



Cochrane Valley Montessori School

Safe and Caring Inclusive School Policy

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Cochrane Valley Montessori School is committed to providing a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment free from fear of physical and emotional harm for all students and staff while also promoting guidelines to ensure that sexual and gender minority students, employees and families are welcomed and included in all aspects of education and school life and are treated with respect and dignity as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Staff, and enrolled families/students will not be discriminated against as provided for in the Alberta Human Rights Act or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We are dedicated to developing a safe, effective learning environment, based on the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori which:

- Challenges all learners to strive to reach their personal learning potential;
- Encourages each learner to be independent and accountable for their learning and behavioural choices;
- Supports and nourishes the development of a caring, inclusive community with dignity and respect for all;
- Encourages effective partnerships among educators, learners and parents;
- Fosters development of self-esteem, self-regulation and personal responsibility;
- Nurtures learner creativity, risk-taking, reflection and an understanding of lifelong learning;
- Facilitates the development of strategies and problem-solving through the use of the prepared Montessori environment and Montessori materials; and
- Incorporates the element of intrinsic fulfillment into the learning process.

The relationship between home and school, as well as the family and staff commitment to the Montessori philosophy, is the key to fostering growth in our students.

A safe and caring school provides for:

- a respectful and caring school culture;
- safety and security;
- a focus on teaching and learning;
- positive relationships among students and staff;
- social and behavioral expectations; and
- community involvement.

We believe all students have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment. This right is guaranteed under the:

- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- The *Alberta Human Rights Act*, including the right not to be discriminated against by reason of race, origin, colour, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression
- *Alberta Education Act*

Rights of all Students

Our CVMS Board believes that all students have the right to:

- be treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect;
- have their confidentiality protected and respected as set out in the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)*;
- self-identification and determination;
- freedom of conscience, expression, and association;
- be fully included and represented in an inclusive, positive, and respectful manner by all school personnel;
- have equitable access to the same supports, services, and protections
- have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, bullying, and/or violence; and
- have their unique identities, families, cultures, and communities included, valued and respected within the school environment.

Our CVMS principal shall provide support for student organizations in accordance with section 16.1 of the *School Act*.

16.1(1) If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall

(a) immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and

(b) subject to subsection (4), within a reasonable time from the date that the principal receives the request designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization or to assist in organizing the activity.

(3) The students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization or activity, including the name “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”, after consulting with the principal.

(3.1) For greater certainty, the principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.

(4) The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in subsection (1), and if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.

(6) The principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in subsection (1) is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity, and is otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to notifications for other student organizations and activities.

CVMS is an organization bound by the *Personal Information Protection Act*. Disclosure of any personal information, including a student's participation in a voluntary student organization or activity as outlined in this policy, must be in accordance with the CVMS's responsibilities under the provisions of the *Personal Information Protection Act*.

- Define appropriate expectations, behaviours, language and actions in order to prevent discrimination, prejudice and harassment through greater awareness of, and responsiveness to, their harmful effects.
- Ensure that LGBTQ+ members of the school community and their families are welcomed, accepted and included in all aspects of education and school life.
- Ensure learning, curriculum and resources shall reflect and value the diversity in the school, so that all students, including LGBTQ+ students see themselves and their lives positively reflected.
- Consistently use respectful and inclusive language in communication to students, staff, families and the community.
- Maintain the right of LGBTQ+ students and staff to privacy and confidentiality regarding their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. This includes all student and employee records, forms, and processes.
- Regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, sanction student participation in physical education classes and extracurricular activities, including in ways that are safe and comfortable and consistent with their lived gender identity.
- Ensure that all discriminatory behaviours and complaints will be taken seriously, documented and dealt with expeditiously and effectively through consistently applied policy and procedures.
- Develop, implement and evaluate inclusive educational strategies, professional development opportunities and administrative guidelines to ensure that minorities, including gender minorities and their families, are treated with respect and dignity in all aspects of the school community in a manner consistent with the school's mission and vision.
- Make resources and support services available for LGBTQ+ students and staff.
- Ensure transgender students shall have the right to be addressed by their preferred name(s) and pronoun(s) that correspond to their lived gender identities. This is true whether or not the student has obtained documentation of a legal change of name or sex designation. Student records will be changed when a parent or guardian requests a change in name and/or gender. Confidentiality of a student's records will be maintained at all times.

The Acquisition of Self Discipline and Regulation in a Montessori Environment

"The spontaneous discipline, and the obedience which is manifested throughout the whole class, constitute the most striking result of our Method".

~ Maria Montessori

The Montessori Method removes many of the obstacles in the environment that contribute to unsettled children. The children are mentally nourished within a caring environment in the company of Montessori Guides. The children also derive a sense of security and peacefulness from the order and structure of their environment. The purpose of this stimulating environment is to invite and engage the child. Children naturally desire to be absorbed in discovery and the result is spontaneous discipline.

At the beginning of the year, the Montessori Guide prepares the environment with not only the physical preparation of the classroom in mind but also the ease of the child in navigating that environment. The Montessori Guide establishes certain defined limits, which are consistently maintained, allowing the child his independence, freedoms and responsibilities. For example, children are asked to respect others work areas and materials unless invited. This is important because the work of the child is the all-encompassing contribution to the development of the child. It is the piece that is celebrated and honoured in a Montessori classroom. The child is free to take each piece of material to be worked on and make decisions about where the work will be done, why the work will be done, when the work is accomplished just not if the work will be attempted if a lesson is given. If work is left out or walked away from, others in the classroom honour that piece of work in progress and asks others about it or leaves it for the attendee to come back to it. This mutual respect and understanding allows the child the security in the classroom without fear of other's interference in his work.

Grace and Courtesy in a Montessori classroom

Respect and care for the materials and environment are concepts that are reviewed and modelled continuously. As the children are involved in the maintenance of their environment, they move about the class in a calm, self-regulated way, moving with control and refined body movements. . Children need to move, touch and gain experiences at all levels of child development. By providing this in a prepared environment we are honouring the natural human tendencies for exploration, orientation, order movement, exactness and repetition, so that a calm expansion in the development of the child can exist.

In situations where Guide intervention is required, redirection is the initial method of choice. Suggestions and invitations are given to engage in other activities. A Guide may introduce a calming activity or a more challenging activity. The Guide will often be involved in the activity with the child to continue to monitor for a calming effect. Guides encourage the children to take responsibility for their own resolutions in challenging situations, resulting in them learning to do so with decreasing adult intervention. Our classroom honours the "peace rose" where children can meet together to have discussions about discrepancies or disagreements, always asking "why the other did something or said something" so miscommunication cannot occur. The person who holds the rose gets to talk and turns are taken. If a child is endangering his/her safety or the safety of another person, an adult will intervene immediately and become involved in the situation. Once the child/children are safe, the staff can assess the situation and choose an appropriate response. When needed, staff involvement and support is always available.

Consistent with Section 12 of the Education Act, and in keeping with the mission and vision of CVMS, each employee and student is responsible for acting positively in support of a welcoming and caring learning environment by adhering to our behavioural code of conduct.

Behavioural Expectations (Code of Conduct)

CVMS promotes a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment. Our approach to discipline is based on enablement, empathy and mutual respect. Rather than taking actions of punishment or humiliation, we promote a process of determining the severity of the unacceptable behaviour and account for the student's age and individual circumstance, then determine the best course of action for learning from our mistakes.

Students and families are responsible for upholding these expectations during school hours, both on and off site, electronically, and at all times while on school property (including before and after school):

- Acting at all times in keeping with the vision and mission underlying the school;
- Respecting oneself and the rights of others in the school;
- Conducting oneself in a manner that contributes to a welcoming, caring and respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging;
- Refrain from, report and refuse to tolerate bullying whether within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means;
- Inform a responsible, trusted and caring adult in a timely manner of incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation or other unwelcoming or uncaring acts;
- Attend school regularly and punctually;
- Diligently and actively being prepared to learn and actively pursue learning;
- Being accountable for individual behaviours to teachers and school staff;
- Cooperating with school staff to make the school a positive learning environment for all; and,
- Knowing and following the rules of the school

Unacceptable Behaviours

Unacceptable behaviour, whether or not the behaviour occurs within the school building, during the school day, or by electronic means will not be tolerated. Such behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- Causing, or threatening to cause, physical harm or injury to oneself or another.
- Behaving in a way that puts oneself or others at risk of physical harm or injury.
- Teasing, intimidating, rudeness or disrespect to others.
- Inappropriate touching: disruptive and unwelcome; private; or sexual in nature.
- Swearing or communicating in an abusive manner.
- Intentionally disrupting the learning environment.
- Misuse of or causing damage to, materials, equipment or the environment.
- Encouraging others to misbehave.
- Bullying behaviours (As defined in Alberta's Education Act: "bullying" means repeated and hostile or demeaning behaviour by an individual in the school community where the behaviour is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more other individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual's reputation).

Remediation and Support

In order to foster a positive learning environment, CVMS will make reasonable efforts to support both or all individual(s) in the situation. This work goes for the person(s) who are found responsible for the action(s) and the victims of the action(s)

Supportive actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Mentoring of individual students by older students;
- More focused attention to individual students;
- Regular follow-up meetings of specific teachers with individual students;
- Student Peer Support Groups, including GSA's as appropriate;
- Counselling;
- Work involved in assimilation back into our community

Disciplinary Actions

1. An CVMS staff member will discuss the unacceptable behaviour with the child(ren).
2. The child(ren) may be removed to another environment.
3. A parent/guardian may be contacted.
4. The child may be sent to their program Director, or Principal, who will discuss the behaviour issue with the child and may opt to:
 - Call the parent/guardian to discuss the issue, and/or
 - Place the child in "in-school suspension" and he/she will not be allowed to return to class until the parent/guardian has spoken to the Director or Principal; and/or
 - Should the situation require, the principal may contact the parent/guardian to immediately remove the child from school for a specific length of time (Suspension). As soon as appropriate, parents/guardians will be met with and conditions will be set for the child's re-admittance.

Incident Report

Every effort will be made to address unacceptable behaviours promptly and help a child make more appropriate behaviour choices. However, in the event of ongoing or significant behavioural issues, an Incident Report will be filled out. The original is sent home and a copy is kept in the student's file. As necessary, Incident Report follow-up meetings may be scheduled with the Parents, Guide, Director and Principal to collaboratively assess the situation and explore solutions.

Suspension/Dismissal Process

Every effort is made by the CVMS staff to support and respect the needs of each child. Every effort is made to work on strategies of appropriate behaviour, time to show the learning of appropriate behaviours towards self, others and our classroom environment. A Suspension will be implemented if/and only if the child is consistently physically harmful to self, others, or the school environment. This may be exhibiting and chronically demonstrating unacceptable behavior(s).

A Director, in consultation with the CVMS Principal, will assess the severity of the behaviour and determine the duration of Suspension. Parents will be notified of the behaviour and decision as soon as possible. An Incident Report Form will be available within 24 hours. Parents will be contacted and asked to pick-up their child promptly. The basis of the suspension is to allow the family and the CVMS Administration to collaboratively assess the issues, explore and implement strategies to best support the student. The best interests of the child and our other children are our priority and this course of action is only taken when no other options with the family have been successful.

Prior to September 30 of each school year, CVMS reserves the right to dismiss a student (as defined by Alberta Education). Younger children (not Alberta Education students) could be dismissed throughout the school year. Parents will be notified in writing of any dismissal. Should a student (as defined by Alberta Education) be unable to function safely in the CVMS environment, CVMS, in conjunction with parents, will look at options for program delivery such as home education, another school, or modified school hours.

Parents have the right to appeal a student dismissal to the CVMS Board of Directors where the CVMS principal is not present. The decision of the Board is considered final.

Written details of a Suspension or Dismissal will be included in the student's permanent file.