

*[Excerpt from a Wisdom Wednesday email sent during the year to our 2 year old parents]*

This document focuses on independence in bathroom needs (ie: toilet training): what it looks like, how we get there, details about the process in an early childhood setting, and how can you help with the process.

### **Why are we talking about this?**

The average age of a Nest student is 18-36 months, which is the perfect age to introduce toileting to toddlers. So naturally, daily living at The Nest will involve the transition from diapering to toileting.

Each child will differ on when, how, and where they are ready to attempt this life skill and milestone.

At The Nest we work daily on the skills that will set our students up for success in their future classroom settings. Independence in the bathroom is one of those skills.

There is no better time than now to discuss this because our Second Year students are only six months away from the PreK-3 bathroom policy.

### **What does independence in the bathroom look like?**

To answer that we look to the St. James Day School bathroom policy:

St. James students enrolled in the Day School beginning with PreK-3 must be able to use the restroom independently (pull-ups are not an option in PreK-3). St. James requires children to be self-sufficient in all aspects of bathroom use and asks that families reinforce a child's ability to undress, wipe, flush, and redress, as well as wash hands. Staff may assist children with clothing fasteners, if needed, but cannot assist with wiping.

St. James understands that young children have accidents from time to time. However, if accidents occur on a frequent basis, parents will be required to meet with the teacher and school administration to develop an action plan to address the situation. This may include keeping the child home temporarily to work on toilet training, consulting a doctor to rule out medical causes, or meeting with the school to re-evaluate the child's placement in the PreK-3 program.

A potty-trained child is a child who can do the following:

1. Tell the adult they need to use the restroom BEFORE they have to go. Students should be able to use words to indicate their need to potty in advance of an accident.
2. Have the dexterity to pull down their underwear and pants and get them back up without assistance.
3. Toilet accurately with all pee and poop in the toilet.
4. Get on/off of the toilet by themselves and flush.
5. Wash and dry hands.
6. Go directly back to the room or play area without assistance or directions.
7. Postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom to finish or if they are away from the bathroom.

\*Most children learn to pee independently before they master pooping independently. Students in PreK-3 must be able to do both by the start of school

### **How do we get there?**

At The Nest we softly introduce toileting as part of the everyday classroom routine. Much like hand washing and clean up.

We work toileting into the daily classroom schedule along with peer modeling, step by step instruction, and skill supervision.

This skill is only successful with consistency and partnership between you and your child's teaching team.

### **What details and things should you consider about toileting in the early childhood setting versus home?**

SET INTERVALS: When a child is ready to transition from diaper to toileting in the classroom we begin by picking times and intervals throughout the day that they just "sit" on the potty. For instance, when they arrive at

school, in center time, before nap time, and after nap time. Adding in when the child expresses a need to use the restroom or wakes up dry. We begin with this method because our schedule is full and the school day provides many distractions to children, so for the classroom we direct the times to assure we get repetition and practice.

**LANGUAGE:** We use language to supervise them and instruct them through the process. With the use of language we must make sure they comprehend the words used for guiding them. For instance, we use the instructions, “pull your pants down.” We must make sure the child comprehends pants and what direction is down. So teaching about clothing, directions, and placement prior to toilet training are key to the process.

**STRENGTH:** Their physical strength and gross motor development are very important to be able to pull their pants up and down. Daily practice on gross and fine motor helps prepare them for this task.

**MODIFIED BATHROOMS:** The bathrooms in early childhood are customized for toddler dimensions to make the process quick and easy. The toilets, sinks, towels, and trash cans are just their size allowing them to be comfortable and more independent in the space. We also have a half door to create privacy with the ability to supervise and instruct. This creates confidence that fosters independence.

**SANITATION:** In community spaces, such as a classroom we must take into consideration the sanitation aspect of diapering and toileting. We add in steps and extra precautions to assure the class remains sanitary and healthy. We focus on keeping accidents contained as much as possible and the entire toileting process in the designated bathroom space. This assures contamination of multiple classroom spaces is not an issue.

### **How can I help in the home setting with this process?**

Here are some ways to help this process transition back and forth from home and school.

**INTERVALS:** Keeping consistency and repetition at home will make for a more successful outcome. Repetition is the key.

#### **LANGUAGE:**

Consistent language and process will also lend to a quicker success rate. Here is our step by step instruction:

1. It is time to go to the potty or let's go sit on the potty.
2. Pull pants down. Pull underwear or pull up down. For girls with dresses we teach to tuck the dress in the front collar.
3. Sit on potty, push to the back, and close legs. In the beginning we may give them a book to look at or talk about the process with them.
4. Get a small amount of toilet paper.
5. Pat the front and wipe to the back.
6. Stand up.
7. Pull up underwear or pull up. Pull up pants.
8. Flush toilet.
9. Wash hands.

**STRENGTH:** Making sure your child's clothing is loose fitting for easier and quicker pulling up/down. During this process; we welcome navy, elastic waist, sweat pants or joggers to get them confident and focused. Girls with loose dresses make for easy training as well. You should always experiment at home with new clothing to assure that your child can quickly pull their clothing up/down.

**MODIFIED BATHROOMS:** Modifying your bathroom at home to make the process easier for them also helps with success. Such as a stool, a smaller toilet seat, and everything for hand washing within their reach.

**SANITATION:** When transitioning from a diaper to a pull up, making sure the pull up has the velcro side openings to allow for quick and easy cleaning. It also keeps them on track because it allows clean up while sitting on the toilet. When we have to undress them and place them on the changing table it interrupts the process put into place. Also using the bathroom area for toilet training at home keeps consistent with school.

At the end of the day, consistency between home and school will lead to success. Toileting takes time and energy on all fronts to become successful. The Nest is here to support you on this journey.