

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

Essential Elements on Montessori Practice in the Public Sector (version 4)				
1. Montessori Adults				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
A. The school employs teachers that have specialist Montessori qualifications for the age group they teach, in addition to appropriate state early childhood, elementary or secondary school teaching qualifications.	• All teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level and hold a state teaching license. • 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 a Montessori credential from an accredited Montessori training center. • 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 a Montessori credential from an accredited Montessori training center. • Montessori principles are evident in the actions of some adults.	• Less than 85% of all teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level. (Note: we are meeting the AMS accreditation requirements for Montessori teachers). • 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.
B. The school provides one paraprofessional /assistant for each classroom along with Montessori 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	• 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	• 75% of all classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course. • Some assistants play an integral role in the culture of the classroom.	• Less than 75% of all classrooms are staffed with an assistant who has completed a Montessori Assistant's course (minimum 40 hours) • Assistants, when they

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	• 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.	• Some assistants play an integral role in the culture of the classroom		are present, are disengaged from the work of the room or function solely as disciplinarians.
C. The school has a pipeline for recruiting, training, hiring, and retaining high quality Montessori teachers	• The school sponsors between two and four teachers for Montessori training annually • The School provides a robust Assistant's Course annually. • The school has a strong relationship with a 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 specifically 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
D. All adults in the school, whether or not they are Montessori trained, embrace the core Montessori	• All staff members engage in ongoing Montessori professional development • A palpable emphasis on	• All staff members engage in ongoing Montessori professional development. • Most staff members	• Some staff members engage in ongoing Montessori professional development • There is uncertainty	• Staff members do not engage in ongoing Montessori professional development. • There is evidence that

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principles and embody a deep respect for the developmental process, the natural tendencies of children, the goal of independence, and practices of grace and courtesy.	global citizenship, environmental stewardship, and grace & courtesy is evident in formal as well as informal school activities. • The vast majority of staff members report a culture of safety and respect.	report feeling safe and respected within the school culture	regarding the social and emotional safety of the school.	not all staff are aligned regarding the aims and methods of the educational program. • Staff members report a culture of disrespect and emotional insecurity.
2. Montessori Learning Environment				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
A. The daily practice of Montessori pedagogy is supported by a clearly defined Montessori scope and sequence¹.	• The Montessori scope & sequence is included in faculty and family handbooks *LMS has this within Montessori Compass • Faculty and staff at every level are familiar with the entire scope of the program and are able to articulate core concepts with confidence	• The Montessori scope & sequence (see appendix for samples) is included in faculty and family handbooks • Most faculty members are able to articulate the full scope of the program with confidence	A copy of the Montessori scope & sequence (see appendix for samples) is available in the school building, but not a prominent part of school literature or culture	Faculty and Staff are following a Scope and Sequence that conflicts with Montessori pedagogy
B. The school's learning environments feature large, mixed-age groupings of children: 2.5-6, 6-9, 9-12, 12-15,	• All of the school's environments reflect three-year instructional cycles • Classroom	• All of the environments reflect three-year instructional cycles. • Classroom communities feature no	• Within mixed age environments, children are segregated by age, gender or ability • The school has a	• The school has single or two-year graded classrooms. • The school has a stand-alone program for

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15-18¹	communities feature between 25 and 30 students supervised by no more than two adults • The primary point of entry to the program is age 3 or 4 • For students who enter after age four, the school has a well-elaborated orientation and induction program	fewer than 24 students supervised by no more than two adults • Significant numbers of 5 year-olds may enter without prior Montessori experience. • The school has a well-developed process for orienting and inducting these new students and families.	stand-alone program for 5 year-olds (calling it “kindergarten”) 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 at a point other than at the end of a 3 year cycle (ie, at a point other than after K, 3rd, 6th, 9th or 12th grades)	5 year-olds (calling it “kindergarten”) and no reliable method for orienting these children. • Children are segregated by age, gender or ability.
C. Specialty programs such as music, art, and second languages are integrated into the three hour work cycle.	• The Montessori teachers are confident in their delivery of 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, which students have access to throughout the week • The school employs bilingual staff to 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 ongoing 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 -- bells, tone bars, etc	• Specialty programs such as music, art, and second languages are delivered by non-Montessori-trained specialists during AM/PM work periods • There are separate morning and afternoon classes • Students have no access to Montessori music materials – bells, tone bars, e

¹ include examples of appropriate Scope and Sequence documents

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D. The school's learning environments enable children to be active for long uninterrupted (ideally 3 hours) periods of time.	• AM work periods last 3 hours for all classrooms • Most PM work periods (for older children) are 2 hours, with limited interruption for specials and other programmed activity	• AM work periods last 2.5-3 hours for all classrooms • Most PM work periods (for older children) are 2 hours, with limited interruption for specials and other programmed activity.	• AM work periods last 2-2.5 hours for all classrooms • PM work period (for older children) are 2 hours, but 2-3 times a week, those periods are taken up with specials and other programmed activity.	Work time is divided into small portions -- e.g.: Readers or Writers Workshop, Literacy Block – with limited opportunity for children to concentrate on self-selected work
E. The full complement of Montessori materials is available in every area, representing the majority of materials on all shelves; additional materials conform to Montessori standards of order, beauty, and simplicity.	• Montessori materials are meticulously cared for and displayed in an orderly and inviting manner, representing the majority of work available to students • Materials are in constant use • Appropriate cutlery, glassware and china are used da	• Montessori materials are displayed in an orderly and inviting manner, representing the majority of work available to students • Materials are in good repair and ready for use • Materials are in regular use	• Montessori materials are visible, but not organized in a way that invites robust engagement and concentration. • There is less than a full compliment of Montessori materials. • Montessori materials are liberally supplemented with other curricular approaches	• Montessori materials may be visible, but the majority of work involves other materials and resources, such a worksheets, text books, and computers • The environment is cluttered, with little attention to order, beauty and simplicity • Children eat with disposable cutlery, plates, and cups.
F. Instruction is characterized by 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	• 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. • Almost all instruction	• Students have choice regarding where and what to work on for part of the day. • Students may be assigned work, but may choose what order to complete the work and where in the environment	• 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

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	takes place in small groups (Elementary & Secondary) or one-on-one (Early Childhood).	takes place in small groups (Elementary & Secondary) or one-on-one (Early Childhood	they work. • Whole or large-group instruction is used almost as much as individual and small group instruction.	are expected to follow a pacing teacher.
G. The learning environment offers ongoing access to real-world materials and activities	• Practical life is a prominent area in the room; students have ample opportunity to engage in food preparation • There is a well-prepared and accessible outdoor learning environment • The environment includes a comfortable reading corner, which is accessible to students throughout the day	• Practical life is a prominent area in the room; students have some opportunity to engage in food preparation • Students have access to the outdoors • The environment includes a comfortable reading corner, which is accessible to students throughout the day.	• There is some evidence of Practical Life – students may have daily chores – but they do not engage in spontaneous care for the environment • Access to the outdoors is set by the teacher	Practical life is absent from the environment • Food is prepared by adults • The only access to outdoors is during “recess”
H. The Montessori curriculum is integrated with, but not driven by, state standards, including CCSS, where applicable.	• Faculty and staff are able to discuss how the school meets state’s standards without compromising the integrity of Montessori practice • Alignment documents have been developed and shared widely within the school and are available to parents,	• A process of aligning Montessori and state standards is underway • Some faculty members are able to discuss the school’s approach to meeting standards while not compromising Montessori integrity. • Teachers almost always “lead with the materials” and then backwards map	• Many members of the faculty are confused about the connection between state standards of core Montessori practice. • Teachers “lead with the standards” and then look for Montessori materials that teach them.	• Learning is entirely driven by state standards

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	central office staff and other stakeholders • Teachers “lead with the materials”— students learn through the Montessori materials and teachers backwards map this onto the state standards.	onto the standards.		
I. ELL and SPED students are fully included and supported within the classroom.	• Montessori teachers are 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.	• Specialists come in the classroom but work with the ELL and SPED students apart from the rest of the group and exclusively through non-Montessori materials.	ELL and SPED students are pulled out of the Montessori classroom for large portions of the day	• ELL and SPED students have a separate program for most or all of the day
3. Family Engagement				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
A. The school is characterized by a strong partnership between home and school, which is evident in all formal and informal	• There is a well-developed Family Handbook, which elaborates mutual expectations in clear, accessible language.	• There is a well-developed Family Handbook, which elaborates mutual expectations in clear, accessible language.	• A Family Handbook exists, but is out-of-date and not widely distributed. • Communication between home and	• A Family Handbook may exist, but is out-of-date and not widely distributed. • Communication between home and

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communications.	• The school engages in robust, two-way communication, which begins 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 come from and/or reflect the ethnic, linguistic and racial makeup of the student-body.	• The school maintains an active website. • 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.	school is limited to 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.	school is sporadic, and usually in the form of announcements from the administration. • Translations are sporadic or non-existent.
B. 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 informing parents 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.	• The Enrollment process features some opportunities to inform parents about the nature of Montessori and the family commitment expected by the school • The school offers an orientation evening for new families. • Parent education opportunities are offered	• 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. • Parent education opportunities are offered sporadically.	• The Enrollment process includes no opportunities for families to learn about the school; many families enroll without any knowledge of what Montessori education is • No adult education opportunities are offered.

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	• There is a robust family induction process, including open houses, orientation evenings, and networking with experienced families. • Parent education opportunities are offered monthly.	quarterly		
C. 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 leaders visible in the school. • There is significant family presence on the school's board or governance council • 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 conduits through which families can participate in the school. • Families report feeling unwelcome in the school.

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4. Leadership and Organizational Development				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
A. The school employs an experienced Montessori educator to guide the implementation of the Montessori program, if not as building principal, then as Program Director, Curriculum Coordinator or Instructional Coach.	• The school leader has deep knowledge of Montessori principles and practices, and demonstrates effective communication and advocacy for full implementation of the Montessori program. • The School employs at least one instructional coach, who holds a Montessori diploma for at least one program level, and whose primary responsibility is to support the full implementation of Montessori pedagogy in the school.	• The School Leader is not Montessori trained, but is enthusiastically engaged in ongoing Montessori professional development. • To support the untrained School Leader, the school employs a trained Program Director or Montessori Coach	• The School Leader is not Montessori trained, and has engaged in minimal Montessori professional development • The School does not employ a Montessori Program Director or Coach, but does rely on the expertise of experienced teachers in making programmatic decisions	• The School Leader is unwilling to engage in Montessori professional development • The School Leader 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.
B. 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 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	• 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.	• 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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	• 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 for inducting, mentoring and evaluating teachers. • Teachers are evaluated based on a protocol specially designed to support fully-implemented Montessori practice.	consultant within the past five 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	• Teachers are evaluated in part or whole based on a protocol that does not reflect Montessori practice	
C. The school maintains membership in one or more Montessori professional organizations, and seeks accreditation to ensure consistent quality	• The school is accredited 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 does maintain contact with at least one major Montessori professional organization.	The school has no affiliations with any Montessori professional organization
5. Assessment				
	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory
A. The school employs	• The school tracks	• The school is in the	• The school includes	• The only form of

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an assessment protocol that integrates measures of academic achievement with those of executive functions such as self-regulation, initiation, and cognitive flexibility.	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 BRIEF, to document wide-scope developmental outcomes • The school maintains profiles of all students based on narrative appraisal, work sampling, as well as performance on standardized academic measures.	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.	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.	assessment is state-mandated tests • Results are reported without context • Minimal standards of proficiency drive instruction
B. 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 record observed activity within the environment • An “Observers Chair”	• 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 making time daily to record observed activity within the environment	• 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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	is visible in the environment • Teachers meet weekly as teams to discuss student progress, reflect collectively on challenges, and share potential solutions.	• 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.		
C. 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
D. 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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