



# How to identify authentic Montessori: Infant

All Montessori schools are not created equal. Montessori isn't a trademarked name, nor is Montessori a franchised operation. Each school interprets Montessori differently: some schools invest in everything needed to deliver a high-quality, authentic Montessori experience, while others may combine elements of Montessori with other approaches, or may make quality trade-offs to offer programs at a tuition that appeals to a broader group of families.

At Little Elephant Montessori, we pride ourselves in offering a high-quality, authentic Montessori environment and a warm, thoughtful community experience for parents and children alike. As you research different school options, here is a quick cheat-sheet that will allow you to evaluate how authentic and high-quality the Montessori approach is at different schools you may consider.

| Montessori concepts and principles   | LEMA                     | Others                   |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>A beautiful, purposefully-prepared environment</b>  |                          |                          |
| • <b>Wooden furniture</b> with low, open shelves, arranged logically around the room, with soft floor surfaces for crawlers  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • <b>Natural, subdued shades</b> for floors and walls, with art and photographs displayed at infant's height; no visual clutter  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • <b>Access to nature</b> —e.g., real grass on playgrounds, other baby-safe plants and trees to look at, strollers for walks around the school or neighborhood; outside time built into the rhythm of the day                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • <b>Plenty of space</b> for babies to practice walking, crawling, and scooting around   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Schedule &amp; class structure</b>  |                          |                          |
| • <b>A child-led schedule</b> of eating, doing activities, and sleeping, individualized to a growing baby's needs (rather than structured around adult convenience)  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • <b>A mix of ages</b> —from 2- to 3-month-old babies, to 14- to 20-month-old emerging toddlers, so young infants can watch older ones, and enough attention is available for each child   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Background of the adults &amp; adult/child interactions</b>   |                          |                          |
| • <b>High-quality Montessori training</b> for lead teacher (accredited AMI or AMS classes, vs. in-house training or self-study/short online courses)   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • <b>Respectful, deliberate adult-child interactions:</b> calm, soft voices; full-sentence explanations rather than short commands; adult squatting or sitting at infant's level with eye contact when speaking with individual children | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • <b>Adults communicating proactively</b> with infants before anything is done to them (e.g., an adult tells the baby he will be picked up before it happens or asks for permission before cleaning the baby's nose)                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • <b>Babies as active participants</b> , not passive recipients, of adult actions (holding their diaper, pulling their clothes up, holding their cups, practicing using utensils...)   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

