



To Whom It May Concern:

I am sharing our Discipline Policy here at Happy Valley Montessori (a small, private preschool serving children 30 month to 6 years of age) to show that there are alternatives to expelling a child from a childcare setting. It does NOT serve the family nor the child! Please try everything within your means to discourage a child slipping in between the cracks. I have taken a blow to the head, bites, pulled hair, etc., but always find ways to “reach” the child. In extreme cases, we have helped families find support outside our school if they prefer a one-on-one or a smaller class size, but it is still rare, and more importantly, VOLUNTARY. Please see our policy below and make note that we support keeping children in our programs!

**In Unity & Wellness,
Jamie Edwards
Director/Lead Guide
Happy Valley Montessori School**

HVM Discipline Policy

“Freedom within limits” is the core of the philosophy regarding discipline in a Montessori environment. Montessori children enjoy considerable freedom of movement and choice; however, their freedom always exists within carefully defined limits within the range of their behavior. They are free to do anything appropriate within the ground rules established by the class and are expected to follow these rules for the social cohesion of the whole child community. A child will be redirected promptly and firmly with positive steps and diversion if she cannot use her own tools of self-discipline (acquired through the Grace & Courtesy lessons). The Montessori Method follows a line of natural and logical consequences as opposed to punishment. Conflict resolution and respect for the environment are both very important aspects of our approach. It is one of our ultimate goals that our students do the right thing, not because they will be punished if they don’t, but because they don’t want to adversely affect the people and the world around them. It has long been observed that young, pre-school age children are challenged by not truly understanding the ramifications of their behavior (cutting hair or drawing on a wall with a marker), and thus, diversion is the first method used. By diverting the child’s attention from the thing that is creating a problem (quickly putting paper in the child’s hand to say, “oh, look, we use scissors to cut paper” or “we use markers to draw on paper,”) one can often rectify the situation through positive reinforcement. If diversion does

not work, we promptly remove the child from the problem and will have a serious discussion with the child. At this time, age-appropriate consequences directly relating to the situation are laid out. Should the child continue to disobey, the consequences will be enforced. Thus, if the child continues to write on the wall or cuts her hair again, she will lose the privilege of markers/scissors for the remainder of the day. Of course, if a child endangers the safety of herself or another person, an adult will intervene immediately and remove the child from the situation and choose appropriate disciplinary measures. If the child's body is out of control and he is not able to respond to diversion, redirection, discussion, or consequences, the guide may choose to have the child sit quietly in a calm part of the classroom to regain self-control. When the child is able to return to work calmly, he may do so with the permission of the adult. We do NOT use the word "time out" as it is an ineffective term in the sense that a child does not sit and think about what he just did to be removed from the situation. It is really a means to help him breathe, relax (better to say, let's have some "relaxation time!") and get "back" into a calm body and state of mind. Our approach to discipline is based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Withholding or using food, rest, or sleep as a punishment is prohibited. Methods of discipline or interactions that frighten, demean, shame, or humiliate a child are also prohibited. If a child at Happy Valley Montessori School is challenged by the school's expectation of positive conduct and self-regulation, every effort will be made to bring the student, family, and staff together to achieve a solution. In more extreme cases, we do seek help outside to encourage observation, evaluation and/or supportive therapy with the collaboration of the parents. It is in rare cases that we have to find an alternative program; we will explore *every* option before coming to this conclusion. And more often than not, we help the family come to an understanding that their child may need one-on-one support; **ultimately, we do not promote practice of expulsion for a child of this age group (under the age of six)**. The beauty of this function of the Montessori Method is that the freedom given to the children to follow their own interests typically regulates behavior naturally. Children tend to be happy and joyful in the prepared environment, allowing for them to concentrate on their chosen work and almost "unconsciously" care for the materials, the environment, and the children and adults of the school.

Trust the Child

One of the hardest tasks of a Montessori parent and the Guide is to trust that the child will educate himself if given the liberty to freely follow his own interests. Maria Montessori found that children do not need coercion or compulsion to engage with the educational materials of a Montessori classroom. Rather, if the child is given liberty to follow his own path of development, he will do so with joy and enthusiasm. Often adults feel compelled to intervene and insist that a child engage in a set task or compulsory piece of work. As adults, we feel that these tasks must be given in order for success and learning to occur; this is not true. Our intervention will prove to be a hindrance to the child's learning. If we allow the child to follow his own path, we see in him an unfolding and development of a unique personality; a capable individual who wants to explore and learn about the fascinating world in which he discovers new things every day. It is our goal at Happy Valley Montessori to provide every opportunity for your child to develop into a capable and joyous individual.