



Waddlers: 1 to 1 ½ years

Young toddlers (waddlers) are a very inquisitive bunch! That's why it is so important for parents and caregivers to stimulate meaningful play with this age group by singing and reading to them, and encouraging them to explore their environment. In this way, caregivers are taking an active role in their cognitive development. At Growing years, we believe waddlers are like sponges; they want to absorb everything about their environment!

This age group loves to learn through using their senses and through motor experiences as well. They are learning that objects have different textures, colors, shapes, and sizes. They can now discriminate your voice and your face from others. As they listen to you speaking to them and to others, they begin to imitate your words and facial expressions. They are eager to hear the sounds of our language as we speak and read to them and it is very important for their cognitive, sensory, and language development.

Primary Caregiving:

Research and early childhood professionals tell us that it is vitally important for waddlers to form an attachment with a caregiver as soon as possible upon entering a new program. Forming a bond/attachment to a significant caregiver allows a child to feel secure in their environment and gives them the ability to thrive within it.

At Growing Years we attempt to form these bonds through a system of supervision called "primary caregiving". Each child is assigned to a caregiver who will provide the majority of care, comfort, communication with the family, and record keeping throughout the day. As much as possible, we try to give children the ability to "pick" their primary caregiver by waiting to see who they might be naturally drawn to.

Communication:

Each month the lead teacher sends home a newsletter which outlines what they will be focusing on with the High Reach Curriculum, as well as sharing words to songs and fingerplays with parents. Other information pertinent to the program is shared also.

Primary caregivers may be reached any time during the day by calling the school at 989-792-8670 or by e-mailing us at info@growingyearspreschool.com

Daily Schedule:

Although waddlers still need a lot of flexibility in their day, they also enjoy and need some structure and routine as well. Having a routine of events throughout the day gives waddlers a sense of security. They can begin to anticipate the order of events while becoming familiar with how those routines are carried out, such as group time, eating time, going on a walk, etc. A typical day in the waddler room might look like this: (diapering occurs throughout the day as needed.)

6:30—7:00:

Children begin arriving and are greeted by staff. Belongings are placed in cubbies and refrigerator. Any special information for each child, such as feeding, sleeping, pick-up, etc., is shared with caregivers and notated.

7:00—8:30:

Growing Years breakfast is served each day for those children who are ready for table food. Breakfast and lunch menus are sent home and posted each month for parents.

8:45—10:15

Waddlers move freely about the room engaging in interest area activities, such as large motor play, water play, dramatic play, blocks, tunnel crawling, and art exploration.

Waddlers also take part in morning group time, which might involve singing, storytelling, or fingerplays in conjunction with the High Reach curriculum for waddlers, called the Cuddlebugs!

10:15—10:30

Snack is provided for all waddlers who are ready for table food. The snack menu is posted on a monthly basis.

10:30—11:00

Children are taken outdoors daily as long as weather permits. It is important for children to get fresh air and explore the outside world each day. For the youngest waddlers teachers might decide to take them on a buggy ride through the neighborhood. For any waddlers who are beginning to walk, we have a special playground full of fun equipment for them.

11:10—12:00

Growing Years lunch is served for those who are ready for table food.

12:30—2:30

After lunch and diaper changes, waddlers lay down on cots for their nap time and teachers pat children's backs until they fall asleep. Soft music is also played to comfort children during nap time.

2:30—3:00:

Afternoon snack is served for all waddlers who are ready for table food.

3:00—3:30:

Waddlers are taken outdoors again by their primary caregivers, in the same way as in the morning, weather permitting.

3:30—5:00:

Waddlers are engaged in small group with their primary caregiver and other children for activities such as singing, reading books, or doing an art or sensory activity together. After small group time, children move freely throughout the room where teachers have structured interest activities involving small motor development (puzzles, etc.) or large



motor development, as well as opportunities for creative expression through dramatic play, building with blocks, and socializing with other waddler friends!

5:00—6:00:

Children engage in individual activities with primary caregivers as they await pick-up by parents. Upon pick-up, primary caregivers share news of the day's activities for each waddler and chat with parents.

Curriculum:

Our Waddler program uses the Cuddle Bugs Curriculum from High Reach Learning. This program focuses on four major areas of learning, all needed to cope with upcoming academic, social, and behavioral demands. The four areas are:

Moving and Exploring
Interacting and Feeling
Communicating and Talking
Thinking and Learning

Examples of development in each area might be:

1) Moving and Exploring:

Walks by self.
Pushes toys with great enjoyment.
Places blocks into container.
Develops pincer grasp.

2) Interacting and Feeling:

Shows affection for people and things.
Checks on location of caregiver while engaged in play.
Resists separation from parents.
Shows anxiety towards strangers.

3) Communicating and Talking:

Recognizes and begins to point at common objects.
Says "dada" and "mama"
Follows directions.
Single words.

4) Thinking and Learning:

Looks for toys that have been covered.
Tries cause and effect relationships.
Stacks blocks.
Seeks out new experiences.



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Music for Munchkins:

We are so fortunate to have Mrs. Michele Spitz/Wietfeldt as our music teacher! The children love her and look forward to her weekly visits. We have a longstanding relationship with Michele as she is also the singer and music arranger for the *Peddlesfoots* series of songs. In addition to *Music for Munchkins* playing a key role at Growing Years, Michele is busy working with children throughout the Saginaw area as she teaches music and provides entertainment for children's parties.

She is also available to sing for weddings and adult engagements. If you're interested in learning more about Michele, you can visit her website at www.musicformunchkins.com.

Developmental Milestones/Assessment:

Primary caregivers, with the help of the lead teacher, provide parents with a developmental milestone report approximately every 3 months to let parents know what we are experiencing with their child at Growing Years. These reports become the vehicle we use to share our understanding of early infant development as outlined by child development professionals. Individual waddlers may exhibit all or only a few of the behaviors for a given age group and still fall within the normal range of development. Obviously, waddlers progress at various rates through different aspects of development: for example, early walkers may not be early talkers...