

Georgia’s Pre-K Program

Instructional Quality (IQ) Guide

Montessori Learning Environment

**Site Name: Teacher Name:**

Young children are active learners and need to touch, feel, experiment, and create within their learning environment. The most powerful motivator for young children to learn is the natural joy that comes from learning and exploring. In the Georgia’s Pre-K Montessori classroom, the learning environment is organized, prepared, and structured according to Montessori method. Materials and activities are structured and changed to meet children’s growing developmental needs and changing interests.

The Montessori classroom requires a well-planned and structured environment that meets children’s developmental needs. The children are free to follow their own interests within this environment. The result is that children develop in a natural way and are highly motivated. Children develop self- discipline and master basic skills, at their own pace. The teacher is trained in each aspect of the curriculum and grounded in a rich understanding of child development, allowing lessons to be personalized to support each child’s unique development.

A key element of the Montessori method is the ‘Prepared Environment,’ meaning that the physical appearance and arrangement of materials adhere to certain principles which focus on meeting the needs of the child. It is the teacher’s role to prepare and maintain the environment. These principles include:

 Freedom of movement and freedom of choice for the children

 Structure and order in the arrangement and sequence of the materials

 Materials that provide active learning experiences

 Vertical grouping (in the age range from 2.5 to 6 years), with permission from Bright from the Start

 A closeness to nature and the natural world, with materials and activities that reflect the reality of life, not fantasy

 An atmosphere that is attractive, warm and inviting

For the purpose of this document, please use the following definitions:

**Enough:** all 22 children or the number of children enrolled

**Some:** enough for a small group of children (2 to 8 children)

**Accessible:** materials are located within the learning areas or in the classroom within easy reach of the children. Children can freely choose to use materials without asking for teacher permission or assistance.

**Available:** items are easily brought out for children’s use for specific activities or to expand children’s learning.

This guide is to be completed first by the lead teacher. This should be completed within the first thirty (30) school/business days of when teachers report and then signed, dated and submitted to the Director/Principal. Upon receipt of the completed IQ Guide, Directors/Principals may designate a second reviewer. The designated reviewer should complete the document while in the classroom, compare results and provide feedback to the teacher. Directors/Principals should sign off at the end regardless of who is designated as the reviewer. A completed copy of the *IQ Guide for the Learning Environment* should be placed with the *Grant Requirement Checklist*. This document was designed to be fluid and used throughout the school year to document changes. Although additional reviews are not required, Directors/Principals are encouraged to set a date for a second review. NOTE: A second or additional reviews can be required as deemed necessary by the Pre-K Specialist.

Additional definitions and clarifications can be found in the *FAQ for the Learning Environment*. Although completion of this guide is required within the first 30 days and recommended for a second review, monitoring and feedback can be given as often as desired. This document is intended to be a working document and teachers can write specific items needed under each area and reviewer/director/principal can add dates when items are available/ordered/delivered or additional corrections are made.

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| **Classroom Environment and Display** | | | | |
| Research shows that when children are in an attractive, inviting environment they perform better and are happier.  In a Montessori environment for young children, the children’s process of creation is emphasized over the products of their work. Therefore, children’s work may not be displayed in the classroom after it is completed. Classroom walls should be sparsely decorated with objects of art, which are rotated on a regular basis. | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / / Date: | Reviewer  / / Date: |
| The classroom is inviting, clean, organized, and visually appealing to  children. |  |  |  |  |
| Materials in every area of the classroom are accessible to the children throughout their daily work cycle. |  |  |  |  |
| Photos of children and their families are available to the children. |  |  |  |  |
| Walls are sparsely decorated with plenty of empty space |  |  |  |  |
| The classroom is safe and free from hazards. |  |  |  |  |
| Display includes objects of art and culture, as in a gracious home, rather  than cartoons or educational posters. |  |  |  |  |
| Comments | | | | |
| **Language and Literacy** | | | | |
| The Montessori approach is a very hands-on and tactile experience for children preparing to read and write. Experiences  in the Practical Life and Sensorial areas offer repeated experiences transferring, pouring, grasping, squeezing, and pinching that have strengthened small finger muscles in preparation for writing. Additional learning tools are used to focus on writing, such as metal insets, sandpaper letters and the moveable alphabet with the direct aim of improving muscle coordination. Language exercises take the child from the concrete, such as working with objects and matching them to the correct beginning sound, to the more abstract work of matching objects or pictures to words. A rich language area with unique materials, books and experiences such as story times, picture discussions, poetry, rhymes, questioning games and discussions involves the teacher as a language role model for the classroom. | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / /  Date: | Reviewer  / /  Date: |
| Materials are organized and easily accessible to children. |  |  |  |  |
| Furnishings: | | | | |

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| Soft seating |  |  |  |  |
| Reading Area Materials: | | | | |
| An attractive display of books including enough for several children to read at any given time.  Examples: Realistic fiction, wordless, repetitive, informational, rhyming, predictable, familiar sequence, repetitive phrase cumulative, chain/circular, question and answer, class-made |  |  |  |  |
| Books that reflect current topics are rotated in the classroom. |  |  |  |  |
| Books are displayed and organized forward facing so children can  easily see the front covers of the books to make choices. |  |  |  |  |
| Puzzle words, moveable alphabet (2 sets; each set red and blue),  phonetic object box, phonogram lessons, masculine/feminine  materials, and singular/plural materials, 3-part classification cards (10 sets), grammar materials for parts of speech |  |  |  |  |
| Miniature environment (farm or dollhouse with labels) |  |  |  |  |
| Listening center with headphones, books and recorded stories (2 choices) |  |  |  |  |
| Writing instruments of various sizes (3 types)  Examples: pens, markers, chalk, crayons, pencils, colored pencils |  |  |  |  |
| Vocabulary cards with words and pictures |  |  |  |  |
| Sand tray to trace letters, sandpaper letters, chalk boards(plain,  squared, and lined), metal insets |  |  |  |  |
| Paper (3 types)  Examples: lined, unlined, journals, drawing paper, tablets |  |  |  |  |
| Name cards of children in the classroom with picture and name |  |  |  |  |
| Comments | | | | |
| **Practical Life** | | | | |
| The Practical Life area offers non-traditional classroom experiences that connect the child to the real world and provide a  link between the school and home. Four primary areas provide these opportunities: Care of Self, Care of the Environment, Grace and Courtesy, and Control of Movement. Practical life experiences provide opportunities to: gain independence, refine coordination, enhance concentration, think sequentially, be attentive to detail, establish a sense of order and develop poise. As these skills are being learned, the intent is for children to gain a sense of pride, independence and self-discipline. | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / / Date: | Reviewer  / / Date: |
| Materials are organized and easily accessible to children. |  |  |  |  |
| Area is large enough to accommodate several children. |  |  |  |  |
| **Furnishings:** | | | | |
| Table and chairs for independent snack |  |  |  |  |
| Basic shelves for practical life materials |  |  |  |  |
| **Basic Materials:** | | | | |
| Five different dressing frames are accessible. |  |  |  |  |
| Materials for various pouring activities are accessible (5 types;  graduated from simple to complex). |  |  |  |  |
| Materials for a variety of transferring exercises are accessible (hand,  tong, tweezers, dropper, baster and/or funnel). |  |  |  |  |
| Materials for polishing exercises are accessible (shoes, glass, brass,  silver, wood and plants). |  |  |  |  |
| Materials for food preparation (snack/cooking) |  |  |  |  |
| Materials for sewing (2 types; graduated from simple to complex) |  |  |  |  |
| Materials for washing (table/chair, dishes, and cloth) |  |  |  |  |

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| Comments | | | | |
| **Sensorial** | | | | |
| Sensorial materials are specifically designed to educate and refine the child’s senses, each targeting an isolated sense as  well as being self-correcting. The initial purpose is geared for moving from the concrete to abstract processes. This area  involves manipulation of specifically designed didactic materials. The use of didactic materials such as long rods, the pink tower, the broad stair, and the knobbed cylinders not only stimulates a specific sense but also entails a degree of difficulty that provides necessary concentration to develop mathematical thinking. | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / /  Date: | Reviewer  / /  Date: |
| Materials are organized and easily accessible to children. |  |  |  |  |
| Sensorial materials are complete with all necessary components and are arranged on shelves in order of complexity (from top to bottom and left to right). |  |  |  |  |
| Sensorial area is large enough to accommodate several children. |  |  |  |  |
| **Furnishings:** | | | | |
| Basic shelving for sensorial materials |  |  |  |  |
| **Basic Materials:** | | | | |
| Knobbed and knobless cylinders, pink tower, long rods and broad stairs |  |  |  |  |
| Color tablets and thermic bottles or tablets |  |  |  |  |
| Touch boards and baric tablets |  |  |  |  |
| Geometric cabinet with wooden insets and frames |  |  |  |  |
| Activities involving the 5 senses (smelling bottles, tasting exercises,  sound cylinders, touch tablets, sorting exercises) |  |  |  |  |
| Comments | | | | |
| **Math** | | | | |
| The Montessori teacher utilizes hands-on materials to provide the child with a simple, clear understanding of the  mathematical concept being taught; examples are: number rods, sandpaper numbers, ten and teens boards, number tiles, beads and games. Each exercise builds upon another, gradually guiding the child’s mathematical mind from the concrete to the more abstract areas of numeration, place value, addition, subtraction, multiplication and fractions. At the Pre-K age, children move progressively toward the more abstract concepts, as appropriate for each child. | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / / Date: | Reviewer  / / Date: |
| Materials are organized and easily accessible to children.  Materials are complete with all necessary components and are arranged on shelves in order of complexity (top to bottom and left to right). |  |  |  |  |
| **Furnishings:** | | | | |
| Basic shelving to accommodate math materials, special shelves for bead |  |  |  |  |
| **Basic Materials:** | | | | |
| Materials for measuring (weight, length and time) |  |  |  |  |

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| Montessori math materials (large number rods/cards,  sandpaper numerals, spindle boxes/spindles, cards and counters, golden bead material/cards, tens and teens boards/beads, bead chains with corresponding colored bead squares, cubes, and counters, short bead stair). |  |  |  |  |
| Montessori materials for geometry: geometric solids and bases,  constructive triangles |  |  |  |  |
| Addition and subtraction strip board and chart, positive snake game |  |  |  |  |
| Money recognition materials and clock with moveable parts |  |  |  |  |
| Comments | | | | |
| **Botany, Zoology, Science** | | | | |
| Children are curious about the things that are in their world. In a science area young children question, become  scientists, and explore and learn about new materials. The science area allows children to examine things closely,  compare and contrast, and draw conclusions about observations. The well equipped science area allows children to explore living and non-living things, but most importantly encourages them to learn about the biological and physical world. | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / / Date: | Reviewer  / / Date: |
| Materials are organized and easily accessible to children. |  |  |  |  |
| **Furnishings:** | | | | |
| Basic shelving to house science materials |  |  |  |  |
| **Basic Materials:** | | | | |
| Montessori materials are on the shelves for sink/float, magnetic/non-  magnetic, living/non-living, and vertebrate/invertebrate lessons. |  |  |  |  |
| Botany cabinet and contents |  |  |  |  |
| Collections of natural items are accessible for sorting, matching, grouping, classifying and comparison work. |  |  |  |  |
| Something living for children to care for and observe |  |  |  |  |
| Montessori puzzles showing “parts of” fish, bird, flower, tree, frog,  etc. |  |  |  |  |
| Cards for parts of plant, leaf and flower; cards for external parts of  fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal |  |  |  |  |
| Comments | | | | |
| **Geography, Cultural Lesson, History, Social Studies** | | | | |
| The Montessori classroom invites children to fulfill their natural curiosity to learn about their world. Geography, history, and social studies fall under the general category of Cultural Studies.  Geography in the Montessori classroom is the introduction to our place in the world: land, air, water, land and water forms, globes and maps, the seven continents, flags, layers of the earth, our solar system and an overall respect for different cultures and people. History concepts are taught through the use of a daily calendar, simple time lines and celebrations. | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / / Date: | Reviewer  / / Date: |
| Materials are organized and easily accessible to children.  Materials are arranged on shelves in order of complexity (top to bottom and left to right). |  |  |  |  |
| **Furnishings:** | | | | |
| Basic shelving for geography materials |  |  |  |  |

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| **Basic Materials:** | | | | |
| Land and water forms with cards |  |  |  |  |
| The flag of the United States |  |  |  |  |
| The flags of North America and holder |  |  |  |  |
| Globes (sandpaper, colored, and political) |  |  |  |  |
| Puzzle maps/labels and control maps (North America, South America, and the seven continents) |  |  |  |  |
| Additional flags are accessible. |  |  |  |  |
| Additional geography maps are available. |  |  |  |  |
| Seven continent folder containing pictures of habitats, climate,  animals, dress, terrain, food, transportation, etc. is accessible. |  |  |  |  |
| Additional Montessori puzzle maps and control maps are accessible  (minimum of 3). |  |  |  |  |
| Comments | | | | |
| **Art** | | | | |
| The purpose of art in the preschool classroom is to allow children to explore artistic media and to provide a vehicle for  creative expression of each individual child. As young children begin to experiment with different media, they begin to understand their world and how to control the tools they use. Young children are very creative and enjoy using art materials to express their ideas. In the preschool years the process of creating is more important than the product the children develop. The Art Center should be a safe, comfortable area supplied to allow the freedom of creative expression with materials and teachers who support these endeavors. | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / /  Date: | Reviewer  / /  Date: |
| Materials are labeled, organized and easily accessible to children. |  |  |  |  |
| **Furnishings:** | | | | |
| Table and chairs |  |  |  |  |
| Drying space or rack |  |  |  |  |
| Shelving for housing art materials |  |  |  |  |
| **Basic Materials:** | | | | |
| Crayons |  |  |  |  |
| Markers |  |  |  |  |
| Paper of different sizes, colors, textures (3 different types)  Examples: construction, tissue, white, manila, newsprint, foil, news, wax |  |  |  |  |
| Scissors (appropriately sized) enough for a small group of children |  |  |  |  |
| Collage materials are available at various times throughout the year  reflecting seasonal or cultural topics of study. |  |  |  |  |
| Glue |  |  |  |  |
| Fresh Paint (powdered/solid tempera, watercolors or finger paint) |  |  |  |  |
| Paint brushes appropriately sized (one for each color of paint) |  |  |  |  |
| Painting smocks or cover-ups |  |  |  |  |
| Materials for three-dimensional creations (variety) and tools to help  cut/shape (clay, play dough, salt dough, etc.) |  |  |  |  |
| Comments | | | | |
| **Music** | | | | |
| Music provides an opportunity to reinforce other areas of the curriculum, such as reading readiness, dramatic play, math  development and gross motor development. Children develop musical skills by singing, playing rhythm instruments, moving to music, listening to music and being creative with music. A classroom environment should be established where children can experiment with sounds while creating their own music. | | | | |

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| ***Date Completed:*** | | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | | Reviewer  / /  1st 30  days | Teacher  / / Date: | Reviewer  / / Dates: |
| Music player (separate from the listening center) | |  | |  |  |  |
| Montessori bells, striker, and damper | |  | |  |  |  |
| Musical instruments (various types of instruments) | |  | |  |  |  |
| Age-appropriate music (3 types)  Examples: classical, children's, jazz, nature sounds, multicultural,  dance, foreign language | |  | |  |  |  |
| Comments | | | | | | |
| **Physical Development** | | | | | | |
| Gross motor activities develop the large muscles of the body and enable children to develop mastery of body  movements. As children develop mastery over their bodies, their self-esteem increases. Early experiences with gross motor activities lay a foundation for a lifetime commitment to physical fitness. In order to develop their large muscles, children need daily access to balls, jump ropes, wagons to pull, slides, and a climbing apparatus. Other activities like marching, running, jumping, bending and dancing also contribute to the development of the whole body. The outdoor play area provides a space for children to run and play. | | | | | | |
| ***Date Completed:*** | Teacher  / /  1st 30  days | | Reviewer  / /  1st 30 days | | Teacher  / / Date: | Reviewer  / / Date: |
| Age-appropriate mobile equipment (3 types)  Examples: balls, hoops, parachute, wagons, tricycles, scooters, plastic bats, catching games/gloves, cones for obstacle course Note: Helmets required when riding vehicles. |  | |  | |  |  |
| Uses stationary equipment daily, weather permitting |  | |  | |  |  |
| Comments | | | | | | |

***1st Review***

***Teacher Signature:***

***Date:***  / /

***Director/Principal Signature: Date:***  / /

***2nd Review (if applicable)***

**Teacher Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Date:*  / /**

***Director/Principal Signature: Date:*  / /**