



AMERICAN  
MONTESSORI  
SOCIETY®

## Montessori Essentials

An authentic Montessori school will implement a philosophical approach that is consistent with the educational methods and areas of instruction as defined by the observations, research, writings and instruction of Dr. Maria Montessori. A Montessori school must allow the child to develop naturally—children are able to learn at their own pace and follow their own individual interests, learning primarily through the hands-on use of scientifically prepared auto-didactic materials, and interacting with the environment under the guidance of a specially trained adult. A Montessori environment promotes the child’s ability to find things out independently, enabling motivation and knowledge-building through internal development rather than external teaching or rewards.

In addition, an authentic Montessori school will apply the following pedagogical elements. It is critical that all of these elements be present in order for the Montessori approach to be successfully implemented. Montessori schools should:

1. Implement the Montessori curriculum which must include:
  - a. A classroom design that is compatible with Montessori “prepared environment” principles.
  - b. A full complement of Montessori materials for each class and age group.
  - c. Uninterrupted Montessori daily work periods, with 3-hour work periods being the ideal.
  - d. Instruction characterized by a high degree of freedom given to the student to choose what to work on, where to work, how long to work.

- e. Instruction that primarily takes place in small groups (Elementary & Secondary) or one-on-one (Early Childhood).

2. Have appropriately trained instructional staff defined as:

- a. Having a lead teacher in each classroom with an AMI, AMS, NCME, and/or MACTE accredited teacher education program credential at the level being taught.
- b. Having staff members engage in ongoing Montessori professional development.

3. Have classrooms

- a. With the appropriate multi-aged groupings: 2.5/3-6, 6-9, 9-12, or 6-12 years of age. Children from birth to 3 years of age and 12-18 years of age may be grouped in varying multi- age configurations.
- b. With class sizes and adult/child ratios that align with Montessori principles. Montessori classroom standards require larger class sizes and higher student to teacher ratios than is typically seen in traditional classrooms. Adding additional teaching staff to a Primary classroom can interfere with, rather than encourage, child-directed learning. It would not be uncommon to see 30 or more children in a classroom at the early childhood and elementary levels.

4. Assess student progress through

- a. Teacher observation
- b. Detailed record keeping

The above statement was created by the Montessori Public Policy Initiative, a collaborative project of Association Montessori International – USA (AMI - USA) and American Montessori Society (AMS). For more information visit

<https://www.montessoriadvocacy.org>