



Renaissance Montessori School

Infant and Toddler Classroom Handbook

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"Education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment."
- Maria Montessori

Welcome to the Infant/ Toddler Community at Renaissance Montessori School!

There are so many exciting and new things happening in your child's life and Ms. Marilyn and I are truly honored and excited about the opportunity to be a part of this special time in their development. We are so looking forward to getting to know your child and your family. We appreciate and value the unique qualities of each individual child; therefore, we are carefully and lovingly preparing our room and ourselves to honor your child and who they are becoming. We genuinely care for the children and families we serve and we are striving to create a community that will provide your child with experiences to support their individual learning, development of independence, and the formation of their self-identity. We look forward to having fun and learning together while building a strong relationship with each of you in the infant/toddler community at Renaissance!

“To assist a child we must provide him with an environment which will enable him to develop freely.” – Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori recognized that this fascinating period of a child's life is centered on rapid cognitive and physical development as the child absorbs knowledge from the world around them and strives for independence. The focus of the Montessori infant/toddler classroom is “to learn through living and loving in each moment”. As the guides in this classroom community, it is our goal to help facilitate your child's development and help fulfill their desire to “do things themselves”. Young children learn by experiencing their surroundings through all of their senses. We will give them a wide scope of opportunities to explore and experience various textures, sights, smells, sounds, and tastes while also practicing skills of daily living (i.e. cleaning up, preparing snack/lunch, independent toileting, dressing, washing hands, etc.) to develop independence. We will offer these experiences and learning opportunities throughout the day with various materials, lessons, and activities. Ms. Marilyn and I are also dedicated to developing positive relationships with your family to fully support your child. You will soon discover that our classroom is a loving community that works together, learns together, and nurture each other's individual development. We welcome and encourage you to share your thoughts, ideas, concerns, and questions. To help make this new transition as smooth as possible, please review the following information about our classroom.

“These words reveal the child's inner needs; ‘Help me to do it alone’.”- Maria Montessori

As your child's teachers, Ms. Marilyn and I are committed to:

1. Working together to ensure that every child in our classroom receives warm, loving care and a safe and enriching learning environment that supports your child's development.
2. Treating each child with respect and dignity as they develop as unique individuals.
3. Understanding and recognizing the importance of building a strong trusting and caring relationship with you and your child so we may all feel safe and secure in the classroom.
4. Providing the children with a respectful, calm, safe, clean, and nurturing environment that is sensitive to their needs and that promotes positive interactions between all caregivers and children.
5. Following and adhering to all school, county, and state regulations to ensure the sanitization and safety of the classroom environment and each child's well-being.
6. Carefully observing each child, thoughtfully interacting with them when appropriate (as to not interrupt their own learning process), and offering them individual and group lessons to meet their individual needs and to maximize their learning potential.
7. Working collaboratively with parents in an effort to ensure continuity of care for you and your child.

8. Providing meaningful learning opportunities for the children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development in both English and Spanish (Ms. Orie will primarily be speaking Spanish to/with your child).
9. Honoring and respecting each child's learning process and supporting it by whatever means possible.

“Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future.”

-Maria Montessori

New Transitions:

It is important that children and families are able to smoothly make the connection and transition from home to school. We have arranged the classroom thoughtfully and meticulously to provide your child with a “home-like” environment where they can safely explore and thrive to meet their own innate developmental needs. To truly respect the children and this transition, we ask that you and your child participate in a “phase-in” week. We feel it is best for the children to spend some time in the classroom with a parent over a period of several days before they start full-time. This, not only gives the child time to adjust to their new classroom environment, but it also allows the teachers the opportunity to learn about each child through observations of parent child together in the classroom.

Prior to your child's first day of their “phase-in” week, please complete the **Parent Questionnaire (found below) and a Family Page**. The completed questionnaire can be submitted to a teacher directly or sent via e-mail. We also ask that you and your child create a Family Page together to introduce your family to our community. Please glue/tape a few pictures of your child and your family (pets could be included too) on a sheet of paper (i.e. white paper or construction paper). You and your child will share your family's page with the class on your child's first day of the “phase-in” week. We will display the pages to help each child get to know each other better and to help connect home life with school life

It is our goal to start off your child's school experience in a positive direction. These visits help develop a strong relationship between the teacher and child (and your family) that is built on trust and respect. We believe this trusting relationship is a key component of facilitating a smooth transition and in the overall well-being of the child and the classroom community. During these visits, you and the teachers may discuss techniques and methods used that best accommodate your child's needs. By seeing teachers and parents together in the school setting, your child's comfort level will be heightened. The transition week also allows more time to get to know each other and the other children in the community on a more personal level. These visits will foster mutual empathy and respect between teachers and parents while promoting respect for the children. The three transitions visits will be approximately 1 - 1 ½ hours. If during a visit, your child seems comfortable and ready, we may suggest that you try a “trial separation” by leaving your child with us and leaving the classroom for a short period of time.

During this time, you may choose to sit in the office or another area of the school, sit in your car, or run a short errand (we will discuss recommended at the time depending on what is in the best interest of your child).

Suggestions for the Parent's Role during Phase-in:

1. Explore/Show your child around the classroom and the school. You should also introduce your child to staff and encourage them to introduce themselves to the staff as well.
2. Allow your child to explore and roam around or stay by your side until they are comfortable. Observe your child and respond accordingly.
3. Demonstrate to your child that you are comfortable there. Your body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice send your child messages about being at school. We want your child to know that you are comfortable and that school is a friendly and safe place to be for your family.
4. Get to know the various areas of the room and the materials that your child will be using. It may also be helpful for you to identify where the bathroom, dressing area, sink, tissues, and paper towels are.
5. Follow your child and let him/her discover the room at his/her own pace while always being available to them, initially.
6. Share information about your child with the teachers. Discuss any specific needs you or your child may have.
7. On the second or third day, if your child appears more comfortable, sit back and let them explore away from you a little more. You may even feel it is ok to step out of the classroom (to go to the bathroom or the office).
8. Encourage your child to ask a teacher for help, or to play, help or work with a teacher.
9. Have fun and enjoy this special time with your child and get to know the teachers and classroom yourself. The children will be watching how their parents navigate this new environment and how you interact with the room and the teachers!

If your child exhibits extreme difficulty with the separation, the teachers will discuss further suggestions or a revised plan to facilitate a positive transition for your child. If your child seems to be handling the trial separation well, then they are welcome to stay for the rest of the day provided that we are able to reach someone via phone if needed. At the end of these visits, we anticipate that your child will develop the understanding that they are in a safe, secure, respectful, and enriching environment that you support and that they will understand that you will always return for them. Following the transition days, we recommend that you say a quick goodbye in the hallway, just outside of the classroom door, so your child walks into their classroom independently or with a teacher. A quick goodbye could be a hug, a kiss, and saying goodbye with a smile (you may also consider saying something like, "goodbye, I will see you after nap!").

When you arrive at school each morning, you will see a teacher at the classroom door that is ready to greet and welcome your child to class. As we welcome your child to school each day, it is important that you maintain an upbeat and positive voice, as well as use positive and encouraging facial expressions and body language. Your child should sense your confidence and delight; not apprehension or stress. It is helpful if you focus on being positive, clear, and consistent with this routine. You may choose to discuss this routine with your child prior to bringing him/her to school. For example, you could prepare your child ahead of time by saying, "I am taking you to school so you can learn and have fun. I am so happy you have such a great place to spend your day. I will take you into school, we will say hi to your teacher and friends and you can go in and find a book or a work. I will come back after your nap."

Prolonging your departure or lingering may cause the transition to be more difficult for your child. Please rest assured that we will treat your child with gentleness, compassion, respect, and love and we will contact you via phone if your child truly needs you to return. You are also welcome to call the school if you have any concerns or just want to check in.

As mothers ourselves, Ms. Marilyn and I understand the feelings and emotions (for you and your child) that can arise during this time, so please remember that we are here to support you all and we will work diligently with you and your child to make this a pleasant experience for everyone. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns regarding the transition process. This is a process, and like any new

experience, it may take a little time but working together and trusting the process will be essential to making this a comfortable and positive transition for your child.

Preparing for School:

We request that you provide the items listed below to help us meet the needs of your child:

1. Please provide at least enough diapers and wipes to last approximately one week (or more). If your child wears cloth diapers, please bring a zippered waterproof plastic lined machine washable bag for transporting soiled clothing.
2. **LUNCH (for half day + lunch and full day students)** - Please pack a labeled lunchbox with a protein, dairy, vegetable/ fruit, carbohydrate option and milk in portions that your child can finish. Your child's teacher will not be able heat up any food during lunch, so please pack hot and cold foods in Thermos brand containers. **Please introduce any new foods 3 times at home before sending to school to check for any potential food allergies.**
3. If your child is drinking milk from bottles, we ask that you bring in enough prepared beverage for the day. Premixed formula or breast milk **MUST BE** labeled with DATE and NAME. All bottles and remaining milk will be sent home each day. We ask that you bring an extra bottle than what you expect your child will need, just in case (i.e. if you think your child will consume four bottles a day, please send five bottles). We cannot reoffer a bottle to a child once it's been used once for the day. Please remember to label all parts of the bottles as well. Bottles that we have served and are not empty will get a sticky dot on them indicating that we are unable to offer that bottle again and placed in the refrigerator. All bottles are warmed using a bottle warmer (not microwaved).
4. **NAP (for full day students)**- Please provide a crib-sized labeled sheet; small pillow and blanket are optional. Your child will be asked to lie down for 30 minutes; if he or she does not fall asleep regularly, he will be invited to rest quietly, and then find an activity.
5. Each child should have **FIVE** sets of clothes (shirt, pants/shorts, socks and underwear, all labeled) at school. Please bring the five sets of clothes on your child's first day, as we will use them as "back up" clothes and also to practice dressing skills as a part of the classroom curriculum. You may leave these items in his cubby in a bag (plastic or cloth that is labeled with the child's name) and we will store them in our room.
6. Please keep in mind when dressing your child for the day (and in regards to extra sets of clothes):
 - a. Weather appropriateness (and layer if needed to accommodate for weather and temperature changes).
 - b. Please send your child to school in closed-toe shoes (that fit well and are easy to walk and run in) for their safety. We prefer shoes that do not have laces as the children will be practicing putting their shoes on and off on their own.
 - c. Please consider the comfort of your child as he/she will be moving quite a bit (sitting, standing, walking, and climbing). Clothes may get dirty from artwork or play so please keep that in mind as well. Weather permitting, we will be going outside every day so please dress your child appropriately for outdoor play (and send jackets/hats when appropriate). For girls, you may want to consider putting shorts or bloomers under skirts and dresses (if you choose to have your child wear a dress/skirt). We teach girls how to sit appropriately as to not display any undergarments but this may not always be possible (during work times, climbing, sliding, etc.)
7. Should your child need sunscreen or bug repellent (as our property is quite wooded!), please apply this before coming to school.

“Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.”

-Maria Montessori

Transition to Independent Toileting

Children that are in diapers will begin toilet training when they show readiness. This may be showing interest in the toilet such as wanting to sit on it. It may be that they are able to recognize the "full" feeling or are able to tell you they have just peed or pooped in their diaper. This does not mean they are ready for underwear. We will introduce them to sitting on the toilet. They may or may not be successful each time they sit. Going through the motions is our first step. It may be a few weeks to a few months before they become independent in toileting. Each child is different. Accidents are expected. The child will not be scolded or embarrassed. They will be asked to go to their bins and get a change of clothes. We will assist as needed.

Diapering is done frequently. Children are asked to help. They will be shown their diaper/supplies bin and will learn to bring a diaper and wipes with them to the bathroom. They may be asked to bring clothes if there's a need to change. Children are changed in the standing up position in front of a full length mirror for pee (teacher sits behind them to instruct and help as needed) and lying down for poop. The children assist in pulling down their pants/shorts and in removing their diapers. If toilet training, they may sit on the toilet for a few minutes then wipe, flush and then get a clean diaper. They will assist in getting dressed and will place their used diaper in the diaper disposal bin. This will be done each time there's a diaper change. Children wash their hands at the designated sink before rejoining their friends.

Once your child is ready to go into underwear, we will ask you to bring in many changes of clothing for the week. The child is expected to be in underwear at home and school while the training process is going on. Pull-ups seem to delay toileting and sends mixed messages. The child continues to think it is ok to pee/poop in the pull-up. When placed in underwear, will think it's fine to do their necessities in the underwear. We understand it may be messy and inconvenient for a while. We do expect you to work together with us in helping your child be successful in this transition. We will not place your child in a pull-up in the classroom or for napping.

Plastic pants over underwear are also not used. The child believes it's fine to pee/poop because there won't be a mess thus delaying toilet training. Also, although they help contain the urine, it creates quite the flood when the child is asked to change. Remember that by now, they are in charge of their needs with minimum teacher involvement. Having to deal with a plastic full of urine is much harder for them than dealing with wet clothing.

All soiled clothes and bedding will be sent home in a plastic bag. All soiled areas are disinfected in a timely manner.

Parent-Teacher Communication:

We feel communication between the parents and teachers is essential to our thriving community. We truly value communication with you; though drop-off and dismissal may not always be the best time for lengthy conversations. These are especially important times in your child's day so we would like to make this time as smooth and child-focused as possible. We just ask that parents are mindful of communications with their child, with the teachers, and with other parents or staff during these times. As

we all value and welcome communication, please keep in mind that others may also have things they need to communicate to the teachers as well. During these transition times, we invite any communication that may be relevant to your child's day or anything that will enable us to give responsive care to your child. If you would like to have a more in-depth conversation or share information not requiring immediate feedback with any staff member, please feel free to call us or e-mail us. We desire positive relationships and frequent communication with you, so we truly hope you will feel comfortable contacting us via phone or e-mail at any time. Phone calls and e-mails will be returned within 24 hours.

In an effort to truly honor and respect the needs of each child and family, we hope you will help us keep pick-up and drop-off times running smoothly and peacefully. If an in-depth conversation is necessary, please contact us to schedule a time to meet before or after school. We strongly believe that communication is vital to your child's well-being; therefore we will have a communication folder in your child's cubby as well. When picking up your child, please check this folder daily for important information regarding your child's day, any suggested needs, or your child's work.

If you need to communicate something to us in the morning but are unable to, please jot down a note using the pen and paper located on top of the cubby shelves and hand it to us or leave it in the basket located there (i.e. if you want to let us know your child had a difficult night/morning, or needs something specific for that day). We will also look forward to discussing your child with you during the two parent-teacher conferences each year.

"It is the child who makes the man, and no man exists who was not made by the child he once was." – Maria Montessori

Birthdays:

In our classroom community we would like to celebrate your child's birthday in a way that honors them as a unique individual. As a community, we will collaborate (with all of the children as well as the parents of the birthday child) to determine a special activity for the day that honors your child. For example, if your child enjoys driving trucks around the room, we may work together to create a special track on the playground for him/her or if your child enjoys watching the birds; we may create a birdhouse or bird feeder together. We could even prepare a birthday snack as a class for your child. If you would like to bring a special treat (preferably low-sugar) to help us celebrate or join us during the celebration, we would welcome that as well. Please do not send birthday invitations to school to be passed out. They should be sent through the mail or through e-mail.

"The things he sees are not just remembered; they form a part of his soul." – Maria Montessori

Infant Tummy Time Policy

Placing an **infant** on his/her tummy while they are awake is important for strengthening their upper bodies (muscles of the head, neck, back and shoulders) and is also important for the child's sensory integration/processing.

- For young babies, tummy time will occur two to three times per day for a short time period (approximately 3 – 5 minutes at a time is recommended at first).
- Some babies may not like the tummy position at first, but by placing a toy or the caregiver in close reach, this often becomes a favorite position for play and exploration. If the child becomes

fussy or frustrated, tummy time will be ended and attempted again later. •The amount of tummy time is gradually increased as a baby gets older and prepares to “scoot” on his/her tummy and later crawl.

- This time will be closely supervised with a caregiver sitting on the floor by the baby. This level of supervision is required until the child is crawling on his/her own.
- If a baby falls asleep while on his/her tummy, he or she will immediately be placed on his/her back for sleeping.

Important Reminders/School Policies (from the Renaissance Montessori Parent Handbook):

When Your Child is Ill:

Whenever your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call or email the school office in the morning to let us know that he, or she, will be absent.

Students with infectious diseases, such as chicken pox or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of the other children’s health, it is vital that you let the office know your child’s diagnosis as soon as possible.

Please keep your child home as long as there is a fever present (that is not reduced with medicine), a sore throat, eye infection, continuous and colored nasal excretions, or persistent chest cough. We determine the need to send a child home by both the symptoms listed above and by their behavior. Children who fall asleep during the morning work cycle or who are unusually cranky or sad during the day (not their usual temperament) may be sent home. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, head lice, or an undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home also. Students will be sent home if any of the above symptoms appear while they are at school. They should remain at home for at least the next 24 hours.

If Your Child Gets Sick at School:

In the classrooms, the teachers are diligent about assisting children with keeping their noses and faces clean and free of mucous. The children are learning this process but require more adult intervention during the times of the year when illness is more prevalent. We teach children how to blow their noses and wash their hands. We strongly encourage parents to help their children practice these skills at home and support these very important self-help skills. If your child ever feels ill, we will keep him, or her, quiet and comfortable. If he, or she, seems to be too ill to remain in school, we will contact you to arrange for him, or her, to be picked up within an hour. If a parent cannot be reached within half an hour, we will begin calling the emergency contacts on the “Medical Emergency Information” form that is kept on file in the office. The child will be isolated from the rest of the children in the office until someone is able to take him/her home. We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, yet all of our children get ill from time to time.

You will want to make arrangements in advance with a friend or a relative when you cannot come yourself. Because colds, flu, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school if he, or she, has a fever, is nauseous, or displays any other symptoms of illness. Weather permitting, students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out to play, then he should not come to school until he can participate in all school activities.

Emergency Care

In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your Emergency Medical Information form up to date in the office. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

If your child needs immediate medical attention and you cannot be reached, your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room at Rex Hospital. Naturally, we will continue our efforts to contact you.

If your child should need basic first aid, a trained staff person will administer aid while other staff continues to contact parents and/ or medical professionals.

Medication

We do not administer medication at school including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs or topical creams. Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that dosages are taken during hours when the student is at home. When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably should not be in school for a full day.

We also ask that students do not bring vitamins, flower essences, or other homeopathic remedies to school. When, in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary that medication be administered during school hours, a parent must administer the medication to his/her child in accordance with the following procedures. Medication may not be stored at the school. Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any medication, including aspirin, to any student.

Discipline

Discipline means "to teach." At Renaissance Montessori, we use a positive, non-violent approach to discipline. We notice the things that our students are doing correctly and encourage them in that regard. Examples are: "You concentrated so well on that activity." "Thank you for being so patient or cooperative." "Thanks for welcoming our visitor. That was so friendly." "You are really being creative today." In addition, we use neutral moments to teach social skills through role-plays, discussions, and skits so that our students have practiced appropriate language and actions before situations arise. A large piece of our curriculum at all levels is "Grace and Courtesy," which includes control of movement and manners. Should a conflict occur, our students are coached in conflict-resolution skills and community meeting skills. If a pattern of misbehavior continues, then the parents will be contacted to help determine the cause and find solutions.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment nor physical or emotional intimidation are allowed at Renaissance Montessori. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of these actions. We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school's values and character.

All students are expected to adhere to and respect them to protect one another. Renaissance Montessori expects full cooperation from students and families during school hours or whenever the student/family represents the school, whether on Renaissance Montessori property or away from the campus.

The school must always be a safe learning environment. Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or interferes with the health, safety, or educational development of him or herself, other students, faculty, or staff, may be temporarily or permanently excluded from attendance at school by the Director or his or her designee. In this extreme situation, we need to reiterate that there will be no reduction, credit, or remission of tuition or fees.

"The prize and punishments are incentives toward unnatural or forced effort, and, therefore we certainly cannot speak of the natural development of the child in connection with them."

- Maria Montessori

Infant/Toddler Community Parent Questionnaire

In the first few weeks of your child's time in our classroom community, it would be very helpful for us to have some notes to help us get to know your child better. By answering the following questions, you will help us to know such things as eating habits, comforting toys, napping routines, etc. We will keep this questionnaire in a binder so we can respond to your child's needs in a more familiar way. Thank you.

Child's Name: _____ **Birthdate:** _____

1. Has your child been in a childcare setting before? If so, where and for how long?
2. Generally what time do you drop off in the morning and pick up in the afternoon (please remember half day is from 8:30am-12pm, lunch is from 12:00-12:30, and full day is from 8:30am-3:00pm)?
3. Does your child have any items they use for comfort (such as blankets, toys, stuffed animals, etc.) that he/she uses?
4. How do you comfort your child when they are upset?
5. What is your child's napping routine at home? How long do his/her naps usually last?
6. Does your child use a pacifier, and if so, what times of the day does he/she use it?
7. Does your child prefer to sleep on his/her back, side or stomach?
8. What kinds of foods is your child eating? What are his/her favorite foods?
9. Does your child have any special diet, health concerns, or allergies that we should know about?
We will be serving snack and cooking with the children on a regular basis.

10. Do you foresee any challenges or difficulties for your child during the school day in the following areas: separation in the morning, naptime or eating?
11. Do you have any questions or concerns about your child's physical or emotional development?
12. We would love to know what your professions are and what kind of work you will do while your child is at school.
13. What are some family members (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) names and what does your child call them (including pets)?
14. What types of activities (indoors and outdoors) does your child like to do?
15. What are your child's favorite songs, rhymes, and/or fingerplays?
16. Does your child have a favorite book or toy?
17. Are there any unique words or other languages your child uses that may be helpful for us to know so we may better understand them and support their emergent language skills?
18. Does your child know how to use the bathroom independently? If not, has your child started learning "independent toileting" or shown interest/readiness? If so, please describe what methods you have been using at home to facilitate this.
19. Any other things you feel would be helpful/ important for us to know: