

The International Montessori Council



Recognition of Authentic Montessori Schools

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THE INTERNATIONAL

MONTESSORI COUNCIL

The IMC Seal of Recognition

Preamble

The purpose of the International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition Program is to offer schools a reasonably simple and inexpensive method of providing prospective parents and the general public with assurance that they offer educational programs that are effective and consistent with the essential characteristics of Montessori best practice at each age level offered. In addition, these schools follow the Code of Ethics of the International Montessori Council.

The Seal of Recognition Program is not an accreditation, but rather recognition that the school meets specific standards associated with best practice in Montessori education.

It anticipates a shorter period of self-study and less intensive one day on-site visit by a small IMC validating team.

Rationale For A Program For The Recognition Of Excellent Montessori Schools

Although most schools try to remain faithful to their understanding of Dr. Montessori's insights and research, they have been influenced by the evolution of the culture in which they live. Despite the impression held by many parents that the name Montessori refers to a universally held and practised educational method and philosophy, the name Montessori is not protected by copyright, nor is there one central body with the power to authorise a schools' use of the name.

Within the Montessori movement, there is considerable discussion and debate about what is, and what is not, Montessori best practice. Around the world we find Montessori schools that differ dramatically from one another in terms of practice and philosophy. While at times the elements

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of practice over which Montessori educators have differed have been silly, in more recent decades the variations have increased. At the same time, the Internet has made it simple for parents to glean reliable information about what Montessori is supposed to look like. Every year the number of parents who contact the Montessori Foundation about the inconsistencies between theory and practice in their children's schools has grown.

As a result, many Montessori educators are concerned about these differing interpretations of Montessori. Today this issue has become a question of truth in advertising. We believe that the Montessori community needs to articulate essential criteria of best practice in Montessori education.

While Montessori may have come to mean different things to different people, underlying its many faces are essential elements of Montessori best practices. These core principles have resulted in a model which is highly effective, replicable, adaptable to different settings, and sustainable. These characteristics led to its world-wide dissemination and caused it to stand the test of time.

The IMC attempts to walk a razor's edge by encouraging ongoing dialogue among Montessori educators who come from many different perspectives, while at the same time attempting to define and promote the legacy of essential Montessori principles and best practice.

This new program is designed to grant a IMC Seal of Recognition to Montessori schools which offer excellent Montessori programs but cannot afford the time and expense of completing full IMC school accreditation. It provides a means by which excellent Montessori schools can be officially recognised at reasonable cost by focusing only on those aspects that are essential to Montessori best practice.

Assessment Methods and Tools

Assessment tools and interpretative sheets will be drawn directly from the SAC document where-ever practical, but amended to allow for alternative forms of reporting to replace the need to extended on-site visitation.

The Head of School and Owner or Board Chair of the School will be required to sign a statement as to the accuracy of the self-study documentation. This documentation will be verified by a one day on-site visit using a small on-site validating team.

Assessment scores are based on the system currently used for IMC School Accreditation.

The Mission of the International Montessori Council

The International Montessori Council (IMC) is an international community of Montessori schools, teacher education programs, school administrators, educators, trustees, parent leaders, and friends of the Montessori movement. Members of the International Montessori Council are dedicated to enriching the lives of children and adults through Montessori education by promoting Dr. Maria Montessori's insights into the human potential to the general public.

The International Montessori Council is a non-profit, non-governmental educational organisation with members in more than 50 countries around the world. Its members represent a diverse constituency of school owners and heads of schools, teachers, Montessori teacher educators, educational consultants, psychologists, school support staff members, volunteers, students, retirees and others associated with the operation of Montessori schools.

Among its many programs and services, The International Montessori Council offers both formal recognition of excellent Montessori programs and school accreditation.

While these two programs are related, the Seal of Recognition is not school accreditation. The purpose of the International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition program is to offer Montessori schools a reasonably simple and inexpensive method of providing prospective parents and the general public with assurance that they offer educational programs that are consistent with the essential characteristics of Montessori best practices and follow the IMC Code of Ethics. The Seal of Recognition program requires a much more limited self-study and a one-day on-site visit by a small IMC validating team, as compared to the longer visit by a larger team found in the school accreditation program.

Policies and Procedures

The International Montessori Council defines a Montessori school as:

An educational institution which provides an educational program identified as being Montessori based, and which is, consistent in its practice with the characteristics commonly identified as defining an authentic Montessori program. The program utilises trained Montessori teachers and other personnel, along with the resources of the natural surroundings and local community to facilitate each student's intellectual, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual growth.

The programs of the International Montessori Council are administered through either the main IMC offices or, where they have been established, through national or state/provincial chapters. Members of the IMC School Accreditation Commission and various participating members serve without pay. The IMC is supported primarily by the dues and contributions of its members. Other support comes from seminar fees, the sale of publications, project grants, and fees for services.

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Members belong to the International Council itself. Where they have been established, members also belong to a national and possibly a state/provincial chapter. These chapters are responsible for co-ordinating some of the IMC programs and services, including the school accreditation programs.

Services of the International Montessori Council include educational programs and seminars, accreditation services, networking, monitoring of legislation at the national and state/provincial levels, *Montessori Leadership Magazine*, public relations services, and a publications centre providing a wide range of books and other resources related to Montessori education, peace education, outdoor education, school leadership, and school design,

Purpose of the IMC Seal of Recognition Program

The primary purpose of the International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition program is to educate the administrators and trustees of Montessori schools in the Best Practices basic to the development and leadership of educational programs that, by policy and design, represent best practices of authentic Montessori education.

Schools that consistently provide an authentic Montessori program tend to be both effective in their work with children and are worthy of public confidence and trust. The Best Practices considered in the Seal of Recognition program place focus on the administration of the quality and integrity of the school's educational program. In contrast, the IMC school accreditation program looks at all aspects of a school.

The standards considered in the Seal of Recognition program establish guidelines for policies, procedures and practices. The school is responsible for ongoing implementation of those policies which are consistent with Best Practices.

A second purpose of the International Montessori Council School Accreditation Program is to provide the public with information which will assist in the selection of schools that meet recognised standards of excellence in Montessori educational practice.

While the Seal of Recognition program's standards focus on educational practices, the IMC Seal of Recognition is not a guarantee that the individual student will meet specific educational objectives, nor can it guarantee that no injury or harm will occur.

IMC Recognition does, however, indicate to the public that the school has voluntarily invited its practices to be compared with the standards of Best Practice established by leaders in the international Montessori school leadership community. At least once every five years, a small outside team of IMC visitors, Montessori school professionals trained in the International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition Program, spends a day at the school to verify compliance with the standards.

Unlike inspections by governmental licensing bodies, the International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition program is voluntary. The International Montessori Council does not have the

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authority to close or otherwise penalise a school not meeting its recognition criteria, except for the removal of the Seal of Recognition status. Licensing focuses on the enforcement of minimum standards. The Seal of Recognition program focuses on the documentation and onsite verification of a school's operation using criteria and standards for its Montessori educational programs that will normally not be covered by governmental regulation.

International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition standards identify practices considered essential to the creation and leadership of a stable ongoing Montessori program that will be both authentic and effective. They do not, however, require all Montessori schools to look alike. The International Montessori Council's Seal of Recognition program has been designed to serve a broad range of schools: schools that are private/independent and those that are public/state sponsored; schools that are large and small; schools that are proprietary and those that are run as not-for-profit organisations; those that offer elementary/primary and/or secondary/adolescent programs, and those that serve primarily early childhood students. Each school addresses, in its own way, the principles of Best Practice identified by the standards.

The International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition program is designed to allow for the tremendous diversity among Montessori schools around the world. It is quite different from an 'approval' model of accreditation, where accreditation as a recognised member of a particular Montessori organisation requires a school to follow that association's one specific set of guidelines for teacher qualifications, curricula, etc. The International Montessori Council understands and respects the integrity of that approach, however, the IMC Seal of Recognition program is based on a different perspective, while still maintaining a sound pedagogical philosophy.

The International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition program is based on the principle that to hold an IMC Seal of Recognition, a Montessori school must be 'worthy of public trust' and follows the Best Practices of an authentic Montessori school. ("Worthy of Trust" meaning: *Is the school clear in what it says it offers? Does it actually do what it says? Is it operated in a sound, stable, manner that deserves public confidence?*)

Dr. Nancy McCormick Rambush and Dr. John Stoops in their work *The Authentic Montessori School* (1992 Middle States Association and American Montessori Society) identified six basic areas that have served for some time as a basic definition of those essential characteristics. The International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition Program incorporates the essence of those principles. We believe that they allow for tremendous diversity, while speaking to the central issue of what one should expect to find in a responsible school that wishes to represent itself as being a Montessori program.

The IMC Accreditation Self-Study Process Consists of Three Integrated Phases:

Phase 1: The school clearly defines its institutional identity, Montessori principles, enduring values and beliefs, and educational outcomes.

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Phase 2: The School initiates the Limited Seal of Recognition Program Self-Study, in which the school documents how it meets the principles of Montessori Educational Best Practice established by the International Montessori Council. The Self-Study process follows an easily understood, objective self-study approach. Each standard is carefully laid out with examples and suggested resources. In most cases, schools will have access to sample policies, handbooks, and other online resources that can be adapted for individual schools.

Phase 3: The School develops a written Education Program Development Plan, in which the school prepares an ongoing plan for continuing to move its educational program closer to its ideal as set forth in its educational philosophy. This plan would include a detailed plan to bring itself into compliance within three years with any standards that were not satisfactorily met at the time of the onsite visit.

Eligibility for IMC Seal of Recognition

Any school member in good standing with the International Montessori Council, which has been in operation for at least three years, can seek the International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition if they can show that they meet no less than 85% of the standards that follow.

The Program uses a 4 point Evaluation Rating Scale

4 = The Standard Has Been Met Exceptionally Well

3 = Standard Has Been Sufficiently Met: The standard has been met.

2 = Standard Has Been Minimally Met:

1 = Standard Has Not Been Met

0 = Does Not Apply: This standard is not applicable to this school.

If during the self-study or validation phase, it is determined that the school has not met a standard (a rating of 1), or that a standard has been only partially met (a rating of 2), the school shall submit a detailed plan to bring itself into compliance (a rating of 3 or 4) within three years or less, or shall submit a thorough case that justifies its decision to modify Montessori practice in this area. In either event, the IMC School Accreditation Commission must approve the plan or explanation before scheduling the onsite visit.

NOTE: When the Self-Study is submitted, the school must state, and provide documentation to prove, that it is in compliance (a rating of 3 or 4) with no less than 85% of all the Seal of Recognition standards. Verification of compliance is accomplished through a careful review of the documentation provided, and a one day onsite visit by one or more IMC Visitors(s) depending on the size of the school and facilities to be visited.

In addition to membership in the International Montessori Council and having been in operation as a Montessori school for at least three years, to be eligible to apply for candidacy for the International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition, the school must:

1. Deliver a Montessori educational program consistent with the International Montessori Council's definition of school and the characteristics of an authentic Montessori school.

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2. Submit an initial application and an annual Statement of Compliance with applicable mandatory standards and other criteria for accreditation as noted at the time of the visit.
3. Pay appropriate dues and fees as determined by the International Montessori Council.
4. Be visited by an International Montessori Council school accreditation on-site visiting team during a period when the school is in full operation.

Content of the Standards

Accredited schools are responsible not only for state/provincial and local laws, but also for those requirements defined by the standards. Those requirements include:

1. **Educational Program**, including characteristics of authentic Montessori programs, group size, student-teacher ratios, and curriculum
2. **Human Resources**, including qualifications, screening, training, and supervision of school faculty and staff.

IMC School Recognition Symbols Are Protected

The use of International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition signs, seals, and logos is a privilege reserved for schools that are currently recognised. Such symbolism represents to the public that a school has met certain standards. All indications of International Montessori Council recognition are protected by international trademark and copyright laws. Any improper use of symbols should be reported to the International Montessori Council offices and may be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Administration of the IMC School Recognition Program

The International Montessori Council School Accreditation Commission is responsible to develop and administer the IMC Seal of Recognition program. Its members are selected according to defined criteria and operate within specific guidelines and procedures approved by the Board of Directors of the International Montessori Council.

The scheduling of visits and assigning of visitors within any given region will be handled by the IMC office or International Montessori Council national, state, or regional chapters as designated by the IMC Board. These chapters are chartered by the Council on an annual basis and are held responsible for the orderly local administration of the accreditation programs under the supervision of the International Montessori Council School Accreditation Commission and the staff of the Standards Department in the IMC office.

IMC Seal of Recognition Criteria

The International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition program is an international program which, when possible, uses national or state chapters as the implementing agency within the IMC structure. The minimum criteria for recognition are established and monitored by the International Montessori Council School Accreditation Commission.

Chapters schedule and conduct on-site visits. They also recommend awarding the Seal of Recognition for schools that meet the IMC standards. Chapters will recommend against awarding the Seal of Recognition for schools that have not met at least these criteria.

Chapters do not have the authority to waive the established standards or the specified criteria established for compliance. If a chapter deems that it is highly desirable to waive such criteria, such request must be made to the International Montessori Council School Accreditation Commission according to the procedure set forth by the commission.

Steps in the IMC School Seal of Recognition Process

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| Step One | If not already a member, the School applies for membership in the International Montessori Council by completing the appropriate membership forms and signing the agreement to comply with the IMC Code of Ethics that is sent when the International Montessori Council receives the School's application. At this time the School remits the appropriate dues and fees as described in current membership materials. |
| Step Two | The School expresses interest in the Seal of Recognition program. Representatives of the School either attend an IMC Seal of Recognition Program Orientation or they arrange with the IMC office for a video orientation session to be run online at a mutually convenient date and time. |

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This orientation offers an overview the process and describes the requirements for the Seal of Recognition Program.

- Step Three The School submits an application to become a candidate for the International Montessori Council Seal of Recognition. This application will include an Institutional Profile, Mission Statement, Range of Programs, Numbers of Students, roster of Faculty & Staff, description of Ownership and Governance Structure and the School's Statement of Commitment to Comply With the Standards of the IMC Seal of Recognition Program. This statement must be signed by both the School's Chief Operating Officer and Board President (if the school is non-profit) or owner (if operated as a for-profit business). The School pays the Seal of Recognition Program application fee, which is due at this time.
- Step Four Application is reviewed for completeness. School is Accepted to Candidacy.
- Step Five School either sends one or more representatives to attend an IMC Seal of Recognition Program Workshop, or it arranges with the IMC office for a video workshop to be run online at a mutually convenient date and time. In either event, there is no separate charge for this workshop beyond the application fee which has been paid. This workshop describes the requirements for the Seal of Recognition and explains the self-study and onsite visit process.
- At the time of the Seal of Recognition visit, the School must be represented by at least one staff member who has completed the IMC Seal of Recognition Program Workshop and who has also participated in the development of the Self-Study.
- At least two representatives of the School who have taken the IMC Seal of Recognition Program Workshop and participated in the Self-Study Process may be asked to serve as members of an On-Site Visiting Team for another IMC School that is going through the program.
- Step Six The School organises a Seal of Recognition Self-Study Committee, which should include a broad cross section of the school community, including parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, older students, administrators, trustees, and others as appropriate. The Self-Study Committee may be organised into several sub-committees, co-ordinated by a small Steering Committee. Over the next several months, the Self-Study Committee develops the School's Seal of Recognition Self-Study, responding to the standards and collecting written documentation as required. The committee also reviews and evaluates the School's compliance with each standard.
- Step Seven Throughout the Self-Study, representatives of the Self-Study Committee may contact the IMC office to ask for examples of a document that is needed, clarification of a standard, to look over the School's initial response to a

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standard to see if it meets the requirements, or to ask any questions about the program. A resource collection will be available on the IMC website.

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| Step Eight | The School submits the appropriate number of copies of the Self-Study as defined in IMC policy to the Director of IMC School Accreditation. Initially this may be done by sending a digital copy of the document set, including all signed affidavits and supporting documents, as well as the School's Educational Program Improvement Plan. The School may wish (but is not required) to include other digital media as evidence of compliance, such as digital photographs and videos. |
| Step Nine | The Self-Study is reviewed for completeness by the Director of IMC School Accreditation. |
| Step Ten | The School Recognition On-Site Visiting Team is identified by the Director of IMC School Accreditation. |
| Step Eleven | The School Recognition On-Site Visiting Team reviews the Self-Study. |
| Step Twelve | The On-Site Visit is conducted by the School Recognition On-Site Visiting Team, (which will normally consist of one or two IMC-trained visitors, who spend one full day on campus observing the School in operation, meeting with members of the school community, and validating the information provided in the Self-Study Report. This visit will occur when the School is in full operation during the academic year. |
| Step Thirteen | The On-Site Team Report is prepared, signed by the Visiting Team and School Representative, and sent to the International Montessori Council School Accreditation Commission. A copy is given to the School's Representative at the conclusion of the On-Site Visit. |

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Step Fourteen If during the On-Site Visit, the Visiting Team has identified any standards which have not been met, or which have only been partially met, which were not identified in the Self-Study prior to the Onsite Visit, the School prepares within sixty days from the On-Site Visit a detailed plan to bring itself into compliance (a rating of 3 or 4) within three years or less, or shall submit a thorough case statement that justifies its decision to modify Montessori practice in this area. Any such plan or explanation must be approved by the IMC School Accreditation Commission.

Separately, if during the On-Site Visit, the Visiting Team has made any formal recommendations for improving the School's Montessori programs, the School will respond to each either confirming its agreement with the recommendation and describing its plan to adjust its Montessori program over the next three years to follow the recommendation(s) made, or explaining its rationale for disagreement or its decision not to follow the recommendation at this time.

The School's responses are sent to the office of the IMC School Accreditation Commission.

Step Fifteen International Montessori Council School Accreditation Commission reviews the On-Site Visiting Team's Report and ay recommendations.

Step Sixteen The International Montessori Council School Accreditation Commission Makes Accreditation Decision. *

*** Normal Accreditation decision options**

1. Full Accreditation for 10 years, with annual report,
2. Provisional Accreditation for 1 or 2 years, with annual report, while recommendations are addressed, or
3. Accreditation Denied until deficiencies are corrected with verification.

In Summary: A Description of the Elements in the IMC School of Recognition Process

School Profile

The School Profile provides a brief introduction to the school including size, level and range of programs offered, governance structure and history (including any existing accreditation with other organisations). The School must also provide evidence that it operates with the approval of all applicable national, state/provincial, and/or local regulating agencies.

Regional Seal of Recognition Program Workshops

School representatives may elect to attend a one-day workshop, which gives an overview of the accreditation process, explains the self-study procedures, and reviews the standards. Workshops are conducted by leaders trained by the IMC. This workshop can also be arranged by video conference call.

Pre-Accreditation Consultation (Optional)

Schools may elect to contract with an IMC approved consultant for the dual purpose of inviting an outside specialist to evaluate the School against the IMC guidelines before beginning the Self-Study process. This option may be attractive to schools seeking to involve large numbers of faculty/staff in the self-study process or those who feel they need additional help with the process. While the International Montessori Council will assist schools in identifying an appropriate consultant, the contract is negotiated directly with the individual.

School Self-Study

In the self-study, the School must document how it meets the basic characteristics and Best Practice principles of Montessori education. Each standard suggests how compliance may be documented. A resource area will be available to the School on the IMC website which will provide examples, sample forms, and further information for selected standards.

The School Recognition On-Site Visiting Team

The School Recognition On-Site Visiting Team is a team of one or two visitors selected by the International Montessori Council School Accreditation office. In the selection, every attempt will be made to select team members whose experience is comparable to that of the candidate school. Before the on-site visit, team members will review the School Profile and Self-Study.

On-Site Visitors are volunteers. They are Montessori educators with a background in classroom teaching, educational programs supervision, and school administration who have completed a training program before conducting visits for the International Montessori Council.

The On-Site Visit

The purpose of the on-site visit is to validate the documentation presented in the School's Self-Study. During the one or two day visit, the team will tour the facilities; visit the classroom, interview students, staff, faculty, administration, trustees, and parents; and review appropriate documentation and records. Before the end of the visit, the team will meet with the school administrator and/or designated staff to review any discrepancies and to present their report. Written documentation required by the standards will have been evaluated before the visit and

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will be verified by the visitors at this time. The visitors will score the standards based on compliance as observed at the time of the visit.

On-Site Team Report

The written report is submitted to the International Montessori Council School Accreditation office within two weeks of the on-site visit. The report indicates the observed level of compliance for each standard, identifies any areas of distinction or of non-compliance, and recommends an accreditation action.

Educational Program Improvement Plan

This strategic plan is based upon the self-study, on-site visit, and team report. In it, the school establishes an ongoing plan for advancing its Educational Program. The Quality Improvement Plan becomes a benchmark for subsequent accreditation reviews.

Annual Report

Schools holding the IMC Seal of Recognition must submit an annual report to the IMC School Accreditation office when renewing their annual membership, or on the anniversary of the awarding of their recognition if they have chosen to renew their membership for more than one year at a time.

In this report, the School will officially confirm:

- its continuing compliance with IMC standards,
- any changes that have occurred in terms of location facilities, ownership, administration, teaching faculty, or any other changes that have affected the School's educational program,
- progress made toward goals established in the School's Educational Program Improvement Plan or in response to areas where the School was not in full compliance with IMC standards at the time of the on-site visit.

Procedures for Revisitation

A school which has been awarded the IMC Seal of Recognition will be required to prepare a new self-study and have a new onn-site visit every five years.

In addition, there are a few specific conditions under which the IMC School Accreditation Commission may ask the school to accept a revisit.

It will be up to the school to accept or reject a formal request for a revisit. If the school accepts, it will accept responsibility for covering the cost of the revisit (travel, meals, and lodging, as with the first on-site visit).

It should be understood, however, that, except for a normal and routine revisit once every five years, a Request for a Revisit would only be made where the IMC School Accreditation Commission feels that there is reason to be concerned that the school no longer in compliance with IMC Seal of Recognition Guidelines.

The purpose of an on-site revisit would be a last effort to confirm whether the School is in compliance. If the school declines the request for a revisit, and cannot otherwise document its actual compliance with IMC Guidelines without an on-site visit, then the IMC School Accreditation Commission may withdraw the school's IMC Recognition. Should this occur, notice of this would be made available to the general public, and the school would be required to immediately cease the use of the IMC Seal of Recognition on its website, in its publications, or anywhere else.

A request for a revisit would only be made under a situation where one of the following conditions has occurred, where the School has been unable or unwilling to provide evidence documenting, to the satisfaction of the IMC School Accreditation Commission, its continuing compliance with IMC School Recognition Guidelines.

The IMC School Accreditation Commission will make every reasonable effort to address and resolve any issues that might potentially arise by allowing the school to provide formal evidence of continuing compliance. However, should the school fail to respond to a request for such additional documentation, or should the IMC School Accreditation Commission determine that its response is unsatisfactory, the IMC School Accreditation Commission may ask the school to undergo a second on-site visit to confirm the school's compliance with any substantial issues that are in question. In such an event, the IMC School Accreditation Commission will give the school reasonable notice to allow it the opportunity to implement any program changes and update any policies and procedures.

A new on-site visit may be scheduled under the following conditions:

1. Five years have passed since the last on-site visit. This is the normal cycle of revisitation.
2. Failure to submit an Annual Report when due, after having been given two written notices of failure to submit them.

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3. Receipt of a credible signed formal written complaint, that alleges, with substantial specific detail, that the School is not in compliance with the IMC Seal of Recognition Standards. Upon receipt of such a complaint, the IMC School Accreditation Office will send a copy of the complaint to the Head of School and the Board President or School Owner, requesting a formal written response along with appropriate documentation to confirm the accuracy or inaccuracy of the allegation. If the complaint is substantially correct, the school would, along with its explanation, submit a plan to bring itself back into compliance in no more than one year, or, should it believe that sufficient reason exists, it may choose to present an argument for why the school's current situation should be overlooked as a reasonable modification of its Montessori program, while remaining within the spirit of the IMC Guidelines.
4. Under certain conditions, major changes in a school's administrative leadership, location, or other factors related to accreditation or changes may indicate to the IMC School Accreditation Commission that a revisit is needed.

Removal of IMC Recognition

IMC School Recognition, and the right to display the IMC Seal of Recognition, may be removed by the International Montessori Council School Accreditation Commission under the following circumstances:

1. Refusal to schedule an on-site visit when required by the procedures identified above, or
2. The on-site visit occurs, but minimum criteria established for accreditation failed to be met, or
3. For reasons as described in the current Statement of Compliance.

The school retains the right of appeal to the International Montessori Council Board of Trustees in such circumstances.

Standards for the IMC Seal of Recognition

Section I: School Programs and Related Policies

Standard I.1 - Five-day attendance: From the early childhood level and above, children from age three and older attend the same Montessori class five-days a week to ensure consistency and the stability of the culture of the community of children. To provide consistency and routine for younger children, if the school offers an infant and/or toddler program, children attend at least three consecutive days a week.

Interpretation:

Children thrive on consistency, and children who come one day, miss the next, and then come again, commonly find it more difficult to adapt to the class routine than children who attend five-days a week. Simply stated, the potential benefits of a Montessori program are reduced.

As the months go by, the difference between the two groups becomes more pronounced, with the full-time students normally making much more progress academically and socially in comparison with those children who come less than five-days per week.

While we recognise parents' right to make such choices, the collective experience of excellent Montessori schools around the world leads us to recommend that Montessori schools offer only five-day programs from age three and beyond.

At the infant and toddler levels, we encourage five-day programs, but recognise that neither all children, nor their parents, are ready. To achieve the most consistent and positive experience for these young children, we recommend that at the infant and toddler level, children attend at least three consecutive days in a row.

Parent-Infant Programs in which parents come in and remain with their children are considered to be outside of the scope of this standard.

All the school's written and online documents (brochures, policy books, online information, enrolment agreements, etc.) should reflect compliance with this standard.

Documentation:

Include two or more examples of written or online documentation of compliance with this standard.

Standard I.2 - Most children enter the Montessori program at age three or younger: If

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students enter the program at older ages, the school has adequate plans, provisions, and methods for successfully and effectively guiding children at whatever age they enter the program.

Interpretation:

Dr. Montessori identified four "planes of development," with each stage having its own developmental characteristics and developmental challenges. The early childhood Montessori environment for children age 3 to 6 is designed to work with the absorbent mind, sensitive periods, and tendencies of children at this stage of their development. The experience of thousands of Montessori educators over the years has led to the commonly shared observation that age three (or younger) is the optimal age for children to enter a Montessori program. Children who enter Montessori after age three may do quite well, but this will depend on many factors. At whatever age a child is admitted, the Montessori program attempts to respond to his or her individual needs.

Documentation:

Include a copy of the completed enrolment report for the current school year.
See Reports Section.

Standard I.3 - Schools provide all day Montessori programs for full day (anytime longer than 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.) Toddler and Early Childhood groups: f If toddlers (age 18 months to three years-old) or children at the early childhood level (children age three to six) are offered the opportunity to stay at school for the full day, then the School provides them with a Montessori program for the entire time that they are in school.

Interpretation:

The intention of this standard is to underscore the importance, (if young children are given the option to be at school before and/or after the morning session), of providing them with the consistency and routine of remaining in a program that is based on Montessori educational philosophy and practice.

An All Day Montessori Program may mean a program which runs from the start of the official school day until the time when most children go home (for example, a school day that runs from 9:00 am until 3:00 pm).

The term All Day Montessori Program can also be used to describe a program in which toddlers and children age three to six may come to school even earlier than the time when the school day officially begins, and remain at school after the official end of the school day (for example an extended day from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.).

In an All Day Program that begins before and continues after the official school day, it would be common to have an overlapping staffing schedule. There are a number of staffing models which are consistent with Montessori educational philosophy and practice.

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The IMC recommends that these young children continue in the same prepared Montessori environment where they spent the morning, with more or less the same group of children and adults. Ideally, the prepared environment will be enriched to provide space and activities to allow the children a wide range of creative, manipulative, cultural, and movement activities (individual and group) in which they can participate whenever they choose throughout the day.

Documentation:

If your school offers an All Day Montessori program, include a detailed description of staffing, daily routine, and the prepared environment. (If you have a thorough description in your school's literature, parent handbook, or on-line, you can copy and use it as documentation for this standard.)

Standard I.4 - Class group size and ratio of adults to children fosters independence and autonomy: Class group size and the ratio of adults to children in each classroom supports a stable Montessori community of children and facilitates the development of children's independence and autonomy.

Interpretation:

By consciously bringing children together in a group that is large enough to allow for approximately two-thirds of the children to return every year, the class environment promotes continuity and the development of a very different level of relationship between children and their peers, as well as between children and their teachers. The age composition of the class and the training and experience of the teacher, as well as the physical structure of the environment will have an impact on the optimum group size and adult/child ratio.

Where government regulations demand a higher ratio of adults to children than facilitates the development of independence and autonomy, the school assigns additional adults a role that supports the educational program without creating a highly teacher-directed learning environment. Such roles might include observing, tone keeping, or monitoring special activity areas (for example an art centre or prepared outdoor environment).

The International Montessori Council recommends the following ratios of adults to children and optimal class age and group sizes (including both teachers and classroom assistants who are not certified Montessori teachers/guides):

- Infants (age birth to 1½ years) 1 adult to every 4 children with an optimal class group size of 8 and at least 1 trained Montessori teacher and an aide (for reasons of safety two adults are always present in any class group)
- Toddlers (1½ to 3 years) 1 adult to 6 children with an optimal class group size of 12 and at least 1 trained Montessori teacher and an aide (for reasons of safety two adults are always present in any class group)

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- Early Childhood (3 to 6 years) 1 adult to 15 children with an optimal class group size of 30 and at least 1 trained Montessori teacher
- Elementary (6 to 12 years) 1 adult to 20 children with an optimal class group size of 30 and at least 1 trained Montessori teacher
- Secondary (12 to 18 years) 1 adult to 20 adolescents with an optimal class group size of 30 and at least 1 trained Montessori teacher (At the secondary level, it is not uncommon to find two or more class groups forged together into a school within the larger school - this is sometimes referred to as a House).

Documentation:

1. Insert a copy of the regulations regarding group size and adult/child ratios established by the local governing agencies which license or have authority over your school's program(s).
2. Complete a Class Profile Report for each class in your school. See Reports section.

Standard I.5 – At all levels of the Montessori program, the school groups children in multi-age classes: The School groups children in learning environments with multi-age groups. Children remain together for more than one school year, with typically only the older students, who are developmentally ready, moving on to the next class.

Interpretation:

Traditionally, at the early childhood and elementary levels, classes are made up of a three-year age span, inspired by the characteristics of children at the planes of development identified by Dr. Montessori. These traditional multi-age class groupings are as follows:

- Early Childhood — Approximately age three to six
- Lower Elementary — Approximately age six to nine;
- Upper Elementary — Approximately age nine to twelve, or
- Elementary - Approximately age six to twelve.

At the infant, toddler, and secondary levels, more than one model of multi-age class grouping can be found, and no one tradition is universally recognised as the accepted ideal practice.

Documentation:

1. Include a description your school's approach to creating multi-age class groupings.
2. Refer to the completed Class Profile Report as seen in Standard I.4.

Standard I.6 - The school works to attract a diverse student body, faculty, and staff, and has established a non-discrimination policy.

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Interpretation:

With our fundamental emphasis on creating global understanding, Montessori schools seek to attract, as best they can within their community, a diverse and multicultural student body. In the process of hiring, Montessori schools attempt to recruit a diverse faculty and staff, reaching out to the local community and beyond.

School policy mandates fair and equal employment practices in hiring, assigning, promoting, and compensating both teaching and non-teaching staff members. The school endeavours to employ persons solely on the basis of the factors necessary in the performance of the job and the operation of the school, without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnic background, gender or any other factor on which discrimination is prohibited by the laws of the jurisdiction within which it is located.

Likewise, the school does not discriminate in matters of admission on the basis of race, religion, ethnic background, gender, or any other factor on which discrimination in admission to the School is prohibited by the laws of the jurisdiction within which it is located.

Documentation:

1. Provide a copy of your non-discrimination statement/policy, including the date of adoption.
2. Describe the school's attendance area demographics. Include a copy of the school's plan to enrol and sustain a diverse student body, and recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff, that reflects the demographics of the community in which the school is located.

Section II: The Prepared Environment

Standard II.1 – Developmentally attuned and child-centred learning environments:

Learning environments offer a variety of learning spaces and facilities which are aesthetically appealing, clean, neat, in good repair and are organised to support the Montessori program.

- The school's Montessori learning environments reflect the following essential elements:
- areas for seated work and work on the floor
- areas for individual and small group work
- space for the entire group to meet
- an area where students can store their belongings; for example coats, shoes, or lunch-boxes
- a classroom library collection
- food preparation area and/or cooking facilities (except where government regulations prohibit these activities)
- chairs, toilets, tables, sinks and other furnishings and fixtures are of a size appropriate to the age of the children in each class, which commonly leads the School to include an assortment of furniture of different sizes to accommodate children of different stages of growth
- an area from which the class can be observed by parents or other guests without interfering with the normal flow of activity
- toilets and sinks are placed and designed to facilitate children's growing independence, normally right within the room for Toddler and Early Childhood classrooms
- a water source for drinking, hand-washing and practical life activities
- no unnecessary visual distractions on the walls - anything placed on them is aesthetically pleasing and does not create visual over-stimulation
- furniture is made of natural materials and is finished in a neutral colour or stain
- floors and any floor coverings (carpeting or area rugs) are: aesthetically pleasing, not visually distracting or over stimulating and, easy for the children to clean and maintain
- learning materials are attractively displayed on open shelves, grouped into curricular strands and sub-topics, and logically sequenced in order of skill development.

See Resource for Standard II.1 - Learning Environments

Documentation:

1. For each of your classrooms, provide a floor plan with dimensions that also shows the placement of tables, shelves, and other furnishing. Each floor plan should also show how the curriculum areas are laid out.
2. For each classroom, provide at least four photographs, each taken from a different corner of that classroom. Each photograph should show a section of the walls, floors, furnishings, and learning materials in that room.

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3. Provide a copy of your school policy or recommended practices statement that describe any standards about the design and organisation of your classrooms at each age level.

Standard II.2 – Each Classroom Is Fully Equipped With High Quality Montessori Learning Materials Appropriate to Age Level Served: The School has established, for each age level offered, a list of the essential Montessori learning apparatus and supplemental educational materials and equipment which must be provided and maintained for each class. It then ensures, by both written policy and practice, that each classroom is so equipped and that the materials are complete and maintained in good condition.

Interpretation:

A Montessori classroom needs to be fully equipped with the full range of Montessori materials appropriate to the children served, with the sole exception of a brand new class, which might begin with a smaller initial set of materials. It is essential to define the materials needed for each class at each given age level to establish a baseline for consistency. Also, it is essential to follow policies regarding regular inventorying of materials, and prompt repair or replacement for any that are damaged or have missing parts.

Documentation:

1. Insert a copy of the established list of Montessori and supportive apparatus that the School considers essential for each class at every age level. See the Resources Section for a list of recommended Montessori materials for early childhood and elementary.
2. Insert a copy of school policies regarding classroom learning materials and their maintenance.
3. Insert a copy of the most recent inventory of Montessori and supporting learning materials for each Montessori classroom in your school.

Section III: Teachers Qualifications and Staffing

Standard III.1 - Montessori Certified Faculty: 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 its Montessori faculty at each level of the school. These qualifications include completion of a formal course of study in Montessori education, which led to a diploma or certification as a Montessori teacher from a Montessori Teacher Education Program accredited by an agency, such as the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE), or from another Montessori teacher education program or organisation that has been evaluated and accepted by the International Montessori Council (IMC).

(NOTE: This standard does not apply to classroom assistants or specialists such as art or music.)

Interpretation:

In defining the standards for the professional preparation and credential(s) to be held by Montessori teachers on the faculty, the school has ensured that the teacher has the professional knowledge, skills, philosophical outlook, and teaching approach considered basic to teachers in an authentic Montessori school program.

The school may require that its teachers hold a credential from a particular training organisation, or by a training centre accredited by an organisation such as the Montessori Accreditation Council for Montessori Teacher Education (MACTE) or a particular Montessori society.

Requesting IMC evaluation of a new Montessori teacher education program or certification organisation: If a staff member is a graduate of a teacher education program that has not met this criteria, see the Forms Section for the procedure that must be followed to request the IMC to evaluate any such program or Montessori teacher certification organisation.

See the Resources Section for:

- a list of the competencies of a Montessori teacher
- sample job descriptions
- other resources on hiring new staff members.

Documentation:

Insert a copy of the school's standards and policy regarding the recruitment and hiring of Montessori faculty.

Standard III.2 - Evaluation of character and competency of teacher candidates prior to employment: The school follows a defined procedure to evaluate teacher candidates before an offer of employment has been made. The procedure is designed to ensure that candidates have demonstrated both the ability to successfully implement or continue an authentic Montessori program, and meet all qualifications required by school policy or government regulation. This includes, but is not limited to Montessori teacher preparation, educational background, visas, work permits, references, and any other background screening required by law.

Interpretation:

Finding the perfect match between teacher candidates and the school is essential to all highly effective schools. It is even more crucial in Montessori programs, because Montessori trained educators are commonly in short supply, and they cannot easily be replaced.

This process might include a wide range of strategies, including; observing prospective teachers in their present class, reviewing videos of them working in their classroom, inviting them to guest teach in your school, and speaking with past and recent parents and colleagues.

Any school may face a last minute teacher vacancy. *See Standard III.3 - Filling an Unanticipated Montessori Teacher Vacancy.*

See Resource Section for suggestions on how to select the right candidates for your school.

Documentation:

Include the school's policy or plan for the evaluation of teacher candidates before employment.

Standard III.3 - 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.

Interpretation:

"In-service" refers to professional development programs that occur during the school year. The training specified here involves more than staff meetings for announcements and co-ordination of schedules that often occur on a regular basis in schools. It includes methods for providing or encouraging staff members to take advantage of outside opportunities for continuing education.

The system of in-service professional development may involve workshops held at the school, local workshops or special courses, college coursework, or attendance at educational conferences. For some positions, in-service professional development may also involve individual training sessions with the staff person's supervisor, a period of "apprenticeship" under experienced staff, or a program of self-study.

Documentation:

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Describe the in-service professional development program for teachers and non-teaching staff members, including a schedule and syllabi or program brochures of the in-service opportunities in which the school participated over the last 12-month period.

Standard III.4 - System for Supervision and Evaluation: The school has developed and implements a plan for the evaluation and clinical supervision of each individual teacher, which includes such professional techniques as self-assessment, mentoring and coaching.

Interpretation:

The supervision of teachers has often been called the “reluctant profession.” Supervision and evaluation often conjure up negative images of judgmental administrators. At the same time, the school has a clear obligation to oversee its programs to ensure that they are safe, well managed, and effective. The profession of education has developed an approach to performing this role in a manner that is both honest and supportive. That model is generally known as Clinical Supervision. Many books have been written about clinical supervision, and schools may wish to check IMC resources for materials that may be of value in this area.

This standard does not envision any one approach to the ongoing evaluation and supervision of the teaching and non-teaching staff, but rather that the school will develop a program of its own that is consistent with the Montessori approach of establishing guidelines, balancing assigned and individually initiated projects, encouraging initiative, facilitating honest two-way communication, and balancing external and self-assessment activities.

Among the techniques that the school might wish to consider are:

- Administrative observation
- Peer coaching
- Video taping one’s own class for self-assessment
- Teachers developing video portfolios of their work over the year
- Teachers observing in other classes and/or schools
- Reflective teaching
- Setting personal goals that are measurable
- Ongoing mentoring, coaching and feedback, reassessment, and planning sessions between the teacher and supervising administrator
- Parent and student feedback about the effectiveness of the educational program
- Teacher’s maintaining professional reflective journals.

Clearly some staff and faculty members need to be observed and coached more often, and effective policy would take this differentiation according to previous experience and evidence of effectiveness into account.

Among the issues to be addressed in developing a program for supervision and evaluation of faculty and staff are:

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Procedures: What will happen?

Supervisor: Who will ultimately be responsible to ensure that it happens?

Evaluative Process: The criteria evaluated, data collected, assessment and feedback process.

Expectations: What is the school looking for? What is expected of the teacher in this process?

Outcomes: The process for following up on evaluations, whether positive or concerned.

Frequency: When will it happen? How often will it happen?

Documentation:

1. Insert the school's policy on the supervision and evaluation of faculty and staff.
2. Describe how the program is implemented in practice. Include sample letters, forms, and reports used in the program.
3. Evaluate how effectively the program is working from both the perspective of the administrator(s) responsible and the faculty.

Standard III.5 - 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.

Interpretation

Effective schools maintain clear lines of communication among administration, faculty, and staff, and encourage staff members to understand that their professional input into the ongoing planning, decision-making, and program-evaluation process is both welcomed and valued.

Documentation:

1. Describe how the school facilitates communication and faculty and staff input. Include sample written communication, faculty meeting minutes, staff feedback, surveys on the effectiveness of internal communications, and anything else that might be helpful in documenting this area.
2. Evaluate how effectively the program is working from both the perspective of the administration and the faculty.

Standard III.6 Contingency Plans for Filling an Unanticipated Montessori Teacher Vacancy: The schools has policies and procedures for filling a last minute or midyear Montessori teacher vacancy.

Interpretation:

When a school is faced with the situation of having to fill a last minute or midyear Montessori teacher vacancy, anyone who is hired to replace the departing Montessori educator will either be screened according to the school's policy for the evaluation of teacher candidates before employment, or will be hired on a temporary and probationary basis, so long as this would be

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allowed by governmental regulation.

In the event that the school is unable to identify and employ a teacher who holds a diploma or certificate as a Montessori teacher at the age level taught (Standard III.2), the school should limit the employment of any uncertified Montessori teacher to the end of the current school year, unless the employee and school mutually agree to an educational plan that is acceptable to the IMC, by which the employee will become qualified as a Montessori teacher within a period not to exceed 24 months. Any such non-Montessori certified teacher who is placed in the leadership position will receive close ongoing supervision and support from the school until either the end of the school year, or until the teacher becomes fully qualified as a Montessori educator.

Documentation:

1. Include a copy of the school's policy or plan for the temporary employment of a non-Montessori certified teacher in the case of unanticipated vacancy if a qualified Montessori educator cannot be found. Include details about the school's plan to provide this non-Montessori certified teacher with close supervision and support until either a qualified Montessori teacher has been employed, or until this individual has completed a full course of study in Montessori teacher education at the age level taught.
2. If the school anticipates the possibility of allowing non-Montessori qualified teachers to continue on staff while they are engaged in Montessori teacher education, include school policy regarding the requirements and expectations for any educational plans to which it might agree.

Standard III.7 - Orientation and continuing in-service training and support for non-Montessori certified classroom assistants, specialist teachers, and non-teaching staff: The school implements a system to provide non-Montessori certified classroom assistants, specialist teachers, and non-teaching staff members with an orientation to the school and basic concepts of the Montessori approach, along with ongoing in-service education that will help them to be most effective in performing their jobs.

Interpretation

Orientation and continuing in-service education should include basic concepts of Montessori philosophy and practice for non-Montessori certified classroom assistants and specialist teachers (those part or full-time teachers who provide programs in such areas as art, music, dance, physical education, and foreign language). It should also consider effective strategies for communicating and working with children, including issues in classroom leadership.

While in-service training is important for all staff members, it is particularly important for those who have classroom or supervisory contact with children. In addition to classroom assistants, this may include non-teaching staff who supervise children at nap time, on the playground, and so on.

The school will provide other non-teaching staff members, such as the receptionist, maintenance person, admissions' director, etc, with an orientation that includes basic Montessori concepts of grace and courtesy, uninterrupted work, and respect.

Ideally, at the early childhood and elementary levels, Montessori educators should be able to integrate art, music, foreign languages, physical education, and so on into the classroom. In practice, this is not always possible.

When a school uses specialists to teach these subjects, ideally they would be Montessori certified.

At the minimum, specialists will have completed a program of professional development to ensure that they understand the philosophy of Montessori education and can complement the general program with their expertise in specific areas (see Standard III.4).

See Resources Section for suggestions about developing an orientation and in-service training program for non-Montessori certified classroom assistants, specialist teachers, and non-teaching staff members.

Documentation

Include a description of the school's program for the orientation and continuing in-service training of non-Montessori certified classroom assistants, specialist teachers, and non-teaching staff.

Standard III.8 Substitute Teachers:
The school has a plan that ensures its ability to maintain continuity for the educational program, safety, and health of its classrooms when the lead Montessori teacher is temporarily absent

during the school year. This standard addresses short-term absences during a school year (i.e. a random day or 3 and less consecutive days).

Interpretation

With the high level of skill and knowledge necessary to direct a Montessori classroom, it is often difficult to find substitutes who will be effective in maintaining the educational program.

There are many ways that schools can address this challenge. The key is having a plan worked out in advance. Some examples include:

- placing two Montessori teachers in every classroom
- hiring an additional Montessori teacher who serves as a trained substitute teacher
- transferring a Montessori qualified teacher from another classroom where they may have two qualified Montessori teachers
- having a non-Montessori qualified assistant teacher who is experienced and knowledgeable take the lead role.

Documentation

Include a copy of the school's plan which addresses the question of how the school will provide for the continuity of the educational program in the temporary absence of the Montessori qualified teacher.

Section IV: The Montessori Classroom Experience

Standard IV.1 Uninterrupted Work Period: At the early childhood and elementary levels, the schedule of the day provides for an extended, uninterrupted work period of at least two hours, free of any interruption including adult-directed whole group lessons, presentations or activities,

Interpretation

In early childhood and elementary Montessori programs, the school day is structured to provide learners with at least one daily, uninterrupted work period that is appropriate to the age level of the children in each class.

This has traditionally been understood as a two-and-a-half to three-hour uninterrupted work cycle in the morning. At the infant/toddler level, it would be unlikely that children would be developmentally ready to focus for such an extended period. At the secondary level, no one practice has been established, although many Montessori adolescent educators do include long uninterrupted work periods in their program.

The purpose of long, uninterrupted blocks of work time is to allow early childhood and elementary students to select work freely, eventually becoming absorbed in work that has a particular fascination for them. Interruptions, no matter how valuable the alternative activity

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might seem to be, disturb the development of the child's focus, concentration, and intellectual exploration. Lessons or presentations should be taught when children are ready and interested. If it is not possible to have the classroom teachers present all areas of the curriculum, Montessori schools should avoid scheduling children to leave the class for additional instruction during the morning.

Documentation

1. Insert the school's policy regarding uninterrupted work periods.
2. Insert a copy of the daily schedule for a typical school week for either each classroom or each class level within the School.

Standard IV.2 - Freedom of Movement Within the Classroom: Students may move about freely, within reasonable limits of appropriate behaviour.

Interpretation

Freedom of movement and independently chosen work are basic characteristics of any authentic Montessori program. Children learn by doing, and this requires movement and spontaneous investigation. The focus of this standard is on children's freedom to move around in their classroom(s), within reasonable limits, when they are not participating in a seminar, formal lesson, or sitting in an audience listening to a guest speaker or performer. For most of the school day, Montessori children are free to move about their class, working alone or with others. They may select from a wide range of activities and work as long as they wish, so long as they do not disturb anyone, anything, or cause danger to themselves or others.

Freedom is a critical issue as children begin to explore. Our goal is less to teach them facts and concepts, than to help them to fall in love with the process of focusing their attention on something and solving its riddle with enthusiasm and joy. Work assigned by an adult rarely results in such enthusiasm and interest, as does work that a child freely chooses for herself. The prepared environment of the Montessori class is a learning laboratory in which the child is allowed to explore, discover, and select her own work. The independence that the child gains is not only empowering on a social and emotional basis, but it is also intrinsically involved with helping the child become comfortable and confident with her ability to master the environment. Freedom of movement and autonomy should logically increase as children get older. For example, at the secondary level, students may be given permission by their parents and the school to leave campus to go to the library, an internship, lunch, and so on.

Documentation

Insert the text of the appropriate section of the school's educational philosophy, blueprint of fundamental values and beliefs, or school policies that addresses this standard.

Standard IV.3 - – Students Select Work and Activities According to Their Interests and

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Curiosity: The school has established (and its teachers follow) formal policies and procedures, appropriate to each level offered, by which its Montessori program(s) will balance the Montessori principle of allowing children to select work and activities that stem from their interest and curiosity with the expectation that students will master basic skills and become culturally literate.

Interpretation

This standard is focused on the need for Montessori schools to have defined their educational philosophy clearly, and to have established specific guidelines for how teachers are to carry it out in ways that are appropriate to each age level. These guidelines should take cognisance of the principle that “cultural literacy” is only a part of the broader developmental and affective goals identified by Dr. Montessori and that schools should ensure that the more direct academic goals do not overshadow the less tangible goals relating the development of the child’s full human potential.

See the Resources Section for additional resources and articles discussing this issue.

Documentation

1. Insert the text of the appropriate section of the school's educational philosophy, blueprint of fundamental values and beliefs, or school policies that addresses this standard.
2. Include a description of how students share their discoveries or demonstrate what they have accomplished to their teacher(s) and fellow students in the area of individual chosen work.

Standard IV.4 – Protocol for responding to disruptive or extreme behaviours: The school follows written guidelines for responding to disruptive or extreme behaviours defining strategies which are in alignment with Montessori goals and principles.
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Interpretation

Disruptive behaviours can occur in any class at one time or another. These are dealt with in a manner which preserves the emotional and physical safety of the entire class, including the child whose behaviour is disruptive or extreme. In rare circumstances, a student's extreme behaviour is so disruptive that it affects the well-being and functioning of the other students. A wise school prepares and follows strategies and guidelines intended to cover those situations where staff members need to respond to violent, emotionally aggressive, destructive, or otherwise alarming behaviour.

This policy defines the strategies and procedures that the school will typically follow in responding to disruptive or extreme behaviour, including:

- avoiding of behaviour modification techniques (rewards and punishments)
- helping children develop the ability to identify and self-regulate emotions
- teaching strategies and techniques for peaceful conflict resolution and problem solving
- intervening in potentially dangerous situations
- reporting extreme behaviour to the administration
- gathering information and documenting the actual behaviours being examined and establishing a record for the files
- communicating with the child's family
- maintaining a list of available resources within the school or in the community to support the individual child in question.

See the Resources Section for resources on the development of discipline policy.

Documentation

1. Insert a copy of the school's policies and procedures regarding discipline.
2. Explain how these policies and procedures are communicated to the parents, staff and children.

Standard IV.5 – Prohibition of Corporal Punishment: The school has and follows a clear policy prohibiting corporal punishment.

Interpretation

Even if it is permissible under local law, corporal punishment is inconsistent with Montessori philosophy. IMC schools are expected to forbid the use of corporal punishment.

This standard is intended to be interpreted in the broadest sense to prohibit corporal punishment in all its permutations including any form of physical harm to the child's body, and including the threat of such punishment.

Documentation

1. Insert a copy of the school's policy prohibiting corporal punishment.
2. Explain how these policies and procedures are communicated to the parents, staff and children.

Section V: Montessori Curriculum

Standard V.1 – Global and Integrated Montessori Curriculum: The School's core curriculum engages all areas of traditional Montessori study and is integrated both vertically and horizontally.

Interpretation

A list of the areas of study which should be covered at every level is attached.

The areas of traditional Montessori study are related to the specific needs of each plane of development, and aim at promoting autonomy and the child's continuing development as a self-directed and independent learner, while at the same time providing a thorough basis of knowledge and skills which are considered necessary to succeed in life.

The Montessori curriculum is organised to explore interconnections or as units of integrated studies. This integration is vertical, with curricular strands at each level linking into the next level. This means, for example, that the Upper Elementary classes build upon lessons and information that is offered in the Lower Elementary level.

This integration is also horizontal, meaning that curricular strands and components are the same in every classroom at a given level.

The elementary classes are also thematically integrated by use of the five great themes of the elementary level. These integrative themes are:

- the universe and its history,

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- life and living things,
- humanity and the works of humans,
- language,
- mathematics.

Even at the secondary level, where accreditation standards, government regulation, or university admission requirements may lead schools to organise their curriculum into distinct and separate courses in each subject area, Montessori schools will still seek opportunities to explore areas where subjects are related to each other.

This thematically integrated approach is one of Montessori's great strengths.

Documentation

1. Include a description of your curriculum, showing how each area is approached at the different age levels offered.
2. Include a description of how the curriculum is integrated at each level within the school.

Standard V.2 – Homework as a Supplement to, or Extension of, the School Day Activities and Interests: Teachers do not assign children homework at the early childhood level (ages 3 to 6). At the elementary and secondary levels (ages 6 to 18), homework may be assigned, but it will almost always be made up of tasks that students find meaningful, interesting, and relevant, and normally includes alternative assignments from which students can choose. At every age level, teachers may suggest at home activities, projects, and books which students may choose to work on voluntarily.

Interpretation

Assigning homework with the expectation that it be completed in a specified timeframe, checked for accuracy and completeness and graded, and with consequences for non-compliance, is inconsistent with Montessori principles of liberty and joyful learning. Challenging a child to do something that he or she enjoys, suggesting interesting activities the children can do at home with their families with the same joy and enthusiasm they experience at school is, however, a valuable extension of the Montessori classroom experience.

In practice, the so called homework that is assigned is very modest, and tends to be activities that they might want to do together at home, or suggestions made by teachers to children and families about ways that they might enhance their learning or achieve a goal that they have found difficult to meet during the school day.

See Resource Section for articles about homework.

Documentation

Provide a copy of the school policy regarding homework.

Standard V.3 – Hands-on/student directed learning: The school ensures that children have the opportunity to learn through educational materials and experiences that are hands-on and promote investigation, exploration, and discovery at all levels.

Interpretation

Direct personal hands-on contact with either real things, or with concrete models that bring abstract concepts to life, allow children to learn with much deeper understanding.

While children's ability to grasp concepts at a higher level of abstraction increases as they grow older, even adults benefit from tangible, real-world, hands-on experience when they are engaged in learning a new concept or skill.

We acknowledge that learning styles differ from one child to another. For example, while studying the rain forest some children might benefit from reading about it while others may learn best from going to a hands-on museum and still others from creating a life-size model.

See Resource Section for articles about providing opportunities for hands-on learning, investigation, exploration, and discovery.

Documentation

Include a copy of the appropriate section of the school's educational philosophy, blueprint of fundamental values and beliefs, or school policies that addresses this issue.

Standard V.4 - Good Quality reference books and other relevant resources are used to supplement the Montessori materials at all levels: Textbooks and workbooks are not used at the early childhood level and if they are used at all at the elementary level it is only to supplement the Montessori materials which remain the primary learning resource. At secondary level genuine research and real-life experience is the primary learning method.

Interpretation

Concrete learning materials and hands-on activities play a major role in learning at all age levels. Montessori students typically use reference books and supporting resources to gather information, explore a topic of inquiry, or learn facts and skills.

Textbooks and workbooks are rarely used as a primary means of instruction or learning. Upper Elementary and secondary students might use texts as a resource or workbooks as reinforcement, practice and drill for the memorisation of facts, but will typically turn even more to primary and secondary library, internet and other resource materials.

Documentation

1. Include a copy of the appropriate section of the school's educational philosophy, blueprint of

- fundamental values and beliefs, or school policies that addresses this issue.
2. If texts and workbooks are used, describe how and when they are used in the school's educational program.

Section VI: Student Assessment

Standard VI.1 – Daily student observation for assessment: The School's Montessori program is designed to include daily observation of children by the teachers. This ongoing and systematic observation informs and enriches the school's educational programs.

Interpretation

Montessori teachers observe their students, including their interaction with the environment and with each other, throughout the day.

They record information about student development, interests, and academic progress and plan individual and group lessons or presentations and teaching strategies based on their observations.

Based on their observations, the teachers design and adapt the environment with this community of children in mind, modifying the selection of educational resources and the learning environment to meet the needs of the children.

Documentation

Include a copy of the appropriate section of the school's educational philosophy and school policies that address observation, record keeping and the use of this information.

Standard VI.2 – Documentation of basic educational expectations for skills and knowledge:

The school has established basic expectations regarding the skills and knowledge it anticipates that children will typically have learned by key points in their educational development.

Interpretation

Because children in Montessori programs learn at an individualised pace, and because so much of the learning that takes place in a Montessori program is dictated by students' developmental needs and individual interests, one cannot predict academic progress on a month-by-month or year-by-year basis.

It is, however, highly desirable to define a set of anticipated learner outcomes. This is best done relative to transition points when children would normally progress from one multi-age group level to another.

Documentation

1. Insert a copy of the learning outcomes that your school anticipates children will normally achieve by given transition points in your program (typically this will be at the end of a two or three year cycle).
2. Describe the school's strategy for responding to cases where students significantly exceed or fall short of anticipated outcomes by pre-established transition points.

Standard VI.3 – Respect for and responsiveness to individual progress and development:

The Montessori program allows children to 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.

Interpretation

In effective Montessori programs, children are allowed to move at their own pace through a carefully planned educational environment. Program planning is focused on each child as an individual, and his or her educational progress is not assessed through comparison with the progress of other students in the class.

Documentation

Include a copy of the text of the appropriate section of the school's educational philosophy, blueprint of fundamental values and beliefs, or school policies that addresses this issue.

Standard VI.4 – A variety of assessment tools and processes are used to assess student development and academic progress: The school uses a variety of age- and developmentally appropriate assessment methods and tools to evaluate and record student development and

progress rather than relying on standardised tests and grades.

Interpretation

Montessori teachers assess their children's development and progress on an on-going basis, using assessment techniques that are meaningful and appropriate to each child's developmental level. Some examples of the assessment techniques Montessori teachers may use, depending on the development level of the child and the skill in question, are observing children at work, asking children to demonstrate a skill, oral and/or written questions, asking children to teach a skill to another child, and asking children to apply information and skills in real life situations.

Montessori teachers regularly evaluate their children's skills, knowledge and understanding in non-threatening and non-judgmental ways that enhance the learning experience. Montessori learning focuses on helping every child to eventually master essential skills and become culturally literate. As a result, if a student has not yet achieved the anticipated outcome, teachers continue to work with them in various ways until they succeed.

Some Montessori schools may, however, ask their students to take one or more standardised tests, beginning in the early elementary level.

After working with the same students for several years, carefully observing their work, Montessori teachers come to know far more about each student's progress than can be revealed through most standardised tests, and thus little emphasis is placed on test results as a reliable measure of an individual student's progress. For this reason test-taking is not seen as required component of Montessori, and schools need to be aware of the inherent problems resulting from teaching-to-the-test and the labelling associated with grading.

Where tests are used, test-taking is taught as a practical skill that children need to master.

Documentation

1. Include a copy of the text of the appropriate section of the school's educational philosophy, blueprint or school policy that addresses student assessment.
2. Describe how the Montessori educators use assessment information in evaluation of student progress.

Standard VI.5 - Reporting student progress to foster self-confidence, motivation and responsibility: The school reports on children's individual progress and development in ways that are useful and meaningful. Children learn because they are interested, not to earn grades or for external rewards.

Interpretation

Because Montessori believes in individually paced academic progress, and encourages children

IMC Standards for Seal of Recognition Program

to explore their own interests, rather than simply complete work assigned by their teachers, Montessori schools do not arbitrarily assign grades or rank students according to external criteria.

In Montessori, we encourage and support students to work toward mastery of key skills and knowledge that is developmentally appropriate. In other words, either they know something, or they do not; either they can demonstrate their ability to perform a skill, or they cannot. If children have not yet mastered an essential concept or skill, they keep working on it until they have. Children are described in reports with reference to their progress toward their individual developmental and academic goals.

Teachers communicate the child's progress through written narrative reports and portfolios of children's work, complemented by parent-teacher conferences (and students, as is appropriate) during the school year.

While letter and numerical grades are the most common way that schools use to report student progress, they are relatively uninformative, encourage competition and often result in shallow learning. Giving children comparative letter or numerical grades violates a basic principle of good Montessori practice.

However, if a Montessori school does choose to issue letter or numerical grades at the elementary or secondary level, it could still meet the spirit of this standard, so long as the following five conditions have been met:

1. Grades are not assigned arbitrarily. Teachers follow a well-defined rubric that sets forth the criteria by which learning will be assessed.
2. Children are aware of and understand what they are being asked to learn, and know in advance how their mastery will be assessed.
3. Children are assessed against their individual progress, knowledge, and/or skill; not against other students
4. Students are allowed to progress at their own pace. If they have not yet achieved mastery, they are reassessed when they are ready. Grades, if used at all, reflect a given level of mastery and achievement, and are not given according to the amount of skill, knowledge, and/or understanding that children achieve within a specific time frame.
5. Most importantly, letter or numerical grades would be accompanied by a narrative report describing the child's individual learning experience. These written narratives are also informed by a rubric or some guiding set of assessment principles/protocol.

See Resource Section for additional resources

Documentation

1. Include a copy of the text of the appropriate section of the school's educational philosophy or blueprint document that addresses reporting student's individual progress and development.
2. Include samples of progress reports, rubrics, narratives, etc which are used to communicate

student progress to parents and students at each level in the School.

Section VII: Administration/Governance/Ownership

Standard VII.1 – Montessori-oriented/trained Head of School: By formal policy, the school is led by an administrator who is well informed about best practices in Montessori education, and who is deeply committed to building and maintaining authentic Montessori programs throughout the school.

Interpretation

A Head of School is the chief executive officer of the school. While qualification to lead an educational institution is essential, and a strong background in Montessori education is highly desirable, the Head of School may have one or more Educational Directors who are subordinate to her or his office to co-ordinate the Montessori educational program and advise the Head as to Montessori best practice.

See Resource Section for additional resources on this topic

Documentation

1. Include a copy of applicable school policy.
2. Include a copy of the professional resume of the Head of School.

Standard VII.2 – Montessori-committed Board of Trustees/Owners of the School: By formal policy, the school ensures that all board members are well-qualified, understand and share a real commitment to Montessori education, and work to ensure both the integrity of the school's Montessori program and its short and long-term stability as an institution. If the school is privately owned, the owner(s) meet the same criteria.

Interpretation

The Board of Trustees should consist of men and women who share a deep sense of commitment to the school. In all matters, they ideally seek what will be in the overall best interests of the school, even if this conflicts with their own interests or over the interests of any constituent group within the school.

Board members should be deeply committed to building and maintaining authentic Montessori programs throughout the school.

Documentation

Include a copy of the school's bylaws and any other documents that describe the qualifications, methods of selection and term of office of members of the Board.

Standard VII.3 - Consistency of Practice: The school's programs are consistent in educational philosophy and practice at every level offered.

Interpretation

One sometimes finds Montessori schools that offer an excellent and authentic Montessori program at one age level, while running a very different, and often much more traditional, modified-Montessori program at another.

Normally a school that is committed to offering an authentic Montessori program will not offer a modified or non-Montessori program at one or more levels. However, IMC recognition can be awarded to those levels of a school where a Montessori program is offered that meets IMC standards.

This standard is meant to apply only to the Montessori programs offered by the school. It addresses the importance of consistency in following Montessori philosophy and principles of best practice appropriate to each stage of child development in each classroom.

IMC Standards for Seal of Recognition Program

Documentation:

1. Include descriptions of the Montessori programs at each level offered.
2. Include a copy of the school policy, educational philosophy or blueprint that addresses this standard.

Standard VII.4 - Compliance with IMC Code of Ethics: The school follows the IMC Code of Ethics in its relationships with parents, students, staff, other schools, and the general public.
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Documentation:

Include a copy of the school's policy which addresses compliance with the IMC Code of Ethics.



THE INTERNATIONAL

MONTESSORI COUNCIL

Code of Ethics

Our School is Worthy of Trust

As a member of the International Montessori Council, we pledge to represent our school truthfully and accurately to the general public and internally to our parent community.

We further pledge ourselves to respect the diversity of the community of Montessori schools. We will not engage in negative public relations nor make any negative statements about another Montessori school.

Our school honours its financial commitments to parents, staff, vendors, and others.

Core Values

Our primary focus will always be the well being and best interests of our students.

We recognise that a Montessori school is more than a place of learning; it is a community of children and adults that has a significant impact on our students' capacity to learn, grow, create, develop, assimilate values, and relate peacefully and respectfully to other people and to the natural world.

We treat all students, families, teachers, and staff members with kindness, warmth, and respect.

Our school will never permit the use of corporal punishment.

We consciously teach our students values fundamental to Montessori education, which include: respect for oneself, others, and their property; peacefulness, empathy and kindness; truthfulness; a search for the solution fairest to all; the pursuit of independence and self-mastery; and a love of work and a passion for excellence.

IMC Standards for Seal of Recognition Program

We endeavour to provide a school environment that will promote and protect the physical and emotional well being of our students and staff.

We seek to instil in our students, parents, and staff 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.

Our school does not discriminate in matters of admission or employment on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic background. We consciously teach children to accept, respect, and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the global community.

We consciously work to build a constructive partnership between the family and school in support of each child's educational development.

Within reasonable guidelines established to ensure the integrity of our educational program and the privacy of other students' records, parents are welcome to visit the school to observe their child in class or to review his/her academic progress.

We will promptly consult with parents should it ever become clear that a student is not benefiting from the school's program, or if the school is not the best program to meet his/her needs.

Transfer and Enrolment of Students

Our school recognises each family's right to visit and consider other schools and to hold preliminary discussions regarding admission without feeling compelled to notify the school, which their children presently attend.

While we welcome inquiries and interest in our school, we will never knowingly attempt to enrol a student who is presently enrolled in or committed to attend another Montessori program.

Before filing an application for admission, we ask that families advise their children's present schools and authorise in writing the release to us of their children's academic records and student recommendations upon our request.

Employment

We consciously follow fair and equal employment practices in hiring, assigning, promoting, and compensating both teaching and non-teaching staff members. We endeavour to employ persons solely on the basis of the factors necessary in the performance of the job and the operation of our school without discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation (unless our school is operated either by or on behalf of an established church for the purpose of religious education), race, national origin, gender, and any other factor on which discrimination is prohibited by the laws of the jurisdiction within which our school is located.

No official of our school will seek to induce a teacher who is under contract at another school to break that contract. [There is nothing deemed improper if a member of the teaching or

IMC Standards for Seal of Recognition Program

administrative staff of one school independently approaches another school about possible employment.]

Our school will not offer employment to a member of the faculty or staff of another school without communicating with the Head of the school at which he or she is presently employed or committed for the upcoming school year to request a frank evaluation of a candidate's qualifications. This information will be considered absolutely confidential.

Our school will take all reasonable and lawful precautions to maintain the confidentiality of records and information concerning teachers and other staff members who are applying for employment at another school, in accordance with the rights of the individual.



International Montessori Council Accreditation Commission
19600 State Road 64 East, Bradenton, FL 34212

Application for International Montessori Council School Recognition Program

Date of Application:		Start date for Recognition Process:	
School Name:			
School Address:			
	City:	State/Province:	
	Country:	Postal Code:	
School Mailing Address:			
	City:	State/Province:	
	Country:	Postal Code:	
Chair of Self-Study Committee:			
email address:			
Telephone (include country code):			
Fax (include country code):			
School Website:			

IMC Standards for Seal of Recognition Program – AUSTRALIA

Name of Head of School:				
Number of sites:		Number of classrooms:		
Number of head teachers/guides:		Number of Assistant Teachers/Guides:		
Number of Administrative and other staff.		Total Number of Students enrolled:		
Total number of Students enrolled:		Maximum number of students that can attend at one time:		
Age levels taught:				
Number of head teachers/guides:				
Structure of school ownership: Mark with a ✓				
private	for profit	non-profit	religious	non-religious/non-sectarian
sponsored by	proprietorship	partnership	corporation	LLC
other:	Detail if other:			
Accredited by other organisation (List all):				
Effective date	Renewal date	Organisation:		
School Recognition Application fee:				

\$5 USD per enrolled student as of the first day of the present school year

Minimum \$100 US, maximum \$500 USD, for each site

Recognition – Continuing Application Fee if the self-study and onsite process is not completed in one year: \$100 US, for each site

After Recognition has been granted, the annual fee for Recognised schools is \$100 US per site, in addition to the school's annual IMC dues.

IMC Standards for Seal of Recognition Program – AUSTRALIA

Recognised schools must maintain their membership in the International Montessori Council
I certify that information in this Application for IMC School Recognition is true and accurate.

By signing, I certify that I am authorised to commit this school to the process of seeking IMC School Recognition and that the School will fulfil all of its obligations, including time and financial commitments, to the International Montessori Council and to each of the organisations and people who are involved in the process.

I have reviewed the standards for the Seal of Recognition and the School will accept the decision of the International Montessori Council as to whether it has successfully completed the process for Recognition.

I recognise that Recognition by the International Montessori Council is for the purpose of establishing that the School has documented that it is operating in the manner as stated in its Self-Study documents at the time they are submitted, and that the International Montessori Council does not take any responsibility for the School's operations.

I understand Recognition will not guarantee that the school will be authorised to operate in any jurisdiction and the International Montessori Council will not be liable for any direct or consequential damages for granting or denying Recognition to this school.

Signed: _____ Head of School

Print Name: _____ Print Title: _____

Signed: _____ President of Board of Directors
or Owner

Print Name: _____ Print Title: _____

International Montessori Council Accreditation Commission

19600 State Road 64 East, Bradenton FL 34212

941-729-9565 (phone) • 941-745-311 (fax) •

timseldin@montessori.org (email)