



# MONTESSORI QUALITY: AUTHENTIC PRACTICE

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Supporting Reflective Development



# MONTESSORI QUALITY: AUTHENTIC PRACTICE

Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice (MQ:AP) has been developed to partner with and support all schools and early childhood programs (education services) providing Montessori environments. It will assist education services to engage in a process of review, improvement, and maintenance to ensure the highest level of Montessori experiences for children.

The emphasis for the MQ:AP is on continuous reflective development to provide authentic Montessori practice. It provides standards and guidelines for authentic practice and supports these with a model of guidance and professional development. Montessori Australia, the national body for Montessori, develops, implements, and reviews the Montessori Standards and Guidelines, and supports reflective development of Montessori programs through Guide training, networking, and professional mentoring. All Montessori education services are eligible to participate. The Montessori Australia's Schools & Centres Directory lists all education services participating in the MQ:AP showing Participating and Montessori Registered™.



# OBJECTIVES

The objectives of Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice are:

- To promote increased confidence in the provision of authentic Montessori environments for children and families throughout Australia.
- To support staff to create a culture of continuous reflection and development leading to quality outcomes for the child.
- To elevate the profile and outcomes of Montessori environments within government to gain recognition of Montessori's contribution to quality education and care.
- To support leadership with legislated compliance with the National Quality Framework/Standards for continuous improvement, quality teaching and learning, accountability and professionalism.

## Why should my education service participate?

- You will be part of an Australian movement where Montessori Standards and Guidelines are used as a quality measure to support positive growth and development of education services.
- This value-added activity addresses National Reform and the National Quality Standards of assessment and accountability by clarifying Montessori practice through an integrated system of continuous improvement.
- The program is streamlined, based on self-assessment, and aids services to develop their features and benefits while complying with external accreditation by ACECQA and/or State Education Departments.

# MQ:AP STEPS

1

## Explore

the MQ:AP website and program information

2

## Select

a guide from your staff to attend the Authentic Practice Guide training

3

## Submit

the online Self Assessment Application

4

## Develop

an Action Plan and submit Annual Update against the plan

5

## Option A

Supporting Reflective Development and Self-assessment

6

## Option B

Supporting Reflective Development, Self-assessment and verifying visit

## MQ:AP Levels

### Participating

Have completed steps 1, 2, 3, 4 and are participating in the guiding phase of step 5.

### Registered

Have completed steps 1, 2, 3, 4 and are participating in the verifying phase of step 6 and have met the majority of the Quality Standards.

# MQ:AP PROCESS

The process is outlined in further detail below.

- Any education service that is currently offering or intending to offer a Montessori educational environment is eligible to join MQ:AP.
- Education service Guides will be trained by MQ:AP trainers (onsite or remotely) to support the internal self-assessment processes.
- Submit online Self-assessment Form and pay fee.
- Sign a copy of the MQ:AP Charter to be displayed at the education service.
- After completing these steps the education service is listed on the Montessori Australia website Directory as “Participating”.
- Self-assessment forms are reviewed by the MQ:AP team, with feedback provided to the education service.
- If a verifying visit is requested, a two-person team will be assigned and a time arranged to visit. The education service will be given a full report on the verification of the self-assessment. One team member will observe in the environment, and the second team member will hold focus groups and/or do surveys with stakeholders. If sufficient standards and practice are verified, the education service will be granted “Registered” status. Registered status will be granted for three or five years depending on the number of outstanding items that need consideration.
- Once Registered, the education service will be required to have a verifying visit in three or five years to maintain registration. If significant changes occur at the education service (eg. new leadership), a verifying visit will be required within two years.
- All education services submit an online annual progress report.

# PROMOTING QUALITY

All education services enrolled in the MQ:AP will be listed at the top of the [Schools and Centres Directory](#) on the Montessori Australia website with the MQ:AP “Participating” or “Registered” logo as applicable.

All education services enrolled in the MQ:AP will be able to display the applicable MQ:AP logo on their website and promotion material.

Montessori Australia will promote and advertise the Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice to the community, encouraging people to seek education services that are part of the MQ:AP.

**Does your  
education  
service  
provide the  
highest  
quality  
Montessori  
practice?**

The Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice website promotes quality  
Montessori in Australia: [www.montessoriregistered.org.au](http://www.montessoriregistered.org.au)



# MQ:AP TEAM

The MQ:AP Team consists of experienced Montessori and quality management practitioners from across Australia that have experience in working in and supporting Montessori programs. This team is contracted by Montessori Australia and has been responsible for developing the Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice Supporting Reflective Development.



## Verifiers

MQ:AP Verifiers are part of the MQ:AP Team and are trained to provide consistent verification of the Montessori self-assessment. Verifiers have extensive experience in training, mentoring and working in Montessori environments. Regular networking and supporting processes ensure continuing reflection on the best practice standards, self-assessment procedures and consistent verification practices. A full verification assessment report will be provided within two months of the visit.



## Guides

The Guide is a staff member from the education service appointed to spearhead their MQ:AP process. The role of the Guide is crucial to the success of the MQ:AP Supporting Reflective Practice. All Guides are committed to supporting and enhancing the quality of Montessori education in Australia. They have undertaken intensive Guide training and are committed to ensuring that the process is a supportive and positive experience for everyone involved. The aim of the partnership is to develop a confidential and trusting relationship with staff in the education service. The Guide will support the education service on a pathway to meet the quality standards.

# MQ:AP FEES

Stages	Members	Non-Members
• Application Fee	\$440	\$770
• Annual Fee - sliding scale based on the number of staff on the payroll		
1 - 5	\$55	\$110
6 - 10	\$110	\$220
11 - 20	\$165	\$330
21 - 35	\$275	\$550
36 - 50	\$385	\$770
51 +	\$495	\$990
• Verifier Team Visit & Report	Cost on Application	

Fees include GST

## GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Choosing the right Montessori environment for your child is important. Each education service is run independently and is either privately owned or run by a non-profit organisation.

“Montessori” is not trademarked so it is possible for any education service to include the word “Montessori” in its name. Most Montessori education services aim to offer a quality Montessori program.

In its role as the national body, Montessori Australia has established an Australian system to identify Authentic Practice for Montessori programs and to support education services in maintaining these standards.

MQ:AP is a supportive and positive means of continuous improvement by which education services strive to ensure quality and best practice.



# ABOUT THE GUIDELINES

Education services in Australia undergo regular government quality audits of required standards under the National Quality Framework (NQF) legislation.

The Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice Guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the State and Commonwealth quality audits. They have been developed to assist Montessori education services to regularly self-assess their organisation to assure that they are providing authentic Montessori practice and meets the expectations of families and stakeholders. A verification audit to provide external validation of the self-assessment completes the Supporting Reflective Development Process.

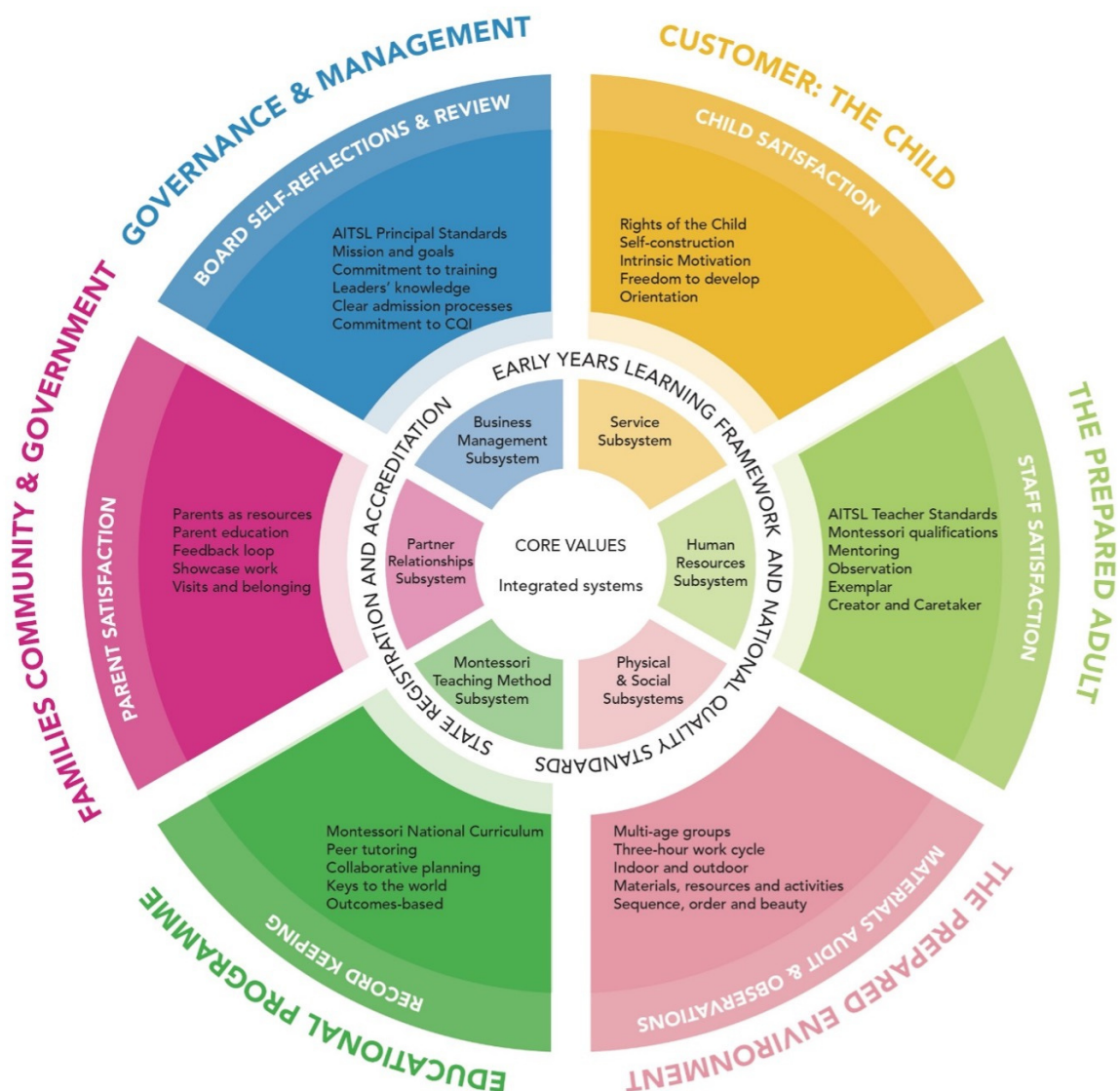
MQ:AP has streamlined processes to ensure no duplication of National Quality Standards. The MQ:AP standards raise defining authentic practices that support Australia's National Quality Framework and add value to Montessori education services. They provide theory, methods, and tools for practice improvement and support the social return on the government investment into education services. The guidelines clarify the Montessori philosophy to the broader community.



# KEY AREAS

The following diagram of the Australian Montessori Quality: Authentic Practice integrated system shows how it aligns with the national education reform requirements for quality and covers six key areas. Each area has equal importance in the scheme and interrelates with the other key areas.

1. The Customer: The Child
2. The Prepared Adult: Educators and Guides
3. The Prepared Environment
4. The Educational Program
5. The Stakeholders: Families, Communities, and the Government
6. Governance, Leadership, and Admissions



# STANDARDS & GUIDELINES FOR MONTESSORI AUTHENTIC PRACTICE

These standards are in addition to the legislated Australian National Quality Standards and clarify Montessori best practice.



## **MQ:API The Child**

The child is...capable of developing and giving us a tangible proof of the possibility of a better humanity [and] has shown us the true process of construction of the whole human being. We have seen children totally change as they acquire a love for things and as their sense of order, discipline and self-control develops within them.... The child is both a hope and promise for mankind. (Maria Montessori)

1.1 The rights of the child are considered when developing education service philosophy, policies, and procedures.

- The education service has a privacy policy that is regularly reviewed and that values children's rights to privacy as well as a code of conduct that encourages a climate of respect, so that children and families feel respected and valued by school staff.
- Children have the right to respectfully say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and have their opinions considered.

1.2 Development for children occurs through self-construction by absorbing experiences from observing and using materials, their environment and the freedom that they are given to develop themselves.

- The education service philosophy includes the aspiration of supporting each child's self-construction of their personality and talents to the full.
- Time is provided for the creative spontaneous activity required for the child to self-construct.

1.3 Children are encouraged to gravitate to their 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky): in other words, what is just beyond their current level of development.

- Educators ensure that new challenges are achievable and scaffold activities as required. Incremental success is achieved by extending just beyond the child's level of development.
- Children choose their work because they are internally motivated by interest, not to earn external rewards or grades.

1.4 Children's mental powers guide them through each developmental period (Planes of Development).

- Children are accustomed to the free exercise of their will and judgement.
- Educators consider tendencies and sensitive periods as the foundation from which children build from their potentialities. The First Plane is 'the absorbent mind'; the Second Plane is 'the reasoning mind'; and the Third Plane is 'the humanistic explorers'.

1.5 Children are orientated to their new environment with careful consideration.

- There is a plan of orientation for new children, that is communicated to the families and staff and reviewed annually.
- Children are consulted when plans are being made to change their environment, to include them in the decision making.





## **MQ:AP2 The Prepared Adult**

The authentic Montessori education service requires the educator do three essential tasks: to meet children's needs, reflect Montessori best practice and prepare the environment by designing and using strategies, innovations, and activities that are observation and research-based; to promote active involvement of children in the learning process; and once children begin to concentrate, to encourage a balance of uninterrupted, self-directed, self-teaching and collaborative activities through the presentation of individual, small and large group lessons. The educator evaluates the class on an ongoing basis by observing the overall classroom environment during individual lessons and introduces new work at appropriate times.

### **2.1 Educators have Montessori qualifications that includes face-to-face components for the levels they teach.**

- Educators hold a Montessori credential for the age group they teach issued by an accredited teacher education program.
- Educators in adolescent programmes: One full-time educator who holds a Montessori diploma for adolescence or pre 2020 equivalent; regular part-time educator or educators with prior Montessori training who hold adolescent orientation certificates; and all visiting specialist teachers have completed the adolescent introductory workshops.
- Educators without Montessori qualifications for the age group they teach are enrolled and in good standing in an accredited Montessori education program.
- New Montessori qualified educators are mentored by experienced Montessori qualified educators for the age group they teach.
- Assistants have undertaken a Montessori orientation course or on the job training by an experienced Montessori educator.

### **2.2 Educators undertake regular Montessori professional development to deepen their understanding and critically reflect on their practice.**

- Montessori professional development programs for the previous two years and planned for the current year are evident for all educators.
- Educators undertake two observations in other Montessori environments per year, which can be internal or external to their service.
- A formal system of mentorship or a peer companion program including observation and feedback is evident.

### **2.3 Educators utilise observation as an essential tool to guide each child's learning assessment and progression.**

- Observation, based on the 'Human Tendencies' (motivating powers that guide the learning and development of individuals throughout their lives), is documented and used as a key tool for reflective practice and program planning on a regular basis.

2.4 Educators display warm, respectful relationships with children, promote inclusiveness and a sense of mutual trust, and foster a collaborative and ethical culture where professional standards guide all aspects of practice.

- Educators model non-judgemental, friendly, cooperative behaviour (in voice, appearance and attitude).
- Educators model 'Grace and Courtesy' (i.e. they show respect, sensitivity and compassion) in helping to define limits for children.
- Educators model empathy and thoughtfulness that helps the group function for the mutual benefit of everyone.

2.5 Educators serve as facilitators for the child's natural development (psychological, social, emotional, cognitive, moral, and spiritual), learning and discovery.

- Educators act as facilitators in the environment with less adult directed work and more child-chosen activities.
- Educators give regular focused presentations of materials with which the child has chosen to work or shown readiness for.
- Concentration of the child is protected and encouraged.
- Educators are aware of the developmental stages of children, and this is reflected in interactions and program planning.





## **MQ:AP3 Montessori Prepared Learning Environment**

The authentic Montessori education service ensures that the environment is carefully prepared by the educators to provide opportunities for children's development and promote their active involvement in the learning process. Within the prepared environment children are free to pursue their natural interests that responds to what Dr Montessori considered an innate drive to work.

**3.1** The environment has appropriate multi-age groupings aligned with the Planes of Development.

- Ideally, three year mixed age groups are aligned to the Planes of Development.
- Age and gender balance are aimed for within each group or class.
- A five day per week Montessori program for children three years to five years is encouraged.

**3.2** The program builds in uninterrupted daily work periods, three-hour work cycles and integrates any specialty programs consistent with Montessori key principles.

- There are extended periods of the day allowing for uninterrupted, purposeful, developmentally appropriate, engaging and self-chosen work.
- Music and art are integrated in each classroom environment wherever possible.
- The integration of specialised instruction, including additional language preparation, support for specific learning needs, sports, music and religion, etc. is consistent with Montessori key principles. Whenever possible, special classes are scheduled outside the uninterrupted morning work cycle.

**3.3** The environment is organised according to Montessori principles and offers multiple learning opportunities and indoor and outdoor learning spaces.

- There is no work on windows that obscures the child's view of the natural environment.
- Children can work on lap tables, floor mats, at appropriately sized tables or in other spaces, including outdoors as appropriate for the age group and activity.
- There are spaces for individual and group work as appropriate for the age group.
- There is opportunity for appropriate food preparation at all levels.
- A water source is available as needed for independent work.
- Freedom of movement is encouraged as appropriate to the age.
- Freedom of communication with respect for others is paramount.
- Access to resources such as an organised, child-friendly library system facilitates independence.
- Children are given opportunities to experience fresh air and sunshine.
- There are plants and animals to care for and natural spaces.
- There is the possibility of indoor/outdoor flow.
- Second Plane classes (6-12 years) have a 'Going Out' program (in addition to any whole class excursions).
- Third Plane classes (12-18 years) emphasise 'Occupations based on Production and Exchange' and engagement with expert adults.

### 3.4 The environment offers a full complement of developmentally appropriate Montessori materials, resources and activities.

- There is a complete range of Montessori materials for the relevant age group.
- Developmentally age-appropriate materials, resources and activities provide opportunities for work in each of the major curriculum areas as outlined in the Montessori National Curriculum.
- Curriculum support materials that meet the needs of the children may be incorporated into the classroom provided they do not replace the primary use of the Montessori materials.
- Montessori materials are in constant and regular use.
- Materials are inspected regularly for completeness and good working condition, and an inventory is kept that includes a repair and replacement plan.
- Montessori educators, rather than management, are responsible for determining the setup of the classroom, the placement of materials and the “flow” of the room. A collaboration regarding material purchases and priorities is encouraged.

### 3.5 The environment is aesthetically pleasing, well maintained, ordered and provides enticement to activity.

- There is an atmosphere of respect, calm and safety in each environment.
- Aesthetics and beauty are key considerations. There is no excessive signage in the classroom.
- Montessori materials are well maintained, complete, precise, accurate and attractively displayed.
- Montessori materials are ordered and purposely sequenced (generally left to right, top to bottom) according to the education service scope and sequence to support auto-education.
- The environment is refreshed frequently to reflect the interests of the children.
- A sense of order is modelled and facilitated by the adults, for example, children have space allocated for them to file their completed work in a way that allows it to be easily identified, sorted and retrieved.

### 3.6 The environment supports the child’s development and encourages self-responsibility and awareness of how actions may influence others and the environment building self-reliance and resilience.

- Materials are limited and offer essential keys for self-correction.
- Appropriate glassware, crockery, tools, materials and cultural items are used.
- The environment is designed to enable children to care for it and to be responsible for their actions towards others and the natural environment.
- Natural materials predominate and resources are conserved to instil an attitude of stewardship and sustainable living.
- Children with additional needs are to be educated with their peers, to the greatest extent appropriate, utilising push-in supports and programs if required. Children with additional needs may be removed from the regular classroom for specialist support when necessary and in small groups or individually.







## **MQ:AP4 Education Program (Curriculum Planning, Implementation, Assessment and Reporting)**

The quality Montessori education service provides a comprehensive Montessori educational curriculum based on the Australian Montessori National Curriculum that includes Montessori's fundamental philosophy of the child and the Montessori Planes of Development. It includes clearly defined learner outcomes, and ensures that it is mapped to the legislated educational framework and outcomes of ACECQA and ACARA.

**4.1** The program follows the Montessori National Curriculum, is developmentally appropriate, dynamic, purposeful and engaging, and lays the foundations for further learning.

- The program is planned from observation and understanding of Human Tendencies and presented across all learning areas.
- Program activities are adaptable, dynamic and responsive so children are challenged to apply their knowledge, to solve problems and to think creatively.
- Studies are integrated and there are opportunities for children to negotiate the curriculum and to undertake long-term projects.
- The curriculum is sequential, with a range of content, deep understandings and high order thinking.
- The education service maps the Montessori National Curriculum with the State and Commonwealth curricula for education services.

**4.2** The implementation of the program is guided by Montessori principles in all aspects.

- Concentration is a developmental priority.
- Contemplation and reflection are valued.
- Presentations and materials gradually move understanding of concepts from the concrete to the abstract and from the more general whole to the more specific parts with increased detail.
- Repetition is encouraged.
- Whole group presentations are minimal and used age appropriately.
- Practical Life activities, including Grace and Courtesy, are emphasised at all levels.
- Peer support, child-to-child teaching and self-reflection are valued.



#### 4.3 Independence, self-direction, active learning and discovery are encouraged.

- A focus upon reality and 'keys' to the world is the basis of curriculum choices (tools of the hand for younger children, imagination for older children and peer engagement for adolescents).
- The balance between adult directed and individually chosen work is appropriate for the age group and individuals.
- The programme incorporates guided discovery.
- Self-created challenge and self-directed learning are present.
- Variations in material use by the child is possible.
- Exploration, discovery, and independence is prioritised.
- Opportunities for developmentally appropriate work are provided according to the child's interests and needs.
- The Second Plane curriculum is designed to spark the imagination and foster 'Great Work'.
- The Third Plane curriculum gives a central role to 'Occupations based on production and exchange' that are meaningful to the adolescent, physically and intellectually challenging, and valued in the wider community, economy, society and culture.

#### 4.4 A process of student progress assessment and reporting is used that is compatible with Montessori principles.

- Regular recorded observations form the basis of planning, assessment and the sequencing of presentations.
- Educators undertake dedicated and recorded observations regularly in their own classroom.
- Educators keep comprehensive records of a child's progress and development with articulated anticipated outcomes for individuals.
- Assessment tools are authentic and used to inform future practice.
- Educators have strategies to meet individual needs if children exceed or fall short of anticipated outcomes and make use of observation and diagnostic tools to assist their understanding of children's learning and development.
- Educators have access to a support system for children falling outside of anticipated outcomes. Reporting student outcomes meets State requirements, remains consistent with Montessori principles and is meaningful to families.
- Student self-assessment and reflection is encouraged including planning and record keeping by children and adolescents in the Second Plane and older.





## **MQ:AP5 Families, Carers, Community and Government**

The quality Montessori education service fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders and provides opportunities for collaboration to make their mission and vision a reality. It creates a program, culture and inclusive community of children, families, staff and governing body (if applicable) that embraces diverse perspectives, cultures, backgrounds and identities. It provides the necessary tools that enable outreach and engagement to the education services' families, including those whose first language is one other than the primary language spoken in the education service.

### **5.1 The role of families as primary carers is respected and supported, and partnerships with families are valued as a powerful resource that is essential, vital and critical.**

- Partnerships of mutual value between the education service, families and community are demonstrated through shared vision and principles as well as evidence of their input into the strategic planning of the education service.
- Families are provided with a handbook including an anti-bullying statement, a discipline policy, a grievance procedure that informs them on how to effectively engage with the educator and education service management and a process of natural or restorative justice.
- Stakeholders assist the education service to research the needs of stakeholders and elicit ideas on what works well and what does not work well, so that they can participate in continuous improvement.
- The education service solicits the knowledge and skills and networks of stakeholders to enhance the work of the education service.

### **5.2 Montessori education and information programs are provided that promote an understanding of Montessori education as an aid to life.**

- Family support and enrichment opportunities such as workshops on Montessori philosophy and curriculum, parenting issues, child development and health and safety issues are provided regularly and at times to meet community needs.
- Parent education programs are ongoing, effective and constantly aim to reach most families.
- Families are assisted in establishing connections with agencies, programs and community resources that may be beneficial to children with additional needs and their families.
- There are regular and effective communications with families and educators, where both view these as highly desirable, aiding their united task of championing the optimal development of the child.

### **5.3 The education service collects direct stakeholder perceptions as well as indirect satisfaction indicators.**

- A variety of data collection and feedback is taken such as surveys, questionnaires, personal interviews, listening panels, focus groups, and complaints management, with a minimum of one family survey per year.
- Data is gathered and stored on new enrolments, lost enrolments, retention, compliments, complaints and correction trends and positive customer recognition.

5.4 Community celebrations, social meetings and events are held throughout the year to allow and encourage a free and open exchange of ideas and information.

- The education service communicates, through multiple channels, the expectations for learning, learner outcomes, education service effectiveness, and goals for improvement to all stakeholders and seeks reflective feedback.
- Opportunities are provided to showcase the children's work, and to celebrate their learning with the broader community.
- Social meetings are held that encourage family participation that are aligned to the shared Montessori vision of sustainability and being with nature.

5.5 The education service has a clear stakeholder policy that encourages belonging, connectedness and explains how families and the community can effectively engage with the education service.

- Families are involved in the development of a stakeholder policy.
- Families are welcome to visit the education service to observe their child in class or to review academic progress following guidelines to ensure the integrity of the educational programme and the privacy of other children's records.





## **MQ:AP6 Governance, Leadership and Admissions**

The quality Montessori education service's mission and vision are child-centred and guided by Montessori philosophy. The education service establishes and communicates a shared philosophy based on values and purpose that informs the strategic plan and all facets of their culture, daily operations and educational decisions. It advocates for child learning and organisational effectiveness through strong governance and leadership that is aligned with their mission and vision. It establishes, implements, monitors and refines a strategic planning process to demonstrate continuous improvement.

**6.1** The education service builds a shared mission and vision with input from stakeholder groups (families, staff and children) that is guided by Montessori philosophy.

- Montessori principles are embedded in the foundational documents of the education service, its philosophy, vision and mission and strategic plan.
- Annual assessments of education service effectiveness are conducted, and the results are analysed and shared in an annual report to the community.
- Everyday practice in the education service reflects the MQ:AP Charter and ethical standards.
- The MQ:AP Charter is predominately displayed within the education service.

**6.2** Governance includes policies and budgets that reflect a continuing commitment to Montessori, including training and professional development.

- Governance has policies regarding the oversight of risk (mitigating risks that should be taken) and compliance of Montessori authentic practice and monitors this on an ongoing basis.
- The goal of financially supporting Montessori educators' training is embedded in the education service policy and budgets to mitigate the risks of not having Montessori qualified staff.
- Educators are supported to regularly attend Montessori events and observe in other quality Montessori education services.
- Experienced and qualified Montessori consultants or mentors provide professional Montessori in-service.



### 6.3 An educational leader is employed that has interpersonal leadership, knowledge of Montessori principles, practice and values, and leadership that is aware of external reform and current expectations.

- The governing body ensures consistency in leadership capabilities, such as equality, consideration, empathy and humility, are prevalent in day-to-day operations and model this in their own duties and responsibilities.
- The governing body monitors and supports the development of the educational leader and implements an annual review considering their interpersonal leadership, Montessori knowledge, and awareness of current educational practice and requirements.
- Educational leaders inspire a common vision of the future among their staff, giving them a sense of direction, and integrating systems with the key Montessori values and goals.
- Educational leaders are aware of their responsibilities as role models and provide leadership through example.
- Educational leaders relate to their staff through communication, listening, helping, encouraging and team building.
- Educational leaders delegate and encourage involvement and empowerment of staff, children and families.
- Broad participation in decision making is actively conceived and implemented.
- Educational leaders maintain relationships in a context of trust and empowerment.
- The education service employs a Montessori qualified leader that transmits Montessori value systems that can produce positive changes in individual and collective behaviour.
- Non-Montessori qualified educational leaders undertake Montessori training to instil key Montessori values so that the education service can successfully achieve its Montessori mission.
- The educational leader's relations with children, families, staff, the community and external bodies are based on integrity, correctness, transparency and honesty.
- Educational leaders foster a culture that reflects and verifies assumptions against facts and measurements.
- Educational leaders have constructed a business and education model from the Strategic Plan that helps governance to monitor its achievement of the mission and goals.
- Educational leaders use quality self-assessment as an integral part of annual business planning.
- There are guidelines for resource management that ensures that they are used effectively and efficiently.
- There is a documented organisational structure that indicates an integrated systems/process-based approach.
- Operational plans and improvement plans are consistent with the vision, mission, Montessori values and the Strategic Plan, and consider data from a range of sources.
- Annual staff satisfaction surveys are implemented, and interviews and/or periodic surveys of management inform planning.
- Staff are encouraged, involved and empowered to support organisational values, continuous improvement and marketing.
- Ongoing needs-based professional development is planned, endorsed and implemented for leadership staff that is based on information about their capabilities.
- The educational leader participates in supporting Montessori community leadership.

### 6.4 The admissions process informs families about the nature of Montessori education, the partnerships involved and the commitment required in enrolling in the education service.

- Families are supported from their enrolment application to feel welcome and informed about all processes that affect them. They are provided with orientation, discussions about the philosophy, policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, commitment expected and can contribute valuable information about their child.
- Families are invited to meet with the educator prior to admission, to develop a shared vision of the current environment. They have an option to observe the classroom to determine if they feel that it is what they are expecting and if it is the 'best fit' for their child.
- The admission process includes a trial day for the child so that there is respectful consideration of the child's comfort in the Montessori environment. This trial day visit also informs families more of the nature of the Montessori approach in ways that may not have been communicated verbally.
- Families are provided a handbook that briefly and clearly explains how to access information on policies, operations, and management and provides an organisational chart that clearly defines roles, lines of authority, relationships and accountability.

## 6.5 The education service supports the broader Montessori mission and undertakes continuous improvement.

- The education service promotes accurate informed understanding of the Montessori approach in the wider community.
- The education service subscribes to Montessori groups, associations or networks.
- There is an emphasis on civic and global responsibility throughout the education service.
- Links are made with the wider environment and community and include education service opportunities.
- The program includes an emphasis on values and actively celebrates diversity, peace and the interdependence of all life.
- Staff are supported to engage in the wider Montessori and educational community.
- The governing body and leadership are active in the Montessori community and generally as advocates for children.
- There is a whole education service quality improvement plan that includes these Montessori elements as part of the Strategic Planning process that is regularly monitored and updated.



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following glossary provides Montessori terms (in blue) and terms used in the National Quality Standards as of September 2020 (in green).

**Abstraction:** The act of drawing conclusions, conceptualising, generalising, synthesising, or imagining from experience in the concrete world.

**Additional needs:** The term used for children who require or will benefit from specific considerations or adaptations and who:

- are Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders
- are recent arrivals in Australia
- have a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- live in isolated geographic locations
- are experiencing difficult family circumstances or stress
- are at risk of abuse or neglect
- are experiencing language and communication difficulties
- have a diagnosed disability – physical, sensory, intellectual or autism spectrum disorder
- have a medical or health condition
- demonstrate challenging behaviours and behavioural or psychological disorders
- have developmental delays
- have learning difficulties
- are gifted or have special talents
- have other extra support needs.

It is important to note that:

- additional needs arise from different causes, and that causes require different responses
- any child may have additional needs from time to time.



**Approved learning framework:** A learning framework approved by the Ministerial Council (National Law).

**Assessment and planning cycle:** The assessment and planning cycle process includes: observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection. This ongoing process is used by educators, with support from the educational leader and in partnership with families and other professionals, to design programs that enhance and extend each child's learning and development.

**Authentic Practice:** Reflective practice and inquiry for Montessori educators that encompasses the principles, practice and learning outcomes that are core to the Montessori method, by questioning what they do day-to-day to ensure that the method continues to be based on their approved training and verified through direct experience and scientific observation.

**Authentic Practice Guide:** A reflective practice and inquiry practitioner who is trained in continuous quality improvement and can integrate the approved learning frameworks with the Montessori method of education to promote in-depth conversations and thinking in a sustainable manner to support excellent quality in their education service.

**Auto-education:** Children educate themselves through their senses by using didactic (teaching) materials, objects and activity.

**Child-centred:** Consideration of each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests as the foundation for the development of the educational program in an education service.

**Child directed:** Child directed play and learning occurs when children lead their learning through exploring, experimenting, investigating and being creative in ways that they initiate and control (Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, p. 4). Child directed learning promotes children's agency by enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.

**Children:** Refers to each baby, toddler, three-to-five year old and school age child and means children as individuals and as members of a group in the education and care setting, unless otherwise stated. It is inclusive of children from all social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and of their learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic locations (adapted from the Early Years Learning Framework, p. 45)

**Collaboration:** Working together cooperatively towards common goals.

Collaboration is achieved through information sharing, joint planning and the development of common understandings and objectives (Framework for School Age Care, p. 12).

**Collaborative learning:** Children engaging with other children and educators to collaboratively work with, learn from and help.

**Collaborative partnership:** A partnership between the educators, families, children and community/ies of an education and care service that is based on active communication, consultation and collaboration and aims to build respectful relationships, support families and promote children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.

**Community:** The local or wider social, cultural or geographical context shared with an education and care service.

**Community engagement:** Developing respectful and responsive connections with the immediate or wider community to build connections and relationships.

**Continuity of staff:** Retention of the staff of an education and care service over a period of time. Staffing arrangements that promote continuity of staff enable children to experience continuity in education and care which, in turn, enhances children's wellbeing, learning and development.

**Continuous improvement:** Ongoing improvement in the provision of quality education and care services. The National Quality Framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement through the National Quality Standard, national quality rating and assessment process, streamlined regulatory arrangements and the overseeing of these processes by ACECQA. Assessment and rating encourages continuous improvement by engaging the approved provider and the service in a process of self-assessment, as well as providing a detailed report of their performance against the National Quality Standard. Quality services regularly monitor and review their performance to guide planning and improve service quality. This creates a shared understanding of the principles that guide the service, and encourages continuous improvement in practice, policies and procedures. Quality services regularly update and maintain their Quality Improvement Plan as a dynamic document to guide progress towards improvement.

**Creative arts:** Dance, drama, media arts, music and visual arts (CAPA).

**Critical reflection:** Describes reflective practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 45).

**Curriculum:** In the early childhood setting, curriculum means 'all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development' (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 45; adapted from Te Whariki).

**Curriculum:** The Montessori National Curriculum is an approved alternative curriculum (ACARA 2011).

**Curriculum decision-making:** In the school age context, also referred to as program decision-making. Interactive decision-making by educators, children, families, and the broader community to develop meaningful curricula/programs to foster children's learning. Curriculum/program decision-making is guided by the approved learning frameworks' inter-related principles, practices and outcomes (Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework, p. 10). The approved learning frameworks support a model of curriculum/program decision-making as an ongoing cycle (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 9; Framework for School Age Care, p. 6)

**Dispositions:** Enduring habits of mind and actions, and tendencies to respond in characteristic ways to situations, for example, maintaining an optimistic outlook, being willing to persevere, approaching new experiences with confidence (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 45; Framework for School Age Care, p. 41)

**Education and care service:** Any service providing or intended to provide education and care on a regular basis to children under 13 years of age (National Law). See Section 5 of the National Law for services that are excluded from this definition.

**Education and care service premises:** In relation to a centre-based service, means each place at which an education and care service operates or is to operate. In relation to a family day care service, means:

- an office of the family day care service; or
- an approved family day care venue; or
- each part of a residence used to provide education and care to children as part of a family day care service or used to provide access to the part of the residence used to provide that education and care (National Law).

**Education Service:** Any service providing or intending to provide Montessori education services to children under 19 years of age. Includes Early Childhood services, Long Day Care services, Schools, Middle Schools, and Adolescent programmes.

**Educational leader:** The educational leader is an appropriately qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual designated in writing by the approved provider under regulation 118 to lead the development and implementation of educational programs in the service (National Regulations).

**Educational program:** A program that:

- is based on an approved learning framework
- is delivered in a manner that accords with the approved learning framework
- is based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child
- is designed to take into account the individual differences of each child  
(National Law)

**Educator:** An individual in Montessori education services who is accepted by National Law to provide education and care, but who also has the spiritual preparation to be a Montessori educator. This includes:

- An understanding of the developmental view of man
- Respect, awe and the need to protect the spiritual embryo of the child (their identity, values, and capabilities) from the barriers to their development
- A skill of observing and using their scientific knowledge to assess the next progression required in the Montessori method to meet the needs of the child
- The power of holding themselves from giving the answers to allow the child to make their own discoveries
- An understanding that the use of power or force (ie rewards or punishments) is not a positive motivating technique
- Preparing themselves for interactive relationships with children that rely on modelling rational classroom management techniques.

Note that in the adolescent programs educators tend to be called 'guides' (American term for adults that are 'side by side' facilitators).

**Evaluation of wellbeing and learning:** In the school age education and care context, gathering knowledge about children's wellbeing and learning by reflecting and engaging in processes of scanning, monitoring, gathering and analysing information about how children feel and what children know, can do and understand (Framework for School Age Care, p. 16). This forms part of the ongoing assessment and planning cycle.

**Excursion:** An outing organised by an education care service or family day care educator, but does not include an outing organised by an education and care service provided on a school site if the child or children leave the education and care service premises in the company of an educator and the child or children do not leave the school site (National Regulations).

**Fundamental needs of human beings:** Basic things on which human survival and civilisation depends. These include the five physical needs of clothing, nourishment, transportation, shelter and defence, and the four spiritual needs of religion or philosophy, culture, vanity or social acceptance and communication.

**Grace and Courtesy:** Scaffolding processes of ways to show respect, sensitivity, compassion, awareness, and rational (thoughtful) behaviour to name a few. This occurs on an ongoing basis when opportunities present themselves.

**Human Tendencies:** Basic motivating predispositions in people that guide behaviour. These include exploration, orientation, order, communication, repetition, exactness, activity, manipulation, abstraction and perfection.

**Inclusion:** Involves taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes. The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognised and valued. The intent is also to ensure that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 45; Framework for School Age Care, p. 41).

**Inclusive environment:** An indoor or outdoor education and care environment that supports every child's inclusion.

**Intentional teaching:** In the early childhood education and care context, involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. Intentional teaching is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing with traditions simply because things have 'always been done that way' (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 45).

**Intentionality:** In the school age education and care context, involves educators being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions (Framework for School Age Care, p. 41).

**Interactions:** Social engagement between children, educators, families and communities and play engagement between children, educators, families and communities and their environment. Interactions are an important part of the education and care curriculum/program.

**Intrinsic motivation:** Internally motivated by their own interest rather than being coerced by rewards e.g. stamps, stickers, play, lollies.

**Learning:** A natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 46). Life-long learning is acknowledged as self-motivated process that extends intellectual, vocational and personal horizons which begins in pre-school times, and is continued throughout life (Framework for School Age Care, p. 42).

**Learning outcome:** A skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in collaboration with children and families (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 46; Framework for School Age Care, p. 42).

**Liberty:** Freedom. Related to degree of choices in learning materials, movement and participation in learning activities and groups.

**Literacy:** In the early years context, a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, story-telling, visual arts, media and drama, as well as talking, reading and writing (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 46).

**Moral preparation:** The commitment by an educator to remove all obstacles that impede the development of intelligence and rationality in children.

**Numeracy:** Understandings about numbers, patterns, measurement, spatial awareness and data as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning and counting (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 46).

**Occupations:** For the adolescent community, Occupations are projects that are a 'need' or 'task' that is demanded by land, space or community. They provide key concepts and skills (key lessons) and are guided work (side by side). The work is considered "big work" because it has to be done in a social organisation.

**Parent:** In relation to a child, includes:

- a guardian of the child
- a person who has parental responsibility for the child under a decision or order of a court (National Law).

**Parent education:** A program or plan of ongoing communication with parents as partners to help them to understand the Montessori principles, practices and outcomes of the service, authentic Montessori practice, how they can contribute to the mission and vision of the education service and continuing quality improvement.

**Planes of Development:** Four stages of human growth that go from birth to maturity. These levels have distinct tasks and ideal conditions for learning and include First Plane: ages 0–6, Second Plane ages 6–12, Third Plane ages 12–18, and Fourth Plane ages 18–24.

**Peer teaching:** The act of working and learning together by students in an educational setting.

**Play based learning:** A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 46).

**Practical Life:** Materials, lessons, exercises, skills and activities involved in daily living and the care of the person, environment, plants, animals, and social relationships of day to day existence.

**Prepared Adult:** The adult prepares themselves to be an engineer of the environment, with purposeful work. It is not enough to teach. They need to give respect, be in awe of the capabilities of the children they teach. They must understand the planes of development and the characteristics of the children in their age group. They must also understand their own capabilities, biases and behaviours in order to model positively what they aim to develop in the children (knowledge, power of silence, observer, prepare themselves in the method).

**Prepared Environment:** The learning space (indoor or outdoor) is designed and maintained by a Montessorian for the purpose of educating others. It allows for freedom, movement, spiritual liberty, nutrition, air, gardens, terraces, wide windows, unencumbered space, washable furniture, beautiful, functional tools for practical life activities, culturally safe, for a feeling of being, belonging and becoming.

**Quality Improvement Plan (QIP):** A document created by an approved provider to help services self-assess their performance in delivering quality education and care and to plan future improvements. Regulatory authorities consider the service's QIP as part of the quality assessment and rating process. The QIP includes three components:

1. An assessment of the quality of service practices against the NQS and the National Regulations
2. Identified areas for improvement
3. A statement of the philosophy of the service (National Regulations).

**Reflective practice:** A form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning. As professionals, early childhood educators examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 13).

**Responsive teaching:** The educational practice of attending and responding to children's strengths, abilities, interests, ideas and play and a key pedagogical practice of the approved learning frameworks.

**Rights of the child:** Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Scaffold:** The educators' decisions and actions that build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning (Early Years Learning Framework p. 46).

**Self-construction:** The internal development of the child that organises the personality and develops qualities of moral order (serenity, discipline, and self-mastery) which leads to self-regulation.

**Self-regulation:** The ability to manage energy states, emotions, behaviour and attention: the ability to return to a balanced, calm and constant state of being. Self regulation is a key factor for mental health, wellbeing and learning (Kidsmatter).

**Sensitive Periods:** Specific times of intense interest in particular activities or for the learning of particular skills or concepts.

**Spiritual:** Refers to a range of human experiences including a sense of awe and wonder and an exploration of being and knowing.

**Spiritual Development:** The act of refining or bringing out the full potentialities and capacities of the human psyche, intelligence, emotion and will.

**Three-period lesson:** A systematic instructional procedure involving three distinct stages:

1. The association of a sense perception or experience with a term or concept
2. Recognition of the phenomenon corresponding to the term or concept
3. Memory or identification of the term or corresponding phenomenon to experience or perceive.

**Zone of Proximal Development:** Vygotsky's term for describing the difference between what a child can achieve/learn independently and what a child can achieve/learn with guidance and assistance of adults or collaboration with more experienced, capable children. Learning in the ZPD depends upon relationships.

**Work Cycle:** The curve of ordered work that the child does. The first period you see occupation choice easy, then a time when they make a change and seem to give a brief impression that they are tired. They then move into a second period with something new, more difficult, and they seem serene, calm and happy. The expertise is in the educator knowing when to offer more advanced work to follow the progress in the work.



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