

Essential Elements on Montessori Practice in the Public Sector
Original document created by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector

Key for Lakeland Montessori, as interpreted internally

Yellow with black text = where we are now, Yellow with red text = where we are now and must improve to be at least satisfactory

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Domain 1-Adults				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
Teachers have Montessori credentials, from a MACTE or AMI accredited training program, for the age group they teach, in addition to any required licenses or credentials.	• All teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level and hold required licenses or credentials. • All auxiliary staff (special education, PE) are Montessori trained or oriented. • Montessori principles are evident in the action of all adults. Key actions include: speaking softly, clearly, and respectfully to children and adults, refraining from offering unnecessary help, inviting, as opposed to commanding, student engagement in meaningful work.	• 90% of all teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level, with the remainder in the process of earning an appropriate Montessori credential. • Auxiliary staff have been oriented in Montessori theory and practice • Montessori principles are evident in many, but not all actions of adults.	• 85% of all teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level, with the remainder in the process of earning an appropriate Montessori credential. (7/8=75%; one UE is in progress. Note: we are already 100% meeting the AMS accreditation and state licensing requirements for all our Montessori teachers). • Montessori principles are evident in the actions of some adults.	• Less than 85% of all teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level. • Absence of robust knowledge of Montessori theory and practice is evident in the actions of adults; key actions include: interrupting students who are concentrating, using a loud, intrusive voice, attempting to control rather model respectful behavior.

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Each teacher is supported by a paraprofessional /assistant given Montessori-specific orientation for that role.	• All classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course. • The school provides an Orientation workshop for all assistants • All assistants play an integral role in the culture of the classroom, providing support in the care of the environment, modeling positive behavior, assisting the teacher when students need redirection, and other duties as assigned by the teacher.	• 90% of all classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course. • The school provides an Orientation workshop for all assistants • Some assistants play an integral role in the culture of the classroom	• 75% of all classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course. 6/8=75% new Willow assistant is currently completing; Secondary assistant is out for new baby with a temporary substitute. • Some assistants play an integral role in the culture of the classroom.	• Fewer than 75% of all classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course. • Assistants, when they are present, are disengaged from the work of the room or function solely as disciplinarians.
All adults in the school, Montessori trained or not, embrace core Montessori principles, respecting the process of human development and supporting children's independence, freedom, responsibility, and growth.	• All adults interact with children in ways that are deeply respectful and support their development as appropriate to the children's age and level of independence.	• Adults sometimes set developmentally inappropriate expectations for children, expecting too little or too much independence and responsibility. • Adults sometimes interact disrespectfully with children (e.g. interrupting, ordering, teasing, contradicting, controlling...)	• Adults often set developmentally inappropriate expectations for children, expecting too little or too much independence and responsibility. • Adults often interact disrespectfully with children (e.g. interrupting, ordering, teasing, contradicting, controlling...)	• Adult interactions with children are not guided by Montessori principles, and are developmentally inappropriate and disrespectful (controlling, interrupting, shouting, shaming, blaming, etc.).

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		• Montessori trained staff interact appropriately, but untrained staff are poorly supported in appropriate interactions.	• Untrained staff show no awareness of appropriate interactions.	
Domain 2 - Montessori Learning Environment				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
Children are grouped according to Montessori age groupings: • 2.5-6 • 6-9 • 9-12 • 12-15 • 15-18	• All learning environments reflect Montessori age groupings • Classroom communities serve at least 24 students supervised by no more than two adults. • The primary point of entry to the program is age 3 • For students who enter after age 4, the school has a well-elaborated orientation and induction program	• Significant numbers of 5 year-olds may enter without prior Montessori experience, but these new students are carefully oriented.	• Mixed age environments exist, but children are segregated by age, gender or ability • There is a stand-alone “kindergarten” program for 5 year-olds, but is working toward achieving a full 3-6 program, and has a reliable method for orienting these children. • Students age out of the school before the end of a 3 year cycle (e.g., after 1st, 2nd, 4th, or 5th grades, etc.)	• The school has single or two-year graded classrooms. • The school has a stand-alone program for 5 year-olds (calling it “kindergarten”) with no reliable method for orienting these children. • Children are segregated by age, gender or ability.
Learning environments provide uninterrupted 3-hour work periods.	• All classrooms provide 3-hour morning work periods. • Classrooms for older children provide 2-hour (afternoon) work periods, with limited interruption for specials and other programmed activity	• All classrooms provide 2.5 hour morning work periods. • Classrooms for older children provide 2-hour (afternoon) work periods, with limited interruption for specials and other programmed activity	• Classrooms for older children provide 2-hour (afternoon) work periods, but 2-3 times a week, those periods are taken up with specials and other programmed activity.	Work periods are divided into small portions (e.g.: Readers or Writers Workshop, Literacy Block) with limited opportunity for children to concentrate on self-chosen work.

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Specialty programs such as music, art, and second languages are integrated into the three hour work cycle.	• The Montessori teachers confidently deliver Montessori music, using bells, tone bars and other materials integral to this part of the program • Materials for making and viewing art are visible on shelves, and students have access to them at all times • Bilingual staff support an immersion approach to second-language instruction.	• Specialty programs (music art, second language) are offered as separate classes, but do not interrupt extended work periods • Students have free access to Montessori music materials-- bells, tone bars, etc.	• Specialty programs (music, art, second language) are offered as separate classes, usually during afternoon work periods • Students have limited access to Montessori music materials	• Specialty programs such as music, art, and second languages are delivered by non-Montessori specialists during work periods • There are separate morning and afternoon classes • Students have no access to Montessori music materials.
The environment supports a high degree of student choice in what to work on, where to work, how long to work.	• Students can choose to work at tables, on rugs on the floor, or outside. • Students have ongoing access to all materials, and are able to choose their work freely during extended work periods. • Almost all instruction takes place in small groups (Elementary & Secondary) or one-on-one (Early Childhood).	• Students can choose to work at tables, on rugs on the floor, or outside. • Students have ongoing access to all materials, and are able to choose their work for the majority of work periods. • 80% of instruction takes place in small groups (Elementary & Secondary) or one-on-one (Early Childhood)	• Students have choice regarding where and what to work on for part of the day. • Students may be assigned work but may choose where and in they will do their work. • Whole or large-group instruction is used almost as much as individual and small group instruction.	• Student movement is restricted • Most students work at tables • Most learning is directed by adults • Most instruction takes place in whole-group formats • Teaching and learning are expected to follow a pacing set by the teacher.
The full compliment of Montessori materials is available in every area, representing the majority of materials on all shelves; additional	• The full complement of Montessori materials is available in every area. • Montessori materials are meticulously cared for and displayed in an	• The full complement of Montessori materials is available in every area. • Montessori materials are displayed in an orderly and inviting	• There is less than a full complement of Montessori materials. • Montessori materials are visible, but not organized in a way that	• Montessori materials may be visible, but the majority of work involves other materials and resources, such a worksheets, text books,

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materials conform to Montessori standards of order, beauty, and simplicity.	orderly and inviting manner, representing the majority of work available to students • Materials are in constant use	manner, representing the majority of work available to students • Materials are in good repair and ready for use • Materials are in regular use	invites robust engagement and concentration. • Montessori materials are liberally supplemented with other curricular approaches.	or computers • The environment is cluttered, with little attention to order, beauty and simplicity
The learning environment offers ongoing access to real-world materials and activities.	• Children have ample opportunities to engage in care of the classroom, food preparation, dining and meal cleanup, and plant and animal care, and these activities are a regular part of children's activity. • Tools and materials for practical activities are functional and child-sized. • Appropriate cutlery, glassware and dishes are used daily.	• Children have some opportunities to engage in care of the classroom, food preparation, dining and meal cleanup, and plant and animal care, and are at times engaged with them. • Functional child-sized tools and materials are available, but the supply is limited or some are not appropriate for children's use. • Appropriate cutlery, glassware and dishes are used daily.	• Some real world activities are available, but children do not spontaneously engage in them • Tools and materials are very limited, or mostly inappropriate for children's use • Care of the classroom, food preparation, dining and cleanup, and plant and animal care are handled mostly by adults. • Children eat with disposable cutlery, plates, and cups.	Practical life is absent from the environment • Food is prepared by adults • The only access to outdoors is during "recess"
The learning environment offers appropriate access to a prepared outdoor environment.	• Children have free access, within appropriate limits, to a well-prepared outdoor learning environment. * • The outdoor environment is in regular use. * *Except for EC	• Children have some access to a well-prepared outdoor learning environment. • The outdoor environment is in regular use.	• Access to the outdoor environment is tightly restricted by adults. (In EC only). • The outdoor environment is in regular use	• Access to the outdoors is only available during "recess", as a free play activity. • The outdoor environment is not well prepared or appropriate for children's use.
SPED students are fully	• Montessori teachers are	SPED students are	SPED students are	SPED students have a

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included and supported within the classroom.	dual certified as SPED teachers and able address all but most significant learning issues through the Montessori program • SPED and Resource Teachers are Montessori trained or oriented and work in collaboration with Montessori teachers to provide special services within the prepared environment.	pulled out for small portions of the day, or specialists come in the classroom but work with the SPED students apart from the rest of the group and primarily through non-Montessori materials.	pulled out of the Montessori classroom for large portions of the day	separate program for most or all of the day
ELL students are fully included and supported within the classroom.	• Montessori teachers are dual certified as ELL teachers. • ELL Resource Teachers are Montessori trained or oriented and work in collaboration with Montessori teachers to provide special services within the prepared environment.	• ELL students are pulled out for small portions of the day, or specialists come in the classroom but work with the ELL students apart from the rest of the group and primarily through non-Montessori materials.	ELL students are pulled out of the Montessori classroom for large portions of the day	• ELL students have a separate program for most or all of the day
Domain 3 - Family Engagement				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
A strong partnership between home and school is evident in all formal and informal communications.	• A well-developed Family Handbook, which elaborates mutual expectations in clear, accessible language. • Robust, two-way communication begins	• A well-developed Family Handbook elaborates mutual expectations in clear, accessible language. • The school maintains an active website.	• A Family Handbook exists, but is out-of-date and not widely distributed. • Communication between home and school is limited to	• A Family Handbook may exist, but is out-of-date and not widely distributed. • Communication between home and school is sporadic, and

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	prior to enrollment and is visible in the school's website, newsletters, letters home, processes for parent-teacher conferences. • All relevant documents are translated into languages reflecting the school's population • The school's Parent Engagement plan may include home-visits. • Faculty and staff reflect the ethnic, linguistic and racial makeup of the student-body.	• Most classrooms distribute newsletters and other regular communications such as websites, blogs, or Google groups. • Highest priority documents are translated into the languages reflecting the school's population. • Efforts are made to hire faculty and staff that come from and/or reflect the ethnic, linguistic and racial makeup of the student-body.	informing families of events, deadlines, and other administrative matters. • Some classrooms distribute newsletters and other regular communications, but there is no coordinated system for ensuring that all members of the community are informed. • Translation services are limited.	usually in the form of announcements from the administration. • Translations are sporadic or non-existent.
The school provides ongoing opportunities for parent education, including information sessions, discussion groups, observation of classrooms, and parent-teacher-student conferences	• The enrollment process features multiple opportunities for parents to learn about the nature of Montessori and the family commitment expected by the school. These events are well planned and executed, and attended by large numbers of prospective families. • A robust family induction process, includes open houses, orientation evenings, and networking with experienced families. • Family education	• The enrollment process features some opportunities for parents to learn about Montessori and the family commitment expected by the school • The school offers an orientation evening for new families. • Family education opportunities are offered quarterly	• The enrollment process may feature events such as open houses, but they are poorly advertised and sparsely attended. • The school offers an annual Open House. • Family education opportunities are offered sporadically.	• The enrollment process includes no opportunities for families to learn about the school, and many families enroll without any knowledge of Montessori education • No family education opportunities are offered.

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	opportunities are offered monthly.			
The school cultivates a strong school-home association, in which parents have authentic opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the school's mission and communicate with school leadership.	• The school maintains a designated space for parents to gather, which includes a resource library filled with material related to Montessori, child development, parenting, and other topics of interest. • The school employs a Community Engagement specialist, who supports the family community by partnering with parent leaders, assisting in the coordination of volunteer opportunities. • There is an active school board and/or governance council with significant family representation. • Minutes of all meetings are shared with the entire community.	• The school's School-Home or Parents Association is active, with parent/adult leaders visible in the school. • Minutes of all meetings are shared with the entire community.	• The school has a School-Home Association, but it is not active. • The school's board and/or governance council may have family representation, but families do not regularly attend meetings • Minutes of meetings are not regularly shared with the community.	• There are no formal structures through which families can participate in the school.
Domain 4-Leadership and Organizational Development				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
A. An experienced Montessori educator guides the implementation of the Montessori program, as	• A Montessori trained school leader communicates and advocates effectively for full Montessori	• The school leader is not Montessori trained, but is enthusiastically engaged in ongoing Montessori professional	• The school leader is not Montessori trained, and has engaged in minimal Montessori professional development	• The school leader is unwilling to engage in Montessori professional development • The school leader

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Principal, Program Director, Curriculum Coordinator or Instructional Coach.	implementation. • At least one instructional coach, with Montessori training for at least one program level, supports full Montessori implementation as a primary responsibility.	development. • A trained Program Director or Montessori Coach supports the untrained school leader.	• The school does not employ a Montessori Program Director or Coach, but does rely on the expertise of experienced teachers or consultants in making programmatic decisions	regards Montessori as an aspect of the school program rather than the essence of the school program • The school leader engages in teacher evaluation and program development systems that are in conflict with Montessori principles and practice.
The school has a clear vision for how it delivers Montessori education, and has an active cycle of reflection and self-review	• The school has a current and active strategic/school improvement plan, which is grounded in Montessori principles, informed by multiple constituents, and widely understood and embraced by the school community. • The school regularly employs Montessori consultants to provide both internal and external audits of program quality, and incorporates consultant feedback into the ongoing strategic planning process • The school has a well-articulated and transparent process of	• The school has a living strategic/school improvement plan, which is grounded in Montessori principles, informed by multiple constituents, and made available to the school community. • The school has employed a Montessori consultant within the past three years to provide internal support for strategic planning and instructional improvement • Teachers are evaluated based on a protocol that is friendly to Montessori pedagogical principles	• The school is in the process of developing a strategic/ school improvement plan, which includes goals for improving Montessori practice • The school does not look to outside resources for Montessori support. • Teachers are evaluated in part or whole based on a protocol that does not reflect Montessori practice	• The school's strategic/school improvement plan includes no goals for improving Montessori practice • Teachers are evaluated based on a protocol that has no relationship to Montessori pedagogical practice

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	for inducting, mentoring and evaluating teachers. • Teachers are evaluated based on a protocol specially designed to support fully-implemented Montessori practice.			
The school maintains membership in one or more Montessori professional organizations, and seeks accreditation to ensure consistent quality	• The school is accredited (AMS or IMC) or recognized (AMI) by at least one of the major Montessori professional organizations	• The school maintains membership in at least one of the major Montessori professional organizations	The school may not be a full member (due to costs or other constraints), but leaders and staff attend at least one major Montessori professional organization's conference.	The school has no connections with any Montessori professional organization.
The school has a pipeline for recruiting, training, hiring, and retaining high quality Montessori teachers	• The school sponsors two or more teachers for Montessori training annually • The School provides a robust annual Assistant's/Fundamental Course. • The school has a strong relationship with a MACTE accredited or AMI Montessori training center • The school recruits broadly and provides a substantive interview and induction process for all prospective and new hires	• The school's budget supports sponsorship for Montessori training for at least one new teacher a year • The school offers orientation and professional development designed to support classroom assistants	• The school's operating budget does not support annual sponsorships, but efforts are made to raise funds for the specific purpose of supporting the talent pipeline	• The school has no systems in place to ensure a reliable pipeline of high quality Montessori teachers

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All adults engage in ongoing Montessori professional development	• All adults engage in ongoing Montessori professional development	50-90% of adults engage in ongoing Montessori professional development.	Some, but fewer than half, of adults engage in ongoing Montessori professional development	Adults do not engage in ongoing Montessori professional development
Adults treat one another with respect and model grace and courtesy in their interactions.	• All adult interactions are respectful, gracious, and courteous. • Respect, grace, and courtesy characterize formal and informal school activities. • Respect, grace, and courtesy characterize interactions with families.	• Most adult interactions are respectful, gracious, and courteous. • Respect, grace, and courtesy characterize most formal and informal school activities. • Respect, grace, and courtesy characterize most interactions with families.	• Adults are sometimes disrespectful, peremptory or dismissive with one another. • There are notable status divisions among trained teachers, support staff, and administrative staff.	• Adults are generally disrespectful, peremptory or dismissive with one another. • Non-teaching staff are blatantly disrespected or delegitimized.
Montessori practice is supported by a clearly defined Montessori scope and sequence, integrated with (but not driven by) state standards .	• Faculty and staff understand and can explain the Montessori approach and how it meets state standards • A Montessori scope & sequence aligned with state standards is shared widely in the school and available to families, district staff, and other stakeholders. *LMS has this within Montessori Compass • Teachers lead with their Montessori training and refer back to the state standards as necessary	• Most faculty and staff understand and can explain the Montessori approach and how it meets state standards • An alignment of the Montessori scope & sequence with state standards is in progress. • The Montessori scope and sequence is part of internal and external communications • Teachers mostly lead with their Montessori training and refer back to the state standards as necessary	• Many faculty and staff are unclear on the Montessori approach and how it meets state standards • No alignment of the Montessori scope & sequence with state standards is in use. • The Montessori scope and sequence is available but not part of community understanding or regular practice. • Teachers mostly lead with state standards and use some Montessori materials and lessons to teach them.	• Faculty and staff are following a scope and sequence that conflicts with Montessori pedagogy. • Teaching is entirely driven by state standards.

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Domain 5- Assessment				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
Assessment protocols integrate measures of academic achievement with measures of executive functions such as self-regulation, initiation, and cognitive flexibility.	• The school tracks multiple indicators of success through means such as alumni, parent, and receiving teacher surveys • The school uses cognitive measures such as the Flanker Inhibitory Control Task, or the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS), to document wide-scope developmental outcomes • The school maintains profiles of all students based on narrative appraisal and work sampling, as well as performance on standardized academic measures.	• The school is in the process of developing a protocol that allows the documentation of social and emotional outcomes • The school maintains profiles of all students based on narrative appraisal, work sampling, as well as performance on standardized academic measures.	• The school includes narrative appraisals of social and emotional development as part of its assessment and reporting protocols, but has no larger system for tracking wide-scope student outcomes.	• The only form of assessment is state-mandated tests • Results are reported without context • Minimal standards of proficiency drive instruction
E. Qualitative Assessment, in the form of observation and documentation, is ongoing, personalized, and drives all instructional decisions.	• Regular, recorded observation is the basis of planning and assessment • The school uses an on-line record-keeping system to ensure that data are collected and managed effectively • Teachers can be seen making time daily to	• Regular, recorded observation is the basis of planning and assessment • Some members of the faculty use an on-line record-keeping system to ensure that data are collected and managed effectively • Teachers can be seen	• Some teachers can be seen making time daily to record observed activity with the environment, but there is no link to larger system of data management • Some classrooms have an "Observers Chair"	- There is no evidence of ongoing recorded observation. • Teachers do not meet to reflect on student progress

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	record observed activity within the environment • An “Observers Chair” is visible in the environment • Teachers meet weekly as teams to discuss student progress, reflect collectively on challenges, and share potential solutions.	making time daily to record observed activity within the environment • An “Observer’s Chair” is visible in the environment • Teachers meet occasionally as teams to discuss student progress, reflect collectively on challenges, and share potential solutions.		
F. Assessments are delivered in the least obtrusive manner possible	• Formative and summative assessments are delivered to individual students during work periods • Tests are treated as Practical Life activities, with minimal fanfare or work disruption • Test preparation is limited to practice experiences designed to familiarize students with format and language	• Summative assessments are delivered during testing windows • Total test preparation constitutes no more than one week of student work time	• Formative and summative assessments are delivered to the whole school/whole class during prescribed testing windows • Test preparation constitutes more than two weeks of student work time.	• Testing windows overtake the entire school day, with work periods suspended, students grouped in grade-level cohorts, and proctored by unfamiliar teachers • Preparing for tests drives the school’s program
G. As students mature, they are increasingly involved in monitoring their own progress	• At the elementary level students begin keeping daily journals of their work. • Teachers regularly confer with students to assist in the development of personal learning goals and to	• Students keep work journals, but they are not regularly employed in the self-assessment process. • Teachers sometimes confer with students to assist in the development of personal learning goals and to	• Students are given assigned “work plans” for which they have little input in developing or reflecting on. • Work plans require the teacher to “check-off” completed work rather than allowing students to	• Students are disconnected from the assessment process, except to receive grades.

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	reflect on progress. • Beginning in the elementary, students regularly participate in parent-teacher discussions of student progress.	reflect on progress.	manage their time and productivity.	
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