



Montessori School of Wooster

Preschool & Kindergarten Handbook

The Montessori method of teaching aims for the fullest possible development of the whole child, ultimately preparing him for life's many rich experiences.

Montessori teachers are trained facilitators in the classroom, always ready to assist and direct. Their purpose is to stimulate the child's enthusiasm for learning and to guide it, without interfering with the child's natural desire to teach himself and become independent. Each child works through his individual cycle of activities, and learns to truly understand according to his own unique needs and capabilities.

Everything in a Montessori classroom has a specific use or purpose. There is nothing in the prepared environment that the child cannot see or touch. All of the furniture and equipment is scaled down to the child's size and is within easy reach.

A quality Montessori classroom has a busy, productive atmosphere where joy and respect abound. Within such an enriched environment, freedom, responsibility, and social and intellectual development spontaneously flourish!

~North American Montessori Center

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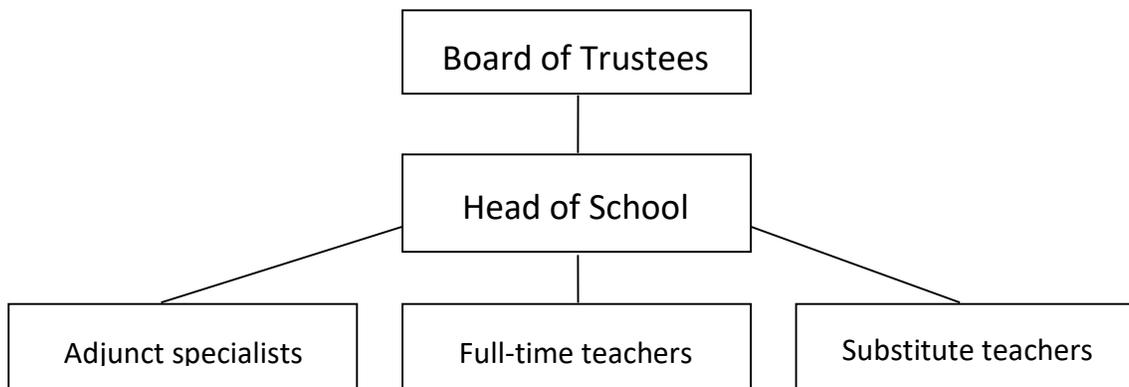
Mission, Compliance with State Regulations, State Required Forms, Philosophy, Non-Discrimination Policy and Board of Trustees

Mission

The mission of the Montessori School of Wooster is to provide a hands-on, individualized Montessori program that fosters self-confidence and creative thinking in an environment of peace, respect and compassion.

Compliance with State Regulations

The Montessori School of Wooster is a not-for-profit corporation, for which a governing board is responsible. The organizational chart is shown here:



The Montessori School of Wooster is legally licensed to operate under the Ohio Department of Education. As such, it follows all guidelines of the Ohio Department of Education and teachers must hold certificates with the Ohio Department of Education. All head teachers are also licensed Montessori teachers. The Montessori School of Wooster is a member of the American Montessori Society.

Parents or guardians of a child currently enrolled in the Montessori School of Wooster shall be permitted unlimited access to the school during its hours of operation for the purposes of contacting their child, evaluating the care provided by the school, or evaluating the premises. Upon entering the school (except on volunteer days), parents must notify the administrator of their presence. We encourage parents to wait until after November 1st to come to observe. Younger children may find seeing you in the environment distracting, especially when you try to leave. We ask that you follow certain guidelines while visiting which will be given to you when you come to observe.

A roster of names, addresses, e-mail and telephone numbers of enrolled children and their parents will be distributed each school year. Each family must sign a release form allowing this information to be published. The roster will not include the names of any family failing to grant such permission.

The school's licensing record is available upon request from the Ohio Department of Education, including compliance report forms from the Department and evaluation forms from the Health Department, Building Department, and Fire Department, among other information.

State Required Forms

Students must – prior to the time of their entrance to school – have a physical examination and a Medical Statement form filled out and signed by a doctor that includes a record of all immunizations. This form, along with a record of immunizations, will be necessary each new school year.

A record of the child’s health history (including communicable diseases) must be filled out by the parent and up-dated yearly. This record is listed on the back side of the required Emergency Medical Card.

Emergency Transportation Authorization will be necessary each new school year. It gives the school your permission to transport your child to medical assistance and gives us names of alternates to call if you are unavailable. The authorization appears on the back side of the required Emergency Medical Card.

Philosophy

The Montessori School of Wooster offers an individualized hands-on approach to education based on the teaching method of Maria Montessori, a method which celebrates over 100 years. In each class, children of mixed ages and abilities work together. Ungraded grouping permits independent development, discourages individual competition, and encourages peer learning and interaction.

In the pre-school classroom, an emphasis on practical life skills permits children to perfect their sense of order, coordination, concentration and independence. Grace and courtesy are vital skills taught along with math, geography and language to cultivate the child’s natural desire to learn. Individualized instruction using manipulatives makes abstract concepts concrete. Integrated programs include music, art, physical education and Spanish.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Montessori School of Wooster supports diversity and recruits students of any race, religion, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation to all its rights, privileges, programs, and activities. In addition, the school will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation in the administration of its educational programs and athletics/extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the school is not intended to be an alternative to desegregation ordered by a court or administrative agency, or initiated by a public school district. The Montessori School of Wooster will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation in the hiring of its certified or non-certified personnel.

Board of Trustees

Sarah Gordon Baker
Rhonda Bowling
Vikki Briggs
Casey Cicconetti
Joanna Cutlip
Jason Frank
Mary Jo Kreuzman
Rachel Relle
Molly Richard
Cathy Roche
Pam Rose
David Shallenberger
Greg Shaya

Arrival/Dismissal, Safety Drills, and Aftercare

Arrival/Dismissal

For everyone's safety, we ask that you refrain from using cell phones in the driveway during drop-off and pick-up. If you are using your phone, please pull over to finish your call. Please remember that cell phones should not be used in the school building.

- Parents are asked to inform the school by 9:15 a.m. if their child will be absent. After this time the school secretary will call your home to ask about your child. You may also call the night before and leave a message on our answering machine (330-264-5222).
- No child will be left alone or unsupervised. If you would like your child to stay and play longer on the playground at dismissal time, please understand that once the child has been dismissed to you, you are supervising your child.
- Many of our parents are dropping off and picking up around work schedules. Please be aware of their need to be timely by not parking in the drive for any amount of time. If you think you will be just "a minute," we ask that you still park your car in a parking spot. As we all know, "a minute" can unintentionally turn into five or ten.
- Arrival policies: We recommend for your child's safety that as soon as they feel comfortable, parents pull up to the front door each morning and let their child step out and enter the building independently. A teacher will be waiting to assist your child. If you would like to park the car and come into the school, you may do that after dropping off your child. If you prefer to park and walk your child into school, we recommend that you walk with your child. Please do not allow children to run ahead or lag behind. It is difficult for drivers to see small children between cars or while backing out. Arrival time for ages 3-6 is 8:50-9:00 a.m. **(Please respect our teachers' need for preparation time before 8:50 a.m.)** Your promptness is appreciated.
- Dismissal policies: In nice weather, children will be dismissed from the playground in back of the school. You may wait at the top of the stairs and the teachers will call your child to meet you. If you would like your child to stay longer, please tell the teacher and be aware that you will be supervising your child. In case of inclement weather, classroom teachers will be dismissing children from the front porch. The gate on the porch steps is there for the safety of our children. Please be sure it is latched when entering or leaving the porch area. To keep our students safe, we ask that you walk with your child during dismissal. It is a busy parking lot and children are often hard to see when they are walking alone. No children will be dismissed to anyone other than their regular driver unless we have received a note from the parent or a phone call from the parent explaining this change. Because our teachers have other obligations after dismissal time, students not picked up by 12:00 (or 2:30 for kindergarten) will be charged a late fee.

Safety Drills

Fire drills are held monthly. Procedures for fire drills and weather alerts are posted in each classroom including diagrams showing evacuation routes. Children are given directions, procedures, and reasons for fire drills and weather alerts. Safety Drills are also conducted during the school year.

Weapon-Free Policy

No student or parent/guardian shall use, possess, handle, transmit, sell, or conceal any object that can be classified as a weapon or dangerous instrument while on school grounds, at school-sponsored or related activities, functions, or events off school grounds, on a school owned, operated or leased vehicles, or at any other time that the student is subject to the authority of the school. Weapons and dangerous instruments shall include any object which is used or may be used to inflict physical harm or property damage.

Aftercare

The before- and after-school sessions are available Monday through Friday 7:30-9:00 a.m. and 12:00-5:30 p.m. This program has limited space available and sign-up forms are given with enrollment packets in the spring. To secure a spot, you must complete the form and return with your enrollment papers for the following school year. We do maintain a waiting list for the aftercare program. Due to licensing requirements, we need to closely monitor and adhere to policy regarding the number of students utilizing this program. For this reason, we are not able to offer a “drop-in” service nor deviate from the schedule that you requested when signing up for before/aftercare. A form explaining fees is available from the main office. Billing for these programs is done at the end of each month. Bills are generated according to the hours actually used in the programs.

While not every child can easily sleep during nap time, we request that non-sleeping kids are quiet during this restful period. Teachers typically will tell the children that they must sit or lie quietly. This can include a quiet-time activity such as looking at a book. Understandably, this policy helps napping children to fall asleep easier and provides a calm atmosphere in the room.

School Delay and Snow Days Policy

Safety is utmost in our minds when considering calling a school delay or closing. Delays and closings are done as early as possible. (We do take into consideration that the call needs to be timely enough for those utilizing our toddler and before-care programs, which may begin at 7:30 a.m.) You should always look for Montessori School of Wooster's cancellation or delay. Extreme weather (cold/wind chill), snow accumulation and road conditions are what govern our decisions.

Sources to check for school delays and closings are:

- WQKT (960 AM, 104.5 FM) or www.wqkt.com
- Channel 3 or www.wkyc.com
- Channel 5 or www.wews.com
*(*Some websites offer the option of a "text alert" that would send you a message on your cell phone if school is delayed or cancelled. We encourage you to sign up for this. It is a free service and is the fastest way to receive notifications.)*

If we decide to go from a delay to a closing, this change will be made by 8:45 a.m. and will again be listed on Channels 3 and 5, on WQKT 906 AM/104.5 FM and on their websites. Calling a delay first is done in order to give us time to make the most informed decision regarding weather safety.

The following plan will be used for a delay:

If we have a two hour delay, the Toddler program and before care will open at 9:30 a.m. (Only those children already enrolled in the before care program may arrive at 9:30 a.m.) The rest of the school (including before-care) will open at 11:00 a.m. School will be optional for preschool children who normally leave at noon. Their days are not counted by the Ohio Department of Education. School will be required for kindergarten through grade 6. If you should decide the roads are too dangerous for you to travel, please call the school by 11:15 a.m. and let us know that you are choosing to keep your child at home. (You may leave a message if you call before school has opened.) This will be considered an excused absence. As a parent, you are the best judge as to whether you should bring your child to school from your area.

Communicable Disease Policies and Emergencies / Accidents

Communicable Disease Policies

- 1) School personnel are trained in signs and symptoms of illness and in hand washing and disinfection procedures. Classes are given by the Red Cross, a registered nurse, or the Health Department, and must be renewed every three years.
- 2) Teachers shall not attend school when they themselves have a communicable disease. In order to lessen the spread of infection and as protection to their own health, they will wash their hands often and thoroughly.
- 3) The following symptoms will be cause to immediately isolate and discharge a child from school. The student should return to school only after they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication. This is imperative, as illnesses can spread quickly among children. If the child has seen a doctor during their illness, please provide a doctor's note upon the student's return to school.
 - Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool within a 24-hour period)
 - Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or to make a whooping sound
 - Difficult or rapid breathing
 - Yellowish skin or eyes
 - Conjunctivitis; pink eye
 - Temperature of 100°+; elevated temperature
 - Untreated infected skin patch(es)
 - Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
 - Stiff neck
 - Unusual spots or rashes; impetigo
 - Ringworm
 - Sore throat or difficulty in swallowing
 - Common cold (when accompanied by sneezing, coughing or nasal drainage that is not clear)
 - Chicken pox, mumps, measles
 - Vomiting
 - Evidence of lice, scabies, or other parasitic infestation
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- 4) The ill child will be isolated and made comfortable on a cot in a corner of the classroom or in the school office and the parent will be notified. Please understand that if the school calls regarding an ill child, we are expecting the child to be picked up as soon as possible to help limit the exposure to other students and staff.
- 5) If your child contracts a communicable disease, please notify the school as soon as possible. Families will be informed of the illness through an email to parents.
- 6) When children return to school, we appreciate an update on their health.

- 7) A mildly ill child should be kept at home. If they cannot participate in normal activities, the child is too sick to be at school.
- 8) Medications may be administered at school only with prior written permission from a parent. A parent or guardian must complete and sign a Medical Authorization Form giving proper instructions to the staff. Medications should be given to the school office to be kept in a medication lock box. Any medication must come to school in its original container. Children are not permitted to self-medicate during school or bring any kind of medication to school including vitamins, cough drops or other over-the-counter products. These requirements are for your child's safety.

Emergencies & Accidents

School personnel are trained in first aid, and a first aid kit is available in each classroom at all times. The school also has an A.E.D. (automatic external defibrillator) unit which is kept in the Administrative Coordinator's office. Emergency telephone numbers are located next to each telephone within the building.

In case of serious injury, the school's medical and dental emergency plan will be put into effect. First aid will be administered. EMS will be called, and the parents or guardians notified. The child may be transported to medical assistance by EMS. The child's medical records and emergency transportation authorization will be sent along.

When an accident or injury occurs, or any other incident necessitates contacting the Poison Control Center or the emergency transportation of the child as prescribed by the state, we will prepare an incident report and provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) with a copy that same day.

Emergency plans are in place for fire, tornado and intruders.

Birthdays, Snacks & Lunches, Clothing, Labeling, Gum/Candy/Toys and Visitations/Observations

Birthdays

Birthdays are always special to the students and we have a traditional celebration here at school. Please send or bring a simple treat such as cookies for your child to share if you wish. To help minimize crumbs, we ask that you refrain from sending cupcakes or muffins. It is also helpful to have “icing-free” treats. Also, no hats, horns, favors, etc. A birthday celebration form was included in your school paperwork and will help in making your child’s day special. Families are always welcome to come and celebrate with the child.

Children with summer birthdays may celebrate “half birthdays.” If your child has a summer birthday and this idea does not appeal to you, you may choose any day. Please talk to the classroom teacher at school to arrange a date. If your child is having a celebration at home, please mail the invitations rather than bringing them to school. We have found this to be disruptive to the classroom and unsettling to those children who may not be invited.

If you would like to honor your child’s birthday by giving a gift to the school, you may talk with the staff about ideas.

Snacks & Lunches

The school has an exemption from food service licensure because only pre-packaged foods are served. Student lunch is brought from home. Soup or other hot foods may be sent in a thermos. Please choose a thermos that does not leak and which your child can manage. Please be sure to provide ice packs in your child’s lunch if you are packing foods that need to remain cold. When choosing a dessert for your child’s lunch, please try to minimize sugar.

Clothing

The children are encouraged to be independent and self-sufficient. This includes being able to manage their own clothing. Clothes with easy zippers and big buttons are good options. Elastic waist, pull-on pants make it easier for children to go to the bathroom by themselves. Overalls tend to be more difficult for a child to manage alone. The clothes should allow children freedom of movement and should also be such that paint spills, etc. will not harm them. For the safety of your child, slippery-soled shoes, open-toed and open-back (clogs) shoes are not recommended. We ask that you refrain from clothing that might be distracting articles. (It is at the school’s discretion to determine whether or not something is distracting in the classroom.) Since wearing hats is not permitted in the classroom, they may be stored with your child’s other outdoor gear (medical and religious exemptions.)

Outdoor activities are important. If the temperature is 25 degrees or above we go outside for recess, so please dress your child appropriately for the current season. Children look forward to participating at recess and we want to be sure they are properly prepared to go outside with their classmates. We require boots whenever we have **any** snow or whenever the playground is muddy.

Labeling

Please be sure to label all of your child's belongings with their name. This includes inside/outside shoes, coats, hats, boots, gloves/mittens, scarves, extra clothing, blankets, lunchboxes and backpacks.

Gum/Candy/Toys

Gum, candy, and toys of any sort are distracting to other students. Even jewelry (i.e., special watches) can be distracting. (Educationally interesting items are welcome, however.) Children should remove gum before entering the school and leave toys in the car.

Visitations/Observations

One of the best ways of learning about the Montessori approach to education is to observe a class in session. The observation shows your child that you are interested in his/her classroom experience and it gives you a clearer understanding of classroom life. Although we have an open-door policy, it is good to clear a time for an observation by contacting the teacher or the head of school. Visitations for birthday celebrations or to have lunch with your child are also encouraged. Grandparents and others who are close to your child are also welcome. Please contact the school to schedule these visits.

Method of Payment for Tuition and Volunteer Opportunities

Method of Payment for Tuition

Tuition for the total school year will be paid according to one of three plans. Plan A: Ten monthly payments beginning in August. Automatic deduction through ACH is mandatory for this option. Plan B: Two equal payments due the beginning of August and the beginning of January. Plan C: Full payment due the beginning of June (for the upcoming year's tuition). A discount may apply for this option. An enrollment agreement will be signed by the school and the parent/guardian which spells out the amount of tuition due and the plan the parent/guardian chose. An enrollment deposit must accompany this contract.

This will be a binding agreement. There will be no refunds because of the child's absence or withdrawal from the school, unless the family should move from the Wooster area during the school year. In that case, the tuition will be prorated based upon the date of withdrawal. If a family decides to withdraw a child after June 15, they are responsible for paying the tuition for that child due to the agreement made on the enrollment contract.

See the Montessori School of Wooster Tuition Rates chart for current fees. (Available in the school office.)

Additional charges may be applied in the event of consistently late payments or arrival/dismissal times that vary from the parent/school signed contract.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are especially welcome. The outside playground area is an on-going project for our parents. If you have any interest in helping with this, please contact the Head of School. Volunteers may also assist within the classroom. Reading to the children, making special presentations about an interest or hobby or teaching a special skill to our students is always appreciated. Contact your child's teacher if you are interested in volunteering.

Our parent group organizes special events for the school. Each event requires volunteers and your help is always appreciated.

Program, Bringing Work Home, and Respecting the Child

Program

The regular session meets Monday-Friday from 9:00-12:00 noon. Two teachers work with 15-20 children ages 3-6. The staff/child ratio is therefore 1:7 or 1:10.

Bringing Work Home

The children bring home their work on “take-home days” (usually once a week) rather than on a daily basis. Take-home bags are placed on the front porch (usually on Mondays) for pickup at dismissal. The bags are in crates labeled by classroom teacher. We work to emphasize the process rather than the final product. Preschool children are primarily concerned with the process and not the product, nor can they readily verbalize their experiences. You may find that if you ask your child what happened during the school day, you may be frustrated by their lack of an answer. The significant facts (at least to the child) will come out later and at unexpected times.

Respecting the Child

During lessons in grace and courtesy, children learn primarily through role-playing. They learn how to conduct themselves with others, how to handle difficult social relationships peacefully and justly, what the class ground rules are, and how to use materials properly. There are certain ground rules:

1. Each child’s *person* is to be respected by all children and adults in the environment.
2. Each child’s *work* is to be respected by all children and adults in the environment.
3. All *materials* are to be respected and used properly by all children and adults in the environment.
4. Walking is the accepted means of locomotion by all children and adults in the inside environment.
5. Low tones and respectful language are the accepted means of communication between all children and adults in the inside environment.

If teacher interference is required, the adult will first discuss the matter with the child or children involved, trying to help them to be in control of themselves. This is our “peace table” approach. On occasion a child needs to be removed from the other children (e.g. sit down on any chair or on the porch at outdoor play time.) Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited.

Child Custody Dismissal Policy, and Procedure for Student Withdrawal or Special Needs Assessment

Child Custody Dismissal Policy

Parents of children enrolled in Montessori School of Wooster whose birth parents are divorced from each other and do not have joint custody shall submit verification of custody. Verification shall consist of a certified copy of:

- 1) a judgment entry which states the name of the custodial parent(s) OR
- 2) the decree of dissolution which states the name of the custodial parent(s).

In the event that custody is pending, the school shall receive a certified copy of the court's temporary custody order. The school is to be informed of any change of custody by a certified copy of such a court order. In the case of shared parenting, parents are to submit a certified copy of the plan of shared parenting.

Our school Dismissal Form states:

"I hereby give permission for my child _____, to be picked up at school during the _____ school year by any one of the following individuals. I understand that my child will not be released to any other individual unless I provide WRITTEN permission to the school."

This form must be filled in by the custodial parent upon consultation with the non-custodial parent, so that the school has the permission of the custodial parent to release the child to any persons listed on the form. We cannot release the child to anyone else, unless the custodial parent writes a special note designating someone not on the list to pick up the child on a certain day. In the case of shared parenting, both parents must fill in this form, and the school then has permission to release the child to anyone on either list.

Procedure for Student Withdrawal or Special Needs Assessment

Rarely do we have students who cannot succeed at our school. However, there have been times when learning issues or behavioral issues have caused families to withdraw. The enrollment contract, a legal document, is then broken and as a school we have to deal with this situation. This procedure is being put into place so we can work together in an orderly and peaceful way to assess what is best for your child.

1. Issues need to be addressed first in a face to face meeting with the teachers and parents involved.
2. If it is determined the child is having problems we feel unable to address, a meeting with the head of school is needed.
3. A professional evaluation is needed by a learning specialist or a psychologist to assist us in knowing what is best for your child and if we can serve her/his needs. The school will help the family set up this evaluation.
4. After the evaluation is received, a meeting with parents, teachers and head of school will help to determine the adjustments which can be made to help the child be more successful or a mutual agreement will be made that the school cannot meet the needs of the child. At this point, the enrollment contract would be sent to the Board of Trustees for final release approval. The family will receive a final letter regarding adjustments to be made or approval of withdrawal from the Board.

Re-enrollment Considerations

Given that the Montessori School of Wooster (hereinafter “School”) does not always have room to accommodate all the children who would like to advance to the next program level, The School has defined procedures for determining re-enrollment.

The overriding consideration will be whether the child is best served by our Montessori program (i.e., does the School think it is a good fit for the child’s learning style, or would he/she be better served in a more structured environment?)

Other considerations, in no particular order, will include, but not be limited to:

1. Length of time at our school or in another Montessori school;
2. Siblings in the program;
3. Readiness for the anticipated program;
4. Teacher recommendations;
5. Probability student will remain at the School in future years;

Re-enrollment policy for all students: Occasionally, we find that our school does not provide a conducive learning environment for every child. In those cases, even if space is available, the School reserves the right to deny re-enrollment. This policy applies to *all* students, whether or not they are advancing to the next level in our program.

The School supports diversity and recruits students of all races, religions, ethnic origins, and sexual orientations to all its rights, privileges, programs and activities. In addition, the School will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation in the administration of its educational programs and extracurricular activities or in the hiring of its personnel. Furthermore, the school is not intended to be an alternative to desegregation ordered by a court or administrative agency, or initiated by a public school district.

Ohio Department of Education - Required Information

We are required by the Ohio Department of Education to provide this information in our parent handbooks:

Our license is posted in the Administrative Coordinator's office, along with our most recent compliance reports. If you would like copies of other inspections (fire, mold, health), these are available upon request.

If a parent has concerns about the program, he or she should first talk with the child's teacher. The Head of School may be brought in if necessary. Formal complaints about the program can be submitted in writing to the Ohio Department of Education.

Parents providing snacks are asked to bring in nutritious food items as requested by individual teachers. Teachers will post a weekly schedule of such snacks.

Discipline:

- A) A preschool staff member in charge of a child or a group of children shall be responsible for their discipline.
- B) Constructive, developmentally appropriate child guidance and management techniques are to be used at all times and shall include such measures as redirection, separation from problem situations, talking with the child about the situation and praise for appropriate behavior.
- C) Behavior management/discipline policies and procedures shall ensure the safety, physical and emotional well-being of all individuals on the premises.
- D) The center's actual methods of discipline shall apply to all persons on the premises and shall be restricted as follows:
 - 1) There shall be no cruel, harsh, corporal punishment or any unusual punishments such as, but not limited to, punching, pinching, shaking, spanking or biting.
 - 2) No discipline shall be delegated to any other child.
 - 3) No physical restraints shall be used to confine a child by any means other than holding a child for a short period of time, such as in a protective hug, so the child may regain control.
 - 4) No child shall be placed in a locked room or confined in an enclosed area such as a closet, a box or a similar cubicle.
 - 5) No child shall be subjected to profane language, threats, derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family or other verbal abuse.
 - 6) Discipline shall not be imposed on a child for failure to eat, failure to sleep or toileting accidents.
 - 7) Techniques of discipline shall not humiliate, shame or frighten a child.
 - 8) Discipline shall not include withholding food, rest or toilet use.
 - 9) Separation, when used as discipline shall be brief in duration and appropriate to the child's age and developmental ability and the child shall be within sight and hearing of a preschool staff member in a safe, lighted and well-ventilated space.
 - 10) The center shall not abuse or neglect children and shall protect children from abuse and neglect while in attendance in the preschool program.