

New Frontiers' Toilet Learning Principles and Policies

A) Toilet Learning Guiding Principles

Does my child have to be “potty trained” to attend New Frontiers?

No, they do not! Unlike many preschool settings that require students to be potty trained, New Frontiers gladly welcomes children who have yet to go through the “Toilet Learning” process. We understand and appreciate that every child’s experience is different and that readiness for Toilet Learning is of utmost importance. Below you will find the New Frontiers approach to Toilet Learning and our policies to ensure success for all.

The Difference between Toilet Learning and “Potty Training”

New Frontiers views it as our responsibility to guide a child through all the elements of learning how to properly use a restroom. We refer to this as “Toilet learning” and treat this type of learning the same way we would approach the learning of any new skill. In that, we must consider a child’s attitude toward Toilet Learning as well as physical and emotional readiness. This approach is more fully addressed and explained in the Readiness Checklist below.

Traditional “potty training”, on the other hand, is often something adults “do to” children, meaning undressing children, placing them on a potty chair or toilet, cleaning the child, and so on. While these are great ways to start acclimating a child to the process of using a toilet, these steps do not necessarily account for the *child’s personal readiness* and more often have to do with parent readiness or desire for actual Toilet Learning to happen.

While we fully understand and sympathize with parent readiness and desire for Toilet Learning to happen, pushing a child will likely only be contrary to everyone’s desired end goal.

Why Toilet Learning readiness is of utmost importance

New Frontiers takes a child’s individual experience very seriously and it is our wish to always work with parents as a team to provide the best and most appropriate learning and growing experiences. Bearing that sentiment in mind, **New Frontiers is also a center that serves many children each day and prides itself on offering a variety of learning and exploratory activities including ample time outdoors. Additionally, New Frontiers is a state licensed and regulated program and must follow certain criteria for staff-to-child ratios, teacher engagement, and sanitary conditions.** As a result, we must be mindful of how much of the time teachers and students alike spend focusing on Toilet Learning. *Children will never be denied access to a restroom facility or be reprimanded in any way for needing to use the restroom.* Children will never be punished, scolded, or in any other way be admonished for having an accident.

How is an “accident” defined?

Accidents are a natural part of Toilet Learning and any child may have an accident while going through the learning process. The distinction between *accidents* and *not being fully ready to transition out of diapers/pull-ups* is that an accident is a rare deviation from an otherwise established and consistent pattern. When a child has not yet shown a consistent pattern of dryness/cleanliness and/or communication about needing to use the bathroom, we cannot consider any potty-related event an “accident”, but, rather, not full readiness to transition out of pull-ups. When a child is truly ready for any and each step of the Toilet Learning process, we will gladly support those steps to success.

B) Toilet Learning Policies

1) The goal of New Frontiers is to achieve **complete toileting independence**. Given that New Frontiers is an educational setting that services many children, children must show signs of readiness (outlined below) to begin Toilet Learning. This is not a punishment or judgment on children or families and it is not our desire to unnecessarily delay the process, rather it is a way to more likely achieve success once the process is started.

2) Class schedules allow for consistent trips to the bathrooms/diapering areas. We will not, however, place children on a potty every 15 or 30 minutes. This practice is very time consuming with little to no benefits. There is even the argument that this may “cause many problems with children not being able to hold much urine and having to constantly go to the potty further along down the line. They are unable to settle down at nap or other rest times because they feel like they immediately need to go to

the restroom. They cannot do walks because they cannot make it very long without having to come back to potty. The day pretty much centers around the potty which is simply not realistic in our setting.”

3) New Frontiers will not push fluids or limit food or drinks. A child’s readiness for Toilet Learning must be in line with a reasonable, healthy, and sustainable daily schedule.

4) If clothing is soaked or soiled, New Frontiers follows the State regulation that these clothes will not be washed or even rinsed out at the center. We must bag the clothes, as they are, in plastic and send them home with parents.

C) Toilet Learning Procedure

When the family and center believe it is an appropriate time to begin Toilet Learning, we will ask that families:

1) Communicate to the child’s teachers that there is interest in beginning Toilet Learning at the center.

2) Whether in diapers or pull-ups, the child will begin to be included in the group of students that regularly uses the bathroom. Students are taken to the bathrooms several times a day, particularly at natural transition times such as before and after meals/snacks and nap. If a child needs to use the bathroom outside of these scheduled times they will, of course, be taken at that time as well.

*Even just visiting the restrooms is a very new and sometimes daunting experience for young children. Some children are frightened by the sounds of flushing toilets and hand-dryers. Teachers will calm and reassure children, however, if a child is resistant to being in the bathroom, we may need to wait until the child is ready to try the visit again. Teachers will gladly communicate how the process is going and we thank parents for the understanding that each step of the process truly may take different amounts of time for each individual.

3) Meanwhile, teachers will work to teach/remind students to indicate to them if they need to use the bathroom and work to establish a pattern of communication that they need to go potty *before* they go. This indication of need may be verbal or through consistent and recognizable signs or gestures.

Transitioning into underwear:

Given the points outlined in the “Guiding Principles” section above, transitioning into underwear is a conclusion of toilet learning at New Frontiers rather than a mechanism to achieve readiness. While we fully support any practice a family chooses that may work at home, our environment is unique in its legal regulations and program standards and expectations and we simply cannot train by transitioning a child into underwear. For a child to transition into underwear:

1) A student must a) be able to consistently communicate their need to go potty *before* they go and/or b) be consistently dry/clean between the times the teachers take students to use the bathroom in order to transition out of pull ups or diapers.

a. This must be a consistent pattern throughout a child’s entire attendance day. For most children mornings are far more “focused and successful” than afternoons.

2) When students communicate need regularly or are consistently dry/clean for a minimum of two full

weeks, parents and teachers will discuss transitioning a child into underwear. At that time, teachers and parents will discuss other considerations such as still wearing a pull-up at nap time (most common practice) and/or sending a water-proof crib liner for nap, and any other circumstances or points.

3) A child may not be sent to the center in underwear prior to a formal meeting/conversation with teachers and an explicit agreement of the change. If a child is brought to the center in underwear before such a meeting is held and an explicit agreement made, parents will be asked to change the child into pull-ups upon drop off.

Additional Notes:

Successful Toilet Learning can only happen when a child is:

___ Able to indicate (verbally or through consistent and recognizable signs or gestures) to an adult they have to use the bathroom *before* they go.

___ Able to postpone going if they must wait for someone to finish using the bathroom or if we are outdoors or not immediately next to a bathroom.

___ Not be resistant to the idea of toilet learning or sitting on the potty.

___ Healthy and not going through any stressful events (e.g. moving, new sibling, etc.)

___ Able to follow simple instructions.

___ Able to walk to and from the bathroom and help undress.

Some things we can all do to get kids ready for Toilet Learning

___ Start reading potty books and talking about going potty in the big girl or big boy potty during diaper changing.

___ Have children go to the bathroom and sit on the potty during *natural transition times* (before and after meals, before and after naps, during diaper changes, and at times that the children would be using the bathrooms at school (found on class schedules))

___ Practice getting pants up and down on their own and hand washing

___ Establish words for using the bathroom, urine, feces, etc. and communicate those words to the teachers at the center

Sources

American Academy of Pediatrics. 2006. Toilet training readiness American Academy of Pediatrics website. November 24, 2006.

Fees, Tori. "Potty Training Letter to Parents". <http://www.daycare.com/nannyde/potty-training-letter-to-parents.htm>. April, 19, 2015.