



How to identify authentic Montessori: Elementary

All Montessori schools are not created equal. Montessori isn't a trademarked name, nor is Montessori a franchised operation. Each school interprets Montessori differently: some schools invest in everything needed to deliver a high-quality, authentic Montessori experience, while others may combine elements of Montessori with other approaches, or may make quality trade-offs to offer programs at a tuition that appeals to a broader group of families.

At LePort Montessori, we pride ourselves in offering a high-quality, authentic Montessori environment and a warm, thoughtful community experience for parents and children alike. As you research different school options, here is a quick cheat-sheet that will allow you to evaluate how authentic and high-quality the Montessori approach is at different schools you may consider.

Montessori concepts and principles	LePort	Others
A beautiful, purposefully-prepared environment		
• A classroom structured into different work areas , with shelves for each curriculum area, a library area, a quiet reading nook, as well as space for group gatherings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• A variety of working spaces —smaller and larger tables and chairs, configured singly, in pairs, or in small groups, as well as ample floor space to allow children choice about where and how they work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• A busy, somewhat less ordered look compared to Primary. As children ages 6-12 have a sense of internal order, their environment needn't be as highly structured	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule & class structure		
• A 3-hour uninterrupted work period in the morning; a 2-hour work period most afternoons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• A full mix of three or more years in one classroom (ages 6-9, or 1st - 3rd grade, and 9-12, or 4th - 6th grade; or ages 6-12/1st - 6th grade together)—versus single-age or other narrower age bands (e.g., K/1 and 1/2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Children who are engaged without direct teacher supervision: most children work individually or in groups, while the teacher may give individual or small group lessons. A productive noise level, like a busy open space office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Background of the adults & adult/child interactions		
• High-quality Montessori training for head teacher (accredited AMI or AMS classes, versus in-house training or self-study/short online courses)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Respectful, deliberate adult-child interactions: calm, soft voices without loud calling across the entire room; an interactive approach to work planning and solving problems rather than teacher-imposed discipline: children are increasingly trusted to take the lead in shaping community norms and practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Good Montessori elementary classrooms are active, lively environments with a wide range of settings and activities. They are less standardized than primary rooms, with more room to follow the community's interests—yet good rooms look very different from traditional elementary school. Lower Elementary (LE) and Upper Elementary (UE) classes have some shared lessons and materials and some that are specific to each age group.

Montessori materials and other learning aids and activities	LePort	Others
Language		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar Boxes (LE)—a series of boxes with color-coded cards for exploring different parts of speech 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Words activities (LE)—children read a series of cards and act out the verb instructions—multisensory “living” grammar—and Interpretive Reading Cards (LE). Children read paragraphs and perform the scene; this tests for and makes comprehension engaging. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence Analysis materials (LE)—wooden circles (black) and arrows (black and orange) for parsing sentences—continuing into Sentence Diagramming for advanced UE work 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-stocked but limited classroom library—students have access to a World Book, a core set of chapter books, and nonfiction books covering a range of areas. The library is purposefully limited—to encourage visits to public libraries for further research. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mathematics		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Stamp Game (LE)—green, blue, and red tiles used to practice addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bead Bars (LE & UE)—colored bead bars used in a variety of math work such as multiples and squaring 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Checkerboard—a large board with green, blue, and red squares on which to lay bead bars—long multiplication (up to tens of millions!). The UE version includes decimals. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racks and Tubes—a set of test tubes containing small green, blue, and red beads shared out onto wooden boards - long division 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science, history, and geography		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-resourced science area where children can perform scientific experiments, following a series of scientific command cards 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Card material and booklets for botany and zoology, teaching the function and parts of roots, stems, leaves, flowers, seeds, as well as the external and internal body systems of animals 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art, music, life skills, and enrichment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Montessori Tone Bars (to play music, LE) and other musical equipment (from instruments a teacher may play, to Orff instruments the children use to create their own music, in UE) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An active Going Out program (UE) where students initiate excursions into the community to more fully explore topics they study in class 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Materials and activities you will not see in a quality Montessori elementary room		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentive charts (sticker charts, red-yellow-green charts) etc. Motivation in Montessori is intrinsic, not driven by rewards or punishments. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desks in rows facing a teacher lecturing to the whole class in front of a whiteboard or projection screen 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole class curriculum lessons. Lessons are given to individual or small groups of children when the teacher observes they are ready for that concept. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>