Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2019-20 school year at the University Of Michigan Towsley Children’s House. It is my pleasure to welcome you as a member of our community! I look forward to getting to know all of you. My office is located down the hall behind the front desk with the child sized yellow door. The yellow door is designed for children so they can feel free to stop in and say hello! The signal for children to know when they can use the yellow door is the open adult door to my office.

Your help is needed to provide children a safe and secure environment. The front door is locked at all times for the safety of everyone in our building. An activated card allows access for currently enrolled families so please be sure to check at the front desk for card activation. If a parent does not have an Mcard, a temporary card will be issued. It is important for everyone to develop and maintain a habit of using their card to enter on a daily basis. When everyone enters with their card access, the building remains more secure.

If someone is unable to enter the building, please do not hold the door open for them. You can direct them to ring the doorbell instead. The front desk staff will check to see if they belong in our building before allowing them to enter.

Also, please keep in mind that every time the front desk staff has to check who is at the door when the door bell rings, they are being taken away from their other responsibilities. Please respect their work by bringing your card and using it to enter the building. Your cooperation in using your cards for access provides a safer environment for all!

We anticipate a great year ahead and look forward to many child-centered adventures facilitated and nurtured by our outstanding teaching staff.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,
Beth Ann

UM Towsley Children’s House Center Director
734-763-3400
bablanch@umich.edu
Core Values

Community
We foster relationships between children, adults, and families to create an inclusive environment where individuality and differences are embraced.

Play
We believe play is essential to children’s growth, development, and understanding of the world around them.

Nature
We provide children with connections to nature to experience all of Earth’s wonders.

Inquiry
We create an environment where children are encouraged to ask questions, investigate, collect information and represent their understanding.

“If it hasn’t been in the Hand... and the Body... it can’t be in the Brain!”
- Bev Bos
HOME VISITS

Children that are new to a classroom can anticipate being invited to have a home visit during the month of August. A classroom teacher will contact the family to set up the visit which typically lasts approximately 30 minutes. This is an informal visit that allows for the teacher to make a positive connection with the child in a comfortable setting. This can help ease the transition to a new classroom.

“No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.” - James Comer

SAYING A GOOD GOOD-BYE

These strategies can ease the jitters of separating on your child’s first day at school.

Keep your tone positive and upbeat. Children pick up on the reactions of the trusted adults in their lives. So try not to look worried or sad, and don’t linger too long. Say a quick, upbeat good-bye and reassure your child that all will be well.

Think about creating a special good-bye routine. For example, you can give your child a kiss on his or her palm to “hold” all day long. Or, the two of you can sing a special song together before you leave. Good-bye routines are comforting to children and help them understand and prepare for what will happen next.

Be sure to say good-bye and don’t slip away. Doing so may cause your child to mistrust you and will only lead to more determined clinging next time. Always let your child know you are leaving. You’ll be helping them learn that separation can be faced and managed.

Bring along a comfort item to leave with your child. It might be a picture of you, a special blanket, or a personal item from you. This object can give emotional and physical comfort to the child.

Let the teacher help your child. If your child is having a harder time getting engaged or saying good-bye, you may want to ask your child’s teacher to stay with your child as you say good-bye so that when you leave, he can turn to another caring adult for support. Allowing the teacher to comfort your child when they are upset will help build a strong connection between the child and teacher.

Resist the rescue. Try not to run back in the classroom if you hear your child crying, as upsetting as this can be. This is a big change and your child may, quite understandably, feel sad and a little scared. But if you run back in, it sends the message that he is only okay if you are there and it is likely to prolong your child’s distress and make it harder to adapt. Rest assured, teachers have many years of experience with helping families make the shift to school. Instead, you can wait outside the classroom for a few minutes to ensure that all is well, or call the school later in the morning to check-in.

DROP OFF ROUTINE FOR GOOD HEALTH

1. Wash hands upon arrival

2. Take a drink of water

Ways We Communicate

- Classroom Daily Happenings: White Erase Board outside of classrooms
- Individual Child’s Developmental Notes: Available in Teaching Strategies Gold weekly
- Weekly Classroom Communication: Sent electronically every week from teachers
- Quarterly Center Newsletter
As new families are joining our program, it is time to remind everyone of parking guidelines. Please be mindful, we are located within a city so parking is limited. We expect everyone to be patient and respectful of each other. After all, everyone trying to park is a member of the Towsley Children’s House community. Within our program, we work toward building relationships among adults and children within our building community. We appreciate your support in continuing this atmosphere when using our front drive or the parking garage next door.

We currently have over 150 families in our program so using alternate parking is necessary. There is not enough space in the front drive for everyone to drop off and pick up at the same time.

Following the guidelines below will allow everyone to have a positive experience when dropping off/picking up children.

- Park in the metered spaces or the parking structure next door.

- If you arrive to pick up your child and there isn’t a space in the front drive look for alternate parking.

The Parking Structure next door typically has spaces available. You may park in the structure if you have a Blue UM parking permit with an AVI device. City parking is also available in the structure at $1.20 per hour.

- Our center has a front drive that is available as a loading zone for quick drop off/pick up of children. A quick drop off/pick up would be 15 minutes or less. Otherwise, use alternate parking.

- When using the loading zone please pull forward as far as possible and park on the right side of the drive. Cars that are moving through should be on the left side of the drive.

- Please park only on the straight part of the drive and as close to the curb as possible. Cars parked in the curve block traffic are at risk to be hit by another vehicle. Please see the attached map for clarification of traffic flow.

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**ALLERGY AWARE**

UM Towsley Children’s House is an allergy aware program. Due to children who have life-threatening allergies to food items, it is imperative that NO FOOD be brought into the building, except for infants. No peanut butter, nuts or nut products will be served (including these items as ingredients). Your cooperation is required in this effort.

Morning snack is served between 9:15-10:00 so please do not allow your child to bring food into the center when they arrive in the morning. If they eat breakfast on the way to school please have them finish before entering the building. We ask all children to wash their hands upon arrival to their classroom.

**PARKING**

Towsley House Drop off/ Pick Up Plan

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![Towsley House Drop off/ Pick Up Plan](image)
UM PSYCHOLOGY
307
STUDENT
PLACEMENTS

UM PSYCH 307 gives UM students the opportunity for direct interaction with young children and their teachers through classroom placements in an early childhood education and care setting with infants, toddlers, or preschoolers. Students are assigned to a specific classroom and group of children and participate under the direct supervision of the classroom teachers and directors of the University of Michigan Towsley Children’s House.

The seminar component of the course along with written assignments provide UM students the opportunity to reflect on classroom experiences. Students learn and discuss topics including, but not limited to: pro-social behavior, social emotional development, quality care, problem solving, literacy development, attachment, play, and creative expression.

While UM Psychology students change every semester, the core professional teachers provide consistent continuity of care for children.

WHO’S WHO AT TOWSLEY

Infant/Toddler Classrooms

Seedling: Erin Goatley, Leslie Thompson, and Sheila Hall
Sprouts: Kim Hull, Sandra Canales, and Ciara Sego
Sassafras: Sonja Whitehouse, Raana Aminlari, Samantha Huff, and Hollyn Formosa
Magnolia: Angelique Rudolph, Emily White, Darius Cobb, and Megan Brown

Preschool Classrooms

Willow: Serena Simmons, Jessica Polonchan, and Asmaa Naser
Birch: Jodi Stratton, Derek Whitten and Ashley Christensen
Oak: Heather Cole, Stephanie Schemak, and Karen Ong
Sycamore: Kellie Chestler-Root, Amanda Matthews, and Amber Bruckner
Maple: Christian Boyer, Kacie Sitts and Kamaria Hayes
Evergreen: Elizabeth Powers, Clara Aldrich and Candace Pankey

Support Staff

Beth Ann Blanchard: Center Director
Jasmine Boster: Program Director and Psych. 307 Instructor
Cathy Hendrix: Administrative Assistant
Katie Meyer: Resource Teacher
Korinn Kulinski – Resource Teacher
Denise Pelky – Program Teacher
Sarah Chaffee – Program Teacher
Andrew Moeller: Program Associate Teacher
Mary McCarthy: Program Associate Teacher
PHASES OF A PROJECT

Phase 1: Beginning the Project
The teacher discusses the topic with children to find out their prior knowledge and experiences they have had. The children represent their experiences and show their understanding through discussions, drawings, idea webs, writing, and other work. Teachers help children develop questions their investigation will answer. Families are encouraged to discuss the topic and share their expertise.

Phase 2: Developing the Project
Children will have opportunities to do fieldwork and speak to experts when available. The teacher will provide resources, the aid in the investigation; real objects, books, and other research materials are gathered. Children will have the opportunity to represent what they are learning. Children will work at their own developmental level in terms of basic skills, constructions, drawings, music, and dramatic play. Group discussions take place so that children are aware of all the different work that is happening in the class. A topic web can be used as a quick way of documenting the progress of the project.

Phase 3: Concluding the Project
The teacher helps arrange a culminating event or work through which children share with others what they learned. As the children select material to share they are involved in reviewing and evaluating the whole project. As the project concludes, the teacher helps the children transition to the next project.

PROJECT APPROACH

Along side a play-based curriculum, UM Towsley Children’s House incorporates The Project Approach to guide learning and development. The Project Approach refers to a set of teaching strategies that enable teachers to guide students through in-depth studies of real-world topics. Projects have a complex but flexible framework which teaching and learning are seen as interactive processes. When teachers implement the Approach successfully, children can feel highly motivated and actively involved in their own learning and produce work of a high quality.

A project, by definition, is an in-depth investigation of a real-world topic. Projects have a beginning, middle, and end. The study may be carried out with an entire class or with small groups of children. Projects typically do not constitute the whole educational program; instead, teachers use them alongside other approaches. Topics of study are based on children’s interests, the curriculum, things happening in the environment, etc.

Source: www.projectapproach.org

AGES AND STAGES

Because your child’s first 5 years of life are so important, we want to help you provide the best start for your child. As part of this service, we provide the Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3), online screening to help you keep track of your child’s development. The questionnaire may be provided every 2-, 4-, 6-, or 12-month period. The first phase of the questionnaire takes place in the Fall before parent/teacher conferences.

You will be asked to answer questions about some things your child can and cannot do. The questionnaire includes questions about your child’s communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving, and personal social skills.

If the questionnaire shows that your child is developing without concerns, we will continue to work in partnership with you to support further development. If the questionnaire shows some possible concerns, we will contact you about getting a more involved assessment of your child. Information will only be shared with other agencies with your written consent.

We look forward to your participation in our program!
Playing in the Rain

The children love playing in the rain and we as teachers had to ask ourselves, “Why do we stay inside when it rains?” When it rains, it changes the environment that we are playing in. Everything is a little bit different when it’s wet out! This revelation sparked during the celebration of International Mud Day. Children and staff were mixing mud and water together and the discussion of rain and what it does for us came about. As a staff we brainstormed ideas as to how we could embrace the rain with children. Rain gives the children many stepping stones to learn from and we need to go outside to experience it!

Being outside, rain or shine, and playing in different environments exposes the children to nature and soil. This can boost their immune systems and some bacteria have shown to increase levels of serotonin in our brains, helping keep us calm. As we know, being outside also helps with children being active. When it rains, puddles form on our playground. The children stomp through them, scoop water with shovels to add to the sand area, mold mud, and even “cook” with it. Children are strengthening their gross and fine motor skills while doing this.

Rain also gives the children a new sensory experience. When the outdoor classroom is wet, the materials feel different and some need to be manipulated differently than we when they are dry. When playing outside in the rain, it also takes different coordination to walk, run and balance.

If it is warm enough and there is no thunder and lightning, we will be heading out to explore our outdoor classroom in the rain.

To support Rain Play:
- When you see rain in the forecast send a rain coat and boots if you have them. If not a spare pair of clothes is sufficient.
2019-2020 Calendar

CLOSED – Labor Day Holiday .................................................. Monday, September 2
First Official Day of School ..................................................... Tuesday, September 3
Center wide Fall Picnic ............................................................ Wednesday, October 2
October ....................................................................................... Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month
CLOSED UM Fall Break - Center Planning .................................. Monday & Tuesday, October 14-15
CLOSED - Thanksgiving Holiday ............................................... Thursday & Friday, Nov. 28-29
Last Day for Children (before Winter break) ............................... Friday, December 20
CLOSED Staff Professional Development .................................... Thursday & Friday, January 2-3

Children Return from Winter break ............................................. Monday, January 6
CLOSED - Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Professional Development) ...... Monday, January 20
CLOSED TO CHILDREN (Professional Development) ..................... Monday, March 2
March ......................................................................................... Parent Teacher Conferences throughout month
CLOSED TO CHILDREN (Professional Development) ..................... Monday, May 4

CLOSED - Memorial Day Holiday .............................................. Monday, May 25
Center wide Spring picnic .......................................................... Tuesday, June 2
CLOSED - Independence Day Holiday ....................................... Friday, July 3
Last day of 2019-2020 school year ............................................. Friday, August 21
CENTER CLOSED ................................................................. August 24-28

First day of 2020-2021 School year .......................................... Monday, August 31st
CLOSED - Labor Day Holiday ..................................................... Monday, September 7