



MMS Positive Discipline Curriculum and Practice October 2025

Q&A with Alasha Al-Qudwah MMS PD Coordinator/Upper Elementary II Lead Guide

What is Positive Discipline?

“Positive Discipline, developed by Jane Nelsen, Ed.D., is rooted in the work of psychologists Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs, who believed children thrive with both structure and freedom.

Influenced by his work with underserved communities, Adler emphasized that all behavior is driven by a need for belonging and significance. He saw misbehavior as a misguided attempt to meet those needs, best addressed through dignity, respect, and encouragement.” *-Positive Discipline in the School and Classroom Manual*

What is Positive Discipline in the Montessori classroom?

Positive Discipline in the Montessori classroom is a classroom management approach that focuses on fostering respectful and encouraging relationships between teachers and students. **Grounded in research, it offers educators practical strategies to build a supportive classroom environment that promotes both learning and personal development.**

Positive Discipline in the Classroom aligns with the Montessori philosophy by promoting mutual respect, cooperation, and intrinsic motivation. Instead of using rewards or punishments, it supports teachers in guiding students toward responsible decision-making and self-discipline. The approach emphasizes effective conflict resolution and the development of self-awareness. Grounded in research, it equips educators with practical tools to create a positive and peaceful classroom community where students feel connected, capable, and motivated to learn and grow.

Positive Discipline and Montessori’s vision for peace education and how it varies through each level:

Positive Discipline aligns closely with Maria Montessori’s vision for peace education by emphasizing self-awareness, respectful communication, and community building. Both Positive Discipline and the Montessori philosophy recognize that **children learn best in environments where they feel connected, capable, and valued**, and where they are guided to take responsibility for their actions. Positive Discipline complements Montessori’s peace education by providing concrete skills and structures for children to understand their emotions, communicate respectfully, and contribute positively to the classroom and the wider world.

In the Primary levels, Positive Discipline mirrors Montessori's focus on **Grace and Courtesy**, modeling respectful behavior daily and teaching children to resolve conflicts independently using tools like the Peace Rose. This supports Montessori's belief in nurturing inner discipline and helping children develop a sense of empathy and personal responsibility from an early age.

In Lower Elementary, Positive Discipline lessons are structured into weekly units and class meetings, giving children opportunities to reflect on their behavior, solve problems collaboratively, and practice cooperation. This reinforces Montessori's goal of **fostering peaceful interactions and community mindedness** within the classroom.

In Upper Elementary and Middle School, the program goes deeper, teaching students to advocate for themselves and others, resolve conflicts thoughtfully, and **become upstanders in their communities**. These practices reflect Montessori's vision of **cultivating social responsibility, justice, and peace-making skills** in children as they mature.

Why is conflict resolution important?

Conflict resolution skills are important in Montessori classrooms because they help children build independence, self-awareness, and social responsibility, all key parts of Montessori education. When children learn to recognize and express their feelings, communicate respectfully, and work toward solutions, they can **resolve conflicts peacefully and autonomously, while strengthening their relationships with others**.

These skills also tie directly to Montessori's vision for peace education, helping students understand themselves, respect others, and contribute to a harmonious classroom community. Learning to handle conflicts constructively gives children a sense of responsibility for themselves and for their community that lasts beyond the classroom.

Learning conflict resolution skills is important because it helps us communicate effectively, use "I-messages" to express ourselves respectfully, and work together to find solutions that strengthen our relationships and community. It also teaches us how to recognize and repair mistakes made in our interactions with others.

What's new about the MMS PD program?

We at MMS are becoming **more intentional and consistent in our approach**. We are taking what we've learned through training and dedicating more time to reflecting and sharing ideas on how to make the curriculum **purposeful, meaningful, and effective for students**. Across all levels, intentional reflection and discussion are helping teachers guide students in becoming peaceful, self-aware, and compassionate members of their communities.