

## MCC INFANT PROGRAM: 3 months – 18 months

For 21 years, The Montessori Children's Center has been a national and international model for early childhood learning and development from children from early infancy to age five. Our Infant Program has been on the frontier of creating safe, responsive, and nurturing environments for the youngest age group.

Numerous studies have documented a correlation between physical development and cognitive development. The beautiful, sunlit, and spacious environment at MCC is custom-designed for infants -- enabling a safe, inviting geography for exploration, growth, and development. Through the quality of respectful care (in holding, feeding, communicating), the infants acquire a strong, positive sense of self. While infants are encouraged to be active, inquisitive learners, our sensitive adults are always near to re-direct exploration, assist, or gently comfort.

If you compare the MCC infant room with a infant room in a more traditional child care center setting, you'll notice many differences. The room is designed to be soothing rather than stimulating. The stimulation comes from the materials and the different areas of the room, rather than from colorful, brightly colored walls or furnishings in primary colors. Soothing wallpapers and calming colors are used to make the room warm and home-like. The furniture is natural and comforting. The space is well-organized and uncluttered. There are areas for a child to explore independently. Children are cared for on their own schedule, meaning they can eat or sleep based on their own needs, rather than the schedule of the group.

A warm, nurturing, and loving atmosphere is essential to the infant's optimal development. Although infants are small, they have tremendous mental abilities and are eager to use these. They have amazing physical abilities if given an appropriate setting. Within the safe confines the MCC environment, infants enjoy freedom of movement to discover and interact while developing gross motor skills such as grasping, reaching, standing, climbing, pulling, walking. In the MCC Infant classroom, you can see how we have prepared a safe environment that allows for maximum exploration and freedom of movement.

Infants learn by touching and responding to gentle touch, and by moving freely as they interact with their surroundings. Whether they are enthusiastically manipulating an interesting object, exploring different textures of material, delighting at seeing themselves in a mirror, scotching under the bridge, enjoying a book with a friend, or determinately climbing up the stair, infants grow and learn emotional and intellectual independence through movement.

During these formative years, we never lose sight of the infant's need for individual care and attention. Infants gather their first understanding of the world through their interactions and thrive in a bath of positive communication. Thus, language development is an integral part of the MCC Infant Program. Our teachers introduce

language through words, inflection, tone, body language, language cards, reading, and singing. The vocabulary of objects, activity, and feelings pervades every aspect of our program.

Close communications between parents and teachers is a hallmark of our program. Parents know best their child's routine, personality, and unique qualities. Our special phase in process helps to ensure the child feels secure during this first, important transition. We strive to maintain a constant dialogue and close relationship with every child's family through daily conversation, daily reports, and regularly scheduled conferences. Parents are welcome to come to the infant room to nurse or bottle feed their child. Teachers are available to meet or talk with parents regarding any issue or concern.

Our head teacher is an American Montessori Society (AMS) CME|NY certified Infant and Toddler professional, and all assistants have received some Montessori training as well as 15 additional professional development hours each year. All teachers are trained in first aid and infant CPR. Each has an in-depth understanding of the infant's needs for physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Montessori teachers are trained in observation and record keeping. Detailed observation notes--as well as photos of the child in action at MCC--are shared with the child's parents throughout the year. Our teachers provide the respect, tenderness, warmth, and patience that allow each infant to blossom and to ensure a dedicated infant environment where parents feel positive and secure about their child's early experience.

## MCC Toddler Program 18 months – 3 years

For 21 years, The Montessori Children's Center has been a national and international model for early childhood learning and development from children from early infancy to age five. Our Toddler Program has been on the frontier of creating safe, responsive, and nurturing environments for the age of curiosity and independence.

Numerous studies have documented a correlation between physical development and cognitive development. The beautiful, sunlit, and spacious environment at MCC is custom-designed for toddlers, enabling a safe, inviting geography to assist children as they fulfill their tasks of trust, separation, independence, and developing self-control.

In the MCC environment, the toddler develops feelings of support, security, and strong self-esteem. The carefully prepared class environment beckons the toddler's strongest desires to make order out of chaos, to move with intention and coordination, and to communicate with others. The curriculum and materials help the toddler respond to the rapid and conflicting changes of this developmental age.

Children are guided toward appropriate behaviors in a non-judgmental atmosphere that offers consistency with a balance between freedom and limits. The comfort, reassurance, and aid of a caring adult is always available to the toddler.

Toddlerhood is in a time of natural curiosity. Exploration for our toddlers is celebrated and the toddler is encouraged to become a functioning, independent member of the community of the classroom. Activities are positioned artfully around the room for toddlers to choose independently. They have freedom of movement to explore, and each is given the time needed to complete what he or she starts. Each activity deals with a particular theme, skill, or subject of particular value to toddler development. These activities allow toddlers to begin to experience concepts of sequence, form, shape, movement, number, and sound. The activities change and evolve as the child grows physically, emotionally, and intellectually.

Toddlers enjoy learning life skills. Activities, which up until now have been going on around them to help or assist them can now be done by themselves, and are irresistible: getting dressed, preparing lunch, setting the table, sweeping the floor, serving their own food, etc. Being able to carefully use breakable objects for the first time, such as a plate or glass, rather than their plastic substitutes, creates a surge of pride at this age.

If you compare the MCC toddler room with a traditional toddler class, you'll notice many differences. The room is designed to be soothing, rather than stimulating. The stimulation comes from the materials and the different areas of the room, rather than from colorful, brightly colored walls or furnishings in primary colors. Soothing wallpapers and calming colors are used to make the room warm and home-like. The

furniture is natural and comforting. The space is well-organized and uncluttered. There is art on the walls rather than posters or instructional materials covering the entire space. This creates a setting that enables the child's natural curiosity to spark. Real materials are used rather than pretend. The children eat with china, glassware, even small toddler size utensils. They have a real, child size tools to use, rather than plastic pretend. Just as they would if they were at home, the children actively participate in the day to day functioning of the class: watering plants, setting a table, making a real contribution to the assisting the life of the room.

Between eighteen months and age two, there tends to be an explosion into spoken language, with young children learning new words every day. As they learn to speak in phrases, toddlers begin to add the other parts of speech. Researchers estimate that many children have learned seventy percent of the vocabulary they will use as adults by age three. The toddler environment is rich in language materials such as books, objects, and picture cards, as well as numerous activities devoted toward language development that include all the senses, such as food tasting and sound games. The vocabulary of objects, activity, and feelings pervades every aspect of our program.

Close communications between parents and teachers is a hallmark of our program. Parents know best their child's routine, personality, and unique qualities. Our special phase in process helps to ensure the new toddler feels secure during this important transition. We strive to maintain a constant dialogue and close relationship with every child's family through daily conversation, daily reports, and regularly scheduled conferences. Teachers are available to meet or talk with parents regarding any issue or concern.

Our lead teachers are an American Montessori Society (AMS) CME|NY certified Infant and Toddler professional and all assistants have received some Montessori training as well as 15 additional professional development hours each year. All teachers are trained in first aid and infant CPR. Each has an in-depth understanding of the toddlers needs for physical, emotional, and cognitive development. The teachers continually seek out new experiences for the toddlers that will stimulate their sense of curiosity and aid in the physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Our teachers provide the respect, tenderness, warmth, consistency, and patience that allow each toddler to blossom and to ensure a dedicated toddler environment where parents feel positive and secure about their child's early experience.