

Grace and Courtesy in the Montessori Classroom

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Grace and Courtesy is a common phrase in Montessori classrooms. They are cornerstones of the work we do and refer to an embodiment of overall respect. We encourage having grace with ourselves and courtesy in interactions with others and our environment. Each day, our teachers model these ideas while our students support one another and demonstrate an intentional appreciation of their surroundings.

Modeling

The primary way to show children expected social norms is through modeling. At Brickton, we do this through daily interactions as well as direct instruction. We encourage regular conversations about respect for ourselves and others on a schoolwide level. Even our youngest students have brief role play lessons to practice new social skills with their teachers. For older children, creating opportunities to participate in constructive dialogue and developing strategies to manage conflict becomes the standard. These are activities that could become part of home routines as well through family meetings and conflict resolution procedures to address concerns.

Supporting others and our environment

After practicing these skills with adults, children begin to internalize the acts of grace and courtesy with one another and their environment. It is commonplace in our multi-age classrooms, infant through 8th grade, to see a variety of peer teaching at every program level. Students regularly collaborate on challenging academic activities, each bringing their own skill set to the problem-solving. Our youngest students work together to get themselves ready for the playground, helping each other find their boots and get on that second mitten. Inside the classroom, materials that have fallen and spilled onto the floor draw a crowd, all clamoring to support the child whose work has been disrupted. Not only are these students demonstrating care for the environment and materials, but inevitably one of them will reassure the flustered child that we all make mistakes. Fostering this expectation of understanding and the strength of the group creates harmonious spaces and empathic individuals.

Self-discipline and advocacy

Finally, Montessori classrooms help teach children to have grace with themselves. Through purposeful activities, students learn how to handle disappointment appropriately and persevere when faced with a challenging task, be it a mathematical equation or a social situation with a classmate. Students practice asking for what they need politely and advocating for themselves and their community. It is important to acknowledge the wide range of emotions that humans experience and help children find productive ways to manage them. Consistently modeling and practicing strategies of de-escalation, mindfulness, and redirection will give them life-long tools for navigating strong emotions.

At Brickton, we recognize the importance of these lessons as essential work to help each child reach their full potential as a student as well as a citizen of the world. Additionally, a strong social and emotional foundation provides a framework for subsequent and continuous academic excellence. We strive to educate the whole child and prepare them for the future that they are to inherit.