



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY
education that transforms lives

School Accreditation Standards and Criteria

These Standards revised in June 2008 were modeled on CITA Standards with permission.

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AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY

SCHOOL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

STANDARD 1: VISION AND PURPOSE

The quality Montessori school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for enhancing the development of students and the effectiveness of the school. The school's vision is consistent with the Montessori philosophy of facilitating the student's development of full potential.

CRITERIA:

- 1.1 Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders, including administrators, governing board members, faculty, staff, parents, students and community.
- 1.2 Creates a school mission statement, educational goals and philosophy appropriate to the needs of the school population in harmony with Montessori's descriptions of the nature of the student, the needs of the family, the prepared environment and the needs of the staff.
- 1.3 Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support.
- 1.4 Identifies, documents and monitors goals to advance the vision.
- 1.5 Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community.
- 1.6 Holds beliefs, mission, and goals of the school appropriate for the students enrolled and does not sanction discrimination against any recognized segment of the public.
- 1.7 Ensures that the school's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process.
- 1.8 Provides written policies and procedures that promote the effective operation of the school and support the school's mission and the beliefs.
- 1.9 Periodically reviews with a representation of all constituents the school's mission statement, educational goals and philosophy and revises them when appropriate.

Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a shared purpose and direction. The school establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the school's vision and in keeping with the Montessori philosophy that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student development and school effectiveness. The school's vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.



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SCHOOL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

STANDARD 2: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The quality Montessori school provides governance and leadership that promote student learning and school effectiveness.

GOVERNANCE

CRITERIA:

- 2.1 Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school, including a system for short and long term sustainability of the governing body.
- 2.2 Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school.
- 2.3 Provides an organizational chart that clearly defines lines of authority, relationships, and accountability.
- 2.4 Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations. If the school is exempt from licensing or compliance, written exemption of current issue (within the last five years) verifying exemption from the appropriate local, state, and/or federal agency is necessary to show compliance.
- 2.5 Maintains on site all legal documents that define and describe the corporate status of the (e.g., articles of incorporation, franchise agreements, proprietary registration, and partnership agreement).

LEADERSHIP

CRITERIA:

- 2.6 Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness.
- 2.7 Fosters a learning community.
- 2.8 Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead.
- 2.9 Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
- 2.10 Controls curricular and extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the school.
- 2.11 Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction.

Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement Montessori curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The school's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.



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SCHOOL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

STANDARD 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING – Educational Nature

The quality Montessori school provides a Montessori curriculum and Montessori instructional methods and materials that facilitate learning for all students.

CRITERIA:

- 3.1 Develops and implements a Montessori curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning
- 3.2 Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning
- 3.3 Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices.
- 3.4 Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice.

Curriculum Implementation and Instructional Programs

The school shall provide a comprehensive educational curriculum based on the Montessori planes of development and implemented by Montessori credentialed instructional staff qualified by Standard 5. The school may use supplementary programs that are deemed necessary to enhance the basic core curriculum for their student population. Conflict resolution skill building should reflect the Montessori philosophy of a peaceful world and harmonious coexistence based on mutual respect that should be evident at all levels. The curriculum should promote the students' cognitive, physical, social-emotional, spiritual, psychological development; thereby addressing the needs of the whole child. Activities should provide purpose, procedure, closure and opportunity for success.

Schools are expected to demonstrate the following curriculum planning and implementation indicators:

3.4.1 *Infant/Toddler (Birth-3)*

Curriculum planning for 0-36 months is extremely dependent upon developmental characteristics. The teacher must plan the daily activities and general program goals based on the capabilities and interests of the child. Learning cannot be separated from motor development at this age. The structure of the curriculum is based on five developmental areas: sensory and perceptual, physical and motor, self-help skills, and social/emotional development. Materials should allow for students to explore, absorb and experience their environment through their senses and kinesthetically.

3.4.2 *Early Childhood (2.-6)*

Curriculum planning at the 2.5 – 6 year levels should integrate Montessori's core areas of Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, and Language, and Culture, including Geography, History, Botany, Zoology, Art, and Music. The learning environment should be designed to promote the development of order, coordination, concentration and independence.



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STANDARD 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING – Educational Nature (continued)

3.4.3 *Elementary I (6-9) and Elementary II (9-12)*

Curriculum planning at the elementary level should consider that the student is entering a new plane of development: a tremendous imagination, an aptitude for the abstract, a strong sense of morality and justice, and a strong need for peer relationships. Individually paced academic progress should allow students to explore their interests along with acquiring the mastery of basic skills and knowledge, including basics such as: math facts, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, sentence analysis, creative and expository writing, and library research. In addition, The Montessori elementary learning environment should reflect activities that provide deeper educational experiences in the areas of mathematics (including geometry and algebra), science and technology, the world of myth, great literature, history, functional and political world geography, civics, economics, and anthropology, and areas of art, music, foreign language, physical education and computer technology. Students have opportunities to plan, monitor and assess their own work, thereby further developing their independence and responsibility for their own actions.

3.4.4 *Secondary I (12-15)*

In addition to the continuation of the Montessori curriculum at a deeper level the curriculum at the secondary level is expected to increase students' development in decision-making, problem solving, community building and applying this learning to their lives and the larger community. Students expand on their cumulative experiences in the creation and care of the environment. Students have opportunities to plan, monitor and assess their own work, thereby further developing their independence and responsibility for their own actions. The Montessori secondary curriculum should include opportunities for community service and career exploration, economic exploration, technology, activities for humanities, peace and cosmic education, physical education, creative arts, outdoor education and field studies.

3.5 Structures classes with multi-age groupings.

Multi-age grouping is an integral part of the Montessori Philosophy at all levels. Philosophically, the rationale is that individuals learn from each other with opportunities to lead, share, and model their peers. Students can accelerate or take additional time as needed to learn skills. AMS Teacher Education Programs prepare teachers to work with a 3-year age-span and to have the expertise to support skills both above and below a developmental level.

A 3-year age-span is considered the optimal configuration for Montessori classrooms for all ages above the infant and toddler level. This allows the maximum opportunity for students to interact and learn from one another.



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STANDARD 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING – Educational Nature (continued)

AMS acknowledges that for various reasons a 3-year span may not be possible. For accreditation consideration a variance must be applied for if the 3-year age span standard is not met.

The reasons for requesting a variance include but are not limited to:

1. Licensing limitations; state or local requirements
2. Financial considerations, i.e., incorporating a full 3-year age span would have a significant negative impact on the school's operating budget
3. Building size constraints
4. Enrollment growth or reduction
5. Scope of ages served by the school
6. Philosophical rationale based on Montessori principles and/or current educational research.

The outcomes at all schools must reflect that the age groupings used by the school are meeting the needs of the students, developmentally, socially, emotionally, and academically.

Once granted, the variance remains valid so long as the reason for granting of the variance does not change. The School Accreditation Commission will be responsible for making decisions regarding variances.

3.6 Maintains ratios and maximum group sizes as follows:

The ratios of students to teaching staff, both Montessori credentialed and assistant teacher is appropriate for the age level:

Infants (Birth to 18 months):	4:1
Toddler (18-36 months):	8:1
Early Childhood (2.5-6 years):	15:1
Elementary (ages 6-12 years):	20:1
Secondary (ages 12-18years):	20:1

The school assigns no more than the maximum number of students to each Montessori credentialed teacher that is appropriate to the age level:

Infants (Birth to 18 months):	8
Toddler (18-36 months):	16
Early Childhood (2.5-6 years):	30
Elementary (ages 6-12 years):	30
Secondary (ages 12-18years):	30



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STANDARD 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING – Educational Nature (continued)

3.7 Maintains an environment that incorporates materials, structure and leadership to best meet the needs of all students.

3.7.1 *Facilities, Instructional Materials*

Classroom environments in quality Montessori schools are equipped with a full range of Montessori and curriculum support materials, aesthetically displayed and easily accessible to students. The following lists are a guide to quality Montessori schools in preparing and assessing environments and selecting materials for each age level. Schools should regularly inspect and evaluate materials for completeness and good working condition and keep a school-wide inventory of all instructional materials and furnishings.

Suggested Materials Lists for each age level are provided in the AMS School Accreditation Handbook.

Classroom environments in quality Montessori schools are equipped with furnishings (tables, chair, etc.) of sizes and quantity to meet the needs of students.

3.7.2 *Physical Environment*

The environment:

- Is clean, orderly, neat
- Has logical organization of materials/resource/activities, such as by level of difficulty of sequence of skill development
- Is aesthetically pleasing
- Is appropriate in size (follows licensing regulations)
- Has adequate furnishings for size and ages of students
- Has accessible, neat storage area for students' belongings
- Has accessible, neat storage of teacher materials
- Has a water source available
- Allows for a variety of activities such as individual/group, floor/table, noisy/quiet, and active/sedentary
- Accommodates different learning styles and different kinds of work
- Provides for display of students' work

3.7.3 *Structure and Curriculum*

Classroom schedule:

- Encourages the student's spontaneous activity
- Provides community building and leadership opportunities appropriate to each level
- Allows for self-teaching activities



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STANDARD 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING – Educational Nature (continued)

CRITERIA:

3.7.4 *Classroom leadership*

The teacher exhibits the following characteristics and abilities:

- Gives clear, meaningful individual, small group lessons
- Plans and implements small and large group activities
- Monitors the overall environment during individual lessons and general observations
- Provides developmentally appropriate guidelines for students to assess their quality of work using a variety of assessment tools including portfolios
- Facilitates regular ongoing communication of student development through parent and or family conferences as needed
- Uses a comprehensive record keeping system that accurately reflects the student's development
- Uses an effective system for communication with parents, acknowledging parents' needs and offering a variety of means for communication, e.g. email, telephone, written and/or online newsletters and notes
- Shares knowledge of the students' development and concepts appropriate to each level with staff and parents.

3.7.5 *Professionalism*

Teacher demonstrates knowledge and internalization of the core beliefs of Montessori philosophy, such as respect for the individual learner, preparation of the environment, fostering independence, order and concentration in the student, respect for and recognition of sensitive periods and planes of development, recognizing intrinsic motivation of the student, and the absorbent mind.

- Teacher has a written plan for and documentation of continuing professional growth.
- Teacher has fundamental communication skills to aid in the social and emotional needs of students and counseling skills appropriate to the age level.
- Teacher's interactions with students are appropriate and professional

- 3.8 Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity
- 3.9 Allocates and protects large blocks of uninterrupted instructional time to support student learning. Optimal learning takes place during two to three-hour blocks of time. Schools should make every effort to schedule enrichment programs and transition times to accommodate these blocks.
- 3.10 Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all age levels within the school, by interactively communicating and exchanging ideas to reach consensus.
- 3.11 Implements interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning.
- 3.12 Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning.
- 3.13 Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs.
- 3.14 Ensures that all students and staff members have regular and ready access to instructional materials and tools, including technology where appropriate based on school philosophy, and a comprehensive materials collection that supports the curricular and instructional program.



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STANDARD 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING – Educational Nature (continued)

Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a Montessori curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process and students exhibit a joy in learning. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations.



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STANDARD 4: DOCUMENTING AND USING RESULTS – Learner Outcomes

The quality Montessori school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents outcomes and uses these results to improve learner outcomes and school effectiveness.

CRITERIA:

- 4.1 Establishes measures for outcomes of student learning that yield information that is reliable and bias free.
- 4.2 Develops and implements a comprehensive assessment system for evaluating progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning across age levels, which may include research based assessment tools.
- 4.3 Uses student assessment data in making decisions that impact continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes.
- 4.4 Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional effectiveness and uses the results to improve student learning.
- 4.5 Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations.

As applicable to **elementary** and **secondary** levels:

CRITERIA:

- 4.6 Communicates the results of learner outcomes and school effectiveness to all stakeholders.
- 4.7 Uses comparison and trend data of learner outcomes from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness.
- 4.8 Demonstrates verifiable growth in learner outcomes.

Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined outcome measures. The system is used to assess student outcomes on expectations for student learning, to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student learning. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding learner outcomes, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.



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STANDARD 5: PERSONNEL

The quality Montessori school provides for ethical and fair and non-discriminatory practices for all employees, teaching and non-teaching.

CRITERIA:

- 5.1 Provides written job descriptions for all school personnel that clearly describe the assigned duties and written employment agreements for all school personnel.
- 5.2 Provides a written non-discrimination policy.
- 5.3 Ensures that all staff participates in a continuous program of professional development and documents teachers' plans for and participation in ongoing professional development.
- 5.4 Ensures that the Head of School and at least 50% of credentialed lead teachers maintain active membership in the American Montessori Society.
- 5.5 The school maintains copies of lead teachers' Montessori credentials, licenses, teaching certificates, and transcripts and updates this information with AMS as changes occur.
- 5.6 Implements an annual evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel and maintains records of all evaluations.
- 5.7 Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience).
 - 5.7.1 Program administrator, e.g. Head of School, has professional qualifications that meet state and local regulations.
 - 5.7.2 A school that employs more than one directing teacher shall designate an educational supervisor/coordinator. This coordinator will oversee the consistency of educational quality and serve as a resource to other staff members. This coordinator shall hold a Montessori credential.
 - 5.7.3 Employs Lead Teachers who qualify with the minimum number of points required in the Teacher Requirements Verification and hold a qualifying credential for the age level taught.
- 5.8 Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school.

The ratios of students to teaching staff, both Montessori credentialed and assistant teacher is appropriate for the age level:

Infants (Birth to 18 months):	4:1
Toddler (18-36 months):	8:1
Early Childhood (2.5-6 years):	15:1
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Secondary (ages 12-18years):	20:1

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Early Childhood (2.5-6 years):	30
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Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when it clearly states and adheres to roles and responsibilities expected of all employees and employs qualified personnel. The school states and follows fair and ethical employment practices for all employees.



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STANDARD 6: FACILITY RESOURCES

The quality Montessori school provides facilities, sites, and equipment that are functional, safe and fully support the school's mission and beliefs.

CRITERIA:

- 6.1 Ensures that the facilities meet all building codes and safety standards required by the local civil authorities, including Americans with Disabilities Act compliance. The school provides ongoing opportunities for staff to learn current local and state safety regulations.
- 6.2 Provides a site, buildings, equipment, and furnishings are designed and maintained to facilitate the safety of all occupants and to maintain the quality of the school's instructional and co-curricular programs.
- 6.3 Safeguards for the protection of students and staff against hazards such as accidents, fire, weather-related events, and natural disasters are evident throughout the buildings and a written crisis management plan is maintained.
- 6.4 Maintains buildings that are well lighted, well ventilated, and the temperature is conducive to learning and working.
- 6.5 Written policies for the access to and use of the school site and facilities by individuals or groups are in place and enforced.
- 6.6 Has facilities that are adequate for the stated purposes and support the school's mission and beliefs.
- 6.7 Provides indoor space used for educational program allows a minimum of thirty (30) square feet per student or the minimum as required by state if greater than 30 square feet.
- 6.8 Provides space for safe, vigorous physical activity.
- 6.9 Makes efforts to fulfill Montessori's vision of maintaining the planet.

Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when its facilities and equipment are well-maintained and function to meet optimum health and safety standards conducive to a safe learning environment.



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STANDARD 7: RECORDS, RESOURCES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The quality Montessori school maintains records and has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and mission.

CRITERIA:

- 7.1 Maintains the following records at the site of attendance: student's emergency medical information, student's health information, first aid treatment administered for any injury or illness at school, medication administered at school, developmental progress assessments/transcript, attendance history.
 - 7.1.1 Abides by state or local regulations regarding retention of student records upon closing of a school. (effective as of 10/15/09)
- 7.2 Recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that is capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities.
- 7.3 Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement.
- 7.4 Regularly monitors all financial practices transactions by engaging a recognized accounting service to annually report on the school's financial practices and financial status through a recognized accounting service, such as an external audit.
- 7.5 Maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants and is in compliance with local, state and federal regulations.
- 7.6 Maintains and regularly updates an inventory of materials and equipment.
- 7.7 Maintains or otherwise contracts for appropriate insurance coverage: fire and extended coverage, comprehensive liability, and workmen's compensation.
- 7.8 Ensures that all procedures used in official transportation provide for the safety of the students. It includes private vehicles used in field trips.
- 7.9 Has in place a current written security and crisis management plan that is reviewed regularly with appropriate training for stakeholders. Crisis management plan should include back up of all student, employee and business files that is maintained off site.
- 7.10 Ensures that each student has access to guidance services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and if appropriate for age levels served, educational and career planning.
- 7.11 Provides appropriate support for students with special needs with participation of all those involved, e.g., parents/guardians, teachers, therapists, counselors, administration.
- 7.12 Maintains a central file of professional support services and agencies in the community and provides connections to other agencies, programs or family systems in accordance with families' needs.

Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when it has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a Montessori curriculum that enables students to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The school employs and allocates staff that is well qualified for their assignments. The school provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.



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SCHOOL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

STANDARD 8: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

The quality Montessori school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

CRITERIA:

- 8.1 Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning.
- 8.2 Has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders
- 8.3 Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school.
- 8.4 Communicates the expectations for student learning, learner outcomes, school effectiveness and goals for improvement to all stakeholders. Communication is achieved through various forms such as, parent teacher conferences, progress reports, newsletters, website, agendas/minutes of stakeholder meetings, surveys.
- 8.5 Involves all its constituents in periodic assessments of its effectiveness.
- 8.6 Encourages observation visits by parents and other community members. The school has a written observation policy.
- 8.7 Provides information about itself to the community. For example, Public relations and public services of the school might include providing speakers to civic and educational groups, distributing literature, contributing books to public libraries, etc.
- 8.8 Provides various types of parent education opportunities such as workshops on Montessori philosophy and curriculum, parenting issues, child development, and health and safety issues. (effective as of 10/15/09)

Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. School personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY

SCHOOL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

STANDARD 9: COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – Strategic Plan

The quality Montessori school establishes, implements, and monitors a process to continuously improve its educational programs and services.

CRITERIA:

9.1 Engages all constituents in a continuous process of improvement that:

- articulates the vision and mission of the school (Vision);
- maintains a detailed and current description of students, learner outcomes, program effectiveness, and the school community (Profile);
- employs goals and interventions to improve learner outcomes (Plan);
- and documents and uses the results to inform goals (Results)

...as outlined in a written five-year Strategic Plan.

9.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement.

9.3 Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and mission of the school and expectations for student learning.

9.4 Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement interventions to achieve improvement goals.

9.5 Annually monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders.

9.6 Annually evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Impact Statement

A quality Montessori school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving its educational programs and services and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.