



Validation Project Handbook

www.matenn.org

Email: info@matenn.org



The MAT Mission

The Montessori Alliance of Tennessee is an inclusive community of schools, teachers, and families supporting high quality Montessori education.

The Validation Project Overview

The goal of the MAT Validation Project is to give participating schools the opportunity to demonstrate that they include all of the essential standards¹ of a Montessori school. The MAT threshold standards were determined by an Advisory Committee of Montessori educators and teacher trainers and approved by the Board of Directors in April 2015.

There is no trademark or copyright protection on the use of “Montessori” in the public domain. Any school or program may call itself Montessori but actually be lacking in elements that would be considered necessary to implement the system of education as taught in accredited or nationally recognized Montessori Teacher Preparation Programs.

The Benefits

Families can be assured that a Validated Montessori program includes those essentials necessary for a program to meet, or exceed, a basic level of quality.

The TN Department of Education and State Board of Education can be assured that the Montessori schools in the state have agreed to a basic standard for defining Montessori. This “standard” gives them an accountability measure by which they can ensure the health, safety, and quality of the programs they license and approve.

Montessori Schools can be assured that the use of the name “Montessori” has some meaning. Validated schools can present a threshold level of quality that will assure families and the state agencies that they can be trusted to provide what they are claiming to be.

Standards for Validation

Each classroom within a school must have the following to be a validated school by the Montessori Alliance of Tennessee.

1. A philosophical approach that is consistent with the educational methods and areas of instruction as recommended by the observations, research, writings and instruction of Dr. Montessori and as taught in Teacher Education Programs accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE), recognized by the USDE.

¹ Montessori Public Policy Initiative. Montessori Essentials. November, 2015.

2. At least one lead teacher in each classroom with a full Montessori credential from a MACTE accredited Teacher Preparation Program, or AMI Teacher Preparation program, at the level being taught.
3. A multi-age group of students based on the Montessori Planes of Development and the developmental readiness of each child in every classroom and at every level. (Toddler-6 weeks- 30 months; Early Childhood- 2 ½ - 6; Elementary- 6-12).
4. A Montessori curriculum, and the research-based Montessori instructional materials, to implement the program for each class and age grouping taught.
5. A daily schedule that provides an uninterrupted work cycle or 2 ½-3 hours. Enrichment programs and transition times are scheduled to accommodate these work periods.
6. An established student/teacher ratio and group size consistent with the Montessori system of education and as recommended by AMI, AMS, IMC, and MEPI for each class and age grouping taught.
7. Meet all federal, state, and local regulatory and statutory requirements for the health and safety of students.

MAT Validation Project Policies

1. All Montessori school programs in Tennessee are eligible to participate in the project. The project will initially include only Montessori Early Childhood classrooms with expansion to all levels of Montessori education to follow.
2. Montessori Early Childhood programs in both private and public schools may participate.
3. The fee for validation is \$50.00 per classroom. MAT will use these funds to reimburse the Verifier Team members for expenses incurred (mileage and lunch) while visiting a school.
4. The Program Coordinator, all verifier team members, and the Approval Committee are trained and clearly understand their role and responsibilities. Each volunteer in a position is required to sign a Confidentiality Form and a Code of Conduct form and will not share any information regarding a school with anyone not working directly with the Validation Project.
5. The Verifier Team members are fellow Montessori educators with three years of classroom experience at the level they are observing. They are not observing to judge, assess quality, or consult with school staff. As often as possible, teams from across the state will observe in schools outside of their geographic region of their own schools.
6. Verifier Team On-site visits are strictly to verify that the information and documentation provided in the Classroom Questionnaire and documentation packet is accurate.
7. A school's initial Validation is in effect for three years. The school may renew its validation without an additional on-site visit unless there are substantial changes in documentation such as a new director, new teachers, a change in building, or changes to the structure of the program or standing with the TN DOE.

8. A Montessori school which is accredited by AMS, IMC, or MEPI, or is recognized by AMI, may choose to participate to receive an automatic validation by MAT by completing the application and attaching documentation of accreditation/recognition.

Process for School Participation

A Montessori school which voluntarily chooses to participate in the MAT Validation Project will:

1. Complete the MAT Validation Project Application and submit for review by the Project Coordinator.
2. When the completed application and payment has been received, the school will be sent the electronic Classroom Questionnaire and Materials List within one week of receipt.
3. The school will have each classroom complete the Classroom Questionnaire and documentation packet, including the Materials List, copies of lead teacher's Montessori credential, classroom roster by age, and classroom daily schedule.
4. The Project Coordinator will review all information received and if it is complete, will send to the Verifier Team members for their review. If the Classroom Questionnaire and documentation packet is not complete, or the school does not meet the essential standards to become validated, the coordinator will let the school know what is needed to participate in the project.
5. The Project Coordinator will contact the school, and verifier team members, to schedule an on-site visit within four weeks of receipt of the completed packet.
6. The Verifier Team will provide an on-site visit to verify that the information submitted in the Classroom Questionnaires is accurate and that the classroom philosophy and curriculum implementation are consistent with MAT Validation Project standards.
7. The Verifier Team will submit its report and recommendation for validation to the Project Coordinator within 2 weeks of the on-site visit.
8. The report and recommendation will be reviewed by the Approval Committee within 3 weeks for final approval.
9. The school will be notified of its validation status and will be sent a Certificate of MAT Validation by the Project Coordinator.

Validation Project Volunteer Staff Roles and Responsibilities

All staff for the Validation Project are volunteers from the Montessori community who donate their time in support of quality Montessori education in the state.

Project Coordinator

The Project Coordinator is the overall administrator of the project. It is her responsibility to:

- Review all applications received and send the Classroom Questionnaires to the school within 1 week of receipt of the application.

- Verify that the application fee has been received by MAT through PayPal or other payment method.
- Review the complete Classroom Questionnaires and supporting documentation. If anything is missing, or the project standards are not met, the coordinator will contact the school to communicate needs and/or status.
- If the Classroom Questionnaires are complete and all documentation is provided, the coordinator will send the information to the Verifier Team for their review.
- The Project Coordinator will schedule the on-site visit with the school and the team.
- Once the on-site visit has taken place, the Verifier Team will send their completed report and recommendations to the coordinator. This report will then be sent to the Approval Committee for final approval of the school's validation.
- The Verifier Team may request reimbursement for mileage and one meal incurred for completion of the visit to the coordinator. The coordinator will provide reimbursement within 2 weeks of receipt of the record.

Verifier Teams

The verifier teams are a minimum of two Montessori educators with a Montessori credential and 3 years of classroom experience at the level they are observing. These teams will review the Classroom Questionnaires and accompanying documentation and provide on-site visits to verify that the information provided by a school is accurate and meets the Validation Project standards. Their responsibilities include:

- Reviewing the Classroom Questionnaires and the documentation prior to an on-site visit.
- Complete a 30- minute on-site observation of each classroom to verify that information and documentation provided is accurate. Both members of each team must observe each classroom and both must review the documentation.
- The Verifier Team members will each submit an On-Site Report with the recommendation for validation to the Project Coordinator within 2 weeks of the visit.

Approval Committee

This committee of 3 Montessori educators and/or administrators of schools make the final decision of validation approval for a school. The committee is also responsible for hearing any appeals of a decision. Their responsibilities include:

- Reviewing the Verifier Team reports and recommendations.
- Determining a school's validation status and giving final approval for the Certificate of Validation.
- Hearing appeals of a validation decision.
- Over sight of the project.

Levels of Validation

Level One: Schools recognized by AMI, or accredited by AMS, IMC, MEPI are automatically validated by the MAT Validation Project.

Level Two: Schools which have successfully completed the process to become a validated school and which have received a Certificate of Validation from MAT.

Level Three: Schools which do not yet meet all standards to become validated may choose to become a Mentored School. A volunteer coach from MAT will work with the school to identify those standards which need to be met and assist the school director in designing a plan for reaching each standard.