

Finding the Right School

"Why is there so much variation from one Montessori school to another? How can I know if I've found a 'real' Montessori school?"

Although most schools try to remain faithful to their understanding of Dr. Montessori's insights and research, they have all been influenced by the evolution of our culture and technology. Remember, despite the impression many parents hold, the name *Montessori* refers to a method and philosophy, and it is neither a name protected by copyright nor a central licensing or franchising program.

In many parts of the world, anyone could, in theory, open a school and call it *Montessori* with no knowledge of how an authentic program is organized or run. When this happens, it is both disturbing and embarrassing for those of us who know the difference. Many of these schools fail but often not before they harm the public's perception of the integrity and effectiveness of Montessori as a whole.

Often one sign of a school's commitment to professional excellence is their membership in one of the professional Montessori societies, such as the Association Montessori Internationale or the American Montessori Society. They, along with several other Montessori organizations, such as the International Montessori Council, also offer schools the opportunity to become accredited as well.

There are many other smaller Montessori organizations as well, but the key is to remember that there is no requirement that a Montessori school be affiliated or accredited by any outside organization. Quite a few Montessori schools choose to remain independent.

What should we look for when we visit Montessori schools?

The Montessori Learning Environment

- ▲ Montessori classrooms should be bright, warm, and inviting, filled with plants, animals, art, music, and books. Interest centers will be filled with intriguing learning materials, mathematical models, maps, charts, international and historical artifacts, a class library, an art area, a small natural-science museum, and animals that the children are raising. In an elementary class, you will also normally find computers and scientific apparatus.
- ▲ You should not find rows of desks in a Montessori classroom, nor will there be a teacher's desk and chalk board in the front of the room. The environment will be set up to facilitate student discussion and stimulate collaborative learning.

- ▲ Montessori classrooms will be organized into several curriculum areas, usually including: language arts (reading, literature, grammar, creative writing, spelling, and handwriting); mathematics and geometry; everyday living skills; sensory-awareness exercises and puzzles; geography, history, science, art, music, and movement. Most rooms will include a classroom library. Each area will be made up of one or more shelf units, cabinets, and display tables with a wide variety of materials on open display, ready for use as the children select them.
- ▲ Students will typically be found scattered around the classroom, working alone or with one or two others.
- ▲ Teachers will normally be found working with one or two children at a time, advising, presenting a new lesson, or quietly observing the class at work.



- ▲ Each class should contain the full complement of Montessori materials considered appropriate for this level.
- ▲ The furniture in the classroom will be the right size for the students.
- ▲ There will be few, if any, toys in a Montessori preschool classroom. Instead there should be a lovely and extensive collection of learning materials that match the developmental capabilities, interests, and needs of the children enrolled in each class. These educational materials allow for multiple modalities of learning and discovery, offering a wide range of intellectual challenges.
- ▲ The learning activities observed in a Montessori environment should involve inquiry, discovery, and provide continuous feedback on the students' progress. With older students, there should be evidence that in discussions and lessons, multiple perspectives and differing viewpoints are treated with respect.
- ▲ The children should clearly feel comfortable and safe.

The Composition of a Class

- A Montessori program is composed of mixed-age groups of children within each classroom, traditionally covering a three-year span from the early childhood level onward. The levels usually found in a Montessori school correspond to the developmental stages of childhood: Infants (birth through eighteen months); Toddlers (eighteen months to age three); Early Childhood (age three to six); Lower Elementary (age six to eight); Upper Elementary (age

nine to eleven); Middle School (age twelve to fourteen); and High School (age fourteen to eighteen).

- Ideally a Montessori class is balanced in terms of boys and girls, as well as in the number of children in each age group.
- Classes should be made up of twenty-five to thirty students, led by either two Montessori teachers or a Montessori teacher and one or two assistants. These numbers will naturally be lower at the infant and toddler levels.
- Montessori schools consciously work to attract a diverse student body and follow a clear non-discrimination policy.

The Teachers

- ▲ Each class should be led by at least one 'Montessori' certified teacher who holds a recognized Montessori credential for the age level taught.
- ▲ In addition to the lead Montessori teacher, each class will normally include either a second certified Montessori teacher or a para-professional teacher's assistant.
- ▲ Montessori teachers should be respectfully engaged with their students.
- ▲ Generally students will be observed working individually or in small, self-selected groups. There will be very few whole group lessons.
- ▲ Typically, we should see Montessori teachers inspiring, mentor-

ing, and facilitating the learning process more often than directly giving children lessons. The real work of learning belongs to the individual child.

The Children at Work

- Students should clearly seem to feel at ease as they select and pursue activities.
- Generally students will work individually or in small, self-selected groups. There will be very few whole group lessons.
- Children and adults should be observed interacting respectfully. If there is some conflict, the teachers will normally facilitate a resolution by guiding children to express their concern and work together to find a solution.
- The focus of the class should be on children's learning, not on teachers' teaching.

Talk openly with school administrators, observe children working in a classroom, and ask the right questions. Keep questions like these in mind as you speak with the administration, teachers, and perhaps some present parents at the Montessori schools while you are observing in Montessori classes.

- ▲ In what ways do you see Montessori as being different from other school programs?
- ▲ In what ways, if any, might your school be distinguished from other Montessori schools in the community?

- ▲ What do you consider to be the strengths of the school?
- ▲ Are there any areas of the school that you see as needing additional resources or attention? How are these areas being addressed?
- ▲ How would you describe a “successful” learner at this school?
- ▲ What sort of children might not be as successful in this school?
- ▲ What do most parents who are pleased with this school find most appealing?
- ▲ What might characterize those parents’ values or expectations who would not find this school to be a good fit for them as a family?
- ▲ If we apply to this school and are accepted, what advice would we receive regarding how to make this a wonderful experience for our child?
- ▲ What opportunities does this school allow for parents to become involved in their children’s education? What expectations would the school have for us as parents?

Observing in the Classroom Environments

As tempting as it is to enroll without visiting a classroom, put this visit at the top of your to-do list. You will learn a great deal by spending thirty minutes to an hour watching the children at work. Ask permission to watch a “work period” first. If you have time, stay for a group meeting or come back later to watch this part of the children’s day.



How can I determine if Montessori is right for my child?

The most important question in selecting a Montessori school is to consider how well it matches your sense of what kind of education you want for your children. No one educational approach will be right for all children. Ideally, parents should seek out the best fit, not only between their child and a particular school, but also between their family’s values and goals for their children’s education and what given schools realistically offer. Finding the right school for mom and dad is as important as finding the right school for a child.

The decision to enroll a child in a particular school, should be based on the parents’ and school’s mutual belief that this will be a good fit for the child’s personality and learning style, as well as with the family’s values and goals. There must be a partnership

based on the mutual sense that each is a good match for the other.

In determining which school is the best match, you will need to trust your eyes, ears, and gut instincts. Nothing beats your own observation and experience. The school that one parent raves about, may be completely wrong for another, while it might be a perfect match for your family. Try to trust your own experience far more than the opinions of other parents.

It is very important to get all parties involved in the school selection process. Sometimes one partner prefers to delegate preschool decisions to the other, which can lead to conflict later when one of the partners concludes that the time has come for their child to move on to a “real” school, or if one objects to continuing to spend money for private-school tuition once their child is old enough to enter free public kindergarten. Ideally, partners should share decisions about their children’s education.

Find a school that you love, and once you do, remember the old adage: "It is not a good idea to try fix something that is already working." Some parents try different schools out for a year or two, and then move on to another. They do it with the best intentions, but it should be common sense that children who are educated in one consistent approach, and who grow up within one school community, tend to be more grounded and tend to get more long-term value from their school experience than children who have had to adjust to several different schools.

In the end, the selection of a Montessori school comes down to a matter of personal preference. If you visit a school and find yourself in love with the look and feel of the school's atmosphere, if you can clearly see your child happy and successful in this atmosphere, than that school is more likely to be a good fit than one that leaves you confused and uncertain.

Parents Who Are Comfortable with Montessori Tend to Agree with the Following Basic Ideas about Children's Learning

1. Intelligence is not rare among human beings. It is found in children at birth. With the right stimulation, it is possible to nurture the development of reasoning and problem solving skills in young children.
2. The most important years of a child's education are not high school and college, but the first six years of life. As a result, Montessori schools regard infant and early childhood education as the very foundation of everything that follows.
3. It is critically important to allow children to develop a high degree of independence and autonomy.

4. Academic competition and accountability are not effective ways to motivate students to become well educated. Students learn more effectively when school is seen as a safe, exciting, and joyful experience.
5. A competitive classroom environment stifles creativity.
6. There is a direct link between children's sense of self-worth, empowerment, self-mastery, and their ability to learn and retain new skills and information.
7. Education should be a transition from one level of independence, competency, and self-reliance to the next rather than a process of passing exams and completing assignments.
8. Children are born curious, creative, and motivated to observe and learn things.
9. Children learn in different ways and at different paces. The idea that those who learn quickly are more talented misses a basic truth about how children really learn.
10. Children learn best through hands-on experience, real-world application, and problem solving.
11. Teachers should serve as children's mentors, friends, and guides, rather than as taskmasters and disciplinarians. Students should be treated with profound respect, in partnership rather than with condescension, external control, and domination.
12. Children are capable of making choices to guide their own learning.

13. It is helpful for children to work together on school projects.
14. School should be a joyful experience for children.
15. The family assumes that their children will do well, and are fairly relaxed about academic issues. They want school to be exciting and fun, not demanding and stressful in the name of high standards!
16. Parents want a school that will stimulate and encourage their child's curiosity, creativity, and imagination.
17. The family would like to stay in Montessori at least for the elementary program, and perhaps beyond.
18. The family would like to be involved with their children's school. They look forward to this and want to participate in as many school activities and events as possible.

Parents Who Are Comfortable with Montessori Tend to Disagree with Statements Such As...:

1. Academic competition prepares students for the real world.
2. Children learn more when they are pushed.
3. Testing helps to insure accountability for children, teachers, and schools.
4. Teachers must maintain strict discipline in the classroom.
5. School is basically like army boot camp, a place to earn a degree. It is not supposed to be fun.

6. Our family places very high priority on achievement. We have high expectations for our children, and are looking for a school that will provide them with a high level of challenge.
7. We want to ensure that our child gets into the best schools and colleges.
8. Our family is able to attend some functions, but we have other commitments. It will depend on the event or function. (Montessori schools normally look for a high level of parent involvement.)
9. Our family plans to stay in Montessori for a year or so to give our children a good start, and then we plan to transfer them to the local public schools (or another private or religious school).

Is Montessori right for your child?

Montessori is “right” for a wide range of personalities, temperaments and learning styles. Children who are consistently waiting for adult direction and those who have difficulty choosing and staying engaged in activities may have some initial difficulty transitioning into a Montessori class, but usually they learn to trust themselves and gradually strengthen their concentration as they meet with successful learning experiences and develop independence and concentration.

Children who are loud learn to use their “indoor voices,” and those who are messy learn to put away their work neatly. In most cases, parents and teachers work together between home and school to help them develop these new habits. One of the strengths of Montessori is the atmosphere of cooperation and respect, as children with a variety of personalities and learning styles find joy in learning.

Parents who are particularly concerned about high standards and achievement may find Montessori difficult to understand and support. While we all want the best for our children, Montessori really represents another way from the more conventional thinking found in most schools.

Montessori schools believe that children are normally born intelligent, curious, and creative, and that all too often, parents and schools make the process of learning stressful rather than natural. We do not believe that most children need external or artificial structure and pressure to make them learn. We also believe that the current emphasis on testing and a state-established curriculum ignores common sense and the true nature of how children learn. The result is all too often students who are more stressed and apathetic about their educations than ever. Montessori children never seem to lose the joy of learning!

Montessori is “right” for families with a range of communication styles and learning expectations; however, families who are generally disorganized (arrive late in the morning, pick up children at varying times, and have difficulty reading and responding to school correspondence with consistency), may experience frustration in a Montessori setting.

The program is carefully structured to provide optimal learning opportunities for children. There is a place for everything, and everything is generally in its place! Children from somewhat chaotic families often cling to this structure and find it very

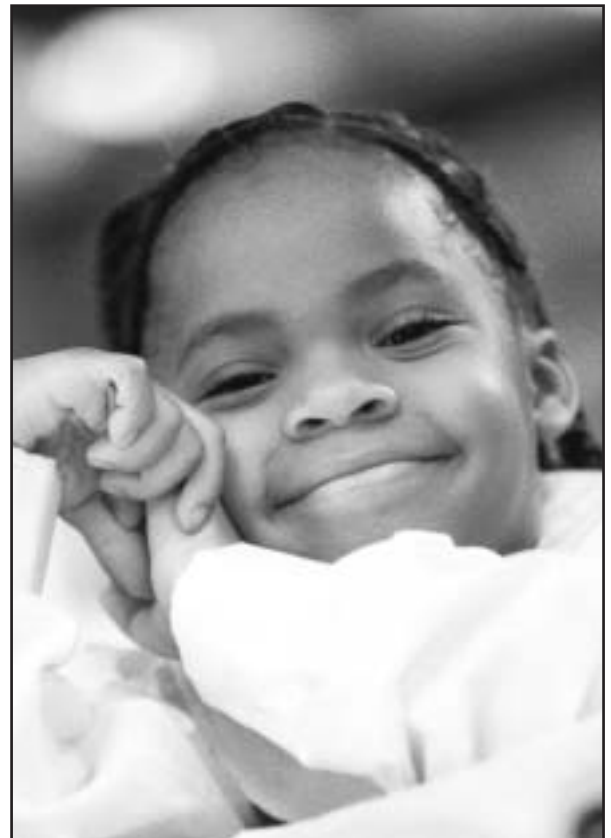
reassuring. But the transition from home to school and back home again can be difficult.

Montessori schools have various expectations regarding parental involvement. Research consistently demonstrates a strong connection between parental involvement and overall student achievement. Be aware of your school’s expectations and strive to be as involved as possible.

If, based on the evidence of your time spent visiting Montessori schools, you believe these basic fundamental principles are true, then Montessori is probably going to be a wonderful fit.

On the other hand if you find yourself concerned, then you may be more comfortable selecting a more conventional school for your child.

We hope that these guidelines will assist in your decision to enroll or not to enroll your child in a Montessori program!





Standards for Montessori Schools

Dr. Nancy McCormick-Rambush, founder of the American Montessori Society and co-founder of the Montessori Foundation, attempted to identify the central characteristics of an “authentic” Montessori school. The following list of characteristics are adapted, in part, from *The Authentic American Montessori School: A Guide to the Self-Study, Evaluation, and Accreditation of American Schools Committed to Montessori Education*, by Dr. Nancy McCormick Rambush and Dr. John Stoops, published in 1992 by the Commission on Elementary Schools of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and the American Montessori Society. Reprinted with permission.

Authentic Montessori Schools

Montessori’s Communities of Learners

Mixed-Age groups: Montessori classrooms gather together children of two, three, or more age levels into a family group. Children of mixed age levels and of different abilities work side by side, remaining together for several years, with only the older students who are developmentally ready moving on to the next class. The usual age groupings that one would find are students ranging from age 2 ½ to age 6; students ranging from age 6 to age 9; students ranging from age 9 to age 12; and students ranging from age 12 to 15.

A Warm and Relaxed Atmosphere: Montessori classes are warm, relaxed, and incredibly safe and secure. These are communities in which children have learned how to live and work in partnership with their adult mentors. There are Infant-Toddler classes; Children’s Houses; Elementary classrooms; and Middle and High School level programs. They are run to a very large degree by the children, with only that degree of adult guidance necessary to ensure order and safety. In such emotionally safe and secure settings, children can relax, be authentic individuals instead of trying to be ‘cool’, and allow their intelligence, curiosity, creativity and imagination to blossom. Here children learn how to do things for themselves, solve problems together, learn how they can best master new skills and knowledge, and discover themselves as individual human beings.

A Flexible Schedule for the Day: The schedule of the day is exceedingly flexible, enabling children to select their own work and to progress at their own pace. These are child-centered classrooms, rather than classes that follow an adult driven lesson plan.

A Family Setting: Montessori classrooms are communities of children and adults. As children grow older and more capable,

they assume a great role in helping to care for the environment and meet the needs of younger children in the class. The focus is less on the teachers and more on the entire community of children and adults, much like one finds in a real family.

Cooperation and Collaboration, Rather Than Competition: Montessori children are encouraged to treat one another with kindness and respect. Insults and shunning behavior tends to be much more rare. Instead we normally find children who have a great fondness for one another, and who are free from the one-ups-manship and needless interpersonal competition for attention and prestige. Because children learn at their own pace, and teachers refrain from comparing students against one another.

The Montessori Classroom

A Montessori classroom should immediately strike the eye as a carefully prepared and well organized environment that has been designed to allow children to become increasingly independent of adults, to freely choose their own work, and to learn at their own pace. The furniture in the classroom is the right size for the students. The learning materials match the developmental capabilities, interests, and needs of the children enrolled in each class. The materials allow children to learn in different ways (multiple modalities of learning and discovery) and at their own pace. The learning materials in the classroom offer a wide range of intellectual challenges.

The learning activities in the Montessori environment involve inquiry, discovery, multiple perspectives, and differing viewpoints. They provide both the student and teacher continuous feedback on progress. The focus of the educational program is on children’s learning, not on teachers’ lesson plans.

Working Independently: Especially at the early childhood level, Montessori students will work individually or in small, self-selected groups. There will be very few whole-group lessons. Older students will tend to enjoy working together, and small group seminar discussions tend to become more com-

Authors’ Note: These two excerpts have been included as models of standards that have been articulated by Dr. Nancy McCormick-Rambush and Dr. John Stoops (*Characteristics of an Authentic Montessori School*) and the International Montessori Council’s proposed *Standards for the Accreditation of Montessori Schools*. These are just two of many different models that attempt to capture the principles of the Montessori teaching methodology and are not intended to represent the only criteria by which to evaluate a Montessori school.

mon, although independent work or short lessons presented to a small group of students will tend to be found much more often than longer lessons taught to an entire class.

The Montessori Classroom is a Responsive Prepared Environment: The classroom environment should be designed to meet the needs, interests, abilities, and development of the children in the class. The teachers should design and adapt the environment with this community of children in mind, rapidly modifying the selection of educational materials available, the physical layout, and the tone of the class to fit the ever-changing needs of the children.

The Program is Focused on Individual Progress and Development: Within a Montessori program, children progress at their own pace, moving on to the next step in each area of learning as they are ready. While the child lives within a larger community of children, each student is viewed as a distinct individual.

The Characteristics of Montessori Learning Activities

Hands-On Learning: In Montessori, students rarely learn from texts or workbooks. In all cases, direct, personal hands-on contact with either real things under study or with concrete models that bring abstract concepts to life allow children to learn with much deeper understanding.

Spontaneous Activity: It is natural for children to wiggle, touch things, and explore the world around them. Any true Montessori environment encourages children to move about freely, within reasonable limits of appropriate behavior. Much of the time, students select work that captures their interest and attention, although teachers also strive to draw their attention and capture their interest in new challenges and areas of inquiry. Even within this atmosphere of spontaneous activity, students do eventually have to master the basic skills of their culture, even if they would prefer to avoid them.

Active Learning: In Montessori classrooms, children not only select their own work most of the time, but also continue to work with tasks, returning to continue their work over many weeks or months, until finally the work is “so easy for them” that they can teach it to younger children. This is one of many ways that Montessori educators use to confirm that students have reached mastery of each skill.

Self-Directed Activity: One of Montessori’s key concepts is the idea that children are driven by their desire to become independent and competent beings in the world to learn new things and master new skills. For this reason, outside rewards to create external motivation are both unnecessary and potentially can lead to passive adults who are dependent on others for everything from

their self-image to permission to follow their dreams. In the process of making independent choices and exploring concepts largely on their own, Montessori children construct their own sense of individual identity and right and wrong.

Activities that are Self-Correcting: To facilitate children’s independence and ability to learn at their own pace, Montessori learning activities (the Montessori materials’) are designed with a built-in control of error, which allows them to detect errors without a teacher’s feedback, and is key to developing a habit of working toward mastery and precision.

Clear and Precise Instruction and Guidance: Montessori teachers minimize student confusion and uncertainty by breaking tasks down into logical segments and by giving clear and precise directions and clear demonstration of the specific tasks involved in each activity. In most cases, tasks are carefully sequenced and programmed so that each new step is built on what the child has already mastered. Lessons and learning activities are specifically designed to increase children’s self-confidence.

Freedom within Limits: Montessori children enjoy considerable freedom of movement and choice; however, their freedom always exists within carefully defined limits on the range of their behavior. They are free to do anything appropriate to the ground rules of the community but redirected promptly and firmly if they cross over the line.

Intrinsic Motivation to Learn: In Montessori programs, children do not work for grades or external rewards, nor do they simply complete assignments given them by their teachers. Children learn because they are interested in things, and because all children share a desire to become competent and independent human beings.

Montessori Programs are Designed to Awaken and Nurture the Human Spirit

Montessori saw children as far more than simply scholars. In her view, each child is a full and complete human being, the mother or father of the adult man or woman she will become. Even when very young, the child shares with the rest of humanity hopes, dreams, and fears, emotions, and longing. From her perspective, this goes beyond mental health to the very core of one’s inner spiritual life.

The Child as a Spiritual Being: Montessori consciously designs social communities and educational experiences that cultivate the child’s sense of independence, self-

respect, love of peace, passion for self-chosen work done well, and ability to respect and celebrate the individual spirit within people of all ages and the value of all life.

Stewardship for the Earth: Montessori seeks to instill in students not only a reverence for the Earth, its waters, and all living things, but also a sense of stewardship for the environment based on a conviction of our individual responsibility for the beauty of the land and the health of our ecosystems.

Universal Values: Montessori deliberately teaches children not only appropriate patterns of polite behavior but seeks to instill basic universal values within the core of the child's personality. These values include self-respect, acceptance of the uniqueness and dignity of each person we meet, kindness, peacefulness, compassion, empathy, honor, individual responsibility, and courage to speak from our hearts.

Social Development: Particular attention is given to the children's social development. The spontaneously formed learning groups so often found in a Montessori class, as well as the spontaneous groups that form to solve problems and help one another, are clear evidence of this aspect of their development. Non-violence, non-aggressive behavior, and respect for another's belongings and work are the norm both when adults are watching and when children believe they are not being observed.

Global Understanding: All Montessori schools are to a large degree international schools. They not only tend to attract a diverse student body representing many ethnic backgrounds, religions, and international backgrounds, but they actively celebrate their diversity. The curriculum is international in its heritage and focus, and consciously seeks to promote a global perspective.

Social Responsibility: Montessori's spiritual perspective leads Montessori schools to organize consciously programs of community service ranging from daily contributions to others within the class or school setting to community outreach programs that allow children and adults to make a difference in the lives of others. The fundamental idea is one of stewardship.

The Montessori Teacher

Is Authoritative: The teacher is firm at the edges and empathetic at the center — the kind of adult who responds empathetically to children's feelings, while setting clear and consistent limits.

Is an Observer: The Montessori teacher is a trained observer of children's learning and behavior. These careful observations are recorded and used to infer where each student is in terms

of his or her development and leads the teacher to know when to intervene in the child's learning with a new lesson, a fresh challenge, or a reinforcement of basic ground rules.

Is an Educational Resource: Montessori teachers facilitate the learning process by serving as a resource to whom the children can turn as they pull together information, impressions, and experiences.

Serves as a Role Model: Like all great teachers, the Montessori educator deliberately models the behaviors and attitudes that she is working to instill in her students. Because of Montessori's emphasis on character development, the Montessori teacher normally is exceptionally calm, kind, warm, and polite to each child.

What Montessori Teachers Do

They are Respectfully Engaged with the Learner: The Montessori teacher recognizes that her role is not so much to teach as to inspire, mentor, and facilitate the learning process. The real work of learning belongs to the individual child. Because of this, the Montessori educator remains conscious of her role in helping each child to fulfill his potential as a human being and of creating an environment for learning within which children will feel safe, cherished, and empowered.

They Facilitate the "Match" between the Learner and Knowledge: Montessori teachers are trained to identify the best response to the changing interests and needs of each child as a unique individual. Because they truly accept that children learn in many different ways and at their own pace, Montessori educators understand that they must "follow the child," adjusting their strategies and timetable to fit the development of each of their pupils.

They are Environmental Engineers: Montessori teachers organize appropriate social settings and academic programs for children at their own level of development. They do this, to a large degree, through the design of their classroom, selection and organization of learning activities, and structure of the day.



International Montessori Council

Standards for the Accreditation of Montessori Schools

The International Montessori Council (IMC) is one of several Montessori organizations that offer a program of School Accreditation. School Accreditation is a voluntary process through which a school community conducts a thorough self-study and develops a long-range plan for its continuing improvement. The process includes an onsite visit by a team of experienced Montessori educators who confirm the validity of the school's self study. At the time this is written, most Montessori schools are not yet accredited. Readers should keep in mind that, while accreditation is an essential standard for most high schools and colleges, it is at this time not required, or even expected, of schools which do not extend through the twelfth grade. We have included the following list of standards of best practice as a point of reference that may be of interest to educators, parents, and others who are interested in understanding Montessori education.

Educational Program

The School provides an educational program that is effective and consistent with the characteristics of authentic Montessori practice at each age level offered.

- **Class group size and the ratio of students to adults** in each classroom complies with local governing regulation and is appropriate to support the school's educational program.

The International Montessori Council recommends the following maximum ratios of students to adults (including both teachers and classroom assistants):

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|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Infants (birth to 1 ½ years) | 1 adult to 4 children |
| Toddlers (1 ½ to 2 ½ years) | 1 adult to 6 children |
| Early Childhood (2 ½ to 6 years) | 1 adult to 15 children |
| Elementary (6 to 12 years) | 1 adult to 20 children |
| Secondary (12 to 18 years) | 1 adult to 20 adolescents |

The International Montessori Council also recommends the following maximum ratios of trained Montessori teachers/ guides to students enrolled in any one class group:

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Infants (birth to 1 ½ years) | 1 teacher to 8 children |
| Toddlers (1 ½ to 2 ½ years) | 1 teacher to 12 children |
| Early Childhood (2 ½ to 6 years) | 1 teacher to 30 children |
| Elementary (6 to 12 years) | 1 teacher to 30 children |
| Secondary (12 to 18 years) | 1 teacher to 30 children |

- **Mixed-Age Groups:** The school groups children in classrooms with mixed-age groups, traditionally covering a three-year span from the early childhood level onward. Children remain together for more than one school year, with normally only the older students who are developmentally ready moving on to the next class.

The levels usually found in a Montessori school correspond to the developmental stages of childhood: Infants (birth through 18 months); Toddlers (18 months to age 3); Early Childhood (age 3 to 6); Lower Elementary (age 6 to 8); Upper Elementary (age 9 to 11); Middle School (age 12 to 14); and Secondary (age 15 to 18). At each level, the program and curriculum are logical and highly consistent extensions of what has come before.

- **Diversity and Non-Discrimination:** The School consciously works to attract a diverse student body and has established a clear non-discrimination policy.
- **Uninterrupted Work Period:** The schedule of the day provides for an extended, uninterrupted work period. (Ideally this should be a three-hour uninterrupted morning work period.)
- **Student Observation:** Individualized education in the School's Montessori program is designed and based on the teachers' ongoing and systematic observation.
- **Curriculum Guide:** The school has established and follows a written curriculum guide, organized as a scope and sequence of the skills and knowledge it anticipates students normally will attain by given age levels.

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- **Basic Educational Expectations:** The school has established basic expectations regarding the desired skills and knowledge that it anticipates children normally will achieve by key points in their educational development.
 - **Orientation of New Children:** The school follows a written plan for the orientation of new children.
 - **Evaluation of the Adjustment of New Students to the Montessori Program:** The school follows a written plan for initial evaluation of the adjustment of new students to the program during the orientation period.
 - **Guidelines for Assisting Normalization:** The school follows written guidelines for assisting and sustaining the development of normalization in children at each age level.
 - **Assessment of Student Development and Academic Progress:** The school's Montessori teachers use a variety of assessment processes to evaluate and record student development and progress.
 - **Ground Rules:** The school follows written criteria defining its fundamental ground rules for student behavior at every age level offered.
 - **Independence and Self-Discipline:** The school's educational program facilitates the development of independence and self-discipline.
 - **Responding to Disruptive Behavior:** The school follows written guidelines defining acceptable strategies for responding to disruptive behavior.
 - **Corporal Punishment:** The school has a clear policy prohibiting corporal punishment.
- The Schools Classrooms Are Set Up to Support an Authentic Montessori Program**
- **Classrooms Are Fully Equipped:** The school's classrooms are equipped with the educational materials and furnishings needed to support an authentic Montessori program at each level offered. School policy establishes a procedure for repairing or replacing worn, damaged, or incomplete materials that ensures that each classroom will remain fully equipped.
- **Classroom Learning Activities Are Consistent with the Characteristics of Authentic Montessori Programs:**
 - ▲ **Hands-On Learning:** The school ensures, whenever possible, that children have the opportunity to learn through educational materials and/or models of instruction that are hands-on and promote investigation, exploration, and discovery.
 - ▲ **Library-Based Curriculum:** Textbooks and workbooks are seldom used as a primary means of instruction. Students normally use reference books and supporting resources to gather information, explore a topic of inquiry, or learn basic facts and skills.
 - ▲ **Library Collection:** Students at each age level have ready access to an organized and comprehensive library collection of age-appropriate literature, reference materials, and instructional media that supports the needs of the Montessori educational program and teaches the students library skills.
 - ▲ **Freedom of Movement within the Classroom:** Students are encouraged to move about freely, within reasonable limits of appropriate behavior.
 - ▲ **Spontaneous Activity:** For much of the time during the school day, students are encouraged to select work that captures their interest and attention. Teachers strive to draw their attention and capture their interest in new challenges and areas of inquiry.
 - ▲ **Active Learning:** Students are encouraged to select their own work and to continue their work over a span of days, weeks, or months, until they can finally demonstrate mastery and teach the skill or concept to younger children.
 - ▲ **Self-Directed Activity:** Students are encouraged to work independently, with minimal teacher-direction once they have been introduced to a new concept or skill.
 - ▲ **Freedom within Limits:** Students enjoy considerable freedom of movement and choice within carefully defined limits.
 - ▲ **Intrinsic Motivation to Learn:** In the school's Montessori programs, children learn because they are interested, not to earn grades or for external rewards.
 - ▲ **Cooperation and Collaboration, Rather than Competition:** Children and adults treat one another with kindness and respect. Students are taught and encouraged to cooperate. Because
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children are encouraged to learn at their own pace, teachers refrain from comparing students against one another.

- ▲ **The Prepared Montessori Environment:** Classrooms offer a variety of learning spaces and facilities which are organized to support an authentic Montessori program.
- ▲ **A Child-Centered Environment:** Learning materials and activities are child-centered rather than dependent on instruction by an adult. In effective Montessori programs, teachers are rarely the focus of attention. Generally students work individually or in small, self-selected groups. Relatively little time is spent in group lessons.
- ▲ **Learning Environments Are Adaptive, Dynamic, and Responsive:** The classroom environment is designed to meet the needs, interests, abilities, and developmental needs of the children in the class. The teachers design and adapt the environment with this community of children in mind, rapidly modifying the selection of educational materials available, the physical layout, and the tone of the class to meet the ever-changing needs of the children.
- ▲ **The Educational Program is Focused on Individual Progress and Development:** Children progress at their own pace, moving on to the next step in each area of the curriculum as they are ready. Each student is viewed as a distinct individual for the purpose of assessment and educational program planning.
- ▲ **Integrated Montessori Curriculum:** The Montessori curriculum is designed as a spiral of integrated studies.
- ▲ **Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum:** The curriculum is developmentally appropriate for the mixed-age group of children within the class.
- ▲ **Applied Learning:** Learning experiences develop the student's abilities to apply knowledge, skills, and thinking processes.
- ▲ **Curriculum Promotes Global and Multi-Cultural Understanding:** The Montessori curriculum promotes a global understanding and a multi-cultural perspective.
- ▲ **Technology:** As is age appropriate, technology is available and used as a learning tool.
- ▲ **Field Trips and Off-Site Experiences:** Off-site field trips and experiential learning enrich the curriculum.

- **A Comprehensive Core Curriculum:** The school's core curriculum at each age level includes those elements common to effective Montessori programs.
- **Moral and Spiritual Education:** The curriculum encourages the child's spiritual development and seeks to instill a strong set of values and global understanding.
 - ▲ The school consciously cultivates children's independence, self-respect, love of peace, passion for self-chosen work done well, and ability to respect and celebrate the individual spirit within people of all ages and to cherish all living things.
 - ▲ The school consciously teaches children appropriate patterns of polite behavior and seeks to instill basic universal values within the core of the child's personality.
 - ▲ **Community Service:** The school consciously organizes programs of community service.
- **Guidelines Define the School's Ability to Accommodate Children with Special Needs Before Admission:** The school has developed and follows written guidelines for determining its ability to adapt the educational program to accommodate students with special needs (cognitive, physical, emotional) before they are accepted. School policy also delineates how information about the school's ability to accommodate students with special needs will be communicated to parents.
- **Teachers and Staff Are Informed of Any Students Who Have Special Needs or Health Concerns:** School policy defines the procedure for informing the teachers and staff members of any specific health concerns or special needs of students for whom they are responsible.
- **Accommodation for Children with Special Needs:** The school follows a formal plan to support the teachers in identifying children with special needs, understanding those needs, adapting the educational program to meet those needs, and working with the family in partnership to support the child.

Faculty and Staff

The school has developed and implemented a plan designed to ensure that its faculty and staff have the skills, knowledge, experience, and inter-personal skills necessary to translate the school's mission into reality.

- **Qualifications of Faculty and Staff:** The school has defined in writing the educational background, professional preparation, certification, professional skills, previous experience, and other factors, such as educational philosophy and teaching style, that it regards as essential qualifications for members of its faculty and staff at each level of the school. In the case of classroom teachers, these qualifications are consistent with the essential characteristics of a Montessori educator.
- **Non-Discrimination in Both Employment and Advancement:** The school has published and follows a policy of non-discrimination and fair and equal employment practices in hiring, assigning, promoting, and compensating teaching and non-teaching staff members.
- **Evaluation of Prospective Teaching Candidates:** The school evaluates prospective teaching candidates to ensure that its Montessori faculty will follow an approach consistent with its expectations.
- **Staff Hiring Policies:** The school follows written hiring policies that identify appropriate application and screening processes for each job category. Staff screening is required for all school staff with responsibility for or access to students. Written hiring procedures require: criminal background checks or voluntary disclosure statements; reference checks and verification of previous work (including volunteer) history; and personal interviews by the school director or a designated representative.
- **Personnel Policies:** The school provides all faculty and staff members with written personnel policies that address the following: equal employment opportunity policies; benefits; time off, absence, and leaves of absence; performance evaluation processes; and work rules and personal conduct, including sexual harassment policies.
- **Employment Agreements:** Each staff member is provided with an employment agreement specifying salary or wages (if applicable), length of employment, benefits, and reference to job description and personnel policies. Legal counsel has reviewed the school's employment agreements.
- **Staff Handbook:** The school maintains a current staff handbook, which is given to each employee at the time of making the initial formal offer of employment. When revised, current copies are distributed to all staff members. The Staff Handbook includes: all applicable school personnel policies, all applicable educational program policies, all applicable policies regarding how the school supervises and evaluates its teachers and staff, health and safety, information about any employee benefits offered, a copy of the school's mission and educational philosophy or blueprint of core values, an overview of the school's administration, information about the school's ownership or governance, an organization chart, a job description for at least the position for which the offer of employment is being made, either a full or summary job description explaining the roles of each position on the faculty, administration, and staff, and the school's expectations regarding communication with parents and additional responsibilities before and after the normal school day.
- **Organizational Chart:** The school maintains a current chart of its organizational structure which clearly articulates lines of authority and which is communicated to the school community.
- **Job Descriptions:** The school maintains written job descriptions for all administrative, teaching, and non-teaching staff members. Each staff member has received a copy of the job description for his or her position. Job descriptions are reviewed periodically.
- **Pre-Service Training for Classroom Assistants and Non-Teaching Staff:** The school implements a system to provide each classroom assistant and non-teaching staff member, prior to assuming job responsibilities, training that is specific to his/her individual job functions, including clear expectations for acceptable job performance.
- ▲ **Staff Training in Health and Safety:** The school ensures that all faculty and staff members have the knowledge and skills necessary to implement its health and safety policies.
- ▲ **Orientation and Training of Staff Hired after the School Year Has Begun:** The school implements a

system to provide orientation and training for teachers and non-teaching staff members hired after the school year has begun who were not present for all or part of the start of the school year orientation training.

- **Student Supervision Ratios:** The school has established and follows written policies for student supervision that identify the required adult/child ratios of faculty or staff members who must be present and on duty with students under various circumstances outside the classroom. These policies also identify activities, locations, or situations where a minimum of two staff members is required to be present. The school's policies for student supervision comply with local governing regulations and are appropriate to support the school's educational program at each age level to ensure that students are safely supervised in such activities as: when children are on the playground, during athletic activities, during lunch, on field trips during the school day, on overnight trips, and during before- and after-school supervision programs.
- **Age Requirements for Auxiliary Staff:** The school has established written student supervision policies which specify that staff used to meet staff-to-student supervision ratios, whether in or out of the classroom, are 18 years of age or older.
- **Substitute Teachers:** The school has a system that ensures that teachers and staff members who are absent on leave are temporarily replaced by substitutes who are able to maintain the integrity of the educational program.
- **Program of In-Service Professional Development:** The school implements a system for in-service professional development of all teaching and non-teaching staff members who work with students.
- **System for Supervision and Evaluation:** The school has developed and implements a plan for the evaluation and professional supervision of each individual teacher, which includes such professional techniques as self-assessment, mentoring and coaching.
- **Communication within the Professional Community:** The school uses a variety of techniques, including, but not limited to, regularly scheduled faculty meetings, conferences, and written communication to keep the faculty and staff informed and to invite faculty and staff input into the planning and decision-making process.
- **Professional Code of Ethics and Appropriate Behavior:** The school has established, with faculty, staff, and administrative input and review, a code of ethical and appropriate behavior for the school's professional community.
- **Policy on Sensitive Issues:** The school has established policies and trained staff to respond appropriately to socially sensitive issues.
- **Faculty And Staff Lunch and Planning Time:** The school has established a clear policy regarding staff lunch and planning time.

Facilities

The school's facilities support its mission and educational program.

- **Square Footage:** Classrooms provide enough floor space to accommodate comfortably the total number of children enrolled, along with the complete collection of Montessori educational apparatus, tables and shelving, and related activity areas, such as art.
- **Aesthetics:** Classrooms are aesthetically pleasing with adequate light and ventilation.
- **Facilities Comply with Local Regulations:** The school's facilities meet local and state standards and hold the formal approval of all governing local and state agencies.
- **Facilities Needs Assessment:** The school has completed a facilities needs assessment.
- **Master Plan for Buildings and Grounds:** If the school owns its own facilities, it has a master plan for the development of its buildings and grounds.
- **Safety Program:** The school has a formal program that ensures the safety and good repair of its buildings and grounds.
- **Preventive Maintenance Schedule:** The school has a calendar of routine and seasonal maintenance projects.

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- **Janitorial Service:** The school arranges for adequate janitorial services to ensure the cleanliness of its facilities.
 - **Administrative Offices:** The school's facilities provide adequate space for its administrative functions, including offices and/or work areas, secure storage of confidential records, and private meeting room(s).
 - **Storage:** The school's facilities provide adequate space for the storage of unused classroom materials and supplies.
 - **Hazardous Materials Under Lock and Key:** Medications, tools, chemicals, cleaning supplies, and all hazardous materials present at school are kept secure under lock and key.
 - **Site Hazards:** The school has a written site-hazard identification and risk-reduction plan.
 - **Emergency Response Plan:** The school has a written plan setting forth the procedures to be followed in the event of fire, bad weather, natural disaster, or emergency.
 - **Inventory:** The school maintains an up-to-date inventory of all of its equipment with a projected life span of a year or longer.
 - **Space for Indoor Play:** The school provides, or has made arrangement for, space for vigorous indoor and outside physical activity.
 - **Emergency Exits:** All buildings used by students provide the following safety features: at least one emergency exit in addition to the main door or entrance; and a direct means of emergency exit to the outside from each floor used by students that is not at ground level.
 - **Flammable and Hazardous Materials:** The school requires that gas and liquid flammables, explosives, and hazardous or poisonous materials are:
 - ▲ handled only by persons trained or experienced in their safe use and disposal;
 - ▲ stored appropriately;
 - ▲ with access limited to trained persons;
 - ▲ in closed, safe containers that are plainly labeled as to contents; and
 - ▲ and in locations separate from food.
 - **Contact with Officials:** The school contacts local fire and law enforcement officials annually to reconfirm the hours and nature of the school's operation.
 - **Fire Equipment Examination:** The school ensures that qualified personnel annually conduct a safety examination of fire equipment and applicable areas, including:
 - ▲ Smoke detectors and other detection devices;
 - ▲ Fire extinguishers (i.e., type, location, and readiness);
 - ▲ Fireplaces, chimneys, and any open fire areas;
 - ▲ Storage and use areas for flammable materials and fuel; and
 - ▲ Cooking areas.
 - **Water Testing:** The school has written confirmation that all water sources used for drinking or food preparation purposes currently meet state or federal drinking water standards.
 - **Utility Systems:** The school keeps on-site the blueprints, charts, or written physical descriptions of locations of all electrical lines and cutoff points, gas lines and valves, and water cutoff points, or for a non-owned site, the written or posted telephone number of the individual or agency to contact in case of problems.
 - **Annual Electrical Evaluation:** The school requires that an electrical evaluation be conducted annually by qualified personnel.
 - **Maintenance Program:** The school has written evidence of a system for regular safety inspections and maintenance procedures for its buildings, structures, and grounds.
 - **Facilities Are in Good Repair:** Inspections and maintenance procedures result in buildings, structures, and activity areas that are in good repair.
 - **Clean Campus:** The school's maintenance procedures result in a clean campus.
 - **Toilet Ratios:** The school provide toilets that meet the following minimum ratios:
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- ▲ For resident programs use:
 - One seat for every 10 females, and
 - One seat for every 10 males;
 - ▲ For day programs use:
 - One seat for every 30 females, and
 - One seat for every 50 males.
 - **Hand-Washing Facilities:** Hand-washing facilities are provided adjacent to toilets and meet the following ratios:
 - ▲ Day schools, one wash basin or equivalent per 30 students, with a minimum of two basins for each toilet facility that is designed to serve more than five students at the same time; and
 - ▲ Boarding/residential schools use one wash basin or equivalent per 10 persons with a minimum of two basins for each toilet facility designed to serve more than five persons at the same time.
 - **Toilet Privacy:** In the main school and living areas, toilet facilities with more than one seat have at least one toilet with a door or curtain for privacy available to all.
 - **Hot Water Controls:** To prevent scalding, the school regulates the hot water temperature by means other than individual adjustment at the taps of bathing, showering, and hand washing facilities.
 - **Shower Facilities (boarding schools only):** The school provides a minimum of one showerhead or bathtub for each 15 students living on campus.
 - **Garbage Cans:** Garbage and rubbish containers in kitchen and dining areas are leak proof and securely covered or tied when not in use.
 - **Dumpster Area:** Garbage storage areas are clean and free of trash beyond the capacity of the closed containers.
 - **Power Tools:** The school requires power tools to:
 - ▲ be equipped with necessary safety devices;
 - ▲ be in good repair;
 - ▲ be operated only by persons trained and experienced in their use; and
 - ▲ be operated only when students are not in the vicinity.
 - **Campus Accessibility:** Classroom, dining, toilet, and other educational facilities included on the site are accessible to persons with disabilities. In the case of boarding schools, this includes sleeping and bathing facilities.
 - **Emergency Transportation:** The school requires that medical emergency transportation be available at all times by either the school or community emergency services, for which prior arrangements have been made in writing.
 - **Traffic Control:** The school controls vehicular traffic on campus by clearly posting designated speed limits or restrictions, traffic areas, parking, delivery, and pick-up areas.
 - **Arrival and Departure:** The school has procedures for orderly arrival and departure and for the unloading and loading of vehicles.
 - **Non-passenger Vehicles:** The school prohibits the transportation of students on motorcycles or in non-passenger vehicles.
- Administration:**
- The school is led by an administration that ensures that its mission is translated into an authentic Montessori program and that in all things the School has integrity and is worthy of trust.
- **Operating Policies are in Compliance with Montessori Code of Ethics:** The school's operating policies are in compliance with the Code of Ethics established by the professional Montessori organization to which the school belongs. This Code of Ethics is prominently displayed in the school's front office or other public area and publicized to parents, faculty, and staff.
 - **Administrative Roles Are Clearly Defined:** The roles of the administrator and any other members of the administrative team are described in writing, communicated to the general school community and staff, and periodically assessed.
 - **Qualifications of the Head of School:** The Head of School has appropriate professional qualifications in terms of both education and experience.
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- **Qualifications of Educational Director:** Anyone serving in the capacity of an Educational Director/ Curriculum Coordinator has appropriate professional Montessori qualifications in terms of both education and experience.
 - **History of the School:** The school maintains a record of its history and development.
 - **Access to Legal Counsel:** The school has arranged for legal counsel to be available to the administration and governing board for consultation as questions and issues arise.
 - **The School is in Compliance with Applicable Regulations:** The school has identified appropriate laws, codes, and regulations affecting its operation and is in compliance with them.
 - **Student Records:** The school maintains, by formal written policy, at the site where the student is in attendance, records that document the educational progress, health, safety, and school experience of each student.
 - **Confidentiality of Student Records:** The school ensures that student records are kept secure from unauthorized access and that the information contained therein is maintained in complete confidentiality except to authorized individuals as defined in school policy. Inside each file, the school shall maintain a log of the record's release or review by staff members, parents, or other school or outside agency.
 - **Parents' Right to Review Their Child's Records:** The School follows a written policy regarding parent and student access to their child's records upon reasonable notice during school office hours.
 - **Strategic Planning:** The School has a written strategic plan, which assesses current conditions and identifies future needs in the following areas:
 - ▲ Educational Programs;
 - ▲ Faculty;
 - ▲ Facilities;
 - ▲ Finances;
 - ▲ Administration;
 - ▲ Governance;
 - ▲ Recruitment and admissions;
 - ▲ Building community; and
 - ▲ Fundraising/Funding capital improvements.
 - **Program Evaluation:** The school has written evidence of a formal and systematic program evaluation system that provides feedback from participants, staff, and administration on:
 - ▲ The effectiveness of the school's educational program;
 - ▲ The effectiveness of any supporting services provided by the school;
 - ▲ The effectiveness of the administration, faculty, and staff;
 - ▲ Parent and student satisfaction with and confidence in the school; and
 - ▲ Health and safety concerns for all types of school operations.
 - **Assessment of Compliance with Montessori Standards:** The school uses a system to verify on an annual basis that Montessori Standards are being followed in applicable aspects of the School's operation. These standards may be school defined or established by the Montessori School Accreditation body to which the school belongs, such as the International Montessori Council School Accreditation Program.
 - **Risk Management:** The school has developed a written risk management plan that identifies risk exposures to humans, financial resources, and property resources, and sets down the risk-control techniques currently being implemented to reduce, control, or prevent potential loss in identified exposure areas.
 - **Incident Analysis:** The school has established a system that includes input from outside advisors to: Annually review and analyze when and where incidents, accidents, and injuries occurred; Identify steps to reduce incidents, accidents, and injuries; and Modify procedures and implement changes as necessary.
 - **Safety Regulations:** The school has established written safety regulations to address general safety concerns in the school.
 - **Emergency Procedures:** The school has established written emergency procedures to respond appropriately to reasonably foreseeable emergencies and natural disasters.
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- **Safety Orientation:** The school requires that both students and staff be oriented to ensure that they understand and can follow established safety regulations and emergency procedures.
 - **Unauthorized Persons on Campus:** The school has established and follows written procedures that address possible intrusion of unauthorized persons onto the School campus that include:
 - ▲ Periodic review of security concerns of the campus; and; and
 - ▲ Training for staff and students when appropriate, about steps to take in such instances.
 - **Insurance Coverage:** The school has ensured that the following insurance coverage is in place:
 - ▲ General liability coverage;
 - ▲ Fire and extended risk coverage on buildings (DNA if the school leases its space);
 - ▲ Motor vehicle insurance (does not apply if vehicles are not used in school operation);
 - ▲ Coverage on all owned, hired, or leased vehicles;
 - ▲ Employer's non-ownership liability insurance on all non-owned vehicles;
 - ▲ Workers' compensation for all eligible staff;
 - ▲ Coverage for students (carried by the school or written evidence that each student has such coverage);
 - ▲ For students who reside on campus – health and accident coverage; and
 - ▲ For day students — accident coverage.
 - **Regulations about Personal Property:** The school has established and advised students, faculty, and staff in writing of its regulations for the possession and use of:
 - ▲ Motor vehicles on campus;
 - ▲ Animals on campus;
 - ▲ Alcohol and drugs;
 - ▲ Personal sports equipment; and
 - ▲ Weapons.
 - **Smoking Policies:** The school prohibits smoking or allows smoking only in designated areas that are away from children and non-smokers.
 - **Staff Emergency Training:** The school has developed and implemented a program of training and rehearsal to prepare the faculty and staff to carry out their responsibilities in emergency situations.
 - **Accident and Incident Reporting:** The school requires faculty and staff members to complete written reports describing incidents and accidents.
 - **Missing Persons:** The school has developed and is prepared to implement written search and rescue procedures in the event that any student is lost, missing, or has run away. The faculty and staff are trained in their responsibilities to implement those procedures.
 - **Emergency Communications:** The school has developed and is prepared to implement written emergency plans including communication procedures, reviewed with staff, that specify:
 - ▲ A system of communication from persons on or off campus when an incident occurs (including out-of-school trips) to school administrative and health personnel or community emergency services as appropriate (e.g., health, law enforcement);
 - ▲ Procedures for contacting parents or guardians of minors directly supervised by the school; and
 - ▲ The school's procedures for dealing with the media.
 - **Students in Public Situations:** For the protection of students in public places or when in contact with the public, the school implements written policies that specify:
 - ▲ Guidelines for ratios, location, and responsibilities of staff supervising students;
 - ▲ Safety regulations and behavior guidelines for students; and
 - ▲ Emergency procedures for students and staff if a person is separated or missing from the group.
 - **Releasing Students from School:** The school has developed and follows written procedures regarding:
 - ▲ The release of students who are minors to a parent or to persons other than the legal parent or guardian; and
 - ▲ Verification of why students are absent from school.
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- **Weapons and Firearms on Campus:** The School prohibits all weapons and firearms on campus or, if allowed for a specific program purpose, such as fencing or marksmanship, requires that they be stored under lock and key when not in use under the supervision of authorized staff members.

Health and Wellness

- **First-Aid and Emergency-Care Personnel:** When students are present in school or on school trips, the school requires trained adults with the following minimum qualifications to be on duty at all times:

- ▲ When access to the Emergency Medical System (EMS) is 20 minutes or less, certification by a nationally-recognized provider of training in first-aid and CPR;
- ▲ When access to EMS is 20-60 minutes, certification by a nationally-recognized provider of training in second level first-aid and CPR;
- ▲ When access to emergency rescue systems or EMS is more than one hour, certification from a nationally-recognized provider of training in wilderness first-aid and CPR; and
- ▲ For non-medical religious schools, an individual meeting qualifications specified in writing by the religious sponsor.

- **Health History:** For each student and seasonal staff member, the school maintains a current health history that asks for:

- ▲ Description of any current health conditions requiring medication, treatment, or special restrictions or considerations while at school; and
- ▲ Except for non-medical religious schools;
 - Record of past medical treatment,
 - Record of immunizations and date of last tetanus shot,
 - Record of allergies.

- **Health-Care Policies/Procedures:** The school reviews written health-care policies and procedures for each type of school operation annually, ensuring that they include, at least:

- ▲ Overall policies specifying:
 - Scope and limits of school health-care serv-

- ices provided, including qualifications and locations of personnel,
- Authority and responsibilities of the school health-care administrator and provider,
- Authority and responsibilities of other school staff to provide health and emergency care, and
- Additional external medical and mental health resources available.

- ▲ Procedures and practices, as appropriate, for:
 - On-campus and off-campus health-care,
 - Provision of equipment and supplies for health-care,
 - Obtaining emergency health-care assistance,
 - Health screening,
 - Medication management,
 - Monitoring sanitation in school, and
 - Procedures for long-term record keeping.

- **Policy/Procedure Review:** The school's health-care policies and procedures have been reviewed within the last three years by a licensed physician or registered nurse, or, if a non-medical religious school, by a person with health-care training approved in writing by the sponsoring program.

- **Contact Information:** The following written information is maintained for students and staff both on campus and with any groups traveling away from school:

- ▲ Name;
- ▲ Birth date and age of each minor;
- ▲ Home address and telephone number;
- ▲ Name, address, and telephone number including business phone(s) of adult(s) responsible for each minor;
- ▲ Telephone number(s) of persons to contact in case of emergency during the individual's stay at school; and
- ▲ Name and telephone number of individual's physician or health-care facility (if available).

- **Health Exams:** For each resident and trip/travel student and seasonal staff member, the school requires written verification from licensed medical personnel that the individual has had a health examination within the past 24 months, and the records include:

- ▲ Any physical condition requiring restriction(s) on participation in the school program and a description of that restriction;

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- ▲ Date of the health examination;
 - ▲ Any current or ongoing treatment or medications; and
 - ▲ Date the form was signed.
- **Permission to Secure Emergency Medical Treatment:** The school has signed permission to provide routine health-care, administer prescribed medications, and seek emergency medical treatment, or if a non-medical religious student, a signed religious waiver.
- **Health Information Review and Screening:** (Boarding Schools Only) When students will be residing on campus during the academic year, the School implements a health information review and screening procedure for students within 24 hours of first arrival at school that requires staff member(s):
 - ▲ Review health histories;
 - ▲ Collect any medications to be administered during the student's enrollment;
 - ▲ Check for observable evidence of illness, injury, or communicable disease, and
 - ▲ Verify and update health information to ensure that health screening was conducted by a licensed physician, registered nurse, or adult following specific written instructions of a licensed physician.
- **Staff Are Informed of Students with Special Health Concerns and Needs:** The school informs its faculty and staff of any specific health concerns or needs of students for whom they will be responsible.
- **Health-Care Personnel:** The school has a health-care provider on campus who is qualified as follows:
 - ▲ For day schools — Is a licensed physician or registered nurse, or has access by phone to a licensed physician or registered nurse with whom prior arrangements have been made in writing to provide consultation and other health-care support to the school;
 - ▲ For boarding schools — Is a licensed physician or registered nurse, or is in consultation with a licensed physician or registered nurse who is on the School campus daily; and
 - ▲ For non-medical religious schools — Is an individual meeting qualifications specified in writing by the religious program.
- **Treatment Procedures:** The school utilizes treatment procedures for dealing with reasonably anticipated illnesses and injuries that are:
 - ▲ Established in writing; and are
 - ▲ Annually reviewed by a licensed physician.
- **Staff Training in Health-Care Procedures:** School staff is trained in the school's written procedures to:
 - ▲ Identify their role and responsibilities in school health-care;
 - ▲ Prepare them to use health-care supplies and equipment with which they may be furnished;
 - ▲ Identify those situations which should be attended to only by certified health personnel; and
 - ▲ Use established sanitary procedures when dealing with infectious waste or body fluids;
- **Health and Safety on Field Trips and Travel Away from Campus:** For off-campus trips or activities or situations where the school health provider is not present or nearby, the School requires that a staff member be immediately available who has been oriented to:
 - ▲ Provide for routine health-care needs of the students; and
 - ▲ Handle life-threatening medical emergencies related to the health conditions of the students and the environmental hazards associated with the area.
- **Health-Care Center:** The school has an infirmary/health-care center available to handle first-aid and emergency cases which provides:
 - ▲ Protection from the elements;
 - ▲ Space for treatment of injury and illness;
 - ▲ A lockable medication storage system;
 - ▲ Toilet(s) immediately available;
 - ▲ Water immediately available for drinking and cleaning;
 - ▲ Isolation, quiet, and privacy;
 - ▲ A cot to rest on; and
 - ▲ For boarding schools, one bed per 50 students and staff.
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- **Supervision in Health-Care Center:** The school requires continual supervision of children who are being treated or are resting in the health-care center.
- **Parent Notification:** The school implements a policy, which is communicated in writing to parents and guardians, that identifies the situations under which parents will be notified of an illness or injury to their son or daughter.
- **Medications On Campus:** To prevent the unauthorized use of drugs, the school requires all drugs to be stored under lock and key (including those needing refrigeration), except when in the controlled possession of the person responsible for administering them, and:
 - ▲ For prescription drugs – dispensed only under the specific directions of a licensed physician; and
 - ▲ For non-prescription drugs – dispensed only under the school's written health-care procedures, or under the signed instruction of the parent or guardian or the individual's physician.
- **Record Keeping:** The school generates the following records:
 - ▲ A health log or other health record keeping system in which the following information is recorded in ink:
 - Date, time, and name of person injured or ill,
 - General description of injury or illness,
 - Description of treatment (if administered), including any treatment administered away from the health-care facility,
 - Administration of all medications, and
 - Initials of person evaluating and treating.
 - ▲ Reports of all incidents resulting in injury requiring professional medical treatment.
- **Record Maintenance:** The school maintains, at least for the period of statutory limits, all health forms and records gathered or produced during the school year.
- **Emergency-Care Personnel:** The school provides adults with the following qualifications to be on duty for emergency care:

- ▲ CPR certification from a nationally recognized provider; and
- ▲ First-aid certification from a provider.

Governance

The school's ownership or governing board provides effective stewardship that ensures the fulfillment of the school's mission and both short- and long-term stability.

- **The School's Legal Identity:** The school's legal identity and ownership is clearly defined and communicated to staff members and parents.
- **Role of the Ownership or Governing Board:** The role of the ownership or governing board is clearly defined.
- **Board Membership:** The school ensures that Board members are well qualified, understand the school, and are willing to make a real commitment to ensure the school's short- and long-term stability.
- **Board/Head Relationship:** The Board's Role in relationship to the Head of School is clearly defined.
- **Opportunity to Address the Board:** School policy allows concerned parents or staff members to request the opportunity to address their concerns to the Board.

Recruitment and Admissions

The school is honest and accurate in its public relations and advertising programs and follows admissions policies and procedures which ensure that prospective candidates are considered without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnic heritage, or country of origin.

- **Admissions Policies:** The school publishes its admissions policies, including a statement of non discrimination, criteria of admission, and admission procedures.
- **Marketing Plan:** The school follows a formal plan for marketing and public relations.
- **Honesty in Advertising:** The school's brochures, advertisements, and similar public relations material accurately describe its core and ancillary programs, facilities, philosophy, practice, and policies.

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- **Publication of tuition, fees and financial policies:** The school's publishes its financial policies, schedule of tuition and fees, payment schedule(s), re-enrollment policies, policies regarding absence, withdrawal, dismissal, refunds and credits.
 - **Financial Assistance:** The school's Parent Handbook and enrollment agreements describe its policies regarding scholarships, financial aid, discounts, and refunds and credits in the event of absence, illness, transfers, or withdrawal.
 - **Ethical Recruitment Policies and Practice:** The school's recruitment and admissions program follows guidelines consistent with the IMC's Code of Ethics.
 - **Communication with Present School Prior to Admission:** The school does not offer admission to any candidate without formal communication with the student's present school.
 - **Non-Discrimination in Admissions:** The school does not discriminate in the admission of students on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background.
 - **Confidentiality of Student Records:** The school ensures that student records are kept secure from unauthorized and that the information contained therein is maintained in complete confidentiality.
 - **Parents' Right to Review Student Records:** With reasonable notice, parents shall have the right to review and insert written comments about information contained in their child's student records. The school follows a written policy regarding parent and student access.
 - **Maintenance of Student Records:** The school maintains student records through the period required by governing law.
 - **Building a School Community:** The school attempts to go beyond the fundamental working partnership with parents, with the goal of creating a positive school community atmosphere.
 - **Parent Right to Observe Classroom:** Within reasonable guidelines established to ensure the integrity of the educational program, parents are welcome to visit the school to observe their child in class.

Retention of Students & Building School Community

The school follows an explicit plan to ensure that lines of communication within the school community remain open, to enhance the general sense of school community, and to keep attrition within reasonable limits.

- **Operating Policies Communicated to Parents:** The school publishes its operating policies to the parent body. The policies cover all areas of school life that affect families, such as financial policy, health and safety, expectations that the school holds for parents and students, drop-off and pick-up procedures, and the calendar for the school year. Normally these policies will be published in a Parent Handbook (which is updated periodically), enrollment agreements, and in other communications issued by the school.
- **Parent Involvement:** The school involves parents in a variety of ways.
- **Communication with Parents about Student Progress:** The school communicates at regular intervals about the progress of their children's academic, physical, and social development.
- **Records of Student Attrition and Projections of Future Enrollment:** The school maintains records of student attrition and projects trends of future admissions, graduation, and withdrawal to project the levels of student enrollment at each level within the school, and subsequent future demands for space and other resources for several years ahead.
- **Parent Education Program:** The school offers a program of parent education designed to inform new and continuing parents about its philosophy, programs, and curriculum.
- **Parent Surveys:** The school surveys its parents and other constituent groups on an ongoing basis.

Finances

The school manages its financial resources in a prudent and organized manner to ensure their effective use to achieve the school's mission while ensuring its short- and long-term financial stability.

- **External Accounting Firm:** The school uses an external accounting firm to conduct an annual review, compila-

tion, or audit according to its official policies and to prepare an annual financial statement and periodic written financial reports that set forth its assets and liabilities, indicating sources of income and how funds were spent.

- **Financial Records:** The school maintains accurate records of all funds received or owed and all expenses paid out or payable.
- **Budgets:** The school prepares and follows a written budget.
- **Financial Stability:** The school demonstrates that it is financially stable and able to meet its obligations on an ongoing basis.

Fundraising

The school has developed a coherent plan for acquiring the financial re-sources needed to enhance its programs beyond what can be covered in the annual budget or to gather the funds needed for major capital improvements.

- **Institutional Advancement Plan:** The school has developed a coherent plan for acquiring the financial resources needed to enhance its programs beyond what can be covered in the annual budget and to gather funds needed for major capital improvements.
- **Fundraising Policies:** The school has established and follows a clear set of policies and code of ethics regarding all fundraising efforts and the acceptance of contributions.
- **Accepting Donations with Strings Attached:** The school follows clear guidelines about the acceptance of donations offered with either explicit or implied conditions attached.
- **Roles of Board Members and Staff in Fund Raising:** The roles and expectations for board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and board members in fundraising are clearly defined.

