

# Montessori Parent guide

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12–18 years

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Choosing Montessori Education for your Adolescent

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# What do you need to know to choose a Montessori education for your adolescent/rangatahi?

*Choosing an education for your approaching adolescent is one of the most important decisions you may make as a parent. At this time in your adolescent's life it is important for them to be included in the decision. They usually have strong preferences and ideas about what will suit them and what will not. While the reasons for their preferences may be different from your own, they usually know if the school will be right for them or not.*

Your family/whānau may have been immersed in Montessori education from a very young age, and it's time to investigate the possibility of taking that further, or this might be your first experience. Either way, the choices that your family/whānau makes now will have a big impact on your adolescent's development during this time.

Montessori is an approach to education. There is diversity within the Montessori community worldwide and each school is unique, reflecting its interpretation and practice of Montessori philosophy, Montessori training of kaiako (teacher/s), families/whānau, the community, facilities, resources available and the vision of the school.

In the rangatahi (adolescent) community there are different schools of thought about how to interpret Montessori's writing in this area, which weren't as comprehensive as in other areas. Everything is an attempt to bring her vision into reality. There are different ways this can happen.

What should you be looking for when you are considering a Montessori high school education for your approaching adolescent? Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand has produced this *Parent Guide* to help you better understand Montessori high school education and to find answers to your questions about Montessori.

# Using this Parent Guide

*This Parent Guide may help you answer the question: Can a Montessori adolescent education assist us to co-create a profound emotional, spiritual, physical and academic base for my/our child's future?*

This Parent Guide is set out in four sections:

## Vision and Leadership

## The Learning Environment

## The Kaiako (teacher)

## The Community

In each section we have identified the following:



**Essential Elements** are provided to help you better understand what Montessori can offer your child. These elements are aligned to the *Montessori Journey to Excellence Te Ara Ki Huhuatanga (MJ2Ex): Essential Elements (see Appendix)*, a document schools and kaiako are able to use as a tool for reflection.



**What it looks like** examples are given of how each Essential Element may 'look' in practice.



**Questions to ask staff** some questions that you could ask the staff are provided.



**Questions to ask yourself** by visiting a Montessori high school you can answer some of your own questions. These questions, while directed at the parents, can work just as well for answering rangatahi questions.

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand recommends visiting a Montessori adolescent community if possible. Sometimes it is not possible, but there may be other ways your family/whānau can view what happens as part of the students' experience. If you, as the parent, can observe directly, make some time to sit and quietly observe. Take notes, and, if possible, visit more than once so you can deepen your understanding of what the Montessori community at this level has to offer your adolescent. You could also visit some state school programmes at the same level to understand how Montessori rangatahi communities offer a different experience for students at this level. If it is offered, your adolescent should also have the opportunity to observe or preferably, participate in the programme so that they can determine if it is going to work for them. It is likely that a student will be invited to join in the work for the period of their visit. Preferably this should be over a prolonged period of time, a few days or a week so they get an idea of how the programme works.

The upper limit on the ideal size for a Montessori community is around fifty 12–15 year olds and the same or possibly slightly more 15–18 year olds. The size of the groups allow for a community where everyone is seen and recognises each other, where everyone has the chance to contribute, where no-one can hide, and where the timetable can remain somewhat flexible to respond to changing needs. The number means rangatahi have to take responsibility for their community and their work. It also means that kaiako and rangatahi know all members of their community, and because of the small size, learn to appreciate, respect, and work with different personalities and learning styles. Finally, in each three year cycle, all of the adolescents become leaders and role models, who guide their peers, just as they were guided in their earlier years – *Ako* (see Appendix).

While the groups are split in various ways for their work, the community will have times it works as a whole for certain times – such as community work, community meetings, presentations, and so on.

In Aotearoa there are currently two forms of Adolescent/High School Programmes available.

1. There are two independent secondary school programmes offering Montessori education to students 11–18.
2. There is one state integrated school offering an adolescent programme for 12–15 year olds and a college programme for 15–18 year olds. This school has students from 3 to 18 years of age.

Please note, Montessori used the age groups of 12–18 years. Some ākonga (students) enter the programme slightly before 12 years depending on their birthdays and developmental readiness. Some programmes might choose to accept younger students. This Guide will refer to the age groupings of 12–18 years or 12–15 years and 15–18 years as being in line with Dr. Montessori's writings.





# Vision and Leadership

*The leadership vision and advocacy within Montessori communities is key to ensuring that the quality of Montessori implementation is upheld in all Governance and Management decisions. Leadership encompasses boards, committees, Parent Trusts, owners, management and Lead Kaiako.*

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## Essential Element

*The school/community has a lived vision on how to be an effective Montessori school.*

## What this results in

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- There is a foundation document that explicitly explains the importance of Montessori to the community and the steps it takes to ensure it remains so. (You will probably see this on the school website).
- The school makes both short and long term decisions guided by Montessori philosophy and education informed decisions.
- The school community has a solid reputation for being consistently Montessori.

## Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What might a response be when someone suggests including another approach?
- Are there places where the basic principles are found, how are these accessed and is this common knowledge?
- What processes are there to decide what to focus on?
- To what extent do Montessori experts that come to review the school help set goals?



### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Which are the main priorities that we can relate to, and do they fit with our family/whānau priorities?
  - Do we think our rangatahi will thrive in this kind of school?
  - Why are we thinking of making this change?
  - Reflect on your long-goal of education. Does a Montessori approach support that goal?
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## Essential Element

*Leadership ensures Montessori kaiako working in the classroom with rangatahi are Montessori trained.*

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### What this results in

- Kaiako working with rangatahi are in training or have completed a Montessori Adolescent teacher training programme that includes face to face delivery and know how to integrate the environment and the community, while responding to each adolescent where they are.
- The community works efficiently, rangatahi are able to choose, they are engaged, and learning opportunities are available.
- Any untrained kaiako are supported directly by trained teachers to ensure that their work is in line with the philosophy of the school.
- Training is encouraged and supported by the school.
- Beyond training, the Montessori teacher's role is to continue the research of Montessori education.



### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What processes are there for staff development, recruitment and Montessori training?
- What process ensures staff are staying true to Montessori values?
- How many of your staff hold a Montessori Adolescent teacher training?



### Questions you could ask yourselves

- What is different about how the teachers interact with rangatahi than we were expecting?
- How does Montessori training inform what the teachers do with each group they work with, and how they are with rangatahi?

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## Essential Element

*There is an avenue for family/whānau to learn about the philosophy and functioning of the school.*

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### What this results in

- There are regular opportunities for family/whānau to engage with what your rangatahi is experiencing.
- Current families/whānau are knowledgeable about how rangatahi are experiencing their education.
- There are family/whānau for prospective family/whānau to talk to who are knowledgeable about the school's ethos.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What kind of opportunities are there for us to learn more about what happens in the programme if our adolescent comes here?
- Is there a family/whānau with someone our child's age that we could talk with about their experience of the school and how it works?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Are we committed to learning more about this style of education?
- Does this sound like a good fit with our family/whānau values?



# The Learning Environment

*The Montessori environment provides the potential to discover and learn about any, and everything. It consists of the physical space (both indoors and out), the greater environment – suburb, city and beyond through internet connections, tools and equipment selected by rangatahi for activities, stories told, ideas discussed, the adults and the adolescents. Rangatahi can expand their interests through choices, curiosities and challenges. The environment also embodies the ambience found within the culture and interactions of the community members.*

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## Essential Element

*The Montessori Adolescent programme and high school communities are characterised by multi-aged groupings of three or more years.*

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## What this results in

- In the 12–15 years and where possible in the 15–18 years programme, rangatahi are members of communities that are integrated groups of three-year age spans.
- Older rangatahi help younger students and younger students have role models to follow.
- Rangatahi step in to help in social or academic situations, reinforcing their own knowledge in the process.

## Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How do the age groupings support adolescent learning in the programme and how is education experienced across several ages?

## Questions you could ask yourselves

- What benefit do we think this kind of grouping will have for us?

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## Essential Element

*The Montessori adolescent environment is beautiful and the decor should encourage calm. There is order evident in the layout and there are processes to return it to order regularly. It is usually made of multipurpose spaces that encourage freedom of movement, choice, and concentration. High trust is a major component of the Montessori adolescent environment as rangatahi develop their own independence and agency.*

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### What this results in

- An environment that looks quite different from a traditional high school programme.
- There are often large open areas that can be used for several purposes as well as withdrawal rooms/spaces for smaller group work or rangatahi to be able to work alone if needed.
- The furniture tends to be moveable and multipurpose and can be used to help create and define spaces.
- There will be shelves with appropriate and supporting resources which are available to students as needed.
- Views of and access to the outdoors will be easy and frequent.
- The outdoors and wider community is part of the working space and is used frequently independently of adults.
- Adolescents could have access to an area for gardening, a kitchen, a maker's space (workshop) and wet spaces for messy work such as art and science. Senior rangatahi could have access to specialist spaces such as science, art, and music labs.
- Rangatahi take ownership of cleaning and restoring their environment at the end of each day.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- Is this an ideal space – are you still developing it? If you are still working on it, what might be added/changed?
- What kind of access do rangatahi have to resources?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- How does this environment feel to us as a place to work?
- Can we see adolescents engaged in activities and working in a number of areas?
- Can this school cater for our adolescent's particular needs and interests?

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## Essential Element

*There are materials and resources for rangatahi to access as needed. As much as possible, materials are made of natural components.*

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### What this results in

- A beautiful, spacious environment that encourages engagement.
- Natural materials encourage handling and students can see that beauty is important in everyday life. They encourage rangatahi to take notice of the resources they use, and those that they discard. The use of plastic is kept to a minimum.
- There are materials available to rangatahi to access in their own time, without needing to go to a teacher.
- When the students are finished working with a particular resource, they return it to its proper place ready for the next person to use.
- There are materials and equipment approaching the professional standard and quality to allow for adult-like work.
- Computers, devices and other information technology are integrated as contemporary learning tools.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What is the basis for purchasing resources in the school?
- What happens when materials are broken, misused, or not put away?

### Questions you could ask yourself

- Can we see natural materials in the environment?
- Are rangatahi handling materials well – does it look as though they are looked after?
- Is the environment relatively well ordered?
- What do the shelves look like?
- Is sustainability evident in the classroom environment?

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## Essential Element

*The design of the environment fosters independent learning, engaged learners, variety, movement, and socialisation.*

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### What this results in

- Most rangatahi are able to make choices about work, whether kaiako are near or not.
- Students have long uninterrupted periods of time in which to work on areas of need or interest.
- They can use multiple ways to gain answers to questions they might have – peers, text, library, internet, local knowledge, experts, collaborators beyond the school and adults, leading to greater problem solving instead of relying on kaiako for every answer.
- Rangatahi move their bodies as they need, having a snack if they are hungry, accessing resources to aid their learning, and when not in lessons, taking a break if needed.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How does the structure of the day allow the student to meet their needs?
- How does that aid their engagement and choices in learning?
- How do you make sure rangatahi have the opportunity to be productive learners throughout the day?

### Questions you could ask yourself

- Are the students peaceful, engaged, and interacting positively with each other?
- Are interactions with visitors appropriate, courteous and prosocial?
- Are rangatahi moving freely about the room and is that movement for the most part purposeful?

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## Essential Element

*The environment, including the curriculum and schedule, allows the human tendencies, needs and characteristics of rangatahi in this plane of development to be met.*

*(See Appendix for explanation of terms)*

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## What this results in

- Each student is learning what they need as they need to.
- Different abilities and learning preferences are catered for.
- The Programme schedule and layout allow for learning in the following areas:
  - Self-expression (the arts, poetry, language, PE).
  - Psychic development – (mathematics, language and moral development).
  - Preparation for adult life (The study of earth and living things, the study of human progress and the build-up of civilisation, the study of the history of humanity).
- There should be practical considerations of:
  - An aspect of production and exchange.
  - There is often an opportunity to grow and take care of living things – plants and animals.
  - An aspect of living together – camps, shared meals prepared on site, event organisation for own and wider community etc.
  - Freedom to move about the environment and opportunity to choose their work.

## Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How do we know students are learning what they need to learn as an Aotearoa New Zealand rangatahi?
- How do you cater for particular interests in this school?
- How does freedom work at this level?
- What happens when students don't choose to work?

## Questions you could ask yourselves

- Does the freedom and choice in this environment seem like it would work?
- How might special interests be encouraged at this school?

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## Essential Element

*Rangatahi are not limited to the direct campus and kaiako for their learning. Experts visit, adolescents visit experts and frequent camps or experiences of living together are part of the programme.*

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### What this results in

- Rangatahi frequently go out in small groups to extend their learning.
- Short (3–5 day) and longer (7–12 day) camps may be a regular feature of the programme.
- Adolescents get to know their wider environment and know how they can contribute to it.
- Service can be a function of day trips and camps, and rangatahi gain confidence through their contribution outside of school.
- Rangatahi maintain and increase their functional independence in self care, environment care and maintenance of social connections.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How do programmes make use of wider resources in the community e.g. people and places?
- What is the process for rangatahi moving out of the school?
- How often do adolescents move outside the school and how often do others come in?
- Why is this so important?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Are we comfortable with this level of movement outside a traditional classroom?
- What are the benefits we can see that would result from this?
- Do we know of resources/experiences that might benefit the programme?

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## Essential Element

*Rangatahi take part in ensuring the environment meets their needs.*

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### What this results in

- Adolescents have ownership of their environment and are confident participants in it.
- Adolescents take daily part in ensuring their environment is kept clean and tidy and ready for the next day.
- Rangatahi take responsibility for the resources in their environment, replacing tools they use back to where they go in good order.
- Adolescents treat each other and kaiako with respect, accepting and respecting each other.
- The atmosphere is inclusive of all regardless of gender, orientation, ethnicity, abilities, politics, world views and health practices.
- Rangatahi have regular, student run and organised meetings to discuss concerns and offer solutions.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What kind of issues are brought up in community meetings?
- What do you do if an issue keeps being brought up?
- Why do the students run the meetings?
- What happens if the teachers don't like what rangatahi are doing?
- What do you do if some rangatahi aren't as accepted as others?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Does this programme feel inclusive of all regardless of gender, orientation, ethnicity, etc?
- Do all students seem welcome and accepted?
- Does everyone seem to have someone to work with?
- Would my adolescent feel welcome here?

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## Essential Element

*New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa is integrated with the Montessori Curriculum so that rangatahi cover the work they need to, to be ready for young adult life.*

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### What this results in

- There is a clear plan that outlines how the NZC is planned and delivered to rangatahi.
- The curriculum is delivered in line with Montessori principles. It does not look like traditional high school delivery.
- Rangatahi are introduced to the concepts in the NZC in an integrated manner rather than as individual subjects.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How do you ensure the state curriculum is supported in private schools and covered in state schools?
- What kind of planning tools do kaiako use?
- What part do adolescents play in the planning process?
- How do you monitor an adolescent's achievement, and how do we know this is happening?
- What happens if there are gaps, or rangatahi miss some lessons because they are away?
- How do you know and then inform parents/whānau that rangatahi are achieving at age, development and interest appropriate levels?
- What happens if they are not?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Do we think this kind of programme supports rangatahi to thrive?
- Are rangatahi learning at the appropriate levels – how can we tell?

# The Trained Kaiako

*Kaiako are an active part of the Montessori triangle (kaiako-rangatahi-prepared environment). The adult (called teacher, kaiako, guide or directress/director) is the 'dynamic link' between rangatahi and the prepared environment. To be an effective link and to be able to prepare the environment well, the adult must be Montessori trained, able to observe thoughtfully, reflect deeply, and be committed to the challenging role of kaiako.*

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## Essential Element

*The majority of kaiako in the classroom have the appropriate Montessori qualification for the age group.*

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## What this results in

- Kaiako can support rangatahi in the way that is needed in this important stage of development.
- There is individual and group work happening as students are met where they are and extended from there.
- Teachers use Montessori strategies (See Appendix) to ensure they are working with rangatahi e.g. observation, individual conferences, short lessons and follow up, freedom to choose, responsibility and accountability.

## Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- Where were you/your teachers trained?
- How many kaiako are trained?
- How is it different from state teacher training?
- What do you do differently because of your training?



### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Does the teacher speak knowledgeable and confidently about Montessori philosophy and practice and can kaiako answer questions clearly?
  - Is the teacher implementing Montessori in a way which is consistent with these guidelines?
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## Essential Element

*The 12–15 year kaiako can be a generalist and can be NZ primary or secondary trained as well as Montessori 12–18 years trained.*

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### What this results in

- Learning is flexible and integrated, and rangatahi feel that knowledge is relevant and connected, rather than taught separately.
- Students generally know why they are learning concepts such as formulas.
- Engaged rangatahi who are active in the learning process.
- Learning looks vastly different than what you would find in a typical high school.
- The full-time adolescent kaiako works across subject areas, in the humanities and sciences.
- Teachers often bring their interests and hobbies into the community.
- Students have a broad general knowledge to take into the senior high school years (Years 11–13).



### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How are the teachers spread across the curriculum?
- When and how do you use specialist knowledge?
- What kind of support do kaiako have to ensure they have sufficient subject knowledge?
- How many generalists do you have on staff?



### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Will we be happy with not necessarily having specialists at this early adolescent level?
- What would be the advantages of not having them?

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## Essential Element

*The 15–18 year kaiako have specialist areas that allow them to take rangatahi further in particular areas.*

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### What this results in

- As adolescents need more specialised knowledge there are kaiako to support them.
- These areas are still integrated where possible.
- Rangatahi learn academic knowledge in context and in conjunction with other subjects but are taken further by those with multiple specialised knowledge.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- Which specialist subjects are offered here?
- What is still integrated?
- How can rangatahi explore and learn in areas where you do not have specialists?
- How many rangatahi graduate and go on to study or work in their areas of interest? Do you have examples?
- Is it possible to talk to ex-students or family/whānau about their experiences?
- What happens to the non-academic adolescents?

### Questions you could ask yourself

- Will their special interests be catered for in this school?
- Do we think our adolescent will succeed at this school?

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## Essential Element

*The overall ratio of teachers is often around 1–10/12. This includes part time and full-time staff. It does not necessarily mean all groups have ten to twelve students. (See Appendix).*

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### What this results in

- There are small groups of rangatahi working in different parts of the school, and kaiako are there to teach or support them.
- Direct instruction or lessons are generally in small groups.
- Students take active part in their lessons; their questions are responded to and they have a chance to offer their opinion.
- Rangatahi are engaged, and the teacher can ensure all students in their group are involved.
- Smaller groups are possible for the more hands-on learning in the occupations (sciences, mathematics, technology etc).
- Different kinds of learning activities are possible because of the small groups.
- At times, the rest of the group will be carrying on their own work and kaiako will be working one on one.
- There are possibilities for purposeful work and individual contribution.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What is the size of your groups for different kinds of subjects?
- How long are lessons?
- What happens after the lessons?
- Do kaiako give homework and when do they mark it and give feedback?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Will their special interests be catered for?
- Will they be able to go on to higher studies if that is their wish?
- Does this programme prepare their students for the next stage of life?

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## Essential Element

*Each rangatahi is in an advisory group where preferably the same teacher follows their learning through their time in that part of the programme (See Appendix).*

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### What this results in

- Preferably there is one advisory teacher who follows each adolescent through all the different aspects of the programme. If this doesn't happen, there should be a thorough system that does the same thing.
- The advisory kaiako is the family's/whānau first point of call, with the advisory teacher and family's/whānau relationship developing over the three years the student is in the community or programme.
- Rangatahi have someone to go to with anything that is worrying them.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- When and how often does the advisory teacher meet with students?
- What happens if there is an issue – either learning or in social interactions?
- What if my adolescent does not get on with their advisory kaiako, or wants to talk to someone else, or just wants to talk to someone different, for instance of a different gender?
- Does having one person as a point of contact mean we can't or won't get updates from the specialist teachers in the high school?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Do we think this method will successfully encourage and follow my child's progress?
- Are all student's seen here?
- How do we feel about having one person as our point of contact through each three-year cycle?
- What if we don't like the teacher?

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## Essential Element

*Kaiako reflect on what they are doing, observing their lessons, and the reactions that come. They do not necessarily make immediate corrections.*

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### What this results in

- Kaiako know what rangatahi are doing and how they react to what they are teaching.
- The teachers can make modifications when something is not working for a particular rangatahi or students.
- Observations cover social interactions, pastoral care, self care and physical development as well as academics, so they can intervene or give guidance as needed.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How do we know students are learning what they need to?
- What happens when they miss something?
- What happens if social difficulty arises?
- What happens if academic difficulty arises?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Are we confident that any issues would be noticed and dealt with?
- Are we confident any help needed to succeed would be easily accessible?

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## Essential Element

*Respect is apparent in all interactions, teacher to student and student to student.*

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### What this results in

- There is a community agreement for the kinds of behaviour that is acceptable in the programme.
- Rangatahi and teachers speak to each other respectfully; that is in an inclusive, accepting way that is pleasant, and courteous, even if they aren't friends.
- Students are friendly and polite.
- Kaiako model respectful and courteous interactions with each other and the students.
- There is an air of acceptance, no student is left out.
- Rangatahi step in to help each other if situations arise where it is needed.
- Students call each other out for inappropriate behaviour.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What do you do with students who don't adhere to this?
- How often do you get bullying and what do you do about it?
- What about rangatahi who are different, how do they fit in?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Are we confident bullying issues if they arose would be taken seriously?
- Are we confident that all students are accepted for who they are?

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## Essential Element

*Teachers are engaged in furthering their own knowledge and skills.*

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### What this results in

- Teachers are up to date and apply this relevant knowledge in their environments.
- Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand suggests teachers should attend 10–12 hours of Montessori-focused professional development each year, in addition to other teaching professional development.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How do the teachers stay current with what is happening in Montessori and general education in Aotearoa New Zealand and the wider world?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Are we confident kaiako are using up to date strategies?



# The Community

*The Montessori community is a collaboration of many, including, but not limited to: rangatahi and kaiako; whānau, hapū, iwi, and the wider community; leaders and governance bodies; and all supporters who share the goals of the Montessori community.*

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## Essential Element

*There are real opportunities for a sense of purpose and contribution for rangatahi (valorisation) in the programme.*

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## What this results in

- Rangatahi have the opportunity to contribute in real ways to their community.
- Student's contributions are valued by themselves and their peers.
- Students know that their actions have real world consequences and take ownership of them.

## Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What are the ways rangatahi contribute to the life of their community?
- What happens if they do not meet others' expectations?

## Questions you could ask yourselves

- Do we find this meaningful?
- How will this help with learning?

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## Essential Element

*There are regular opportunities for community work and/or community service in the programme.*

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### What this results in

- Students may become involved in the wider community in acts of work and service – this could be outside the school, or in other areas of the school if there is one.
- Rangatahi see the value in serving others and in giving to their community.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- What kinds of community work and service happens, and how often?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Do we have contacts which would be helpful in this area?
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## Essential Element

*The Montessori community nurtures kotahitanga, supports the ethos of aroha, and role models whakamana, all in the context of bicultural (and indeed, multicultural) understanding.*

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### What this results in

- Opportunities for 'valorisation' for individual contributions to the community.
- Community service is a regular part of the programme.
- Regular community meetings are held to resolve issues and discuss how the community might work collaboratively.
- Opportunities are available for a strong relationship with at least one kaiako who rangatahi can look up to.
- Adolescents learn to set aside their personal needs for the good of the group.



### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How are peaceful and respectful interactions encouraged, not just in this community, but when they step outside this environment?
- What are your priorities for inclusion and acceptance of difference – gender, ethnicity, ability etc.



### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Does our family/whānau support this kind of attitude towards others
- Will this kind of education satisfy our requirements?



## Essential Element

*Seminar and/or Socratic dialogue is a regular part of the programme.*



### What this results in

- There are regular opportunities to have informed debates and discussions about a range of issues. Such discussions are in small groups and involve prior preparation.
- Rangatahi have a chance to have their voice heard about various issues.
- Students learn to respectfully challenge someone's opinion and listen to beliefs and opinions different from their own.
- A community of students with the ability to discuss and accept that it is possible to have different ideas and opinions and still work together for the good of all.



### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How might a seminar/socratic work here?
- What kinds of issues are discussed?



### Questions you could ask yourselves

- How will this kind of education help with character development?



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## Essential Element

*Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are developed where necessary to ensure an adolescent's particular needs are met.*

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### What this results in

- Students who require additional assistance or resources have access to that.
- Family/whānau are aware of what is happening in their adolescent's educational journey.
- The school is inclusive and accepting of different abilities.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How would this community include rangatahi with special abilities?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Would this environment work with our family/whānau?
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## Essential Element

*There are opportunities for respectful and supportive relationships to form between communities, between parents/whānau and staff.*

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### What this results in

- Interactions between parents/whānau and staff; parents/whānau and rangatahi; and staff and adolescents are respectful, positive, cordial, and friendly.
- Rangatahi and kaiako are happy to come to school.
- There are places for interactions to occur.
- The atmosphere in the school is peaceful and cooperative.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How are issues dealt with, what if we are not happy with something, what do we do?

### Questions you could ask yourselves

- Can we work within the structures the school has for dealing with issues that arise?

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## Essential Element

*Family/whānau are welcomed into the school as partners in their adolescent's education.*

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### What this results in

- Family/whānau have someone to talk to about their adolescent's education.
- The Advisory teacher follows up quickly with any issues raised.
- There are formal and informal opportunities for family/whānau to engage with the school.
- Family/whānau are listened to and considered experts on their adolescent.

### Questions you could ask the Principal/Kaiako

- How can we be involved in the school as a whole?
- What kind of opportunities are there to be involved in this part of the school?

### Questions you could ask yourself

- Does this school feel welcoming and accepting of our family/whānau?

# Appendix

## Glossary of Montessori Terms

**Montessori  
Aotearoa  
New Zealand**

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand is a collective of schools, organisations and individual members who work together to provide and promote Montessori education in New Zealand.

**MJ2Ex**

*Montessori Journey to Excellence (MJ2Ex): Te Ara Ki Huhuatanga: Essential Elements* was written in 2010 with the aim of identifying Essential Elements and Quality Indicators of Montessori practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. The revised edition, published in 2020, continues with the intent of providing a guide for establishing best practice, while recognising the influence of leadership in sustaining quality Montessori education and including a stronger emphasis on Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

**Montessori  
Principles/  
Strategies used to  
structure a  
Montessori  
Programme**

The Montessori programme, (indoors and out) is designed to optimise learning, social relationships, and self-esteem. Some of the characteristics of this community (and its programme) – at all levels of Montessori education – include:

- Respect for the learner's unique developmental needs and interests. Learners are not compared, they are valued for their individuality. Montessori education embraces multiple styles of learning and understands that each student's learning journey is different.
- Kaiako are warm and welcoming, trained to connect adolescents with meaningful and relevant experiences. At the adolescent age group level, it is usual for this to be real work and investigation at an adult-like level such as learning maths through building a chicken coop.
- Kaiako utilise a variety of observation techniques to assist them in ensuring rangatahi are engaged and making progress in their learning.
- Freedom of movement and choice of activity are both encouraged, within the context of respect for others ("common good" and "common courtesy").
- Appropriate materials and resources are available to the students at all times, without needing to ask for the items needed for learning.
- Independent effort is encouraged, as is peer collaboration.

- Mixed Age Range supports peer collaboration (tuakana/teina relationships). Typical age groupings are:
  - 0–15 months (infants, not yet walking)
  - 15 months – 3 years (confidently walking)
  - 3–6 years (early learning)
  - 6–9 and 9–12 years OR a combined 6–12 years (primary classes)
  - 12–15 years (middle school)
  - 15–18 years (high school)
  
- Activities such as class meetings and community service projects put adolescents in charge of their community’s functioning and its culture of friendliness.
  
- ‘Rewards’ are intrinsic to the programme therefore rangatahi are encouraged to notice when they have worked well, and experience satisfaction as a result. In the Adolescent programme, recognition of a student’s work by their peers provides the most powerful feedback, or valorisation.

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**Planes of Development**

The Four Planes of Development is the holistic framework upon which Dr. Montessori built her vision of developmental psychology. This theory encompasses human development from birth until maturity at age 24 years with each plane lasting approximately six years. Each plane has its own characteristics.

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**Human Tendencies**

Montessori philosophy has as its basis that all humans, no matter when and where they live, have the same tendencies and it is in meeting those tendencies that allow us to adapt to our time and place. These tendencies may differ slightly, from training to training, but for the purpose of this handbook are: to orient, to explore, to order, to move, to imagine, to repeat and perfect, to work, to calculate, to abstract, to communicate and associate. Montessori contends that the way these tendencies manifest at each age changes and therefore the environment that supports the development of said age needs to change to allow optimal growth.

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<b>Needs and Characteristics of the Adolescent</b>	<p><u>Physical</u> – growth, puberty and all that goes with it, with resultant need for good exercise, diet, sleep, activity, work that integrates mind and body, and rest.</p> <p><u>Social</u> – entering the adult social world, finding their group. Loyalty to peers is prime – with need to take on various roles to see what fits, to belong, to communicate, to collaborate, to achieve together, to explore personal and social identity within the group.</p> <p><u>Emotional</u> – rewiring of the brain as it prepares for adulthood, susceptible to illness, fatigue, discomfort. Risk taking increases due to decreased ability with executive functioning, emotions are higher and govern decisions, friendships, moods, feel self conscious, so need an accepting community, time to talk and to be alone, a sense of personal dignity, respect from their peers and teachers.</p> <p><u>Cognitive</u> – intellectual curiosity lessens as does the ability to focus and concentrate for extended periods, so need to know the relevance of what is learnt increases, need to express themselves in different forms, find their voice</p>
<b>Valorisation</b>	The self-esteem and sense of self worth which comes from having one's work valued by peers and guides.
<b>Guide</b>	Guide refers to a teacher in a Montessori environment. They are more of a support who works alongside the adolescent and guides their development than what is currently accepted as a teacher.

## Glossary of Māori words

<b>Ako</b>	A reciprocal non-hierarchical relationship between the student and the teacher – to both teach and learn.
<b>Akomanga</b>	Classroom
<b>Aroha</b>	Compassion, empathy, love, respect
<b>Kaiako</b>	Teacher
<b>Kotahitanga</b>	Unity, togetherness, solidarity
<b>Rangatahi</b>	Adolescent
<b>Tuakana-teina</b>	Older students supporting younger students.
<b>Whakamana</b>	To enable, empower, or give prestige
<b>Whānau</b>	Family

## Ministry of Education (MoE) Document

### **New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.**

In keeping with the spirit and intent of the Treaty of Waitangi and New Zealand's bi-cultural nationhood, there are two statements of national curriculum: *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*. These set the direction for rangatahi learning and provides guidance for schools as they design and review their curriculum. It commences with a vision of adolescents developing the competencies they need for study, work, and lifelong learning, so they may go on to realise their potential.





**Montessori**  
Aotearoa New Zealand