

Montessori School Programs: Class size

Montessori Teachers are prepared in their early learning education to teach a large class size. In fact, it is considered preferable to the instructors to have more students in the class, to allow for each age group to have a solid number of peers.

In her development of the pedagogy for early childhood, Maria Montessori addressed the benefit of having more activity happening in the class in order for children to have more exposure to use of the materials.

“We consider that in its best condition, the class should have between 28-35 children, but there may be even more in number.” – Maria Montessori

*“When classes are fairly big, differences of character show themselves more clearly and wider experiences can be gained. With small classes this is less easy.”
(Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind)*

Unlike some schools, which strive for very small classes, Montessori values the lessons of community when the size of the class is somewhat larger. The classroom dynamic helps children see that their presence and activity matters in the group and there are many opportunities to interact. This is the source of the genuine and abundant language development.

How many students are typically in a Montessori class?

AMI School Recognition:

Group Size 1 teacher 1 assistant-	10-12 infants/toddlers
	24-35 primary (3-6 years)
	24-35 elementary (6-12 years)

AMS School Accreditation:

Group Size 1 teacher 1 assistant-	8 infants
	16 toddlers (18-36 months)
	30 early childhood (2.6-6 years)
	30 elementary (6-12 years)

Montessori classes thrive when the number of children in the class is substantial. Limiting the size of the class is detrimental for the teaching dynamic in the classroom. The schools that are implementing genuine Montessori practices with credentialed teachers are capable of maintaining full class capacity.

The accreditation of Montessori schools includes all the elements of quality that are required for the waivers addressing the limit of 20 children per class in the WAC: 170-295-2100:

- **Staff qualifications:** Montessori credential is tailored to the expectations of a larger class.
- **Program structure:** The open classroom model of children pursuing freely chosen work lends itself to greater focus and learning as well as greater social interest in sharing the experience.
- **Square footage:** The measurements provided by the Health department are reliable for the classroom spaces.
- **Lower staff to child ratios:** The adaptations Montessori schools have made to support the basic classroom team of 2 teachers includes additional staff that can do the work of supporting the class routines. This allows for a lower ratio and supports the reflective and intentional work of teachers.
- Also, the maximum capacity of a class is not consistently full. The design of the day for Montessori children often implies smaller group sizes in the afternoon while older children have extended day.