

What to expect when my Toddler transitions to a Pre-Primary Classroom

Moving from One Age Group to Another: What to Expect

Transition to any new classroom requires change for children, parents and even teachers, who are eager to meet and learn the unique personality and gifts of each child. But the change can be slightly different for different age groups. Here are some things you may notice about the environment of your child's new classroom; the group sizes and ratios, staff communication and new education opportunities. At Schoolhouse the transitions from our Toddler Classroom to a Pre-Primary Classroom takes place three times a year. The transition can take place in September (with the first day of school), January (with the first day back after the Winter Break) or June (with the start of Summer Camp). A child is able to transition into a Pre-Primary classroom based upon their age, toilet-training abilities and social readiness. The transition month (September, January or June) is determined by the teacher, director and parents.

From Toddlers to Pre-primary

The first transition at Schoolhouse Montessori is from the Toddler Classroom to a Pre-primary Classroom. This is where they begin to leave behind the baby years. The transition from Toddler to Pre-primary is often the one parents anticipate most. Children who have been in group care and education usually dive right in. This age group is transforming themselves daily. Their motor and perceptual skills, social skills, and most dramatically, their cognitive powers are catapulting them into new territory. Expectations for children's planned educational experiences increase as they proceed through Schoolhouse. Here's what to expect.

Transition readiness

To prepare your child for the change, we gradually introduce them to their new classroom. The weeks before their first "official day" in Pre-primary are spent transitioning from their Toddler classroom into their new Pre-primary classroom. They are able to visit their new room for scheduled regular intervals that build over the course of a few weeks before the anticipated transition date. This time allows them to become familiar with the environment, teachers and students in their classroom at a gradual, slow pace.

An energy-filled environment

Pre-primary classrooms may appear confusing, but there is an order, based on learning centers (or the case of Montessori, individual work). Children are engaged in all sorts of exploration and discovery in a changing environment that is well-planned by teachers. Teachers are orchestrating experiences and are strategically engaged in discussion, encouragement, education, caring, and helping children navigate tricky social situations and learning self-control. When your child initially enters the pre-primary classroom he/she is introduced to all of the main areas of the classroom; practical life, language, sensorial, mathematics, geography, history, science, art, with the focal point being in the practical life area. The practical life area, in the pre-primary Montessori classroom, is an essential area for a young child. Therefore we encourage children to work in this area regularly to build the skills needed to be successful in the academic areas, such as math and language arts. The practical life area helps to promote independence, concentration, coordination and order within the child. We find that when daily individualized lessons are given in the academic areas children that have obtained these chief skills seem to flourish and become confident, independent learners and take pride in doing things for themselves.

A larger group size

Pre-primary classrooms have more children. More children means more space, which in turn results in more learning opportunities. Even though the group appears large, it does decrease throughout the school day. As students have recess, lunch, nap time, and rest time, the numbers decrease within the classroom to give students a break from the larger student numbers.

More consistent routines

Since pre-primary students are able to verbalize more and follow routines, the classroom routines are more consistent. Toddlers often have difficulty with transition periods, where a student of pre-primary age does not- so they are able to have a very consistent routine within the classroom.

Higher staff-to-child ratios

With the “I can do it myself” attitude of children ages 3-6 (our Pre-primary age group) and their growing independence from adults, a higher ratio and group size are possible without sacrificing quality in care and education. This ratio allows for increase time to interact with other children and their environment, given their budding social skills. The staff to child ratio is 1:10 for the pre-primary age group.

More creative ways of communication

It is not always possible for daily written information because of the larger group size in a pre-primary class, but there are lots of creative ways that staff and our children communicate with us about what happens during their day – posted weekly lesson plans, weekly Scribbles, and much more. If there's something that you need or want to know each day, just ask your child's teacher at pick-up. If you are not able to pick-up during the teachers hours, please call the teacher at school (or write a note) they will call you back during your child's music class (M/W/F) or after school hours between 3:30-4:30 daily.

Possible Transition Concerns

As part of the transition process, toileting accidents are bound to happen. As the children experience a new level of independence, they will learn again, how to grasp cues as to when it is time to use the restroom. This is all part of the process and we find it normal. The teachers will help as necessary for your child to become adjusted to his/her new routine.

Your child may also begin to experience separation anxiety. Coming to school will be a whole new experience for them, as they are now in a “new” environment. Please note that this anxiety will only be temporary and helping to keep the children in a routine will greatly help their transition into their new classroom.

If a child begins to exhibit issues with the transition, we also have services that can help to bridge the gap between home and school and address the behavior concerns that may arise during this time or for that matter at any time, during their attendance at Schoolhouse Montessori Academy while under the age of 6.

Please note that if you have concerns at anytime during the transition process we would request that you address your concerns with us so we can help to encourage a positive transition.