



*Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI)
A Joint Collaboration*

An Introduction for Advocates to the Montessori Essentials

Policymakers need to hear a unified voice from the Montessori community in order to create Montessori friendly policy. They can become confused and frustrated when they hear varying demands about what kinds of policies, regulations, and allowances need to be in place to accommodate Montessori programs. When policymakers are confused they are less likely to generate or approve the policies and regulations that Montessori schools need to protect the integrity of their programs.

The *Montessori Essentials* document is designed to be used as a tool in advocating with policymakers and regulatory agencies. Most policymakers are unfamiliar with the various components of a Montessori classroom and how those components work together to create a successful Montessori environment. By proclaiming that the criteria outlined in this document are “essential,” we are giving advocates a tool that tells policymakers what non-negotiable standards their policies need to make allowances for when looking at Montessori programs. Since they have the approval of the Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI), these standards will bear more weight with policymakers than the voice of a school or advocacy coalition alone.

As you review these criteria, *please keep the intent of the document in mind*. This document is not intended to evaluate or judge programs that currently do not meet all of these criteria and/or who cannot meet them due to constraints of current regulations. The sole intention of this document is to provide policymakers with evidence of why advocates are asking for certain policies or regulatory accommodations.

In addition, this document is not intended to imply that these standards are indicative, on their own, of the quality of a Montessori program. Montessori associations will continue to have their own school accreditation and recognition standards for schools that choose to pursue them. Additionally, the Essential Elements rubric, developed by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, details several other criteria and provides one quality measure for public Montessori schools.

In creating this document, the MPPI Council drew from the Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools in the Public School Sector which was previously drafted and endorsed by several Montessori organizations, including American Montessori Society, Association Montessori International, North American Montessori Teachers' Association, Montessori Educational Programs International, and the Southwestern Montessori Training Center.



*Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI)
A Joint Collaboration*

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

<http://www.montessoripublicpolicy.org/>