



THE SUMMIT

Montessori Toddler Program

The Terrific Twos

“Although we just celebrated Maria Montessori’s 100th anniversary, her philosophy is on the cutting edge of education. We are thrilled to extend that educational methodology to two-year-olds.”

—Phyllis Schueler, Director of Montessori

As one of the first Montessori Programs established in this area, The Summit brings over 45 years of experience and a passion for childhood learning to their program. The sunny and peaceful Lower School facility is thoughtfully designed for the young child. Completed in 2004, the Lower School building is a “magical place” featuring a spiral staircase with plenty of natural light and amenities that include science laboratories, music and art studios, libraries, regulation size gymnasium and dining facilities. The program is led by teachers who believe in the infinite possibilities of children.

The toddler years are a time of astounding development. The Summit recognizes this formative period when personality, trust, thinking, problem solving and separation are all established. As an example, at twelve months 50 percent of young

children can say six or more words. When the toddler year ends, their speaking vocabulary may balloon to 1,000 words. Obviously, a language-rich environment during this time is critical.

The two year-old is growing and changing so rapidly that the environment must be altered to keep pace with their current stage of development. A Summit toddler teacher is a perceptive observer who anticipates the unique needs and characteristics of the children in her care and creates a responsive, warm environment.

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The Summit Country Day School
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MOVEMENT



Maria Montessori based her methodology and philosophy on brain research which states that the most important education occurs before the child's sixth birthday. She referred to the child's absorbent mind from birth to age six. Specifically, in the period from birth to age three, the child has an unconscious absorbent mind. Therefore, classroom materials in the toddler environment are designed to invite exploration.

The first of three primary developmental needs for the child under the age of three is movement. Toddlers experience tremendous muscular growth from the center to the periphery and from head to toe. In The Summit Montessori Toddler environment, children are offered numerous opportunities to purposely move around the room and explore. They strengthen their gross or large muscle development and their coordination skills while moving in a prepared

environment from activity to activity and during music time. They are given activities in stations, like scrubbing or sewing, to employ their hands and fingers, cultivating fine motor skills. Balancing activities and fine motor development foster the eye movement from left to right, preparing the toddler for sequencing.

Materials are presented to promote movement and to support the individual child's focus and attention. It is the role and responsibility of the teacher to provide projects suited for the active child who needs to move frequently and is eager to experience all of the new materials as well as the child who can sit and focus on one activity for 15 to 20 minutes.

The Montessori philosophy recognizes that movement and cognition are closely connected and movement enhances thinking and learning.



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LANGUAGE



Language is another important phase addressed by The Summit Montessori Toddler program. It is the sensitive period when children are absorbed in acquiring language. They are fascinated by listening to and replicating sounds to make words. This is the time when a toddler creates language. For example, a child may say, “I goed to the store,” rather than “went,” based on her experience hearing the “ed” added to indicate past tense.

Given the toddler is an acute listener, teachers serve as critical role models in building vocabulary by spending a great deal of time talking and listening to the child. They sing, rhyme and read stories with the child. Teachers acknowledge and expand upon the toddlers’ attempts to express themselves. Naming and labeling

are important tools in the toddler environment - many objects are labeled in the room. Even emotions are given names.

At two years of age, the child moves into symbolic play. The toddler uses objects in a truly imaginary way which involve a series of “schemas,” such as “feeding” the teddy bear, “reading” the teddy bear a story, and “putting” the bear to bed. The toddler environment provides an abundance of Montessori materials arranged in an orderly manner from the simple to the complex in support of creativity and language development.



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ORDER



Typically one thinks of order as materials placed in an orderly manner on the shelf — an important aspect that supports the independence of the toddler. For children to interact successfully in the environment, they need to know where the books are located or where to find the pink tower. An orderly environment helps children concentrate and focus on the task at hand. But order in the Montessori toddler classroom is actually much broader than shelf order.

Toddler Montessori teachers create an environment where there is predictability. Upon entering the classroom in the morning, the toddler knows that she will greet her teachers, take off her coat and place it in her locker, sing songs and then engage in an activity, a sequence she follows every morning. Children come to feel they have control over their lives in this predictable

behavioral frame. Contrary to conventional thought, toddlers actually have a natural affinity for physical, social and emotional order in their lives. Mastering the process of how to get work off the shelf, to learn the cycle of the activity, and then return it to the shelf, for example, builds the toddler's initiative and self esteem. These learning skills lay the foundation for the child's work in the three to six-year-old classroom.

Teachers devote a great deal of time preparing the classroom environment so that the child can work unencumbered and as independently as possible.



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AUTONOMY & COMMUNITY



This is a period when the child's will is becoming apparent. The Summit Montessori toddler teacher recognizes and respect the emerging autonomy of the child and creates an environment where the child is offered many opportunities to make independent choices and activities in which he will become engaged.

“Most importantly, [Maria Montessori] recognizes that with stimulation, the child's ability to concentrate, absorb and master new ideas and skills will increase. The earlier we begin a program of intellectual, physical, sensory, and artistic education, the more dramatic the results. If during this time, the mind is stimulated by the child's exposure to a rich environment, the brain will literally develop a much stronger and lasting ability to learn and accomplish.” — Warren McGrath, Director of Family Education for the Montessori Foundation

The Summit Montessori Toddler Program also introduces the child to The Summit community. For many children, this is the first time they are experiencing any type of group socialization. The children in the classroom learn to cooperate in a group, learn to support one another, and begin to respond to their leadership abilities by helping their peers successfully carry out activities.

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TO LEARN MORE AND TO APPLY TO THE SUMMIT

Montessori Toddler Program

- Contact the Office of Admission at 513.871.4700, ext. 261 to obtain an admissions application.
- Parents are invited to attend an information session.
- The process concludes with the scheduling of a 30 minute classroom experience for the parent and child.