

Toddler Behavior Guidance and Support Policy

Program	Bellevue Montessori School - Toddler Program
Applies to	Toddlers enrolled in the school community
Purpose	To explain how we guide toddler behavior with safety, respect, consistency, and family partnership.

Our Philosophy

At Bellevue Montessori School, we understand toddler behavior as communication. Toddlers are learning how to manage big feelings, use language, move safely, care for materials, wait, share space, and live in community with others. These skills develop through connection, modeling, repetition, and time.

Our goal is not to control children or expect perfect behavior. Our goal is to teach social-emotional skills in a safe, respectful, and developmentally appropriate way. We guide toddlers with calm consistency, clear boundaries, practical life experiences, grace-and-courtesy lessons, and close partnership with families.

Parent partnership

When behavior concerns arise, we approach them as a shared problem-solving process. We look for what the child is communicating, what support the child needs, and how home and school can work together with compassion and consistency.

Program Expectations

Toddlers are still learning these expectations, so adults model them many times throughout the day. We use positive language, visual cues, gentle reminders, and practice rather than shame or punishment.

Expectation	What this looks like for toddlers	How adults support it
Safety for Self (Be safe with our bodies)	Children practice gentle hands, walking feet inside, sitting while eating, asking for help, and moving away when a friend needs space.	Adults stay nearby, model safe movement, name body cues, redirect unsafe actions, and help children try again.
Safety for others (Be kind and connected)	Children practice using words, signs, gestures, or pictures to ask for help, take turns, notice friends, and repair after conflict.	Adults name feelings, interpret peer cues, offer simple language, model empathy, and guide repair in a toddler-appropriate way.
Safety for the classroom (Care for our classroom)	Children practice choosing work, using materials respectfully, returning materials, and caring for books, plants, animals, and classroom spaces.	Adults give Montessori lessons, prepare accessible materials, reduce clutter, rotate work, and support independence.

How We Teach and Guide Behavior

Behavior guidance happens throughout the day, not only after a problem occurs. Teachers prepare the environment and daily rhythm to help children feel secure, engaged, and capable.

- We build warm, responsive relationships so children feel safe and known.
- We use predictable routines, clear transitions, and a peaceful, prepared environment.
- We teach feelings, body awareness, turn-taking, asking for help, waiting, repairing harm, and caring for materials.
- We use positive language that tells children what they can do, such as "use gentle hands" or "you may ask for a turn."
- We offer limited choices when appropriate and help children move toward a safe next step.
- We observe patterns such as hunger, fatigue, illness, sensory needs, communication needs, transition difficulty, peer conflict, or environmental stress.
- We use redirection, emotional coaching, visual supports, practical life work, movement, quiet space, and close adult support as needed.

Practices We Do Not Use

Our behavior guidance is respectful and non-punitive. We do not use or threaten to use:

- physical punishment, rough handling, intimidation, or frightening language;
- humiliation, ridicule, sarcasm, shaming, name-calling, or labeling a child as naughty;
- withholding meals, snacks, water, rest, toileting, outdoor time, comfort, or required care routines;
- isolation, locked seclusion, or exclusion from the classroom community as punishment;
- forced apologies, yelling, threats, or discipline based on disability, language, culture, race, gender, family structure, toileting status, medical needs, or developmental delay.

Adults may calmly block or hold a child only when needed to prevent immediate harm and only for the minimum time necessary to restore safety.

Observation and Communication with Families

Teachers observe toddlers so we can understand the whole child. When we notice a pattern, we look at what happened before the behavior, what the child may have been communicating, how adults responded, and what helped the child return to safety and connection.

Families may be asked to share context that helps us support the child, such as sleep, eating, health, toileting, home language, recent family changes, sensory preferences, comfort strategies, favorite activities, and what works well at home. This information helps us respond with care rather than assumptions.

- Families are informed promptly about injuries, repeated behavior patterns, or concerns that require additional planning.
- Communication focuses on the child's needs, strengths, and next steps. It is not meant to blame the child or family.
- Behavior documentation and family information are treated as confidential and shared only with those who need the information to support the child or as required by law.

Levels of Support

Most toddler behavior is handled through everyday guidance, routine, and repetition. When a child needs more support, we use a tiered process, so families understand what is happening and can participate in the plan.

Level	When it is used	What parents can expect
Everyday support	For all children, every day.	Teachers use Montessori routines, grace-and-courtesy lessons, redirection, emotional coaching, movement, visual supports, and close observation.
Targeted support	When a behavior pattern repeats or begins to affect safety, participation, relationships, or the classroom environment.	Teachers share observations with the family. The school and family may create a short-term support plan with specific classroom strategies and home-school consistency.
Intensive support	When behavior is chronic, intense, unsafe, or continues despite targeted support.	The family, teachers, and school leadership meet to revise an individualized plan. A shortened schedule, temporary removal from optional extended care, a temporary reset period away from school, or a transition plan to a setting better able to meet the child's needs, or outside consultation or evaluation may be recommended.

Behavior Support Plans

A Behavior Support Plan may be used when a child needs consistent support across adults and routines. The plan is designed to teach skills and reduce stress for the child, not to punish the child.

A plan may include the child's strengths and interests, likely triggers, prevention strategies, communication supports, sensory or movement supports, replacement skills to teach, adult response steps, calming strategies, home-school routines, and a review date.

Examples of supports include a visual choice board, first-then language, individualized transition support, a quiet reset space, sensory tools, extra practical life work, smaller group practice, peer coaching, or shared language between home and school.

Safety Concerns

If a child is unsafe with themselves, other children, adults, or the environment, teachers will respond immediately and calmly. Safety steps may include moving nearby children, blocking unsafe actions, reducing stimulation, contacting leadership, calling the family, or asking for pickup when the child cannot safely continue at school that day.

If serious safety concerns continue despite reasonable supports and family collaboration, the school may recommend outside evaluation, a shortened schedule, temporary removal from optional extended care, a temporary reset period away from school, or a transition plan to a setting better able to meet the child's needs. **A change of placement is considered only after careful review, except when immediate safety requires urgent action.**

Family Partnership

Families are essential partners in a child's social-emotional growth. We ask families to communicate changes that may affect the child, including sleep disruption, illness, travel, family stress, new caregiving routines, toileting changes, food or allergy changes, or developmental concerns.

When home and school use consistent language and expectations, toddlers are more likely to feel secure. We may suggest simple home routines such as previewing goodbye, naming feelings, practicing gentle hands, using the same calming words, or supporting a child in asking for help.

Final Reflection

Toddlers are not miniature adults. They are in the earliest stages of learning to regulate emotions, manage their bodies, communicate needs, and relate to others. With patient repetition, respectful limits, and caring partnership between home and school, children develop the foundation for independence, empathy, and community life.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Bellevue Montessori School welcomes all children and families.

We do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender, age, disability, physical ability, family structure, or any other protected status.

We are committed to fostering a respectful, inclusive community where every child and family is valued, supported, and welcomed.

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