

PRACTICING PEACE

with Preschoolers

By: The PreK Teacher Facilitator Team
The Westwood School

We use many different Grace & Courtesy lessons to help our preschoolers practice peace each day. We help them understand what peace feels like – it can mean being friendly, kind, respectful and sometimes funny.

Here are **8 examples of the Grace & Courtesy lessons** we use to help our preschoolers learn and practice peace.

1. How We Greet Someone

Each day we practice how to make others feel welcome and important when we enter the classroom – Look the person in the eye, smile, shake their hand and use your words to greet them, “Good morning. It’s good to see you today.” This little pause before the day begins, helps us and the person we greet feel peaceful.

2. How We Move in the Classroom

In Montessori classrooms each child’s personal work space is marked by a small rug. Our students practice being mindful and considerate of others’ personal space, a key aspect of peaceful living. For example, they learn to walk around rather than on top of the rugs. In doing so, they practice respect for the hard work done by other children.

3. How We Use Our Voice

Here is a lesson we give and re-give! We emphasize we are many people in one room and how speaking calmly in a low tone helps maintain peaceful surroundings. We also help the children practice their role in fostering an atmosphere of concentration and respect.

4. How We Watch Someone Work

We encourage children to learn by watching and admiring the work of others. For example, one child might be working on a big map with many beautifully intricate parts. Other children may be tempted to touch the map assembled on the other child’s rug. We teach the children to ask if they can watch and not touch the other person's work.

It’s beautiful to see preschoolers sit, watch and demonstrate their respect for the child who is working. In addition to helping them practice peace, it fosters admiration and curiosity while igniting their passion for learning.

5. How We Use Our Materials

We help preschoolers understand that sharing materials is part of fostering a peaceful community. Keeping the materials in good shape is part of sharing.

For example, we demonstrate how to gently carry the pink tower cubes to their rug or table. We reinforce how the tower is used in the classroom and that it needs to be in good shape for the



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PRACTICING PEACE *(cont.)*

next person who uses it. We let them know that if they just grab a bunch of pink tower cubes without thinking about it, eventually the tower will get damaged.

They learn to respect our materials, the work that went into producing them and the people who will use them in the future.



6. How We Respect the Outdoors

Our lessons about peace and respect for people in our classroom also extend to our outdoor play program. We help them understand that each bug, plant and creature is precious and deserves respect.

For example, we let them know they don't have to step on a spider they find on the playground. We suggest they step away and let an adult know about the spider. We also take this moment to teach them about the good and helpful role spiders play in nature.

7. How We Resolve a Disagreement

We help our preschoolers learn that we all see things in our own way. Little by little, they learn to deal with the frustration of someone they've hurt.

They practice polite wording to resolve a conflict. For example, if one student steps on another's work or rug—say, "Oh I'm sorry, I didn't pay attention and I just ran over your rug. What can I do to help you fix it?"

If they can't resolve the problem among themselves, they can "Bring the Problem" - Speak with a teacher and ask for help. This specific Westwood practice, helps them learn about alternatives for resolving disagreements and about how to ask for help.

8. How We Offer or Refuse Help

A big part of our Montessori approach is letting older lower school children learn by mentoring those who are younger. For example, an older child might see a younger child struggle to put their work away. The older child's first reaction might be to jump in and help.

**Starting at an early age,
Day-by-day...
Step-by-step...**

We help our students grow into caring young adults who are inquisitive, informed and inspired to succeed in an ever-changing world.

The Westwood School
Montessori Lower School Community
Serving Toddler - 6th Grade Families

We teach them an important aspect of peace in these situations—offering help instead of forcing it on another person. The older child learns to say, "I know how to do X, would you like me to help you?" By the same token, the younger child learns to politely ask for or refuse help, "No thank you. I want to do this on my own."



Learn more about Westwood's Montessori School Community:

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