



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY
**2023 SCHOOL
ACCREDITATION
STANDARDS**



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY®
education that transforms lives

STANDARD 1

Philosophy, Mission, and Vision

The quality Montessori school establishes and communicates its mission and vision, which are guided by Montessori philosophy. The mission and vision are evident in the school's culture, daily operations, and instructional decisions.

CRITERIA

The quality Montessori school:

- 1.1 Creates written mission and vision statements with consideration of stakeholder input.
- 1.2 At least once every accreditation cycle, there is a practice of reviewing the mission statement with stakeholders for currency and relevance.
- 1.3 Ensures that the school's education goals and philosophy are in alignment with its mission and vision.
- 1.4 Communicates the mission and vision to all stakeholders to foster understanding and support.
- 1.5 Develops and updates a demographic profile of the school, its students, faculty/staff, and the community.
- 1.6 Demonstrates a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- 1.7 Conducts an equity audit and creates an action plan based on its results.
- 1.8 Publishes a written non-discrimination policy on the school website and in the school handbook that meets or exceeds U.S. federal or state non-discrimination policies.
- 1.9 Has created and continues to foster a program, culture, and inclusive community of students, families, faculty, staff, and governing body (if applicable), that recognizes diverse perspectives and embraces diverse cultures, backgrounds, and identities.

STANDARD 2

Governance, Leadership, and Continuous Improvement

The quality Montessori school establishes, implements, monitors, and refines a strategic planning process to affect continuous school improvement. It ensures its effectiveness through mission- and vision-aligned governance and leadership.

GOVERNANCE

The governing body:

- 2.1 Delegates responsibility to school leadership for all school operations and implementation of the strategic plan.
- 2.2 Serves as the strategic, fiduciary, and generative arm of the school, governed by published bylaws and processes that are in keeping with best practices of a school.
- 2.3 Strives to be a diverse group that provides a range of perspective, gender, race, age, and life experiences and is reflective of the regional community, as much as possible.
- 2.4 Formally evaluates the school leader at established intervals, based on their job description and the school's strategic goals.
- 2.5 Ensures the school has written, equitable, and inclusive policies and procedures that provide for the operation of the school and for the short- and long-term sustainability of the school leadership and governing body.
- 2.6 Is knowledgeable of and complies with applicable federal, state, and local laws, standards, and regulations. (If the school is exempt from licensing or compliance, written documentation verifying the exemption is required to be kept on school grounds.)
- 2.7 Adheres to all applicable laws and regulations related to the education of students with disabilities.

LEADERSHIP

The administrative leader:

- 2.8 Promotes a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
- 2.9 Recognizes and responds to school community concerns in an equitable way, in order to clarify expectations and strengthen stakeholder commitment.
- 2.10 Internally publishes an organizational chart that clearly defines roles, lines of authority, relationships, and accountability that is assessed regularly through a DEI lens.
- 2.11 Promotes consistency and continuity of culturally-responsive Montessori philosophy and practices across all program levels.
- 2.12 Ensures oversight of curricular and extracurricular activities sponsored/offered by the school.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – STRATEGIC PLAN

The governing body together with school leadership:

- 2.13 Engages stakeholder groups in a continuous process of improvement that results in a written multi-year strategic plan.
- 2.14 Ensures that the school's strategic plan is aligned with the mission and vision, DEI objectives, and the expectations for student learning.
- 2.15 Ensures the following is in its strategic plan: goal statements, person(s)/role(s) responsible for achieving each goal, stated commitment of resources needed, and a timeline and benchmarks for completing each goal.
- 2.16 Annually monitors, evaluates, and updates, in writing, the progress made toward the goals outlined in the strategic plan.
- 2.17 Communicates the progress and results of improvement efforts to stakeholders annually and equitably.

STANDARD 3

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning: A quality Montessori school implements a Montessori curriculum based on clear and measurable AMS learner outcomes: academic preparation, autonomy and independence, confidence and competence, global citizenship, intrinsic motivation, social responsibility, and spiritual awareness/cosmic education. Students actively engage in the learning process, exhibit joy in learning, and apply their knowledge and skills to real-world situations.

CORE COMPONENTS

3.1 Required for Accreditation

Classrooms are equipped with the fundamental Montessori materials.

- All materials are culturally responsive and reflect a diversity of learners.
- Curriculum support materials that meet the needs of the student may be incorporated into the classroom, provided that they do not replace the primary use of the Montessori materials.

3.2 Required for Accreditation

Structures classes with Montessori multi-age groupings. Program levels must be structured and staffed for the following multi-age groupings*:

- Infant: within the range of birth – 18 months

- Toddler: within the range of 15 months – 3 years
- Early Childhood: a 3-year age group within the range of 2.5 years – 6 years
- Lower Elementary: 6 years – 9 years
- Upper Elementary: 9 years – 12 years
- or Elementary I – II: ages 6 years – 12 years
- Secondary: the school must offer an age grouping of either 12 – 14, 14 – 16, 16 – 18 years of age or 12 – 15, 15 – 18 years of age.

*Schools granted a multi-age grouping variance prior to October 3, 2014, may maintain the age-grouping(s) for which the variance was granted. The accreditation status of these schools must be noted in their listing on the AMS website and in all other AMS accredited school listings, as well as in the schools' own marketing materials. The exact wording that must be used is: "Accredited with non-traditional Montessori age groupings." Failure of a school to comply with this language will result in revocation of AMS accreditation.

3.3 Curriculum Design and Implementation of Instructional Programs

The school provides a comprehensive Montessori educational curriculum in an identity safe learning environment that is culturally responsive. based on Montessori's fundamental philosophy of the child, the Montessori planes of development, and peace and social justice education. The school's Montessori curriculum is implemented with clearly defined learner outcomes.

3.3.1 Infant and Toddler (Birth — 3)

Required for Accreditation if program offered

The Infant & Toddler curriculum is based on 6 integrated developmental areas: sensory and perceptual, cognitive, physical, gross and fine motor, self-help skills, and social/emotional development. The learning environment fosters freedom of movement, integrates daily routines, and provides experiences that develop a child's growth and independence.

3.3.2 Early Childhood (2.5 — 6)

Required for Accreditation if program offered

The Early Childhood curriculum integrates the core areas of Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, and Language, as well as the Cultural Subjects. The learning environment is student-centered and self-directed.

3.3.3 Elementary I (6 — 9) and Elementary II (9 — 12)

Required for Accreditation if program offered

The Elementary curriculum integrates the core subjects of Mathematics (including geometry and algebra), Biological and Physical Sciences, Technology, Language Arts and Literature, History, Physical and Political World Geography, Civics, Economics, Anthropology, Peace and Cosmic Education, Art, Music, Additional/World Language, and Physical Education. Individually paced academic progress allows students to explore

their interests and acquire the mastery of basic skills and knowledge.

The learning environment is student-centered and designed to promote the development of organizational and time management skills, healthy identity development, conflict resolution, social justice, and anti-bias skills, concentration, independence, cooperation, and collaboration. Indicators of successful implementation include teacher guidance, assessment in planning in concert with student planning, monitoring, and assessing their own work, and demonstrating responsibility for their own learning and actions.

3.3.4 Secondary I (12 – 14/15) and Secondary II (14/15 – 18)

Required for Accreditation if program offered

In addition to the core curriculum areas of Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Additional/World Language, and Creative Arts, the Secondary curriculum includes opportunities for community service, career exploration, economic awareness, technology, peace, social justice, and cosmic education, physical education, outdoor education, and field studies.

The curriculum prepares students for post-secondary education or careers through self-construction, extensive self-reflection, identity development, self-advocacy, and opportunities for leadership and personal responsibility. Personality integration and stewardship of the Earth and humanity are crucial elements of the curriculum. Students' independent decision-making, problem solving, community building, and application of learning indicate successful implementation of the curriculum.

3.4 The school provides uninterrupted work periods of a length appropriate to the age of students served, to support student learning. The school protects uninterrupted blocks of student work time, scheduling enrichment programs, recess, transition times, group snack (EC – SEC), and large-group lessons (EC – EL), outside of the designated work period. (See “The Montessori Uninterrupted Work Period” in the Characteristics Papers.)

3.4.1 Infant & Toddler:

Required for Accreditation if program offered

The school allocates and protects, at minimum, a daily 2-hour work cycle. The time block allows for adult-assisted mealtime, snacks, hygiene, transition times, time outside, and nap/rest routines.

3.4.2 Early Childhood

Required for Accreditation if program offered

A 3-hour uninterrupted work cycle, 5 days per week is optimal. The school allocates and protects, at minimum, a 2-hour work cycle, 4 days per week. Enrichment programs, recess, transition times, group snack, and large-group lessons are not part of the

uninterrupted block of student work time.

3.4.3 Elementary

Required for Accreditation if program offered

A 3-hour uninterrupted work cycle, 5 days per week is optimal. The school allocates and protects, at minimum, a 2-hour work cycle, 4 days per week. Enrichment programs, recess, transition times, group snack, and full-class lessons are not part of the uninterrupted block of student work time.

3.4.4 Secondary

Required for Accreditation if program offered

The school allocates and protects, at minimum, a 90-minute work cycle for core curricular subjects (language arts, mathematics, sciences, and social studies). Extended whole-group teacher-directed activities/presentation, enrichment programs, recess, transition times, and group snack are not part of the uninterrupted block of student work time.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS

3.5 Includes programmatically appropriate furnishings (tables, chairs, etc.) of suitable size and quantity.

3.6 Is attractive, clean, and tidy.

3.7 Has ample, accessible storage area(s) for students' belongings.

3.8 Has a water source available as needed for independent student work.

3.9 Is prepared and responsive, allowing for a variety of activities and spaces.

3.10 Incorporates a variety of tangible representations that reflect Montessori's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and respect for all cultures and peoples.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

3.11 Are aesthetically displayed and appropriately accessible to students.

3.12 Are purposefully sequenced (generally left-to-right, top-to-bottom) according to the school's scope and sequence.

3.13 Are inspected and evaluated regularly for their cultural representation and appropriateness, completeness, and condition, and keep a school-wide inventory of all instructional materials and furnishings, including a repair and replacement plan.

3.14 Schools have a policy in place regarding teacher-made materials to account for ownership.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- 3.15 School administrators and educators shall ensure that students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate, utilizing push-in supports and programs wherever appropriate. Students with disabilities shall be removed from the regular classroom setting for the provision of instruction and/or services only when necessary and individually appropriate.
- 3.16 The school publishes and follows a written scope and sequence that integrates equity principles across all program levels within the school.
- 3.17 The quality Montessori school encourages and fosters the realization of Montessori's vision of a peaceful world, accounting for the fact that the world consists of people from different cultural, ethnic, and identity groups.
- 3.18 The quality Montessori school has intentionally crafted and follows policies that speak to the social and emotional health of the students, including the students' sense of equity and belonging.
- 3.19 The quality Montessori school engages students in environmental stewardship and sustainability activities to foster Montessori's vision of maintaining the planet.
- 3.20 Demonstrates knowledge and internalization of the core beliefs of Montessori philosophy, such as respect for the individual learner; preparation of self and the environment; fostering independence and interdependence; order and concentration in the student; respect for and recognition of sensitive periods; planes of development; intrinsic motivation of the student; and the absorbent mind.
- 3.21 Demonstrates effective communication skills to support the social, emotional, and identity development of students and to relay student progress in those areas to parents and guardians. The Montessori teacher forms a culturally sensitive and productive partnership with families in service of the child's development.
- 3.22 Designs and uses unbiased and culturally responsive instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are observation- and research-based, meet diverse student needs, and reflect Montessori best practice.
- 3.23 Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process.
- 3.24 Provides for a balance of uninterrupted, self-directed, self-teaching, and collaborative activities with the presentation of individual, small-, and large-group lessons.
- 3.25 Observes daily the individual students as well as the overall classroom environment and records observations.
- 3.26 Maintains clear and impartial, objectively written records of individual, small- and large-group lessons and activities using a comprehensive record-keeping system that accurately reflects each student's development.
- 3.27 Uses developmentally and culturally appropriate methods to support students in assessing their work.
- 3.28 Uses various methods of culturally responsive communication to meet families' needs during discussions about student development.
- 3.29 Implements equity-assessed, bias-free accommodations and interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning in consultation with school administrators and parents/guardians.
- 3.30 Recognizes and provides opportunities for students to participate in meaningful, age-appropriate leadership activities that develop self-advocacy, social responsibility, and action.

TEACHER PREPARATION

The Montessori teacher...

- 3.20 Demonstrates knowledge and internalization of the core beliefs of Montessori philosophy, such as respect for the individual learner; preparation of self and the environment; fostering independence and interdependence; order and concentration in the student; respect for and recognition of sensitive periods; planes of development; intrinsic motivation of the student; and the absorbent mind.
- 3.21 Demonstrates effective communication skills to support the social, emotional, and identity development of students and to relay student progress in those areas to parents and guardians. The Montessori teacher forms a culturally sensitive and productive partnership with families in service of the child's development.
- 3.22 Designs and uses unbiased and culturally responsive instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are observation- and research-based, meet diverse student needs, and reflect Montessori best practice.
- 3.23 Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process.

STANDARD 4

Documenting and Using Results

The quality Montessori school enacts an ongoing assessment system that monitors and documents learner outcomes that are based in equitable practices and uses these results to improve educational effectiveness.

CRITERIA

In a quality Montessori school, the administrative leader, faculty, and staff collaboratively:

- 4.1 Determine written benchmarks across all program levels that indicate progress toward the AMS Learner Outcomes.
- 4.2 Create, publish, and implement a data-driven system that provides inclusive qualitative (rubric-based) and quantitative measures (as appropriate to the age level) to assess each student's progress toward the established learner outcomes.
- 4.3 Analyze recorded data, action research, and classroom observations to examine each student's physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development.

- 4.4 Use the analysis of this data to make curricular and instructional decisions for individual students.
- 4.5 Evaluate school-wide effectiveness in meeting established benchmarks using compiled student data.
- 4.6 Use the results of a systematic analysis of instructional effectiveness to drive continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes.

STANDARD 5

Personnel

The quality Montessori school has policies and practices in place to ensure that employees are well qualified and are assigned professional responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience). Employees are provided support through ongoing evaluation and professional development and are sufficient in number to support the school’s mission and vision. The school states and follows fair, ethical, and non-discriminatory employment practices.

CRITERIA

The quality Montessori school:

5.1 Required for Accreditation

Employs lead teachers who hold a recognized Montessori credential for the level they are teaching (or who are enrolled and in good standing in a qualifying Montessori teacher education program) and qualify with the minimum number of points required in the Teacher Requirements Verification form.* In addition, lead teachers must meet all applicable requirements of the state, territory, or country in which they teach.

Secondary-level, core subject teachers (language arts, mathematics, sciences, and social studies) working in coordination with the lead teacher are required to, at minimum, have taken an approved Introduction to Secondary Montessori course.

*Teachers holding an AMS or NCME credential do not need to complete this form.

5.2 Employs Elementary and Secondary lead teachers who hold a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited college/university in the U.S. or a degree that is deemed to be equivalent.

It is highly recommended that all Infant & Toddler and Early Childhood lead teachers hold a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree or equivalent as stated above.

5.3 Employs a school leader who holds a Bachelor’s degree, qualifies with the minimum number of points stated in the Head of School Requirements Verification Form, and meets state and local regulations, as applicable.

- 5.4 Follows a written school-wide equitable faculty salary scale that considers credentialing, education, and years of service.
- 5.5 Provides written employment agreements for all school personnel annually, including compensation, benefits, and terms of employment.
- 5.6 Provides written job descriptions for all positions within the school.
- 5.7 Provides an employee handbook that includes, but is not limited to, the following: a code of ethics, an organizational chart, a non-discrimination policy, an anti-harassment statement (including sexual harassment), an anti-bias, anti-racist statement, a discipline policy, description of employee conduct expectations, a grievance procedure, and a policy and procedure for termination.
- 5.8 Engages in annual staff training on written policies and procedures in employment handbook, including non-discrimination, anti-harassment, and anti-bias, anti-racist policies.
- 5.9 Ensures that all educational leadership and teaching staff document completion of a minimum of ten (10) hours per year of professional development, including on the topics of anti-bias, anti-racism and the education of students with special needs.
- 5.10 Implements an annual equity-based evaluation system that sets goals for professional growth for all teaching and administrative personnel.
- 5.11 Ensures that all newly hired non-credentialed employees receive an orientation to Montessori philosophy and practice.
- 5.12 Ensures that the school leader and 100% of credentialed lead teachers maintain active membership in the American Montessori Society.
- 5.13 Provides dedicated planning time for lead teachers on a weekly basis.
- 5.14 Annually reviews its classroom ratios to ensure that lead teacher workload is manageable while striving for larger classroom sizes and maintains ratios of students to adults as appropriate for the age level:

Infants (Birth – 18 months):	4:1
Toddler (15 months – 3 years):	8:1
Early Childhood (2.5 – 6 years):	15:1
Elementary (6 – 12 years):	20:1
Secondary I (12 – 14 years):	25:1
Secondary II (14 – 18 years)	30:1

STANDARD 6

Facility Resources

The quality Montessori school provides facilities, sites, and equipment that meet optimum health and safety standards conducive to a safe learning environment in alignment with the mission of the school.

CRITERIA

The quality Montessori school:

- 6.1 Certifies that the facilities meet all applicable federal, state, and local laws, standards, and regulations including, but not limited to, building codes and safety standards as required by national, local and civil authorities and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- 6.2 Evidence of compliance with mandated safety protocols is provided in the form of completed health, fire, playground, and/or other inspections.
- 6.3 Provides and maintains a learning environment site and facilities that reflect the school's philosophy and aesthetic for instructional and co-curricular programs.
- 6.4 Has written policies for the access to and use of the school site and facilities by individuals or groups outside of school hours.
- 6.5 Has access to facilities that are adequate for developmentally appropriate gross motor activity including space for safe, vigorous physical activity.

STANDARD 7

Finances & Stability

The quality Montessori school maintains strong and prudent financial management practices and adequate fiscal resources to support its mission and vision.

CRITERIA

The quality Montessori school...

- 7.1 Complies with all federal, state, and local regulations*, as required by the school's legal status, and is verified by the AMS Independent Accounting Questionnaire.
- 7.2 Monitors all financial practices and transactions to be in compliance with federal/state/local requirements and is verified by the AMS Independent Accounting Questionnaire.
- 7.3 Develops an annual operating budget that is approved by the governing body.

7.4 Utilizes a system for accurately tracking and documenting revenue and expenses.

7.5 Reports on current year financial performance through the preparation of financial statements on a monthly or quarterly basis to the governing body for oversight.

7.6 Clearly states and publishes financial responsibilities of parents/guardians (if applicable).

7.7 Maintains a written policy for managing, disbursing, and overseeing the allocation of funds awarded through its financial assistance program (if applicable).

7.8 Engages in financial planning practices for the sustainability of the school.

*It is the school's responsibility to be aware of laws and regulations and to take steps to be and remain in compliance. It is not the responsibility of AMS or the Visiting Team to independently verify compliance. Accreditation by AMS is not certification of a school's compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

STANDARD 8

Records, Resources, and Support Systems

The quality Montessori school has appropriate documentation, training, and human resources to meet applicable federal, state, and local regulations, assure health and safety of faculty/staff and students, and enable all students to achieve expectations for student learning.

CRITERIA

The quality Montessori school...

8.1 Develops and implements a published comprehensive health (physical and social-emotional) and safety plan, preventive/emergency preparedness plan, and crisis management plan.

8.2 Annually reviews, updates as needed, and shares with appropriate stakeholders the comprehensive health and safety plan, preventive/emergency preparedness plan, and crisis management plan. (Plans should reflect the date of the most recent review and/or revision.)

8.3 Documents that staff are trained, including provisions made to simulate and practice the execution of health and safety policies and procedures, as required by local and state safety regulations.*

8.4 Documents and reports incidents/accidents that occur on school grounds and during school-sponsored activities.

8.5 Has procedures and utilizes tools to ensure safe use and access to technology, including protections from cyber threats, use of firewalls, and policies for staff and student use.

- 8.6 Maintains insurance coverage: fire and extended coverage, comprehensive liability, workers' compensation, and director and officers' liability Insurance (if applicable).
- 8.7 Creates and publishes policies and procedures for field trips and off-site events that provide for the safety and accessibility of all participants, including proper chaperoning and procedures for use of commercial and/or private vehicle transportation.
- 8.8 Maintains and distributes to staff students' emergency, health, and academic records at the site of attendance.
- 8.9 Ensures that all teachers, administrators, and appropriate staff members shall receive any and all necessary information about a student's disability-related needs, which may include a copy of a student's specialized education program, to ensure that disability-based accommodations and specialized instruction occur consistently throughout the student's day.
- 8.10 Maintains a list of professional support services and agencies in the community that are able to assist students and families of students with disabilities, to be distributed as necessary or as requested.
- 8.11 Provides a plan regarding retention of student records upon closing of the school that abides by state or local regulations.*
- 8.12 Assists families in establishing connections with agencies, programs, and/or community resources that may be beneficial to the students and/or their families.
- 8.13 Maintains employee records in compliance with state/federal requirements.* In addition, Montessori credentials, licenses, teaching certificates, transcripts, evaluations, professional development records, background checks, and employee applications should be on file.
- 8.14 Has a policy for maintaining, backing up, and securing current and former student and employee records and business files in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.*
- 8.15 Ensures accessibility to all legal documents as required by federal state and local laws/regulations* befitting the school's legal status.

*It is the school's responsibility to be aware of laws and regulations and to take steps to be and remain in compliance. It is not the responsibility of AMS or the Visiting Team to independently verify compliance. Accreditation by AMS is not certification of a school's compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

STANDARD 9

Stakeholder Communication and Relationships

The quality Montessori school fosters effective and accessible communication and relationships with and among its stakeholders, with intentional inclusion of historically marginalized groups.

CRITERIA

The quality Montessori school...

- 9.1 Has accessible, formal channels of communication described and outlined in a policy and procedures document to listen to and communicate with stakeholders.
- 9.2 Solicits, listens to, and responds to the questions, issues, and/or concerns of historically marginalized groups within the school community to promote inclusivity, belonging, and participation.
- 9.3 Publishes an accessible student & family handbook that articulates all policies and procedures relevant for students and families, including an anti-bias, anti-racist statement, an anti-bullying statement, a student discipline policy, and a grievance procedure.
- 9.4 Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school, with consideration given to ways historically marginalized stakeholders can contribute.
- 9.5 Communicates in accessible ways to all stakeholders the expectations for student learning, learner outcomes, school effectiveness, and goals for improvement.
- 9.6 Provides the necessary supports to enable outreach and engagement to the school's families, including those whose first language is one other than the primary language spoken in the school.
- 9.7 Conducts annual assessments of school effectiveness with stakeholders and analyzes and shares results.
- 9.8 Develops a written policy regarding parent/guardian observations of the learning environment and encourages visits by them and other community members.
- 9.9 Practices community engagement by providing information about school programs and seeks ways to contribute locally and globally.
- 9.10 Provides family support and enrichment opportunities on topics such as Montessori philosophy and curriculum; family and parenting issues; child development; anti-bias, anti-racist education; justice, equity, diversity, inclusion education; and health and safety issues.



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