

A Montessori School Experience

Choosing to send your child to a Montessori school can be so exciting, as well as nerve-wracking! You may have heard that the term “Montessori” is not trademarked and any school can use it!

Your head may be swirling with questions, or you might be going blank, not sure where to start on your journey to find a great school.

How can you be sure you are sending your child to a high-quality program?

Does accreditation matter?

Will Montessori “work” for my child?

I have created this guide and checklist so you can organize your thoughts when you talk to and visit potential schools so hopefully you find one that is a great fit!

"The education of a small child, therefore, does not aim at preparing him for school, but for life.."

- Maria Montessori

Montessori School Checklist

- Is the school accredited?
While I do not think this is the most important factor in choosing a Montessori school, it may be important to you.
- Are the teachers certified?
At the very least, the lead teacher must be certified, even better if all teachers are and if classroom assistants have taken Montessori-specific assistant training.
- What is the school's approach to discipline?
You should ask how the school handles different types of behavioral issues. Montessori schools do not usually use time-outs, for example.
- How does the school address diversity and inclusion?
Are families from different communities, races, religions, and abilities welcome at the school? Is the school equipped to support special needs children?
- Does the classroom have authentic Montessori materials?
You should see all the classic Montessori materials in complete form and well-kept. If there is some plastic don't worry! (Some licensing standards may require "toys" or no glass). However, it should not look like a "typical" preschool or kindergarten.
- What is the teacher to student ratio? What ages are the students?
Unlike other forms of education, Montessori functions best with larger groups of mixed-age children. Small class sizes or inappropriate age groupings are undesirable.
- What are the safety policies?
Will someone trained in CPR always be at school? How are emergency situations handled?
- Does the school have an uninterrupted work cycle? How long is it?
While a 3 hour work cycle is recommended, it is often difficult to achieve in some schools. At the very least a 2 hour work cycle should be provided.
- How much outdoor and unstructured time will children get?
Children need plenty of outdoor time for physical activity and stress relief.
- Are parents welcome to volunteer and visit?
You may or may not want to volunteer at your child's school, but parents who have passed a safety requirement should feel welcome to visit (as long as they adhere to basic Montessori philosophy while in the classroom).