

Bringing Up Baby

Love A Lot Preschool takes babysitting to the next level: early childhood development by Frances Madeson

There's an oasis on Suffolk Street for some of the neighborhood's youngest people, a place where pristine, serene rooms are named for Gingerbread, Sun-flower and Butterfly.

Thirty-five children are currently enrolled in Love A Lot Preschool, and while school founder Olga Bosio is planning to expand to sixty children, there will be no more slots for newborns and 1 year-olds. In fact, in both of those age ranges there's already a waiting list, and it's easy to understand why:

The space is spotlessly clean; there are no odors or apparent refuse even where the diapers are changed. All street shoes must be removed before entering the baby room to maintain strict hygienic standards, "especially on the floors where the babies crawl," Ms. Bosio counsels. "They're never alone and for extra measure, each room has a security camera." At nap-time, soothing classical music plays on a compact disc in the baby area.

Elizabeth Quinores has a degree in Early Childhood Education, knows baby CPR and First Aid, and has undergone child abuse training. "Sometimes people don't understand why people who care for infants need to be so credentialed as educators," she says. "But we're teaching all the time. For instance, if we see a baby trying to develop a new skill, we devise ways to encourage it to accomplish the task. If he or she wants to roll over, we'll place a favorite toy just out of reach, so the baby works toward the goal."

The preschoolers have a busy day filled with free play, stories, puppets, snacks and naps, all of the usual preoccupations, as well as many extras, like gardening in the private garden.

At Love A Lot there are two kinds of music classes. On Mondays there's folk music; on Wednesdays, Tony Corsano gives a class combining music and movement with multi-colored, age appropriate props. Forty-five merry minutes are spent shaking noisemakers to the beat of a drum, pounding the floor with plastic hammers, popping bubbles—all seamlessly woven into the songfest. *Zoom, zoom, we're going to the moon!*

Yet to come: A tennis class. "We'll start the two-year-olds with tennis; it's a great way to build muscle memory," Olga informs me.

No doubt, but when are they going to squeeze it in?

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