

Potty Learning

Is Your Family Ready?



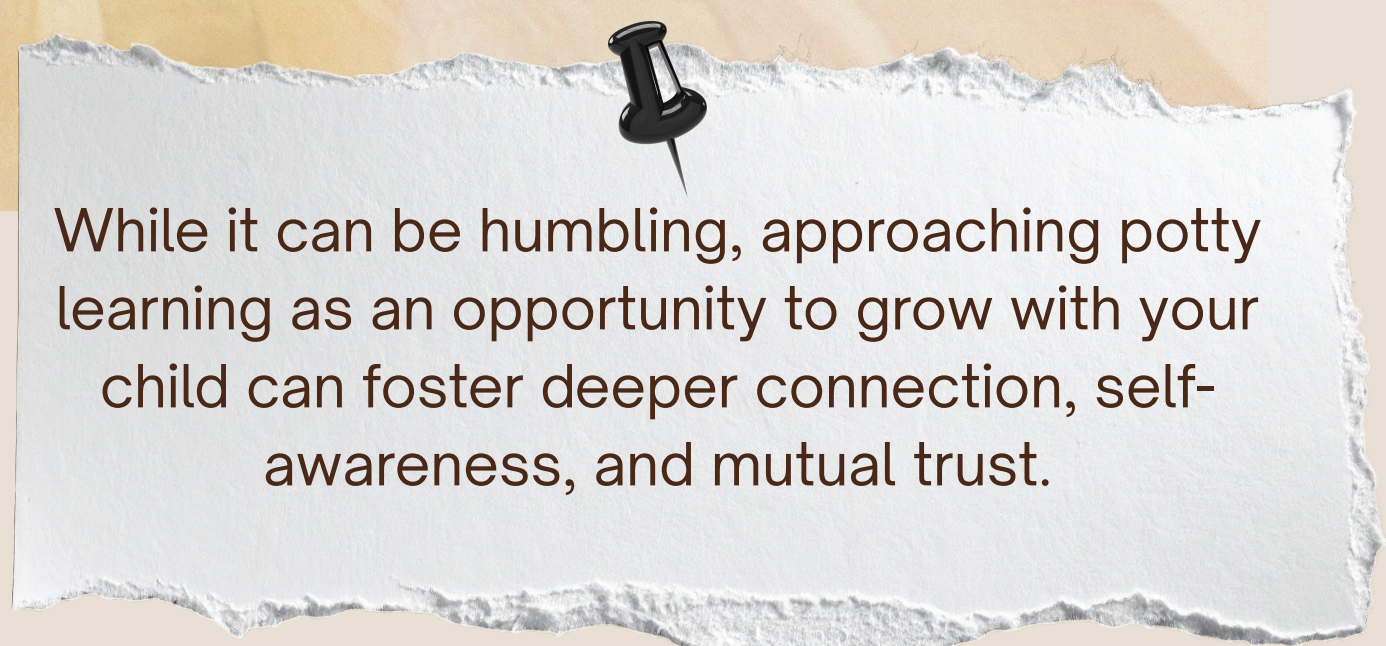
OUR APPROACH

At Oakview Preschool, we view potty learning as an important milestone that unfolds over time with patience, consistency, and care. Every child develops at their own pace, and our role is to create a calm, respectful, and supportive environment where each child can succeed when they are ready.

Rather than focusing on traditional “training,” we approach potty learning as a collaborative process rooted in readiness, trust, respect for the child’s individual timeline and partnership between home and school. When children feel safe and supported, they gain confidence and pride in their growing independence.

Potty learning can bring up a wide range of emotions for both children and adults. We encourage families to be kind to themselves throughout the process and remember that this is meaningful, important work.

Potty learning is a journey, not a race—and Oakview Preschool is here to support your family every step of the way.



While it can be humbling, approaching potty learning as an opportunity to grow with your child can foster deeper connection, self-awareness, and mutual trust.



Supporting Your Child Through Potty Learning

Is Your Family Ready?

Self-awareness and reflection around the emotions that arise during potty learning can help adults respond intentionally, rather than react unconsciously. The messages we send—through our words, tone, and body language—shape how children experience this important step toward independence. By slowing down, noticing our own expectations, and approaching the process with patience and empathy, we create a supportive environment where children feel safe, respected, and capable.

As you partner in this journey, here are a few areas to consider as you support your child through potty learning:

Don't Push

A calm, matter-of-fact approach helps children experience potty learning as their accomplishment. It is possible to have expectations without pressure or stress. Children are intuitive—they know when adults want them out of diapers, and they also know their body belongs to them. When adults express too much eagerness, potty learning can turn into a power struggle, leading to resistance. Research shows that when families wait for clear readiness indicators, the process is often smoother and shorter. Gentle reminders are helpful; repeated prompting can create unnecessary tension.



Be a True Partner

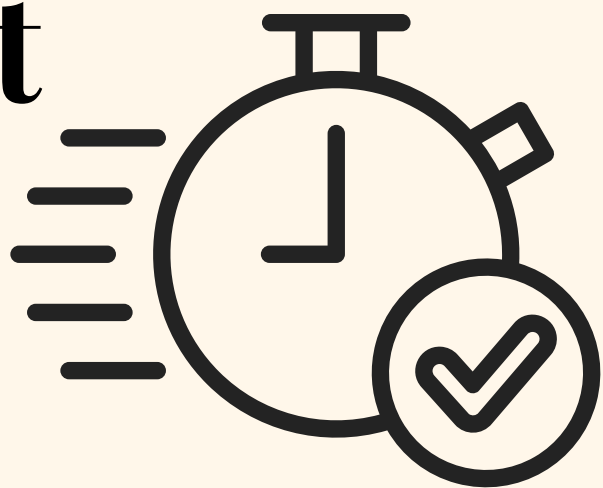
Potty learning is a shared process between children and the adults who care for them. Being a true partner means finding balance—staying engaged and supportive without taking over or stepping back completely. When children show physical and emotional readiness, adults support learning through consistency, encouragement, and predictable routines. Rather than centering adult schedules or expectations, we follow the child's cues and work together to create a thoughtful, supportive plan that helps the child feel confident and capable.





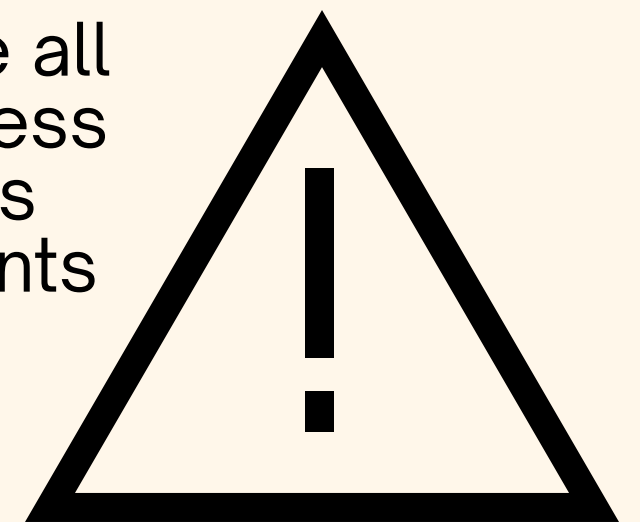
Right Timing is Important

Children may show early signs of interest in toilet learning—such as learning words for elimination or noticing the potty—but readiness for underwear in group care requires more than curiosity. At Oakview, children must demonstrate *all* readiness indicators at both home and school before moving into underwear. Readiness looks different for every child and can occur across a wide age range. Children are ready when they can participate actively in the process, including communicating their needs, managing clothing, sitting on the toilet, flushing, and washing hands.



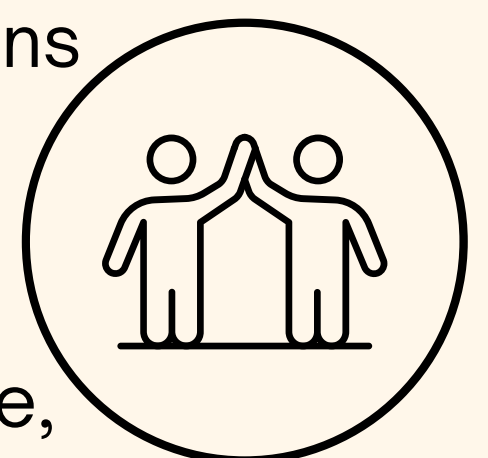
Expect Accidents to Happen

Toilet learning, like all learning, is a process and rarely happens overnight. Accidents and occasional regressions are a normal and expected part of this journey. Just as we accept falls when children learn to walk or babbling when they learn to talk, we accept accidents as part of learning to use the toilet. These moments offer opportunities to build resilience, persistence, self-confidence, and a sense of unconditional acceptance.



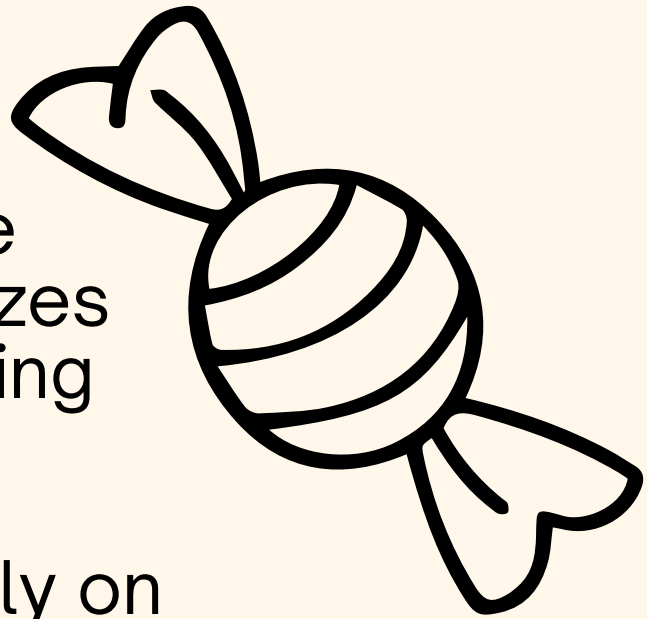
No Shame or Punishment

A child's body is their own, and bodily functions are deeply personal. Shame or punishment can create fear, stress, and power struggles often leading to withholding or increased accidents. Children learn best when they feel safe, respected, and supported. At Oakview, we approach potty learning with empathy, patience, and reassurance.



Bribes and Prizes

We do not use rewards or prizes for toilet learning at Oakview Preschool. Instead, we rely on encouragement, positive language, and meaningful support. We believe the intrinsic rewards—self-regulation, confidence, and self-respect—are far more powerful and lasting than external incentives, especially when learning to care for one's body.



Build Trust and Grow Love

Working together toward a shared goal strengthens the partnership between adults and children. Potty learning offers an opportunity to deepen trust, build confidence, and practice unconditional support. When children feel respected and encouraged, this experience can lay the foundation for strong parent-child relationships and a positive approach to future milestones.



Readiness for Adults

Potty learning takes place across multiple settings and with several trusted adults, making adult readiness just as important as child readiness. When adults are informed, aligned, and confident, children feel secure and supported. Readiness for adults includes understanding the potty learning process, communicating consistently across home and school, and recognizing that mistakes are a natural and important part of learning.

At Oakview Preschool, we partner closely with families throughout this process. When a child shows readiness indicators at both home and school, we connect with families to create a thoughtful, individualized potty learning plan that supports the child's age, development, and needs.



Potty Training vs. Potty Trained

At Oakview Preschool, we make an important distinction between potty learning (in progress) and potty trained (independent).

A child who is potty trained can:

- Verbally communicate to an adult that they need to use the bathroom
- Control their bladder and bowels long enough to reach the toilet
- Use the bathroom independently, including managing clothing, sitting or standing, wiping, and pulling clothing back up

If the answer is “no” to any of the above, your child is still potty training—and that is completely developmentally appropriate.

School Underwear at Oakview

While children are potty training, they should come to school wearing what we refer to as “school underwear” (pull-ups). Pull-ups provide comfort, confidence, and flexibility while children are still learning and help maintain a clean, sanitary classroom environment for both students and staff.

Pull-ups are intended for “just in case” moments during active potty learning. If a child is consistently using a pull-up to go to the bathroom (for example, during rest time or before active potty learning has begun), a diaper is more supportive and appropriate for that stage.

Is my child ready to begin potty training?

Every child is unique, but potty training is most successful when it is child-led and readiness-based, not forced. Children may be ready to begin when they demonstrate most of the following readiness indicators:

- Stays dry for longer periods (1–2 hours or after naps)
- Has regular, predictable bowel movements
- Recognizes pee and poop and communicates when they are wet or soiled
- Shows awareness of needing to go (wiggling, pausing play, holding themselves)
- Shows interest in the potty or wearing underwear
- Can follow simple directions
- Walks and runs steadily
- Can sit for short periods (about 5 minutes)
- Demonstrates a desire for independence



Potty training works best when children feel capable, supported, and confident. At Oakview, our focus is to encourage independence, build self-esteem, and make potty learning a positive, low-pressure experience for children and families.



Why Potty Training at School Is Different



Even when children are doing well using the bathroom at home, using the toilet at school can feel very different. This is a normal part of learning to use the toilet in a group setting.

Children may experience:

- **More distractions:** Busy classrooms, peers, and play can make it harder for children to pause and recognize their body's cues.
- **Different bathrooms:** School bathrooms look, sound, and feel different from home, which can cause hesitation or uncertainty.
- **Less immediate access:** Children must communicate their needs and may need to wait briefly for a teacher to supervise or assist.
- **Growing independence:** Teachers provide guidance and support while encouraging children to manage clothing and wiping independently as part of the learning process.
- **Group setting:** There may be other children using the bathroom at the same time, and teachers may not be able to provide one-on-one assistance. Children may experience less privacy than they do at home, which can also affect how comfortable they feel using the toilet.

These differences are expected and are part of the transition toward independent toilet use at school.

Working Together

When you feel your child may be ready to begin potty training at school, please schedule a meeting with your child's teacher. Potty learning is not a topic for drop-off or pick-up times, as those are busy transition periods.

Before beginning, we encourage families to reflect on why they are starting. Is your child showing clear readiness signs, or is the timing based on convenience? Readiness and timing play a key role in a successful experience.



A scheduled meeting allows us to:

- Partner together to create a plan that supports your child's individual needs
- Use consistent language, routines, and expectations between home and school
- Support your child's potty learning journey with patience, encouragement, and confidence

When to Pause or Reassess

It is okay—and sometimes necessary—to pause potty training. The process should feel calm and supportive, not stressful for children or adults.

Common reasons for a pause or regression include:

- Starting a new routine (including changes to naps, bottles, or pacifiers)
- Transitioning to a new classroom or school
- Moving to a new home
- Family changes, such as illness, separation, or the addition or loss of a family member

Regression should be looked at more closely if a child was fully potty trained and then lost multiple steps in the process.

When to Seek Additional Support

Please let us know if you notice:

- Ongoing emotional overwhelm or anxiety
- Fear of the toilet or withholding behaviors
- Very frequent urination
- Daily hard or pellet-like bowel movements
- Persistent stomach pain or discomfort

These signs may indicate the need to slow down, reassess, or seek additional guidance. At Oakview Preschool, we are committed to making potty learning a positive, collaborative experience—one that supports your child's confidence, independence, and long-term success both at home and at school.

Thank you for partnering with us to make potty learning calm, consistent, and empowering for your child.

An Outline of Steps for Moving Out of School Underwear (pull-ups)

There are many approaches to potty learning, and every child's path looks a little different. At Oakview Preschool, we follow a developmentally respectful, partnership-based approach that supports children as they move out of pull-ups and toward independent toilet use in a group care setting.

Because potty learning happens across two environments—home and school—and with several trusted adults, communication and shared expectations are essential for success.



OUR APPROACH

“Learning to use the toilet is a process that takes time. Rather than push or manipulate your child with rewards for something they will learn to do on their own, trust that they will learn when they are ready. Respect is based on trust.”

— Magda Gerber

1. Share

We begin by sharing Oakview's potty learning philosophy, policies, and resources with families early on. This helps create a shared understanding that potty learning is a process and that consistency between home and school supports children best.

2. Decide Together

When a child demonstrates all readiness indicators at both home and school, families and teachers come together to decide next steps. Using the readiness checklist, we agree on a mostly consistent approach that reflects the child's developmental needs and current skills.

3. Begin

Once home and school agree the child is ready, the child may begin wearing “school undies” (pull-ups) at school. At this stage, children are supported with predictable routines, gentle reminders, and encouragement as they practice new skills.

4. Continue

Potty learning continues through consistent support at both home and school. Families and teachers communicate regularly about progress, challenges, and successes, adjusting the plan as needed to best support the child.

FAMILY TIP SHEET

Potty learning is most successful when children experience consistency, patience, and support across both home and school. The tips below outline how Oakview Preschool supports children during this process—and how families can extend that support at home.

Predictable Schedule

At Oakview:

In our classrooms, diapering and potty learning are part of our daily Caregiving Routines. Children are always welcome to use the toilet when they communicate the need, and teachers respond promptly to ensure children are never left in soiled clothing. In addition, we offer consistent opportunities throughout the day for children to try the toilet. For children wearing underwear, we follow predictable toileting intervals (approximately every 1.5–2 hours) as a gentle reminder during the learning process.

If a child says they don't need to go during a scheduled time, we respond calmly and matter-of-factly: "It's time to try—and if nothing comes out, that's okay."



At Home:

Predictable routines at home help reinforce toilet learning without over-scheduling family life. Simple sequences such as "First we try the potty, then we get in the car" or "Potty, then outside time" provide structure and clarity. Logical routines—like using the toilet after meals or before naps—support children in recognizing their body's cues. While adults cannot control when a child needs to go, gentle reminders are often necessary early on. Young children may become deeply engaged in play and forget to pause, or hesitate to stop an activity they enjoy. Making trips to the potty a regular part of the family routine is both helpful and supportive.

Imitation and Modeling

At Oakview:

We never force children to sit on the toilet. In a group care setting, children naturally learn by observing their peers. As they see classmates trying the toilet, curiosity often grows and interest follows. Toilet learning becomes a shared, social experience supported by trusted adults.



At Home:

Children also benefit from modeling at home. When appropriate, allowing children to observe parents or older siblings in the bathroom can help them understand the process. Children learn how to sit or stand at the toilet, flush, wipe, and wash hands by watching people they trust and love.

Choices

At Oakview:

Offering choices supports a child's growing autonomy and sense of self. Teachers may offer options such as, "Would you like to try this toilet or that one?" or "Would you like to try now or in two minutes?" When a child is hesitant but it is nearing a natural toileting time, choices help reduce power struggles while maintaining structure.

At Home:

A helpful rule of thumb: only offer choices if both options are acceptable to you.

Examples include:

- "Would you like to use the upstairs bathroom or the downstairs bathroom?"
- "Would you like to go now or in two minutes?" (Using a timer can help.)
- "Would you like me to stand nearby or wait outside the door?"

Independence Through Movement

At Oakview:

Throughout diapering and potty learning, we encourage children to do as much as they can independently. Care routines support motor development, coordination, sequencing, problem-solving, and confidence. Rather than lifting children onto the toilet, we give them time to climb, sit, and manage clothing on their own whenever possible. We honor children's desire to say "I can do it myself" and view toilet learning as a meaningful educational milestone. Care routines are never rushed and are given the same respect as all learning experiences.

At Home:

We understand that family life can be busy. Still, slowing down during care routines whenever possible supports children's confidence and independence. Simple encouragement such as, "Look how you climbed onto the potty by yourself," or "Can you show me how you turn on the water and get the soap?" allows children to master each step. When children feel ownership over their bodies and actions, pride and motivation naturally follow.

Accidents are a Part of Learning

At Oakview:

Teachers expect accidents and approach them with a calm, supportive tone. Mistakes are learning opportunities. Children hear messages such as, "Sometimes accidents happen. Let's get clean clothes." Teachers partner with children during clothing changes, offering help and encouragement without using accidents as consequences or punishments. Children need to know that adults remain present and supportive, even when mistakes happen. Families are asked to send extra clothing so children can change comfortably and without stress if needed.

At Home:

Accidents are a normal part of potty learning. Families are encouraged to keep extra clothes available when out and about and to respond with patience and reassurance. Children should never be punished, shamed, forced to clean accidents as a consequence, or left in soiled clothing. Children do not learn through fear or shame—they learn through safety, trust, and consistency.

Potty Learning

Readiness Checklist

Once we have filled out the readiness checklists at home and school and agree that the child is ready to move into underwear, we can discuss questions, expectations and rituals, and decide when the transition to school underwear (pull-ups) to underwear can be made at school. Determining a window or readiness and deciding together on the right time is important for children to be supported and successful in group child care settings.

HOME NOTES

SCHOOL NOTES

CHILD STAYS DRY FOR 2 HOURS

Holding urine for at least 2 hours at a time indicates that the bladder is big enough and the child is mature enough to begin potty learning.

CHILD IS HAVING REGULAR BMS

Children should be having regular soft comfortable bowel movements, If there is any possibility of bowel withholding or constipation, it should be addressed with a pediatrician

CHILD IS AWARE WHEN WET OR SOILED

Does the child indicate discomfort or show you or tell you when he/she needs to be changed?

CHILD CAN UNDRRESS

Children should be able to pull up and down their pants to practice potty learning as a self-help skill. It helps to dress children in elastic-waist comfortable clothes and are not too tight.

LARGE MOTOR SKILLS

children should be coordinated enough to walk, even run, and climb. Physical readiness will allow the child to be a full participant

	HOME NOTES	SCHOOL NOTES
CHILD STAYS DRY FOR 2 HOURS		
CHILD IS HAVING REGULAR BMS		
CHILD IS AWARE WHEN WET OR SOILED		
CHILD CAN UNDRRESS		
LARGE MOTOR SKILLS		

HOME NOTES

SCHOOL NOTES

CHILD CAN FOLLOW SIMPLE DIRECTIONS

The child will need to cooperate with simple directions to participate.

CHILD IMITATES OTHERS & SHOWS PRIDE

Role play and imitation are a sign that the child is making sense of their world and are motivated to begin potty learning. Showing pride indicates the child is intrinsically motivated as well as eager to please.

CHILD TRUSTS ADULTS

We learn from those we trust and love.

LANGUAGE

The child needs to be able to answer yes and no questions such as “do you need to go?” or “are you wet?” The child should also be using language to describe body parts and waste products.

CHILD WASHES HANDS

The child participates in hand washing routines, and will wash hands with prompting. Hand washing is part of potty learning, promoting healthy habits.

ADULTS ARE READY TO BE SUPPORTIVE

Adults are communicating in a variety of environments to provide consistency, and they understand there may be some inconvenience in the routine, and are ready to give encouragement and support

HOME NOTES	SCHOOL NOTES