently
Positive separation, saying goodbye

Classroom Routine

Developing independence
Sense of order
Making choices
Sharing/patience/turn taking
Develop a love of learning
Self esteem/self confidence

Toilet Training

Wearing underwear and using the toilet daily
Undressing and dressing in the bathroom
Proper hand washing

Math

Concept of counting
Concept of Quantity
Number symbols

Culture

Exposure to the community/world around us
Nature/animals

Music

Singing
Listening to sounds and music
Exposure to musical instruments

Grace and Courtesy

- Development of proper eating habits
- Greetings and farewells
- Manners

Playground

- Social development
- Parallel play/peer play
- Gross motor development

Children Home Expectations & Responsibilities

Daily Routines:

Routine is very important to a young child. It helps to provide the child with a sense of order, expectation, sense of the passage of time and consistency. Routine can also help with reducing temper tantrums as, in general, a tantrum is caused by a change of expectation between the child and his/her environment.

Regular waking, mealtimes, nap times, outdoor play opportunities, and bedtime routines are all very important to try to keep the same schedule as much as possible day to day, in order to help your child, build a sense of self and understand how the world around them functions.



PROGRAM STATEMENT



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

At Little Galaxy Childcare & Montessori School our Mission is to provide within a nurturing environment a well-balanced instructional Montessori program that will enable all students to reach their highest level of academic success.

The staff is committed to creating a student-centered educational environment that stresses high expectations and addresses the physical, social and emotional needs of children with a variety of ability levels and learning styles.

Our goal is to maintain an active partnership involving students, teachers, parents, community and staff to develop a love of learning while embracing our diversity and unique talents in a safe, challenging, respectful and supportive environment.

OVERVIEW

Little Galaxy Childcare & Montessori School (LGCM) offers a Ministry of Education licensed Infant/Toddler/Pre-school part-time and full-time programs for students 6 months to 6 years of age.

88 student capacity in the Pre-school part / full-time program (Casa) at a ratio of 1:8 and
60 student capacity in the Toddler part / full-time program (Pre-Casa) at a ratio of 1:5
10 student capacity in the Infant part/ full-time program at a ratio of 1:3

Making the total capacity: 158 students

LGCM operates all year around starting September, from the first day after Labour Day weekend to beginning of the new semester back in September. Hours of operation – 7:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. School is closed for Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Years Day, Ontario Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Civic Holiday, Labour Day. A number of Professional Development days will be posted online and handed to parents prior to the beginning of each school year.

LGCM full day program offers a catered lunch, morning and afternoon snacks, two hours of outdoor play in a designated licensed play area and an afternoon nap/quiet time of a maximum of two hours.

All LGCM staff hold an updated Standard First Aid and CPR certificates and are subject to the following: Police Vulnerable Sector Check, Monitoring Behaviour Management policy, Allergy and Anaphylactic policy, Medication Administration policy, Playground Safety policy and Supervision of Volunteers and Students Policy

For further policies, schedules and school year calendar please see the LGCM Parent Handbook, LGCM Information / Enrollment package

OUR COMMITMENT

As a licensed child care facility under of the Ministry of Education, we are committed to being in compliance with the Child Care and Early Year's Act, 2014. We view children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. Years of Montessori research and observation indicates that when children are in a stress-free environment with positive and supporting staff they feel a sense of belonging, they are well-balanced and ultimately ready and eager to learn. By building that special trust, and creating diverse rich responsive interactions between children and their teachers, learning can take place.

By following the children's interests and acknowledge that everyone is different and should not be categorized based solely on their age, we allow natural growth and development to occur at the child's pace without unnecessary pressure. At that point children are happy to engage in learning and express their unique ideas and creativity.

Engaging families in the program builds on these positive relationships and supports the child in their healthy growth and development. Parent Education Evenings are an important element to keep parents at LGCM informed and able to compliment the "Montessori way" at home. The Administration at LGCM is committed to `annual review and evaluation of our Program Statement and Implementation Policy. Adjustments will be made as needed as we continue to learn and evolve.

In addition, we have discussed and incorporated "How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (2014)" as the document to guide and influence our approach to curriculum. How Does Learning Happen? is organized around four foundations that are considered to be essential for optimal learning and healthy development for children: Belonging, Well-being, Engagement, and Expression. The four foundations apply regardless of the child's age, ability, culture, language, geography, or setting. Unlike a structured curriculum, the conditions are high-level states of being that children naturally seek for themselves and should not necessarily be viewed as separate elements. There are very similar lines within the Montessori philosophy that enable us to observe the child from the same perspective. That allows for a child centered environment rather than a teacher centered environment to be established, so to better focus and cater to the students' current needs and tendencies which ultimately leads to growth and success.

LGCM Program Goals and Indicators:

Following each goal here is a sample list of indicators of compliance with the Program Statement. It is by no means a comprehensive list.

- (a) promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of the children;
- (b) support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff;
- (c) encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate.

- (d) foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry;
- (e) provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences;
- (f) plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported;
- (g) incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day, and give consideration to the individual needs of the children receiving child care;
- (h) foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children;
- (i) involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff;
- (j) support staff in their continuous professional learning
- (k) document and review the impact of the strategies set out in clauses (a) to (j) on the children and their families

LGCM Program Approaches to the indicated Goals above:

(a) Goal: To plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be encouraged and supported.

Approach: The Montessori environment is designed to develop a foundation for creative learning and a sense of independence. The diversity of the Montessori materials, activities and experiences foster physical, intellectual, creative, social, and personal skills.

(b) Goal: To support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, guardians, childcare providers, educators and other staff members.

Approach: Childcare providers and educators are aware of children's cues and respond appropriately and consistently. Comprehensive and respectful communication ensures positive relationships with all members of the school community.

(c) Goal: To promote the health, safety and well-being of children.

Approach: Childcare providers and educators implement the policies and procedures related to health, safety and well-being of children, meeting and/or exceeding the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Environment, City of Brampton and Region of Peel.

(d) Goal: To encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate.

Approach: The Montessori classroom environment and the playground encourages social interaction for cooperative learning, peer teaching and emotional development. Children become aware of their feelings and the feelings of others.

(e) Goal: To incorporate the Montessori Work Cycle, indoor/ outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day, and consider the individual needs of the children receiving childcare.

Approach: The Program Schedule is designed to allow enough time to meet the physiological and developmental needs of the children.

(f) Goal: To involve local community partners and allow partners to support children, their families, childcare providers and educators.

Approach: Cooperatively work with community partners who include, but not limited to, Ministry of Education, Region of Peel, Peel Health, Peel Inclusion Resource Services, Child Development Resource Connection Peel, Speech Pathways and Brampton Caledon Community Living.

(g) Goal: To support childcare providers, educators and other staff who interact with the children at school in relation to professional learning.

Approach: Professional education is offered to improve skills and knowledge to directly benefit children and peers.

(h) Goal: To foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry.

Approach: Learning takes place when children explore their social and physical environment and choose Montessori curriculum and activities that interest them. Freedom of choice entails some responsibility while allowing a child's natural aptitudes to be satisfied.

(i) Goal: To foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with the parents about the program and their children

Approach: Encourage members of the school community to speak freely, honestly and with respect regarding their needs and experiences to ensure they feel heard and valued.

(j) Goal: To provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences.

Approach: The Montessori environment gives children the opportunity to problem-solve, self-correct, see connections in knowledge and to create new ideas. The childcare providers and educators are educated and trained in the Montessori philosophy and the methodology for the age level they are teaching and have the ability and dedication to put the key concepts into practice.

(k) Goal: To document and review the impact of the strategies identified in this Program Statement.

Approach: Evaluate and address successes and areas of opportunity at least annually based on written documentation, collaboratively with parents, guardians, care child providers and educators.

THE MONTESSORI DIFFERENCE (A.M.I.)

The Association Montessori Internationale – AMI – is the oldest international Montessori organization in the world. It was founded in 1929 by Dr. Maria Montessori and her son Dr. Mario M. Montessori. In founding this, Dr. Maria Montessori’s aims were two-fold: to safeguard her original contribution on behalf of the child against diluting influences, and to maintain the standards of training for those wishing to apply or to teach her methods.

AMI has functioned without interruption since its foundation and is the most reliable authority on authentic Montessori theory and practice in existence. AMI is governed by a Board consisting of a Chairman and 21 members, of which two-thirds are educators. AMI is a non-subsidized organization, subsisting exclusively on membership fees, gifts, donations, a percentage of trainees fees from each AMI Training Centre and AMI recognition fees from schools. Much of AMI’s international work is supported by affiliated Montessori Societies or Branch Offices in various countries. AMI is a non-governmental organization collaborating with others with similar aims and admitted to UNESCO.

AMI’S AIMS:

To promote, maintain and further the Rights of the Child more specifically by:

1. Promoting the Montessori method, spreading knowledge of the physical, intellectual, moral, social and mental development of the child, at home as well as at school and in society.
2. Demonstrating the importance of the child in and for the progress of civilization.
3. Safeguarding the real objectives of the educational method of Dr. Maria Montessori.
4. Promoting general recognition of the Rights of the Child, irrespective of race, religion or political conviction.
5. Co-operating with other bodies and organizations which fight for human Rights, for the development of the method of education and for the furtherance of peace.

ACCREDITATION

All teachers at LGCM have an internationally recognized Montessori accreditation by A.M.I., A.M.S., M.A.C.T.E. or N.A.M.C.

Teaching Assistants are Registered Early Childhood Educators.

The Vision of Dr. Maria Montessori

DR. MONTESSORI AND HER METHOD:

Maria Montessori was a medical doctor, anthropologist, and psychologist who became interested in the development and psychology of the young child. The teaching method she evolved stresses the individual growth of the physical, intellectual and psychological abilities of children. It is designed to allow children to progress at their own speed by their own motivation, within a carefully prepared environment, offering beauty, order and reality. The goal of Montessori is not to fill the child with facts from some pre-selected course of study, but rather to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

THE ABSORBENT MIND – During the first years of life, the child possesses a unique aptitude for learning which Dr. Montessori identified as the absorbent mind. This means that the child absorbs knowledge from the environment like a sponge, simply by living in it, seemingly without effort. The process is particularly evident in the way in which a small child learns his native language without formal instruction and without the conscious, tedious effort which an adult must make to master a new language. Acquiring information in this way is a natural and delightful activity for the young child who employs all his senses to investigate his surroundings.

SPONTANEOUS ACTIVITY – Since the child retains this ability to learn by absorbing until they are almost seven years old, Dr. Montessori reasoned that their experience could be enriched by a classroom where they could handle materials which would demonstrate basic educational information to them. Her theory that a young child can learn to read, write and calculate in the same spontaneous, natural way that they learn to walk and talk, has been proven by over seventy years of experience.

HOW THE YOUNG CHILD LEARNS – Dr. Montessori always emphasized that the hand is the chief teacher of the child. In order to learn there must be concentration, and the best way a child can concentrate is by fixing their attention on some meaningful tasks they are performing with their hands. The Montessori apparatus allows the child to reinforce his/her casual impressions by inviting them to use their hands for learning.

SENSITIVE PERIODS OF LEARNING – the effortless ability to acquire certain skills and abilities are called SENSITIVE PERIODS by Dr. Montessori. They correspond with the child's development. Most of the observed sensitive periods are involved with the child's senses – their learning tools. Their interest is spontaneous. From birth, they are interested in their surroundings and gradually they make order out of them. This spontaneous interest and inclination toward order is the basis of the Montessori apparatus.

THE LEARNING CYCLE – The youngest children begin the simple exercises based on those activities which all children naturally enjoy. The equipment which they use at three and four will help them to develop the concentration, coordination, and working habits necessary for more advanced exercises they will perform at five and six. The entire program of learning is purposefully structured. Therefore, optimum results cannot be expected either for a child who misses the early years of the cycle, or for the one who is withdrawn before they finish the basic materials of the primary class.

ENRICHED ENVIRONMENT – A primary Montessori class is neither a daycare, babysitting nor a nursery/play school. Rather, it provides for a unique cycle of learning and is designed to take advantage of the child's sensitive years between two and a half and six years when they can absorb information from an enriched environment. A child who acquires the basic skills of reading and arithmetic in this natural way has the advantage of beginning their education without drudgery, boredom, or discouragement. By pursuing their individual interest in a Montessori classroom, they gain an early enthusiasm for learning – their key to real education.

SUGGESTED READING FOR PARENTS:

A Parent's Guide to the Montessori Classroom By Aline D. Wolf
The Secret of Childhood By Maria Montessori
Today By Paula Polk Lillard
The Discovery of the Child By Maria Montessori

CURRICULUM

PRE-CASA: THE TODDLER PROGRAM (Ages 18-30 Months)

As increasing demand for quality child care continue to grow, especially during the crucial first three years of life, the Little Galaxy Childcare & Montessori school offers a beautiful Montessori environment for toddlers between the ages of 18 – 30 months. The toddler class completes the classic cycle of Montessori education at LGCM which begins with the toddlers and ends with Pre-school.

Our toddler community provides an environment which is carefully prepared to meet the unique needs of this age group. Our classroom accommodates children 18 to 30 Months Old with one teacher for every 5 students. In this setting the children come to feel the classroom is their own peaceful, special space where they play a meaningful role in their own care and the care of their environment. All furniture is a size that allows maximum independence, and the Montessori toddler materials are designed to be attractive and inviting to the children. Taught by a certified Montessori toddler teacher, the program for the youngest group at LGCM acknowledges that a child's mind is most absorbent during the first three years of life. Because of what Dr. Maria Montessori termed "the absorbent mind", children develop many language and motor skills without formal instruction, as long as their environment is rich with learning opportunities.

Since toddlers are especially committed to achieving independence, our teachers provide responsive individual attention as the child deals with positive experiences as well as frustration. Our curriculum takes advantage of the rapid growth of gross and fine motor skills at this stage of development.

The primary goal of our toddler program is to create a nurturing and secure environment where young children can do what they do best – explore everything! The main focus is language and motor development, assisting the child in developing self-help skills (including toilet training), and helping children build trust in relationships.

The entire toddler environment is designed to allow the children to explore and to develop concentration and coordination. The teachers observe the children each day and monitor their development and readiness. Social interaction, language skills, independence, food preparation, music and movement activities are integral to the Montessori toddler experience.

CASA: THE METHOD AND THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM (Ages 2 ½ - 6)

Dr. Montessori observed that children go through various sensitive stages in which they are very receptive to learning specific skills. She stressed the importance of developing the senses between the ages of two and six when the child naturally wishes to use and perfect his/her senses. Thus, the materials used by the children are designed for them to learn by seeing, touching, hearing feeling and moving.

The Montessori prepared environment allows children to meet their needs through individual, spontaneous activities; the child's sensitivities guide his choice. The children work with scientifically selected materials to build concentration and self-discipline, while learning skills. Their education is an active rather than passive process

– the child educates himself. Class time is an individual or small group format, although at some part of each day the entire group is together for singing, story telling and movement activities.

Dr. Montessori realized that if the child is guided during this crucial period to perfect his natural tools for learning (the senses, the hand, the intelligence) and to grow towards self-discipline and independence, then he/she will develop a sturdiness of character and natural love for learning that will last the child all their life.

PRACTICAL LIFE:

Attention is paid to practical life skills such as the care of plants, cleaning up a spill, polishing shoes, setting the table, fastening clothes, washing hands, using scissors, or washing linen (and even the smallest child is shown how to tidy up afterward).

These exercises offer the child the means of caring for himself and his environment. As well, they build confidence in the young child and allow their independent nature to flourish. The children are encouraged to form courteous habits and to be respectful of others and of their environment. These activities provide the very foundation on which the child approaches more academic exercises.

SENSORIAL:

Sensorial materials in the Montessori classroom are designed to sharpen the senses of the young child and enable him/ her to understand the many impressions they receive through them. Each of the sensorial materials isolates one defining quality such as colour, weight, shape, texture, size, sound and smell. Sound boxes, for example, are all the same size, shape, colour and texture; they differ only in the sounds which are made when a child shakes them. Other sensorial materials include geometric solids, fabrics, square Pythagoras, colour tablets, temperature bottles, cylinder blocks, etc. These materials help the child to distinguish, to categorize, and to relate new information to what

he/she already knows. The child finds a sense of order in these materials and acquires the joy of learning that his/her environment has order. Their intellect is trained to make order out of a multitude of experiences, which is the learning process.

LANGUAGE:

Our language program begins with Enrichment of Vocabulary. For example, it is not unusual for a child attending our school to understand such words as continent, obtuse, conjunction, etc. Children love beautiful language, and we give them exact terms to name their environment and convey their thoughts. Reading and writing come naturally to the children after they have worked for some time with the Sandpaper Letters (which they trace and sound phonetically) and the Movable Alphabet (the formation of words by combining phonetic sounds). Further, the children work with the materials to concretely learn the Function of Words and finally experiment with Reading Analysis.

MATHEMATICS:

Through Number Rods, Beads, Cubes and Number Cards the child builds a clear idea of the meaning of numbers using concrete examples. The children combine, separate, share, count and compare the concrete materials. With the help of tables, charts and arithmetic games we guide the child to the abstract. All the math exercises help the child to an internal understanding of basic mathematical concepts and processes. At this age the children have an extreme sense of order and all of them find mathematics simple, enjoyable and extremely satisfying.

CULTURE AND GEOGRAPHY:

Through our cultural activities the children gain a meaningful, involved first person acquaintance with plants and animals, music, basic science concepts, and art. Geography and earth science are introduced to the children as they work with jigsaw puzzle maps, model land & water forms, and culture pictures. These help the child towards becoming a knowledgeable, compassionate and loving citizen of the world.

Most of the materials are self correcting, enabling the children to work on their own without the constant correction or discouragement from another. The process is self-education, building self-confidence through competence.