



The Montessori Alliance of TN Validation Project: An Overview

There is no trademark on the use of “Montessori” in the public domain. Any school or program can call itself Montessori but be lacking in any of the elements that would be considered necessary to implement the philosophy and curriculum as taught in accredited or nationally recognized Montessori teacher preparation programs. There are programs that market themselves as Montessori which do not have an understanding or commitment to the philosophy, do not have credentialed teachers from accredited programs, do not have the materials needed to fully implement the curriculum, and are lacking in those elements of the prepared environment, such as an extended work period and developmentally appropriate mixed age groups, which are the foundations of high quality Montessori education.

This ability for programs to use the Montessori label is confusing for families who have chosen this educational model for their children. It often gives state agency personnel, and policy makers the impression that there is no “true” Montessori, and contributes to the overall misunderstanding of just what Montessori education is in the public.

A **MAT Validation Project** is one answer to the question “What is Montessori?” By determining baseline, threshold components for participating Montessori schools in TN, MAT has established a Validation Project that is self-regulating and which provides accountability to state agencies, policy makers, funders, and most importantly, families.

Families can be assured that a Validated Montessori program includes certain fundamental, baseline components necessary for a program to meet, or exceed, a basic level of quality. They can be confident that the school they have chosen is a Montessori school that has participated in demonstrating a measure of quality.

State Agencies can be assured that the Montessori schools in their state have agreed to a basic standard for defining Montessori. This “standard” gives them a measure by which they can ensure the health, safety, and quality of programs they approve.

Montessori Schools can be assured that the use of the name “Montessori” in TN has some meaning. This measure of quality builds trust in regulators that a program is meeting, or exceeding, the baseline set by state approval requirements. With this increased level of trust, requirements can safely be modified to provide for more fully implemented Montessori programming.