

# ALIGNMENT COMPARISON

## HighScope PQA Quality Indicators and Montessori Philosophy

### I. Learning Environment PQA

**I.C** Locations of interest areas are carefully planned with enough space for many children to play at once

**I.E** Classroom areas are labeled with various print and types of labels

**I.F** Classroom materials are varied, open-ended, authentic, and multisensory

**I.G** Materials are plentiful with duplicate materials so several children can play with same material at the same time.

**I.I** Children's self-initiated work is displayed; adult displays reflect children's interests and experiences

### I. Learning Environment - MONTESSORI

**I.C** Great care is taken to create a beautiful, orderly, uncluttered, and compelling environment in which a young child can feel safe and capable. Materials are kept in interest areas and stay in the same dependable place for all to use and return. Children take these materials to a personal rug or table of their choice to use. There is adequate space in each interest area of the environment for many children to be working and talking together at once; however, a PQA validator may give a lower mark on **I.C** because he does not see many children "playing" at once in an area.

**I.E** To avoid visual clutter, Montessori environments do not include myriad labels for classroom areas. We do value a child being exposed to many types of print and such aids as labels in categorizing. This conceptual goal is developed by including many types of labels within many sorting and categorizing activities, helping the individual child to focus more clearly on this developmental labeling and identification task. A validator unfamiliar with this would not recognize the same quality indicator being achieved in a different manner.

**I.F** Montessori materials have been scientifically designed to teach particular developmental skills and concepts. Children are given a demonstration in careful handling of each material, and then are free to manipulate and discover. Materials are varied, multisensory, and authentic. However, they may not be considered open-ended. Montessori students in a full-day program are exposed to open-ended materials for a substantial portion of their day before or after their class session

**I.G** Both HighScope and Montessori share the goal of developing independence, trust, and self-control gradually in the young child. Materials are very plentiful in a Montessori environment, but we do not have duplicates of particular materials for philosophical reason. Except for tools such as crayons, scissors, markers and so on, Montessori environments have one each of a particular material. This allows a child to develop self-regulation, the ability to defer gratification and the ability to trust that the material will be returned ready for use. Multiple similar materials are available to build particular skills in varying degrees. For example, many types of pouring are always available—dry materials such as sand and rice, water, and for applied purposes such as pouring beverage at snack, table washing, and cleanup.

**I.I** Children’s artwork is displayed in Montessori environments and in hallways. Respect for the child in her decision to display or to take work home, and placement always at the child’s level is taken into account. A validator may believe she is not seeing enough displays because they are changed often and care is taken not to overwhelm the environment visually. More displays may be in the hallways.

## II. Daily Routine -PQA

**II.B** Parts of the day's routine include time to plan, to recall plans with an adult

**II.D** Children have time to make plans and to indicate their plans to an adult

**II.F** Daily time is set aside for children to recall/review their activities with an adult

**II.G** Children and adults always stay in the same small group for at least 2 months.

**II.H** Large group activities reflect and extend children's interests and development. Adults participate as children direct at each large group.

**II.J** The program has a set clean-up time with children making choices during clean-up.

**II.K** Snack procedures: A time is set aside for snack, children have choices about where they will have snack, adults sit and interact with children during snack.

**II.L** Adults join in children's outdoor play

## II. Daily Routine - MONTESSORI

There are differing practices between HighScope and Montessori to achieve similar developmental goals. These differences do not reflect lack of quality or inadequate knowledge of best practice, but different philosophies and techniques. In a Montessori environment the daily routine is comprised primarily of time for the child to make choices of interest, work freely with materials and to repeat an activity according to interest. The child chooses when to clean up as he feels he is finished, and when to have snack. Typically at the end of the day the group gathers together.

**II.B , II.D, II.F** Allowing an extended uninterrupted period for child-initiated, free-choice activity is paramount in a Montessori classroom schedule. This type of sustained focus is optimal for neurological development. Adult interruptions or numerous scheduled transitions diminish the quality of concentration. Kids make choices that focus their attention on activities which interest them. We know from research that often a child's choice of activity or manner of play may be swayed by desires to please an interested adult.

Reflecting on work or the activity is done throughout the class period with individual children as they accomplish a task or activity. At times the reflection is of the child's own volition. Individual activities reflect and extend children's

interest and development.

**II.G** The developmental goal of this practice is to create bonding and trust, to acquire closer knowledge of the child and to promote friendships. Montessori classrooms have a three year age mix, so small group identity occurs naturally. Also, most presentations of materials are given individually by a teacher at this level, so a teacher knows well each child's abilities and needs. A child stays with the same group of mixed age children (3-6) for three years.

**II.H** Less time is spent in large group activity in a primary Montessori community. Small group and most importantly individual activities satisfy a child's interests and needs.

**II.J** As children work individually or in a small group, they clean up and replace materials as they are finished.

**II.K** Children choose when to have snack at a dedicated snack table when they are hungry. They sit with friends.

**II.L** Sometimes an adult may join in children's play outdoors, but not every day; mostly adults respect the children's choice as how to play.

### III. Adult-Child Interaction - PQA

**III.F** Adults participate as partners in children’s play.

**III.H** Adults support and extend children’s ideas and learning during group time.

**III.I** Adults encourage children to use materials in individual ways.

**III.K** Adults encourage children to interact with and turn to one another for assistance throughout the day.

**III.M** Adults involve children in resolving conflicts.

### III. Adult-Child Interaction - MONTESSORI

A Montessori environment is child-centered, with the teacher acting as a guide or facilitator in a classroom that is structured to promote the children’s independence and success. Some of the teacher-child interactions described above would be considered intrusive in a Montessori setting. Close relationships are formed between teachers and their students, but they come about in a more natural way as children and adults move about the classroom and participate in individual and small group lessons.

**III.F** Adults are playful with children during large motor group activities or outside play, but respect the child’s choice of activity to promote focus and self-initiation. Montessori teachers are very conscious that playing as a “partner” might distract the child from her own choices to those that might please the adult.

**III.H** Montessori teachers do have an array of games and activities where a child’s ideas are extended in a group—follow-the-leader movement games, creating endings to a story, rhyming words to a group poem or song, etc. However, as less time is spent in large group activity and an extended free choice period is respected, a validator would not be able to rate a Montessori class at higher quality levels. A full-day child who attends after-class day care programs would experience much more teacher initiation and involvement in play. This would be a separate environment, however, for the validator to rate.

**III.I** Most Montessori materials are designed according to research-based principles (See explanation of **I.F** previously). There is a natural way that many materials should be used in a Montessori classroom. Adults model this for children when presenting them. However, many pieces of work can be combined and used creatively once the child discovers their initial relationship. There are also art materials and open-ended items such as tangrams, parquetry puzzles, and pattern blocks in Montessori classrooms.

**III.K** Montessori classrooms have an industrious feel—a “hum”—because children are working individually, in pairs, or in small groups, rather than in large play groups. However, when children are helping one another or an older child is helping youngsters, they are doing so at their developmental levels and supported for their cooperative efforts.

**III.M** Grace, courtesy, and conflict resolution are integral parts of a daily Montessori peace curriculum. Many Montessori classrooms have a peace corner where children are taught how to resolve problems. This mirrors the PQA process except that children learn to do this without the need for adult intervention.

## **IV. Curriculum Planning & Assessment - PQA**

**IV.E** Staff regularly use a child observation measure of proven reliability and validity to assess children’s developmental progress

## **IV. Curriculum Planning & Assessment - MONTESSORI**

Children in Montessori classrooms have individualized programs, and assessment in various forms takes place continually, rather than at prescribed times. Many Montessori materials have built-in control of error, through which the child is able to self-assess and make adjustments. Montessori teachers use observation as the primary means of assessing child progress with the materials as measurement tools.

**IV.E** Montessori teachers are trained to observe, reflect and adapt their teaching based on the needs of the child. This training is required to obtain a Montessori teaching certificate.

## V, VI, VII. Agency Items - PQA

**V.G** Staff members schedule home visits and seek input from parents about the program.

**VI.A** Program Director has the appropriate education

**VI.B** Instructional staff have the appropriate education, training

**VII.B** Ratios & teacher turnover; Program policies promote continuity of care by classroom adults

## V, VI, VII. Agency Items - MONTESSORI

**V.G** Most Montessori schools do not schedule home visits. The primary reason for this is the safety and security of staff. A further philosophical reason relates to the development of independence in a young child. Although it is important to connect with families in many of the ways listed in the PQA, we feel it is equally important to maintain the distinction between home and school for the child. Because of the independence fostered in the classroom, it may be the one place that the child considers to be truly his own, separate from his parents and siblings, and over which he has control. We have seen very young children who are proud of their ownership of their school environment become confused and distraught when their mental order of people in their appropriate and familiar places is rearranged by a visit.

**VI.A & VI.B** We are asking that the Montessori Early Childhood Credential be recognized for its true value.

**VII.B** Dr. Montessori's original writings advised large ratios of children to adults in the classroom in order to promote the gradual development of independence, self-reliance, and problem solving. There should be enough adult supervision to keep the children safe and feeling secure and to meet physical needs, but not so many that children have too many opportunities to cling, rely on adults to handle challenges and problem solving, or to develop "learned helplessness." Our programs follow licensing ratios because they must, but in order to attain the highest score in the PQA and the star rating system, ratios are to be smaller than what licensing requires, in direct conflict with Montessori philosophy.