

# Our Peaceful Classroom

## Maintaining a Physically and Emotionally Safe Environment

**We want children to experience school as a happy place.** When they walk in the doors of Mandala, we want them to know that they are in a peaceful classroom where they are cared for and they feel secure. Our guidelines for discipline and safety (below) are created to best help children learn how to treat each other with respect and to assure them that we will protect them and keep the atmosphere peaceful.

We go to a Montessori school.  
Our classroom is a very happy place.  
We keep everything on shelves.  
Every day we choose the material we want to work with.  
If we don't know how to use it, our teacher helps us.  
When we finish our work, we put the material back in its place.  
Sometimes two of us want to use the same material at the same time.  
We might start a fight over it.  
Then our teacher tells us that hands are for helping, not for hurting.  
Our teacher asks us to think of a better way to decide who can use it.  
We decide to take turns because that is the most *peaceful* way.

-From *Our Peaceful Classroom* by Aline D. Wolf



## Our Positive Discipline Policy

**“Discipline” is another aspect of teaching and learning at Mandala, *not* punishment.** We understand that learning to play with others is a *learning process*. Children in preschool *do* display and will occasionally be exposed to aggressive language and behavior. Discipline encompasses all those actions taken by teachers to develop socially acceptable behaviors in children. The purpose of positive discipline is to help children learn inner controls (self-discipline). We follow these guidelines for teaching children to behave in responsible ways:

- 1. Set realistic expectations for young children's behavior.**  
Make the rules clear by telling the child what s/he can do.
- 2. Create an environment that enhances the possibility that children will behave in appropriate ways.**  
Model appropriate behavior.  
Establish eye contact with the child when talking to him/her.  
Give the child choices whenever possible.
- 3. Focus on positive communication techniques to gain children's cooperation.**  
Use “Active Listening” to understand a child's feelings and reflect back his experience.  
Give “I-Messages” when setting limits.
- 5. Give children alternatives to turn destructive situations into constructive ones.**  
Redirect the child to another activity.  
Encourage the child to say what s/he needs: “Hands are for helping, not for hurting. We use our words.”  
Offer sensory-based activities to meet a child's need.
- 6. Use natural and logical consequences to motivate and empower children to make responsible decisions about their behavior.**  
Remove the child from the situation temporarily.  
Reward children for positive behaviors.  
Call the parent to come for the child if s/he cannot control self.
- 7. Teach preschool children to use problem-solving skills and strategies to resolve conflicts.**  
Validate what the child is trying to do, while guiding him or her to the behavior we want.

# Our Safe Classroom Policy

## NORMAL BEHAVIORS

**Children need to learn.** They come to preschool to learn the rules of social behavior and at the same time to learn how to manage their strong emotions. They do not come to school knowing all the rules ahead of time. Preschool is a learning laboratory for *every* child. We expect minor behavioral incidents as children practice self-regulation and learn how to get along with their peers. It is normal for all children to “test and try the limits” by grabbing a toy, pushing another child, or having an occasional tantrum. We see this as a “teachable moment”

Our staff uses various positive techniques to limit and correct unacceptable behavior and guide children in learning self-control. Some children need a lot of teacher help and redirection, while others need very little. Teachers will speak with parents early in the process if a child is having a difficult time learning “the rules” of behavior, but normal upsets are usually handled in the classroom and regarded as part of the learning process. Typically, with repeated teaching, most children learn fairly quickly and become cooperative over time.

## ONGOING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

**When a child does not learn over time, it becomes a problem.** When a child repeatedly bites, hits, hurts, or throws things, this becomes an issue of personal safety in the classroom. The teacher’s job is to keep all children safe. We know that some children have developmental challenges that cause them to become easily frustrated and make it more difficult for them to learn regulation and control. While we are willing to work with all children on a trial basis, we need to guarantee an overall atmosphere of well-being and provide safety from unexpected aggression. If a child is having continuing difficulty with discipline in the classroom, the teachers will talk with the parents, and a parent meeting will be requested to explore the situation further. A team approach is used to explore causes and solutions. Parents share feedback, teachers discuss the specific techniques they are using, and a positive behavior plan is formulated. The staff will also make recommendations for consultants or further evaluation, if needed. When parents agree to work with us, we will make every effort, as long as the child’s behaviors do not pose a risk to the classroom and we see ongoing improvement. Often, a time-frame is agreed upon and we re-evaluate progress within weeks.

## SERIOUS INCIDENTS / UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS

**We set limits on disruptive behavior that presents a safety concern.** When a child shows a *pattern of repeatedly hurting others* (hitting, throwing, pushing, biting) *with intensity and unpredictability*, or when they *severely disrupt the learning atmosphere*, we will follow our safe classroom policy. We will end the child’s school day early when he/she hurts another child, and we will call his parent to pick him/her up.

### Safety Policy for Disruptive Behavior

Our goal is to keep all children physically and emotionally safe. Mandala makes every effort to create a peaceful classroom that is conducive to learning. Children develop good problem-solving abilities and self discipline when they receive consistent, positive interactions with adults. However, when redirection and positive discipline techniques are not effective and the child’s behavior presents a *risk to self/others* and *repeatedly* interferes with other children’s preschool experience, the plan of action is:

- (1) Parent is told of ongoing behavior problem(s) and safety concerns.
- (2) Child’s school day is ended when the behavior occurs: child is removed from the classroom and taken to the office (using positive words).
- (3) Parent is called to pick him/her up in the office.
- (4) Parent partnership is enlisted.
- (5) Behavior Plan is established and signed.
- (6) Recommendations are made for additional evaluation and/or consultants and services, if needed.
- (7) Evaluation period is agreed upon.
- (8) If there is no measurable improvement in the child’s behavior, or if the child’s behavior continues to pose a risk to the classroom, or if the plan is not followed by the parent, the school reserves the right to withdraw the child from the program. Tuition for the month will not be refunded.

Ending a child’s school day early is not done as a punishment, but as a teaching tool for all. We demonstrate that grown-ups are in charge and will protect all children. We also teach the individual child that playing with

others (i.e.: coming to school) is a privilege and certain rules must be followed in order to participate. We will use positive language that encourages new behavior and better choices next time: *"Oh, no, so sad. School's over for today. Remember, no hitting. I'm sorry you forgot your rules. I know you will make a better choice tomorrow."* Or, *"You are having a hard time being the boss of your body today. It is not OK to hurt anyone. I am helping you. I am keeping you safe, and I am keeping the others safe, too. Next time you'll do better."* We expect that parents will be cooperative and work in partnership with us to do the same.

### WHEN OUR SCHOOL IS NOT A GOOD "FIT" FOR A CHILD

**Some children have a more difficult time adjusting to the "social rules" of the classroom.** Sometimes we are able to make adaptations in the classroom that help things work for the child. This is always contingent on parent-partnership. We may use a Behavior Plan, along with some of our "School Tools." Sometimes a child needs to come with a shadow aide. We use the services of our Social Worker. We also use our Occupational Therapy Consultant. Sometimes a referral is made to Early Start or the child's School District for assessment. Sometimes, we assist a parent in finding outside support (i.e.: speech/language therapy or occupational therapy), and the child gains new skills and learns to regulate his or her behavior in the classroom.

**We may request outside consultation.** When we observe that a child needs something more, we will suggest to the parents that they seek the guidance of a trained professional to support the efforts of our staff in meeting the needs of their child. This may be the result of needs we have identified, or it may be that we wish further assessment due to observed behavior, physical or learning challenges. We will suggest resources/consultants, and we encourage parents to find someone they are comfortable with who will give their child what he or she needs. Our staff will collaborate with consultants, as much as we are able, based on our time and availability. If a teacher is needed to attend IEP's, or complete additional forms, an hourly fee will be charged.

**Sometimes our classroom set-up does not work for a child.** We try very hard to be inclusive. We work with children with differing needs and abilities. However, we aren't always able to meet *every* child's need in our particular environment. Many children with differing abilities do better with fewer children in a more highly structured environment, with less sensory stimulation, with one-on-one facilitation, and with a professional staff trained to work with developmental differences.

**We help parents to find the appropriate services when their child needs something different** and our classroom is not a good "fit," and we help them to move on to take advantage of those services. We always try our best to help children get connected with the program or services that will give them the skills they *truly* need. What typically happens in these situations is that a child will leave our program for a time, attend another program and build the missing skills, then return to Mandala when s/he is able to be successful and utilize what our program has to offer.

**Keeping a peaceful classroom means finding a balance.** Although our staff will make every effort to work with a child, we are always sensitive to balancing the needs of the individual child with the needs of *all* the children in the classroom. In the event that we determine we cannot meet the developmental needs of a child, or if the child's behavior poses a risk to others, we will have to ask a child to be withdrawn from the program.

We are committed to preserving our peaceful classroom.

