

United Montessori Schools of Indiana

Validation Project Handbook



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**UMSI’s Mission**

With integrity, the United Montessori Schools of Indiana will support, unify and advocate for the advancement of Montessori education.

**The Validation Project Overview**

The goal of the UMSI Validation Project is to give participating schools the opportunity to demonstrate that they implement the essential standards[[1]](#footnote-1) of a Montessori school. These UMSI threshold standards were determined by the UMSI Validation Project Committee representing Montessori educators across the state and were approved by the Board of Directors in April 2016.

There is no trademark or copyright protection on the use of the name “Montessori” in the public domain. Any school or program may call itself Montessori but actually be lacking in any of the 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 the essentials necessary for a program to meet, or exceed, a basic level of quality.

**IN DOE and FSSA** 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” in the state has meaning. Validated schools present a threshold level of quality that will assure families and the state agencies that they can be trusted to provide an authentic Montessori education.

**Standards for Validation**

Each classroom must have the following to be validated as a Montessori school by the United Montessori Schools of Indiana.

1. A philosophical approach that is consistent with the educational methods and areas of instruction as recommended by the scientific research of Dr. Maria Montessori.

2. A 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-aged group of students based on the Montessori Planes of Development, and the developmental readiness of each child in every classroom and level.

4. A Montessori curriculum, and instructional material requirements, to implement the program for each class and age grouping taught.

5. A schedule that provides an uninterrupted work period of 2-3 hours (with 3 hours being the ideal).

6. A student/teacher ratio and group size consistent with the Montessori system of education (and as recommended by AMI, AMS, and IMC) for each class and age grouping taught. \*

7. A staff member with a Montessori credential who contributes to decision making on administrative issues as they relate to Montessori philosophy, pedagogy and curriculum.

8. Meet all federal, state and local regulatory and statutory requirements for the health and safety of the students.

\* A school licensed by FSSA may be required to have group size and ratios in compliance of rules and regulations.

**UMSI Validation Project Policies**

1. All Montessori schools in Indiana are eligible to participate in the project. The project will initially include Montessori Infant/Toddler, Primary Early Childhood, and Elementary I and II classrooms. Expansion to include Montessori secondary programs will follow.

2. Both private and public Montessori schools may participate.

3. The fee for validation is $100.00 per classroom level. Additional classroom levels are discounted at $50.00. The school is responsible for reimbursement to 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 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 a minimum of three (3) years of classroom experience at the level of classroom they are observing. They are not observing to judge, assess quality, or consult with school staff.

6. Verifier Team On-Site Visits are strictly to verify that the information and documentation provided in the School Questionnaire is accurate.

7. A school’s validation is in effect for five (5) years. Each validated school will be required to complete an annual checklist to maintain validation status. The school may maintain its validation without an additional on-site visit unless there are substantial changes in documentation such as a new director, a change in building, or changes to the structure of the program (additional levels or classroom) or standing with the IN Department of Education or FSSA.

8. A school must participate in the full process every 5 years for renewal of its validation.

**Process for School Participation**

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

1. Complete the UMSI 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 School Questionnaire within one (1) week of receipt.

3. The school will complete the School Questionnaire and return it to UMSI with all required supporting documentation including copies of lead teacher’s Montessori credentials, classroom rosters, classroom daily schedules, and materials lists.

4. The Project Coordinator will review all information received and if complete, will send to the Verifier team for review. If the School Questionnaire 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 prior to the onsite visit.

5. The Project Coordinator will contact the school and the verifier team to schedule an on-site visit date to occur within four (4) 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 School Questionnaire is accurate and that the classroom philosophy and curriculum implementation are consistent with UMSI Validation Project Standards.

7. The Verifier Team will submit its report to the Project Coordinator within two weeks of its on-site visit.

8. The report and recommendation will be reviewed by the Approval Committee within three weeks (3) for final approval.

9. The school will be notified of its validation status and will be sent a Certificate of UMSI Validation by the Project Coordinator.

Validation Project Steps

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| Steps | Time Frame | Validation Team Member |
| 1. Submit application & fee |  | Project Coordinator |
| 2. School questionnaire & documentation | Within 1 week of application | Project Coordinator |
| 3. On Site Visit | Within 4 weeks of questionnaire | Verifier Team |
| 4. Verifier Team Report | Within 2 weeks of visit | Project Coordinator Team |
| 5. Approval by Approval Team | Within 3 weeks of report | Approval Team |
| 6. Certificate of Validation | Within 2 weeks of approval | 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 School Questionnaire to the school within 1 week of receipt of the application.
* Verify that the application fee has been received by UMSI through PayPal or other payment method.
* Review the completed School Questionnaire and supporting documentation. If any piece is missing, or the project standards are not met, the coordinator will contact the school to communicate needs and/or status.
* If the School Questionnaire is 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 verifier 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 will send a record of mileage and a meal incurred for completion of the visit to the school director. The school director will provide reimbursement within 2 weeks of receipt of the record.
* The coordinator will send a Certificate of Validation to the school.

**Verification Teams:** The Verifier Teams are a minimum of two Montessori educators with experience at the classroom level they are observing. These teams review the School Questionnaire 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:

1. Reviewing the School Questionnaire prior to the on-site visit to determine that the school meets the Validation Project Standards.

3. Verify that all information provided by the school is accurate by observing the classroom, and reviewing all written documentation during an approximately 1-4-hour visit to the school. Both members of the team must observe each classroom being validated and both must review the documentation.

4. Within 2 weeks, submit their completed Report and Recommendation to the Project Coordinator.

5. Within 2 weeks, submit any reimbursement records for mileage and a meal to the School Director.

**Approval Committee:** This committee of 3 Montessori educators and/or administrators of schools make the final decision of Validation approval for a school. This committee oversees compliance with all requirements of a Validating Organization. Their responsibilities include:

1. Reviewing the Verifier Team’s Report and Recommendations.

2. Determining a school’s Validation status and giving final approval for the Certificate of Validation.

3. Overseeing all processes, records, and documentation of the UMSI Validation Project.

**Validation Peer Coach:** A school wishing to become validated but not yet meeting all essential components, may ask to have a peer coach. As collaborators, the school director and the peer coach can design a Validation Plan for the school. This plan will outline how the school may meet all essential standards.

A Validation Peer Coach is a Montessori educator with a minimum of 3 years of experience at the level being validated. The Coach is also familiar with the UMSI Validation Project. The Coach will work with the school director and/or the level teachers to guide the school in meeting the essential standards. The Coach is not a consultant to the school regarding the operation, functioning, or quality of the school or its programs.

**Validation Project Levels**

**Accredited Montessori Schools**: Montessori schools which are accredited, or recognized, by a national Montessori organization (AMI, AMS, IMC, MEPI) can apply for an automatic Certificate of Validation (with no fee) by submitting a copy of their accreditation or recognition with their application.

**Validated Montessori Schools**: Montessori schools which successfully complete the UMSI Validation Project will receive a Certificate of Validation and will receive all benefits of validation.

**Mentored Montessori Schools**: Montessori schools which would like to complete the UMSI Validation Project but which do not yet meet all criteria for validation may choose to work with the Validation Peer Coach. The school will be assigned a coach and together they will determine a Validation Action Plan with a time frame for preparing the school to complete the Validation Project.

1. The Montessori Public Policy Initiative: a collaborative between AMI-USA and AMS. Montessori Essentials. November,2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)