

INFANT PROGRAM

Our infant program accepts children beginning at 6 weeks and runs through approximately 15 months.

Infancy is one of the most important times in a person's life. When building a house, the most critical component is the foundation. When that structure is strong, it will support the house and its future additions. During a child's first year of life, the foundation for future development is established. We offer an atmosphere where infants receive intimate, secure care to establish a strong foundation for their development.

There are several reasons you may want to choose our infant program for your child.

- Our staff to child ratio is 1:4 and our group size is 4. This enables infants to form strong attachments to their caregivers.
- Consistency of staff is an important element of high quality infant care so each child is placed with a team of primary caregivers who are always responsible for that baby's daily care
- We only employ staff educated in infant/toddler development. They are warm, loving, nurturing individuals who view caring for infants from a professional perspective. While most adults can take care of an infant's physical needs, not every adult is equipped to meet the psychological and emotional needs of an infant.
- We encourage infants to explore in order to develop physical, social, emotional, and intellectual skills appropriate for their age.
- We have frequent, specific, honest communication between staff and parents. When adults trust one another and in the care of an infant, the result is greater development of the child's potential.
- Sanitation is emphasized. There are separate sinks for diapering and food preparation in each room. Toys are sanitized throughout the day. Hand washing for staff and children is a constant occurrence. We only use disposable utensils, bibs, napkins and cups.
- We have separate monitored sleeping rooms, radiant floor heated tile for warmth during cold months, an open environment for safe exploration without the use of "baby traps", such as walkers and generous indoor and outdoor space.

Daily Schedule

The majority of each infant's day is spent in caregiving routines. Diapering, feeding and comforting all provide opportunities for one-to-one connections between caregiver and infant. Each infant is viewed as an individual with unique needs and abilities. During caregiving procedures, the staff focuses on the individual child and sings songs and poem infants enjoy.

Our staff pays close attention to the signals and communication infants provide for expressing wants and needs. We agree with research that indicates infants will eat when hungry and sleep when tired and believe in following his/her cues. We use the daily communication form to report all eating, sleeping, and elimination events and attempts to feed or nap when the child may have refused to do so. We also inform you of the activities your child has participated in each day.

(continued)

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Philosophical Basis for Program

The school uses a philosophical approach combining portions of theories by noted authorities.

Key philosophical components of the infant program include a focus on Erik Erikson's first stage, known as trust versus mistrust, and Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development.

Trust

Erikson's theory stresses the importance of creating a consistent, predictable environment. Our staff responds to the infants' needs appropriately, quickly and consistently for each infant. Through these responses the infant learns that the world is a good place to be. In addition to the infant's developing sense of trust, we recognize parents and staff are learning to trust one another as well. Communication with families is key.

Cognition and Learning

Piaget's theory discusses how children learn. We believe children are active learners, constructing their knowledge through the manipulation of materials in the environment, commonly termed as play. Because play is the way children learn, much of the infant's day at the school is spent in 'play' situations.

Motor Development

The school prides itself on establishing conditions for optimum motor development. The classroom is designed to be used during all the developmental stages of infancy. Activities that stimulate motor development are provided through regular visits to the mini-gym and infant playground. We believe that infants need to use their own bodies. We view any piece of equipment that a baby cannot get into and out of himself as a "baby trap". This is why we do not have walkers or "exercisers" and carefully monitor the amount of time an infant is in a swing or bouncy seat. In order for infants to develop their motor skills, they must be provided opportunities to use their bodies by engaging in play with a caregiver.

Language Development

Language development is encouraged through caregivers' constant responses to infants' vocalizations. Teachers repeat sounds and add patterns and rhymes for the babies to mimic. In addition, we read to the infants, sing songs, chant nursery rhymes, label objects, and describe activities.

Social and Emotional Development

Beginning at birth, positive social interactions are viewed as essential to the overall development of a healthy individual. A healthy self-concept is necessary for the development of self-confidence as well as language, physical, cognitive and social growth. Through warm, loving interactions with the primary caregivers, your child is respected and nurtured as an individual.

Assessing your child

When your baby has accomplished the developmental tasks of infancy, it is time for him to move to the toddler room. This move provides the child with new experiences to stimulate further learning. The decision is based on development, the child's birthdate, and Toddler I program availability. In consultation with the family, there are four criteria that we use as a guideline to assist us in the evaluation process.

1. feeds self table food
2. drinks from a cup and is weaning from a bottle during the day
3. takes one afternoon nap per day (sometimes a short morning nap is necessary, and provided in the toddler room)
4. is emotionally ready for the change in room structure and group size

We have, and will move children who meet some, but not all of the above criteria. The criterion that stresses emotional development is most critical.