



How to identify authentic Montessori: Toddler

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		
• Wooden furniture with low, open shelves , with art pieces and materials attractively displayed so toddlers can easily access them and put them away when done	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• A variety of work spaces —including low wooden tables and chairs, large area rugs, and individual rugs that toddlers roll out and place work on	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Access to nature —e.g., real grass on playgrounds, other toddler-safe plants and trees to care for	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Self-contained materials in baskets or trays that facilitate independent transportation and clean up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schedule & class structure		
• A morning work period of up to two hours , during which toddlers are encouraged to cycle through activities from start to finish (choose workspace, choose work, do work, put work away, roll up rug)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Active outdoor time in the mornings and (for non-nappers) in the afternoons, with sufficient time to transition well (toddlers put on own clothes and shoes, sunscreen...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Time for a family-like group snack mid-morning, with enough time for children to do the snack set-up (setting the table with glasses, ceramic plates, placemats...), eat without hurry (including serving themselves, pouring water), and clean up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• A mix of ages —from new walkers (around 16-18 months) to young preschoolers speaking in full sentences (typically, toddlers transition to primary around age three, plus/minus a few months)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Background of the adults & adult/child interactions		
• High-quality Montessori training for lead teacher (accredited AMI or AMS classes, vs. in-house training or self-study/short online courses)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Respectful, deliberate adult-child interactions: calm, soft voices; full-sentence explanations rather than short commands; adult squatting or sitting at toddler's level with eye contact when speaking with individual children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



A good Montessori toddler classroom (ages around 18 months to around three years) looks very different from traditional daycare. While each Montessori toddler room has its own look and feel, a good toddler environment will have five key areas of work—Practical Life, Language, Psychosensory Motor, Self-Expression, and Toileting—and you will see toddlers actively engaged with a variety of activities during their work period.

Classroom area and what to look for	LePort	Others
Practical life		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real tools and utensils available (e.g., scissors, knives, glass cups, ceramic dishes, shovel, broom, mop, duster, watering can) and being used by toddlers for purposeful work (e.g., watering plants, sweeping the floor...) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real, purposeful work (e.g., washing dishes, arranging flowers, preparing food) as against pretend work (e.g., cutting velcroed wooden food, washing plastic fruit) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials and activities that are child-sized and arranged in color-matched sets (e.g., a yellow tray, a yellow apron, a yellow cloth, and a yellow sponge) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A varied set of language materials—objects in baskets, cards with photos, objects to match to cards—covering a range of content (e.g., furniture, fruit, animals, vehicles) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child-accessible library of high-quality, reality-based children’s books 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich conversations between child and adult where precise language is used 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Psychosensory motor		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas for nature exploration: indoors (e.g., pine cones, dried flowers, sticks, insects, rocks) and outdoors (e.g., planters or gardening beds for growing herbs, flowers, vegetables) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities that challenge children’s motor abilities (e.g., puzzles, beading work, sewing, pasting) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-expression		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets of musical instruments—e.g., drums, bells, rattles, xylophone 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended activities for the exploration of a variety of art media (e.g., easel painting, collages, gluing, cutting, clay)—as against just crayons and coloring pages 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toileting		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A toileting area with at least two low toilets for a room of 12 toddlers and sink 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comfortable dressing area where toddlers have access to a seat, clean clothes, and a mirror 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Materials and activities you will not see in a quality Montessori toddler room		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic toys with batteries that make sounds and noise 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretend play in place of real purposeful work (e.g., pretend cooking in place of cutting fruit for the day’s snack) 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plastic cups and dishes and disposable eating material 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>