

CHILD GUIDANCE POLICY/BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The ultimate goal in Montessori is for children to develop self-discipline. The prepared environment in a Montessori classroom thus provides a setting in which children can learn to control their own actions, rather than relying on an adults' authority. If a child is disruptive or unmotivated, the Montessori teacher first analyzes how to better serve that child. In her book, *The Discovery of the Child*, Maria Montessori wrote, "In our system we obviously have a different concept of discipline. The discipline we are looking for is active. We do not believe that one is disciplined only when he is artificially made as silent as a mute and as motionless as a paralytic. Such a one is not disciplined but annihilated." In Montessori children are not coerced. Children are guided and teachers talk with them rationally and with great compassion and love.

Positive Discipline is used as a foundational approach to classroom and school discipline in many Montessori schools throughout the United States because of its continuity with the Montessori principles of respect and independence.

Positive Discipline is based on the work of Alfred Adler and Rudolph Dreikurs, contemporaries of Maria Montessori. The primary goal of the approach is to help create a social/emotional environment where children are given the tools to to succeed in becoming responsible, respectful and capable members of their communities and families. Based on the best-selling books of Jane Nelsen, PhD, Positive Discipline teaches important life and social skills in a manner that is deeply respectful of both children and adults.

The five criteria for effective discipline:

1. It helps children experience a sense of connection. (belonging and significance)
2. It is mutually respectful and encouraging. (kind and firm at the same time)
3. It is effective long-term. (considers what the child is thinking, feeling, deciding and learning about himself and his world)
4. Teaches important life-skills. (respect, concern for others, problem solving, empathy, helpfulness)
5. It invites children to discover how capable they are. (encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy)

If a guide needs to talk with a child about his or her actions, the guide will do so in a manner that respects the child (e.g. speaking quietly with the child away from peers). Sometimes children only need some time and space to gain control of their actions. If the child cannot control his or her actions, the child may be gently removed from the classroom, with an adult in close proximity, until able to regain composure and return voluntarily.

The following are prohibited in the school: spanking or other corporal punishment; subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment; depriving children of meals or snacks; force feeding children; disciplining children for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet; forcing children to remain in soiled clothing or forcing children to remain on the toilet; or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting.

When appropriate and feasible, children shall participate in the establishment of rules, policies, and procedures.

The school's basic rules are:

- People must be treated with respect. This means no physical or mental harm.
- The environment must be treated with respect. Materials are to be used carefully and returned neatly when not in use. Any accidents are to be cleaned up.
- Work of others must never be disturbed.
- Lessons may be chosen only after an invitation by a guide.

Procedures for dealing with unacceptable behavior:

- Make immediate response.
- Go quickly and quietly to the child without calling across the room unless a person or the environment is in danger.
- Get down to the child's level. Let your serious expression and tone of voice communicate your sincerity. It is not necessary to raise your voice.
- Make and maintain eye contact.
- Seriously and simply state the rule or condition that is the problem. Do not tell the child what should or should not be done. Say, "Yelling is NOT allowed," instead of, "You shouldn't yell," or "You should use a quiet voice."
- Maintain eye contact for three seconds after speaking.
- Ask, "What did I say?" and have the child repeat it to you.
- Ask, "Do you understand?" In the rare case that a child does not understand, restate the condition differently until the child admits that he understands.
- If the behavior is repeated, say NOTHING! It is difficult, but important to refrain from lecturing and repeating. You MUST simply gesture to the child to be seated at a separate table. Make NO remarks or expression of emotion.
- After the child has regained self-control, gesture or invite the child to return to his or her work.

A child who continually annoys others or disturbs their work must be provided with a place to sit alone. He must be given many lessons in an attempt to get him interested in his own work.

Physical aggression (hitting, biting, scratching, pushing, etc.) require that the child sit alone for a time appropriate to the circumstances so that the child may regain control over his or her actions.

General Guidelines

Enforce all rules equally for all children. Adults must follow rules, too. Remember that children learn by example.

If you are not sure of an incident ask, "What happened?" Ask every child involved and give equal acceptance.

Be careful to refrain from reacting to "tattling." It is usually used to get attention. Have the child accompany you to the person about whom he is tattling and directly address the problem with that

person. Let the children work it out whenever possible.

Never lecture or moralize on the condition, such as, "It isn't nice to yell," or "People do not like it when you yell." This is an adult tendency that causes children to tune out.

Never ask, "Why did you do this?" Children are not developmentally able to analyze their actions.

Never threaten consequences that are unreasonable and cannot be carried out. Be sure to follow through with what you say.

Consequences should relate to the consequences of the unacceptable behavior as much as possible, e.g. for throwing sand in sand box the child may not play in the sand box during that playtime.

For Children's House and Kindergarten children, discipline consequences should be of an immediate nature. For example, playtime should not be withheld for misbehaving or "goofing around" in class. Rather, the guide can limit the opportunity to "goof around" in class by limiting the child to a particular table to work alone or requiring that a guide escort the child to choose lessons if necessary.

Never argue with a child.

Never withhold food as a consequence of unacceptable behavior.

If a child cannot control him or herself, the child may need to be in a safe place where he or she can regain control. Be careful to provide the child with opportunities for developing self-control, through work with the hands which leads to concentration.

Be careful not to interfere with the child's individual pattern of development and natural creative powers. This requires careful and objective observation.

Be careful not to impose what you wish or think the child should be doing. Remember to state a condition, not a "should" or "need to." "There is rice on the floor," instead of, "You need to sweep up the rice." "Your chair is still out," instead of, "You must push your chair in." "Running is not allowed inside," in place of, "You need to go back and walk."

Wear a smile. The children are usually behaving appropriately and need to know you accept them. Corrections do not always have to be done unpleasantly, just firmly.

Keep verbalization during lesson presentation and especially discipline to a minimum.