



SOUTH CAROLINA
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SAFE-T Guidance Document for Montessori

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Purpose

The purpose of this *SAFE-T Guidance Document for Montessori* is to facilitate the valid evaluations of teachers in Montessori classrooms. This document is intended to help clarify expectations for SAFE-T evaluators and Montessori teachers. This document also may be useful in assisting and developing novice Montessori teachers and teacher candidates.

About Montessori

Montessori is a method of education in which students construct their knowledge within a purposefully designed environment that supports the development of executive functions (i.e., the cognitive processes needed to “get things done”) and self-regulation. Some of the more salient features of the Montessori method include the following:

- The Montessori class consists of children of different age levels.
- Montessori teachers most often interact with the students on a one-on-one basis. Small group instruction is sometimes used, with whole class instruction occurring least often.
- Montessori “lessons” are differentiated. Lesson selection and presentation is based on each individual student rather than on the class as a whole.
- Learning is self-directed, self-paced, and hands-on.
- Montessori teachers are less directive in their instruction than are most traditional classroom teachers. In the Montessori method, the student drives the instruction while the teacher assumes the role of observer, guide, and facilitator.
- The Montessori environment is carefully structured.
- Montessori instructional materials are specifically designed to be purposeful and self-correcting.
- The most frequently used form of student assessment is structured observation.

Connecting ADEPT and Montessori

The ADEPT Performance Standards (APSs) for Classroom-Based Teachers apply to Montessori teachers. Therefore, the Summative ADEPT Formal Evaluation of Classroom-Based Teachers (SAFE-T) process is the appropriate formal evaluation model for Montessori teachers. However, because the Montessori method is based on a distinctive philosophy, SAFE-T evaluators must be aware of the important characteristics that distinguish the Montessori method from more traditional classroom instruction. More importantly, SAFE-T evaluators must take these factors into consideration when assessing the performance of Montessori teachers.

SAFE-T Evaluation Teams for Montessori Teachers

The SAFE-T team for a Montessori teacher must include at least one certified SAFE-T evaluator who is knowledgeable about the Montessori method. All other evaluation team requirements are the same as those described in the *SAFE-T Guide for Teachers and Evaluators*.

Montessori Considerations for Domain 1: Planning

- For Montessori teachers, a **unit** is defined as *a sequential set of lessons presented over a specified period of time* [Key elements 1.C, 2.A–C, 3.A–C].
- An important component of the Montessori planning process for students in the *elementary grades* involves individual **student work plans** [Key elements 2.A–C].
- Planning for students in the *primary grades* (3-K through 5-K) is based on the teacher's individual student records that indicate when lessons have been introduced, practiced, and mastered [Key elements 2.A–C].
- The teacher adjusts plans, as needed, based on daily observations of individual students [Key element 2.C].

Montessori Considerations for Domain 2: Instruction

- The students are working at the appropriate level [Key element 4.A].
- The teacher provides clear directions [Key element 4.A].
- The students are engaged, focused, and concentrating on their work [Key element 4.B].
- The majority of students are engaged in their lessons and/or working with Montessori materials [Key element 4.C].
- The students ask for help when they need it [Key element 4.C].

- The teacher uses a facilitative, less directive, approach to instruction [Key element 5.A].
- Teaching strategies frequently include discovery learning in order to advance students' thinking and problem solving skills [Key element 5.A].
- The teacher presents lessons and demonstrates materials clearly and, typically, at the student's eye-level [Key element 5.B].
- There is evidence that the students are experiencing success in mastering the standards [Key element 5.C].
- The teacher asks questions and checks student work [Key element 7.A].
- The teacher observes the students, takes notes, and keeps records [Key element 7.B].
- Rather than "correcting" a student's errors, the teacher typically re-teaches the lesson [Key element 7.C].

Montessori Considerations for Domain 3: Environment

- The room is arranged so that areas of the curriculum are clearly defined and individual work spaces are provided [Key element 8.A].
- The room is inviting, orderly, and uncluttered [Key element 8.A].
- The teacher exhibits a respectful, calm demeanor [Key element 8.B].
- Students work well together and are respectful of one another [Key element 8.B].
- The classroom is characterized by an appropriate balance of freedom and structure [Key Element 8.C].
- Background music is usually playing. The noise level is low, but there is an ever-present learning buzz [Key element 8.C].
- The teacher is aware of what is going on in the entire room, even when directly engaged with an individual student or small groups of students [Key element 9.A].
- The teacher is not overly controlling. The teacher stands back and allows students to work through conflicts, intervening only when necessary [Key element 9.A].
- Students follow the established procedures for getting help; having work checked; obtaining, handling, and returning materials; and the like [Key element 9.B].
- Materials are logically sequenced, neatly displayed, complete, in good repair, and accessible to the students (Key element 9.B).
- The room is arranged to facilitate smooth traffic flow and transitions [Key element 9.C].

Montessori Considerations for Domain 4: Professionalism

- No special considerations.