

Toddler's Morning Out

Guide for Parents

2025-26



OUR PURPOSE



TMO is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, play-based environment that fosters first friendships and builds curious, confident early learners. TMO aims to foster relationships with families, provide parenting education and support, and strengthen community involvement and collaboration.

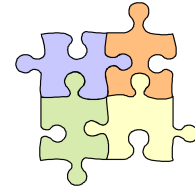
OUR PHILOSOPHY

Our program is designed to support and encourage physical, social, cognitive and emotional growth in a group setting. TMO will work together with families to create a classroom community in which children and their families feel cared for and about.

TMO recognizes and respects that children are part of families that have diverse values and backgrounds. TMO is committed to supporting the choices of families. TMO does not promote any particular religious belief but supports the right of each family to have their own beliefs. TMO is committed to welcoming children from a limitless variety of family structures.

TMO recognizes that, for many of its families, this is the first experience that their children will have away from home. Each child will be given the emotional support necessary for making the transition into a group environment. Effective communication with children and parents is highly valued at TMO. There will always be someone available to handle the questions or concerns of TMO families. We hope that the experiences children and families have at TMO will build a positive, healthy foundation for years of learning ahead.

STRUCTURE



Toddlers' Morning Out, Inc. (TMO) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation represented by a Board of Directors consisting of the Director and up to nine additional individuals who have an interest in the well being of the program and have been elected by the Board of Directors.

All policies and procedures of TMO are in accordance with the child care licensing guidelines for the State of Vermont, Department of Health and Human Services.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Safeguarding the confidentiality of information and records pertaining to the personal lives and education of any and all TMO families is of the utmost importance. In order to protect the rights and privacy of parents and their children, all records containing personal information about families are kept at TMO. Any information that these files contain shall not be transferred to any public or private agency or to any individual without the written consent of the parent or guardian. No information about any child will be discussed by an employee with any individuals outside of TMO. Likewise, information about a child, including but not limited to behavior, will not be shared with another parent at TMO without written consent from the child's parents.

ENROLLMENT



Priority for enrollment will be given to the following:

- 1) Incumbents/siblings of incumbents
- 2) Siblings of alumni
- 3) New families

Definitions:

Incumbents/siblings of incumbents: Children currently enrolled in TMO who will be enrolling again the following year and/or their incoming siblings. **Siblings of alumni:** Children from families who have previously attended TMO.

New families: Families that have never had a child enrolled in TMO.

Applications for Enrollment are on our website: toddlersmorningout.com. A non-refundable fee of \$35 must accompany the application. Upon acceptance into TMO, families will receive a Reservation Form, which must be completed and returned to the Registrar with a \$250 deposit. A waiting list for each class is maintained.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS: TMO offers six separate classes:

For children over 2 years: There are two separate classes for children who will be 2 years old by September 30, 2025, but do not turn 4 before July 1, 2026. Enrollment is limited to 10 children in each class.

1. Two, 3-day classes meeting on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (8:30 - 11:00 a.m.)
2. Two, 2-day classes meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays (8:30-11:00 a.m.)

For our children under 2 years: This class is for children who will be at least 18 months old by September 30, 2025. Enrollment is limited to 8 children. There is a class meeting Tuesdays & Thursdays from 8:15-10:45 a.m., in addition to a Monday, Wednesday, Friday class from 8:15-10:45 a.m.

Each classroom will have a lead teacher and an assistant teacher. Children are generally grouped by age; however, the age ranges of the groups may vary or even overlap according to enrollment. The teaching staff, with consideration of the children's needs, determine final class placements.

While the TMO philosophy will be the cornerstone of all of our classrooms, the day-to-day experiences will vary according to the age of the children, the character of each class, our shared resources, and the teacher's discretion. This flexible approach, in the end, better serves the children at TMO. Children in the under 2 classrooms will have a curriculum specifically tailored for our youngest toddlers.

Emergency and Health Forms

Once the Reservation Form and \$250 deposit are received, parents are sent a packet of materials. This packet includes all paperwork required to begin the new school year. If you have questions about your paperwork, or need additional copies of forms, contact Margaret Lukovits at toddlersmorningout@gmail.com.

Children may not attend class without completion of these forms.

Withdrawal Policy

Parents wishing to relinquish their child's spot must notify the Registrar (tmoregistrar@gmail.com) in writing by June 30th. Parents who withdraw their child before June 30th will forfeit their \$250 deposit unless another child fills the reserved spot prior to the first week of school. Parents who withdraw their child after June 30th will: (1) forfeit their \$250 deposit, and (2) be required to pay tuition for the full school year unless the spot is filled by another child, in which case the parents will be required to pay only for the period of time when the spot was unfilled. If, at any time during the school year, the Lead Teacher and Board of Directors of TMO recommend an alternative placement for a child, this financial obligation will be waived.

If a child experiences significant difficulty adjusting to the program, parents must notify the Registrar (tmoregistrar@gmail.com) in writing of their desire to withdraw their child. Written notice of this desire must be received *prior to the fifth week of the program for children over 2, and prior to the seventh week for children under 2*. The Board of Directors, in consultation with the Director and Lead Teacher, will meet to consider the request and determine whether to release the parents from their financial obligation of the year's tuition. Should the Board agree that the child has not been able to adjust to the program, the parents will be released from their financial commitment. The parents will still be responsible for the following costs: (1) \$35 application fee; (2) \$250 deposit; (3) tuition for the weeks attended.

TUITION

Tuition for the entire TMO year is as stated in the *Registration Policy*. Tuition may be paid annually, semi-annually or quarterly. Checks made payable to Toddler's Morning Out may be mailed to TMO at 166 Palmer Court, White River Junction, VT 05001, or they may be given to classroom teachers. You may also pay your tuition online at www.toddlersmorningout.com or via the Quickbooks link that will be provided on statements by email to all families. For your reference, TMO's Tax ID Number is 02-0419725.

OVERDUE TUITION: In the event that tuition payment is two or more weeks overdue, notice will be sent to the parents and a \$25 late fee will be added to the balance due. This notice will request payment (plus cost incurred for a bounced check, when necessary) within ten working days or request that the parents set up an alternative payment schedule with the Director and Treasurer. If there is no response to the first notice, a second notice will be sent advising the parents that, unless payment is received or a new schedule is set up within ten working days, their child will no longer be able to attend the program. If no response is made to the second notice, their child will no longer be able to attend the program and, at the Board's discretion, notice may be served to the parents that the Board will take legal action to collect any overdue tuition.

SCHOLARSHIP: Scholarship money is available to assist families who qualify for financial assistance. Please contact our Director for further information. Financial Aid Applications are available on our website.

FUNDRAISING



Throughout the year, TMO holds fundraising events to supplement our budget and provide scholarship assistance for eligible families. We appreciate your support in making our fundraising projects a success. TMO relies heavily on participation by the parent community in our fundraising efforts. We also welcome suggestions for future fundraisers and ask you to please bring your ideas to the attention of a Board member.

PARKING



Always be watchful for small children in the parking lot. When you drop-off and pick-up your child, have them walk by your side and never run in the building or parking lot.

We also ask that you *never leave children unattended in your vehicles* even when running in and out of the building quickly.



HEALTH POLICY

Health forms: At the time of enrollment, all children must have a Child Health Form on file at TMO. This form must document immunizations (including dates), describe the general condition of the child's health, and make note of any medical conditions or allergies of which TMO should be aware. This form must be signed and dated by a physician. TMO will not require documentation of immunizations for families who notify TMO in writing that such medical procedures are contrary to their religious beliefs, **BUT** we do require that you have a Certificate of Religious Exemption in a Child Care Program on file. This form can be obtained from the Director.

Medications: Due to the short length of time that children will be present at TMO, we request that medications be administered at home whenever possible. If there is an occasion when it is **necessary** to have medicine administered at TMO, parents are required to complete a "Permission to Administer Medication Form" which can be obtained from the Director upon request. All medicines must be in the original container and may not have reached their expiration date. *Prescription medicines* must have the child's first and last name on the label affixed to the bottle. *Non-prescription medicines (including fever reducers and cold/cough medicines)* are not routinely administered as they tend to suppress fever temporarily or mask important symptoms while children are still contagious or uncomfortable. *Non-prescription medicines* will only be administered in accordance with signed, dated instructions from the child's licensed health practitioner regarding the appropriate dosage for that child. *Non-prescription medicines* must be labeled clearly with the child's first and last name and the date. **Please keep us informed about any medications administered at home as this may affect your child's behavior at TMO.**

Guidelines for illness: In addition to the guidance listed below that addresses common health concerns, parents will receive additional guidance specifically regarding the management of Covid-19. If one or more of the following conditions exist, you should keep your child home from TMO. If these conditions are observed *while* your child is at TMO, you will be called to take him/her home as soon as possible. *It is required that we have the name of at least one person who could assume temporary care of your child in the event that we cannot reach either parent by phone.* We ask that you leave a number to call in an emergency if you will be running errands, shopping, going to the gym, etc., while your child is at TMO.

Your child must stay home from TMO, or will be sent home if the following conditions are present:

- a. The illness prevents your child from participating comfortably in activities at TMO.
- b. The illness results in a greater need for care than teachers can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- c. Your child has any of the following conditions:
 1. **Fever** (101 degrees Fahrenheit orally or 100 degrees Fahrenheit under the arm) accompanied by behavioral changes or other signs or symptoms of illness. A child should not return to school until he/she has been without a fever for *a minimum* of 24 hours.
 2. **Symptoms of possible severe illness** which may include: lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, unexplained irritability or persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, any other signs that are atypical for your child. A child with a cough associated with a fever, increased rate of breathing, a fast respiratory rate, belly breathing, coughing up phlegm, or audible wheezing should be excluded from TMO and evaluated by a medical professional.
 3. **Diarrhea** Two or more watery, less formed stools (deviating from the normal pattern) not associated with a diet change or medication. Children in diapers who develop diarrhea must be excluded from school, and children who have learned to use the toilet, but can't make it to the toilet in time, must also be excluded. The child can return to TMO 24 hours after the last episode or after a normal stool at home.
 4. **Blood in stools** not explainable by dietary change, medication or hard stools.
 5. **Vomiting** Two or more episodes of vomiting. The child can return to TMO 24 hours after the last episode.
 6. **Persistent abdominal pain.**
 7. **Mouth sores** with drooling.
 8. **Rash with fever or behavioral change.** Any rash should be evaluated by a medical professional (office visit or phone consultation) before sending a child to TMO.
 9. **“Pink Eye” or conjunctivitis:** Any eye drainage or redness should be evaluated by a medical professional (office visit and/or phone consultation) before sending a child to TMO.
 10. **Other infectious diseases** including Scabies, Tuberculosis, Impetigo, Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, Chicken pox, Pertussis, Mumps, Hepatitis A, Measles, Rubella, Shingles, and Herpes simplex. All infectious diseases

should be evaluated by a physician to determine an appropriate plan/timeline for reintroduction to school.

11. Antibiotics: If your child has been put on an antibiotic or other prescription drug, please keep your child at home for at least 24 hours.

Using your best judgment: Please do not send a sick or becoming sick child to school. If you notice a runny nose you have not seen before or have a surprisingly tired or fussy child, please err on the side of caution and keep your child home that day. Your decision as a parent not only affects the teachers and children in your child's class, but each of their families as well. When in doubt, particularly given that many symptoms may also be consistent with Covid-19, please contact your Director/teacher and discuss how your child is feeling. Attendance will be up to the lead teacher's discretion in situations that are "borderline" regarding the child's ability to participate fully at school. Generally, a parent-teacher discussion is all that is needed to develop a shared plan for your child that makes sense.

PLEASE NOTE: If your child has been exposed to a communicable disease, including Covid-19, please notify the Director so that we can check with medical authorities to see whether or not it is advisable to have your child attend TMO and potentially expose other children and families. This will also give us the opportunity to make families aware of "what's going around".

If you are pregnant, are trying to get pregnant, or have a reasonable chance of becoming pregnant and have had neither the chicken pox nor the immunization, you should consult your physician or medical professional *before* entering the classroom.

HEAD LICE POLICY

Before an outbreak occurs, parents can help by:

- Checking children's heads at home at least once a week.
- Notifying TMO if there is an outbreak in the school of a sibling or close friend.
- Notifying TMO if a sibling or close friend has head lice.
- Notifying TMO immediately if you find signs of head lice on your child's head.
- If your child is found to have head lice, she/he will be isolated from the other children and you will be called to take your child home.
- Lice must be killed and nits removed from your child's hair.
- Your child can return to TMO when he/she is nit free.

During an outbreak of head lice at TMO, the TMO staff will do the following:

- Remove all pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, dress-up clothes, hats, etc., from the play area for the duration of the outbreak and for two weeks after that. All articles will be bagged or cleaned as appropriate.
- Vacuum the entire room thoroughly on a daily basis.
- Check heads daily as time and resources allow. This may require asking for additional helping parents during an outbreak.
- Put children's clothing into individual plastic bags.
- Keep parents informed as to the number of infestations found.
- Keep the names of all affected individuals confidential.
- Give parents the information needed for completing treatment and cleaning at home.
- Be available to parents before the TMO day begins to help check heads and/or pick nits.

*** We have adopted a no nit policy to help ensure that all children will be safeguarded while children who have contracted head lice will be cared for with sensitivity. Our goal is to enable families to keep their children lice and nit free and keep our classrooms from contributing to the spread of lice. Families can help by being aware of the signs of lice infestation and communicating with TMO.

EMERGENCY POLICY



We will call **9.1.1.** for all life-threatening emergencies. You will be notified as soon as possible for all emergencies whether life-threatening or not. If you cannot be reached, other persons you have listed on your Child Care Registration and Emergency Information Form will be notified in the order listed.

You **must** keep us informed at all times of how you can be reached in the event of an emergency (pager, voice mail, cell phone, etc.) and **please** check for messages often.

EMERGENCY AND FIRE DRILLS

TMO conducts monthly fire drills with the children to ensure a safe and swift evacuation of the building in the event of an emergency. In the event of an activated fire alarm, and actual fire, or any other emergency, TMO shall immediately evacuate all children from the building.

In the event of an emergency that requires leaving the building, all children will be escorted to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Upper Valley, 320 US-5, Norwich, VT 05055. If parents are required to pick up children early following an evacuation of the building, this will be the pick-up location.

All safety procedures will be reviewed by teachers in detail at the Parent Orientation.

TMO SCHOOL CALENDAR 2025-26

JULY, 2025

July 1 - 1st Quarterly/1st Biannual/Annual Tuition Due

AUGUST, 2025

Wednesday, August 27 Parent Meeting (to be confirmed)

SEPTEMBER, 2025

Wednesday, September 3 - Orientation

Thu, September 4 - First Day - T/TH Classes

Fri, September 5 - First Day - MWF Classes

OCTOBER, 2025

Friday, October 10 - Teacher Inservice

Mon, October 13 - **No School** - Columbus Day

NOVEMBER, 2025

Monday November 10- **No School** - Veteran's Day

November 15 - 2nd Quarterly Tuition Due

Wed, November 26 - Fri 28 - **No School** - Thanksgiving Holiday

DECEMBER, 2025

Monday, December 22- Friday, January 2 - No School - Holiday Break (to be confirmed)

JANUARY 2026

Monday, January 5 - **TMO Begins after Holiday Break**

January 15 - **3rd Quarterly/2nd Biannual Tuition Due**

Mon, January 19- **No School** - Martin Luther King Day

FEBRUARY 2026 (to be confirmed)

Week of February 16-20 - **No School** - Winter Vacation

MARCH 2026

Mon, March 9- **No School** - Teacher Inservice

APRIL 2026

April 15 - **4th Quarterly Tuition Due**

Week of April 6-10 - **No School** - Spring Vacation (to be confirmed)

MAY 2026

Mon, May 25- **No School** - Memorial Day

JUNE 2026

Thurs, June 4 - **Last Day of TMO** - T/TH Classes

Fri, June 5 - **Last Day of TMO** - MWF Classes



SNOW DAYS & CALENDAR CHANGES

Every year, we expect that there will be some mornings when inclement weather will necessitate closing TMO. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience this may cause. While we do not generally have the capacity to make-up missed school days, in the event of an unusually difficult winter season, or disproportional missed days across classes, the TMO Board will consider options to address this issue. If TMO is canceled due to weather, the Director will send an all class email, and will post the information on our Facebook page.

TMO will update the above school calendar as needed to align with the school district as those dates become available. TMO reserves the ability to make changes to the school calendar and will make every effort to provide advance notice to parents if a change is required.



DAILY SCHEDULE

(Sample Schedule)

Arrival*

Choice of Activities/Free Play

Welcome Circle Time

Hand Washing/Snack

Choice of Activities (sometimes including an organized large group activity)

Diapering/Toileting

Goodbye Circle Time

Departure

Arrival* and Departure

Over 2 years two and three morning classes begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 11:00 a.m.

Under 2 years, the two and three morning classes begin at 8:15 a.m. and end at 10:45 a.m.

In order to keep disruptions to a minimum, we ask that you arrive ***no later than ½ hour*** after the scheduled arrival time. If there is a special occasion for which your child needs to arrive late (i.e., doctor's appointment), please make the staff aware of this exception. When you arrive at TMO, please be sure the staff is aware of your child's arrival. Diaper bags/backpacks and lunch boxes should be given to teachers.

Signing In/Signing Out: Upon your child's arrival at TMO, please sign him/her in on the Attendance Form with the time. You must similarly sign out on the Attendance Form when you leave. This form is used to account for all children in the event of an emergency.

Parent Sign-in: If you (or the designated adult dropping off your child) plan to remain in the classroom for more than ten minutes to assist your child or assist teachers, please sign-in on the Parent Record. Please sign-out when you leave the classroom. Similarly, if you plan to work/stay in our Parent Room, please sign-in on the Parent Record located in that room.

Please keep your emergency information up to date. If you will not be at your usual number, please leave a number where you can be reached in case your child becomes ill or injured. In the event that we are unable to reach you, your emergency contact person will be called.

Your child will only be released to escorts who you have authorized on your child's Parental Permission Form or have notified TMO staff of in writing. We will not release your child to **anyone** for whom we have not received parental permission. In the case that an unauthorized escort arrives, you will be contacted by phone. If your child will be absent from TMO, please notify the staff before 8:30 a.m. We are concerned about the children at TMO and appreciate knowing why they are absent. We also want to be aware of illnesses to enable us to look for symptoms in other children and alert the families of TMO, if needed.

*Please see Appendix B for Notes on Separation.



LUNCH BUNCH PROGRAM

We offer a Lunch Bunch program for children in all “over 2 years” classes. This program runs for one additional hour immediately following dismissal, Monday through Friday. Lunch Bunch is offered in two ways:

1. Parents may opt to include Lunch Bunch for the year and wrap the cost of Lunch Bunch into their yearly tuition total. In this way, Lunch Bunch provides a guaranteed extended morning program on all school days. The decision to add Lunch Bunch is made during the registration process. If you decide later to add Lunch Bunch for the year, please contact the Director regarding this possibility.
2. If an occasional Lunch Bunch Day is needed, parents may consult with teachers and if there is availability, they may schedule a “drop-in” Lunch Bunch day.
3. Children bring their own lunches (*no nut or sesame products, please*) in labeled containers that do not require heating or refrigeration, and include a beverage, napkin and utensils. Remember when packing lunches that your child may eat foods at home that may not be appropriate to have at school (e.g., large size pieces of food, hard foods like carrots, popcorn, that may be potential choking hazards). At school, children are likely to be distracted by their peers and may eat differently than they might at home. Please check with teachers if you have questions about what to pack in lunchboxes. We are happy to give you some tips!
4. If there are significant food allergies in your child's classroom, TMO may decide to provide lunches to minimize risk. If we feel it is in the best interest of the class to provide lunch, parents will be informed and provided information about lunch offerings. (Additional lunch bunch fees may be applied to cover food costs).

ABOUT ACTIVITIES

We present a wide array of activities throughout the morning. Some samples include (but are not limited to):



- **Arts/Crafts**

- Water colors and finger paints
- Stringing necklaces
- Gluing projects
- Painting plant pots
- Nature crafts
- Marble painting
- Making puppets
- Using crayons, markers and chalk, pastels, etc.
- Scissors, stencils and stickers

- **Fine Motor**

- Puzzles
- Duplos
- Magnets
- Gears



- **Active Play**

- Climbing equipment
- Obstacle courses
- Dancing/marching
- Tunnels
- Parades
- Riding vehicles

- **Science Exploration**

- Planting seeds
- Flashlight play
- Making ice cream
- Creating 'volcanoes'
- Exploring bubbles

- **Tactile Play**

- Assorted play dough
- Salt drawings
- Outdoor sandbox
- Assorted materials in the tactile table
- Cornstarch and water
- Snow and ice
- Baking

- **Dramatic Play**

- Housekeeping/Kitchen Play
- Supermarket/Flower Shop
- Picnics
- Train rides
- Mud kitchens

- **Reading**

- Book Corner
- Circle Time stories
- Storytelling
- Puppets



- **Music**

- Songs/fingerplays/chants
- Listening to music
- Instruments to make and play



We encourage children to participate in all activities. However, we do recognize that each child has his/her own unique preferences and learning styles. We never force children to do things, such as touch things that are unpleasant to them, sit during Circle Time, paint or join in any other activity.

Please dress your child in clothes that can get messy.
They look cute in anything!

WHAT TO BRING



Before the date of the first class, all required forms **MUST** be on file in order for your child to participate in the TMO program:

In addition, we would appreciate having a picture of your child that we will use to identify a space for her/his coat and other belongings and add to their emergency information card.

To each class, you should bring the following items in a **LABELED** bag or backpack. (These will be kept on the hooks located outside each classroom):

<u>For Diapered Children:</u>	<u>For Non-Diapered Children:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A minimum of 2 diapers● Diaper wipes● A minimum of 1 change of clothing (including socks)● A comfort object, if needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1 or 2 complete changes of clothing (including socks)● A comfort object, if needed

SNACK

TMO will be providing snack for all children for the school year. This allows greater control over food selection and preparation to best manage both health concerns and food allergies/sensitivities. A snack calendar will be posted on the main bulletin board at the front entrance of TMO. Typical snacks may include:



Favorite Toddler Snacks

Fruit: *Chopped into small pieces*

Bananas	Apple slices
Strawberries cut in half	Blueberries
Watermelon	Pear slices
Peach slices	Mango
Grapes cut in half/quarters	Cantaloupe/Honeydew Melon
Kiwi	Pineapple
Applesauce	



Breads: Teachers will check all ingredients!

Small Pretzels/Goldfish/Cracker	Mini Bagels
Pumpkin/banana bread	Pita bread
Crackers	Low sugar cereal (Cheerios)
Corn bread	

Fresh Vegetables:

- Cucumbers
- Semi-cooked carrots
- Avocado

Dairy:

- String cheese-chopped
- Assorted Hard Cheeses (mild cheddar or similar)
- Yogurt/Frozen Yogurt

Beverages: We serve water at TMO at snack time.

CHOKING HAZARDS

**** Vermont Child Care Program Licensing lists the following common choking hazards for children less than 3 years of age and prohibits a program from serving the following foods. Please do not bring these items for Lunch Bunch.**

- *Whole or rounds of sliced hot dogs*
- *Nuts and/or seeds*
- *Whole grapes*
- *Hard, gooey or sticky candy*
- *Marshmallows*
- *Chips or hard pretzels*
- *Popcorn*
- *Chunks or spoonfuls of peanut butter/sun butter*
- *Raw vegetables, such as carrot rounds, peas or celery*
- *Other foods that may pose a choking hazard*



COMMUNICATION

Communication between parents and the TMO staff is very important. Listed here are some forms of communication that you can expect.

Face-to-Face Communication is very important at TMO. Upon arrival, parents have the opportunity to tell the TMO staff about special things that have happened or about difficulty sleeping or anything else that is important concerning the child. At departure time, the TMO staff has the opportunity to tell parents about what their child experienced during the morning.

Monthly Newsletter The *TMO Newsletter* is distributed to all classes each month by email and is also available on our website under the “For Parents” page. When there is extra news to share, additional newsletters will be sent during the month. The newsletter includes a summary of events in each class, what to expect in the coming month and special messages for parents.

Transition Check-In:

Close communication between parents and teachers is especially important at the beginning of the school year. During the first week of school, your teacher will talk with you about how your child is settling in and how you feel it has been going from the parent perspective. Teachers will also check in with you briefly at drop-off and pick-up to be sure we are current on any changes or family updates. In addition, parents will have an opportunity to provide feedback through an anonymous, electronic survey provided in October and again at the end of the year. These surveys will be collected electronically and reviewed by TMO Board members. Our Director and Board members are also available to talk with parents at any time.

Parent Conferences:

will be offered to parents twice during the school year.

The Director/Teachers

The Director/Teachers are available to speak with parents at any time. We encourage parents to bring any issues, even small ones, to our attention in a timely manner so that we can plan together for your child and resolve any concerns along the way.

Child Observations

Under certain circumstances, you may receive a Child Observation Form that documents your child’s behavior (strengths and/or difficulties) when engaged in particular activities at TMO. Conferences will be scheduled if either the parent or teacher feels that it is necessary.

APPENDIX A

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM TODDLERS!

A group of ten toddlers can be a lively and energetic group! This time in their lives is full of exploration, discovery, and the emergence of self-assertion and independence. They are full of warmth and cuddles. It may take time for the children to warm up to you. They are sometimes wary of new faces. With patience and understanding on your part, they will soon accept you as their friend.

Toddlers have very short attention spans, generally, and move frequently from one activity to another. They love to explore their environment! Making things move, putting things together, making noise, manipulating sensory materials (play dough, sand, water, etc.), climbing, running, and jumping are all part of their exploration.

Toddlers are not usually interested in creating huge intricate structures. They like to discover how things fit together and, more importantly, how things come apart! While a toddler enjoys making a sandcastle, he/she absolutely delights in knocking it down! Blocks are much more fun when tumbling and crashing to the ground than they were when they were being built into a tower. Play dough gets squashed and torn much more frequently than it is molded! All of these things are very normal and very acceptable behaviors as long as no one will be hurt physically or emotionally.

Physically, toddlers are growing and changing very rapidly. They are constantly exploring new physical activities and boundaries. They are always attempting to climb higher, jump farther or run faster. They have little understanding of danger and, thus, must be watched very carefully. The physical environment of a toddler should be made as safe as possible while encouraging the toddler to test physical limits and meet with success! Toddlers always need a watchful eye, occasionally a helpful hand, and always a word of encouragement and the opportunity to do it themselves.

Toddlers still need to feel a strong sense of security. They need to feel that they are cared for and cared about. Touching in positive ways is very important to toddlers. A warm hug, sitting on an adult lap while singing or reading, and rolling together on the floor are all strong and important "skin sharing" techniques.

Toddlers need to be listened to! Toddlers often have difficulty expressing their needs, feelings and ideas. They need to have a patient ear listening to them and helping them to find healthy ways to express themselves.

Toddlers are becoming quite social people. They enjoy playing pretend games in small groups. Quite often, they have a need for an adult to be part of that group. There are also times in a toddler's day when playing alone or with one other child is much more satisfying.

Toddlers, like any other group of people, are very diverse – each quite unique. They are all in their own individual stage of development and have their own wonderful personalities! They are very loving and have a wonderful need to be loved!

HINTS FOR WORKING (and playing!) WITH TODDLERS

- **Set limits firmly but gently. Toddlers need to have limits. They should not be allowed to do things that will hurt themselves or another child. Limits should be enforced gently without giving the child a sense of failure.**
- **Avoid stimulating competition. It is much more important for a toddler to do something for the sake of doing it than it is for him/her to be the "best". Encouraging competition usually leads to frustration. Often the accomplishments of the "losers" are left unnoticed – this is not a nice feeling.**
- **Encourage cooperation. Encourage children to work together to clean up toys, open a door, put on a jacket or any other task that confronts them. They feel rewarded by helping and develop important social skills.**
- **Offer a choice to a toddler only if her/his decision will be accepted. Choices are important to toddlers. Giving a toddler a choice gives him/her more control over a situation. However, choices should not be offered if only one answer is acceptable. For example, do not ask a child if she/he would like to go outside if you have already decided that everyone is going out. The child may say no and feel unsatisfied when his/her answer is not accepted.**

- **Get down to the child's level when speaking with a child. What you have to say is understood more easily if a child can see your face. Eye contact is very important to all communication! Getting down to a child's level also helps to eliminate the feeling of "power".**
- **Listen carefully! Children say important things! Toddlers often have difficulties expressing their thoughts. It is important that you listen carefully and give them whatever assistance is needed for them to express their needs, feelings and ideas.**
- **Talk with children - not at them. Conversation is a wonderful gift! Children enjoy conversing as well. It is difficult if your vocabulary is not understandable to the child. Use words that can be comprehended (not "baby talk") and appreciated. Give the child ample time to respond. Listen carefully!**
- **Be specific and follow through. When asking a toddler to perform a task, be very specific. For example: "Jane, please put the truck in this basket now" vs. "Jane, clean up before snack" tells the child exactly what you expect from them. Toddlers sometimes need help in performing the task. Follow through and find a way to bring success to the child!**
- **Be consistent. A toddler's sense of security may be threatened when there is a lack of consistency. They need limits that will be enforced consistently for each child.**
- **Avoid setting models on an adult level that cannot be achieved by a child. Toddlers are still exploring and developing in play and art. When drawing, painting, playing with play dough, building with blocks, etc., with children, do so on the children's level.**
- **Relax and enjoy. Toddlers will be more relaxed if you are. If you are having fun with them, it is almost certain that they will be having fun with you as well!**

POSITIVE GUIDANCE

Toddlers often need guidance and direction. You will meet with much less resistance when guiding and directing if you approach a situation in a positive manner. A positive suggestion is constructive and nonjudgmental rather than interfering and disapproving. When using positive methods of guidance you accomplish many important things. You give the child a successful experience rather than one that could lead to a sense of failure. You become a wonderful model for the child's own social development. You show your acceptance of the child and his/her feelings. You begin developing a more positive attitude toward the child's behavior. You also learn to understand the difficulties the child may be having in finding a positive behavior.

Two major kinds of positive guidance that are effective with toddlers are the use of positive statements and redirection.

Positive statements explain what you want the child to do rather than what you do not want the child to do. They accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. For example: "Carry the block to the table" rather than "Don't throw the block."

Redirection is the art of finding a positive alternative for a negative behavior. Children do things for many different reasons. It is helpful to try to understand why a negative behavior is occurring. Redirection is most effective when done in a manner consistent with the child's purpose. For example, a child may be throwing a truck across the room because she wants to throw something or it may be that she does not know the proper way in which to use the truck. You could direct her to throw a ball or push the truck, depending on the purpose of her action. It sometimes takes a lot of perseverance and creative thinking to find an alternative that is acceptable to both you and the child.

GUIDANCE AROUND BEHAVIOR

At TMO, we understand that behavior for children is a way of expressing their thoughts and feelings, even when that behavior requires extra guidance or redirection. We prefer thinking about all behavior as communication, and our efforts to understand and support the child help to guide that behavior. We believe in modeling the behavior we hope to see in the children and also will set fair, appropriate limits to ensure safety of all. Our interventions are always geared toward helping the child develop self-regulation, positive social skills, and the confidence and security that leads to healthy learning. In the classroom, you will see us:

Clearly define limits and enforce them consistently.

Speak softly, but firmly. Reducing the rate of speech is much more effective than raising the volume.

Be in close range. Walk across the room to the child rather than shouting at long distance.

Acknowledge the toddler's feelings. Let her/him know that you understand what she/he is feeling.

Always use language to shape positive outcomes and expectations.

APPENDIX B

NOTES ON SEPARATION

Toddlers are in a very confusing stage of life. They are just coming to terms with the fact that their significant others are not actually a part of their physical bodies. Saying good-bye is often difficult. Even though they know that they are in a safe, fun place with people who care about them and will take care of them, it is still tough. Children, being the individuals that they are, react to separation in many different ways.

Some children will not show any signs at all. This does not mean that they do not care if their parent leaves. It does not mean that they do not miss their parents when they are apart. It does not mean that they have more fun than the other children do. It only means that their personalities are more able to cope with transitions.

Others will manifest signs of separation anxiety. If your child has a difficult time allowing you to leave, it does not mean that there is something wrong with where they are. It does not mean that your child is less skilled than another. It does not mean that your child will not have fun during childcare. It only means that your child is doing what she/he needs to do in order to cope with the transition.

Children show signs of separation anxiety in many different ways. Some children need to have the pass off. They need to go from their parent's arms to the arms of their care provider. Some children need to have a routine upon arrival (or before) at childcare – certain clothes to wear, a special object to hold, a particular toy to play with, a specific book to read, a usual activity or place to sit, or certain music to listen to. Other children cry for a few seconds when their parents leave, stopping about as soon as the parent walks out the door. There are children who need to cry for several minutes when their significant other leaves. They often need to be engaged in an activity by their care provider before they can get on with having fun. Some children are very serious about the day and concentrate hard on what they are doing so that they do not think about missing their parents. Some children are fine until they see the parent of another child arrive to take them home. Then, they think about their parents and worry about when they will arrive. Some children are fine until there is an activity that upsets them – changing diapers, falling down, having food that they don't like, etc. All of these reactions are normal reactions to saying good-bye.

What can we do to help the children who have difficulty? The most important thing that we can do is to reassure the child that Mom or Dad or friend will return to bring them home again soon. The parent needs to act as though they are confident that the child will be well cared for and will have a good time. Even if you are being ripped apart inside, a confident façade goes a long way in helping your child develop the skills needed for transitions.

We can also be aware of the different challenges for the children. Being sensitive to the fact that arriving early at the end of the morning may upset some children can remind you to arrive as quietly and as discreetly as possible. Knowing that some children need to have a certain routine, we can be sure that the routine is available. Knowing that some children need to cry for a while, we can allow that rather than trying to force them to stop by throwing a barrage of ideas at them – this can often be over-stimulating and just make matters worse for the child.

How long difficulty with transitions will last is also a very individualized situation. Some children have no problem at all for a couple of weeks and then, all of a sudden, they are having difficulty. We call this the ‘honeymoon effect’. The first two weeks or so are okay until they realize that this is the way things are going to be for real! Then, they begin having difficulty. Other children have a problem for a couple of weeks and then realize that things are okay and the difficulty ends. Some children will always need reassurance. Once again, this does not mean that there is a problem with the program or your child; it is just the way your child needs to cope.

When is separation anxiety a sign that there is a problem with where your child is? If your child cries throughout the entire day or is withdrawn for much of the time, the childcare placement that you have chosen may not be the right one for your child. Some things to watch for at home are: lack of interest in the usual play activities, sudden need to always have a parent in view, lack of appetite, extreme change in toileting habits, stories of things that are worrisome or play themes that are inappropriate. If your child is exhibiting any of these symptoms, it is time to talk to his/her childcare provider.

The most important thing to remember, as a parent, is to communicate with your child's care provider. Be alert to your child's actions and reactions. Be sensitive to the needs of other children in your child's group. Above all, be confident that your child is being well cared for and allow your child to see that confidence!

A few more notes that we have accumulated over years of watching separations and going through them as well.

- Before you arrive, talk about some of the fun things that your child will be doing. Questions like, "I wonder what the craft will be today", or "What do you think will be in the tactile table today?" will help to start the transition.
- Expect your child to hesitate before coming into the room. You may wish to carry her/him in.
- Make contact with a teacher. Give your child at least a few seconds of time with both a parent and a teacher.
- Find a routine that is most helpful for you and your child. Some examples:
 - Get your child interested in an art activity before you leave. Leave your child with a mission such as, "When I come back, I can take this and hang it on my office wall!"
 - Read a book with your child. Allow a staff member to move in to read the next book.
 - Start your child playing at the tactile table. Leave when your child is happily playing.
 - Pass your child to a staff person. Some children need to be held as their parent leaves.
 - Provide your child with a comfort object that will make parting a bit easier.
- Always tell your child when you are leaving. Do not sneak out. If your child is unaware that you are leaving, she/he may become very frightened when she/he realizes that you are gone.
- Tell your child that you will be back when TMO is done for the day.

- Know that tears may flow (from you as well). Even if your child is upset, leave when you say that you are going to. Leave with the confidence that your child is in a safe, caring environment and will receive as much emotional support as is needed. Also know that if your child remains distraught for an unusual amount of time, you will be informed. Everyone wants TMO to be a pleasant experience for your entire family!