

## Toddlers' House Classroom Observation Guide

Welcome to our Toddler Community! During your visit, we hope that you get a glimpse of the wonder and joy that we see each day as the toddlers' engage with the environment and one another. We bet that you will also have a chance to see how they struggle to communicate, manage their bodies and conflicts with one another. Although observation is an important component of Montessori practice, many people have very limited experience with formal observation. We hope the answers to the following frequently asked questions will help you get the most from your experience:

- **What do I do when I walk into the room?** We have an adult sized chair where you can sit and watch what is happening in the environment. We suggest that you come in quietly and sit without greeting the children so that you will be more likely to see their typical activity.
- **What do I say if a child comes and talks to me?** Some children may be excited to have a visitor. We suggest that you greet children who approach you with a smile and continue observing. If they want you to join them or talk with them, respond briefly and then let them know you are doing your work observing. We give you the clipboard partly because this will signal the children that you are observing like their teachers do.
- **What if my child is part of the community of children?** If your child is in the room, we suggest that you enter, quietly greet your child, and then tell her where you will be sitting to watch. It is very hard to predict how children will feel about their parents observing. Some will want to sit and observe with you, others will continue their own work, and some may be confused by your arrival and express some feelings about it.
- **What if my child asks me to come and work with him?** We think you will get the most from your observation, if you are observing rather than engaging. However, sometimes taking a moment to see your child's work will actually allow you more quiet observation time afterwards. We think you are the best judge of what will work for your child.
- **Why are all the other children working peacefully and my child is \_\_\_\_\_?** We added this question because some parents have left their observation really worried about how their child behaved. Having you visit is not routine and will likely change how your child spends his morning. You will probably get a better sense of your child's typical morning by observing what the **other children** of the same age are doing.
- **What am I looking for when I am observing?** We encourage you to engage all of your senses as you observe just as a toddler would. What does it look like, smell like, and sound like in our room? The toddlers are apt to explore what objects taste like as well, but we are not asking that of you! The back of this sheet has some places for you to take notes and some additional thoughts to consider as you observe.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are the children working independently or in small groups? What do you notice about their interactions with one another?
  
2. Choose one child to observe. What captures her attention? How long does she focus? What captures her attention next?
  
3. This is the sensitive period for language, movement, and order.
  - a. How do the children reveal their interest in language, movement and order?
  
  - b. What is provided to support their need to move, learn language or categorize their world?
  
4. How are the adults engaged with the children?
  
5. Does anything surprise you?
  
6. What happened that you want to ask about later?