



## How to identify authentic Montessori: Infant

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
<b>A beautiful, purposefully-prepared environment</b>		
• <b>Wooden furniture</b> with low, open shelves, arranged logically around the room, with soft floor surfaces for crawlers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <b>Natural, subdued shades</b> for floors and walls, with art and photographs displayed at infant's height; no visual clutter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <b>Access to nature</b> —e.g., real grass on playgrounds, other baby-safe plants and trees to look at, strollers for walks around the school or neighborhood; outside time built into the rhythm of the day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <b>Plenty of space</b> for babies to practice walking, crawling, and scooting around	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Schedule &amp; class structure</b>		
• <b>A child-led schedule</b> of eating, doing activities, and sleeping, individualized to a growing baby's needs (rather than structured around adult convenience)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <b>A mix of ages</b> —from 2- to 3-month-old babies, to 14- to 20-month-old emerging toddlers, so young infants can watch older ones, and enough attention is available for each child	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Background of the adults &amp; adult/child interactions</b>		
• <b>High-quality Montessori training</b> for lead teacher (accredited AMI or AMS classes, vs. in-house training or self-study/short online courses)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <b>Respectful, deliberate adult-child interactions:</b> calm, soft voices; full-sentence explanations rather than short commands; adult squatting or sitting at infant's level with eye contact when speaking with individual children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <b>Adults communicating proactively</b> with infants before anything is done to them (e.g., an adult tells the baby he will be picked up before it happens or asks for permission before cleaning the baby's nose)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• <b>Babies as active participants</b> , not passive recipients, of adult actions (holding their diaper, pulling their clothes up, holding their cups, practicing using utensils...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



A good Montessori infant classroom (ages three months to between 18 and 24 months) looks very different from traditional daycare. While each Montessori infant room has its own look and feel, here is a list of some key materials, furniture items, and general look & feel that you will see in a good Montessori infant room. In general, look for well-set up areas for all daily activities—eating, movement/active time, toileting, sleeping.

Classroom area and what to look for	LePort	Others
<b>Movement/active time</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A movement area</b> for the youngest infants with mirrors, soft surfaces, boppy pillows, and mobiles such as a bell on a ribbon</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A variety of gross motor activities</b> for mobile children—e.g., mirrors with pull-up bars above a soft rug, tunnels, stairs &amp; slides, a bridge with two rails to cruise along</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low shelves</b> with materials attractively displayed and accessible to any mobile child (including crawlers)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A limited selection of toys</b> made of attractive materials (wood, fabric, high-quality plastic)—including rattles with visible rattle mechanism; boxes with drawers, slots or latches to practice opening; a variety of balls of different textures; a good selection of books attractively displayed</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self-motivated infants</b> reaching their maximum potential without aid from the adult</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Eating</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A comfortable chair or loveseat</b> for adults to bottle-feed the youngest babies, or for nursing mothers to visit and nurse on site</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Low tables and chairs</b> for children to eat at (“weaning tables”)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Glass cups, ceramic plates</b> and silverware for children to self-feed (vs. sippy cups, paper or plastic plates)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Toileting</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Diaper changing spaces</b> that allow adults to interact with infants (forward-facing changing tables and/or low tables for children to crawl up to; a pull-up bar with mirror in the toileting area for stand-up diaper changes)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>An area equipped for toilet learning</b>—a potty chair, a bench to sit on, a sink for washing hands accessible to children</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sleeping</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Floor beds or mattresses</b> at floor height that mobile children can crawl onto and off on their own, surrounded by soft, padded surfaces</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A designated nap area</b> with dimmed lights and quiet music to assist children in falling asleep</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Materials and activities you will not see in a quality Montessori infant room</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Battery-activated toys that entertain a passive baby (noises, flashing lights...)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Containers of any type—e.g., high chairs, playpens, bouncers, walkers, cribs (<i>note that there may be evacuation cribs, and that some regulatory authorities do require cribs for sleeping for younger infants</i>)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>