



Adult Environment Audit

Is your school preparing adults to succeed?

A reflective tool for observing, strengthening, and sustaining the adult community



How to Use This Audit

Look for patterns before solutions.

A prepared adult environment does not happen by accident. It is shaped by clear expectations, thoughtful systems, healthy relationships, effective communication, and enough time for people to do their work well.

Use this audit:

- during the opening weeks of school
- at the six-week mark
- during a leadership or administrative retreat
- when welcoming a new team
- whenever the school feels more reactive than intentional

Complete the audit individually first, then compare observations as a leadership team.

This is not an evaluation of individual employees. It is an opportunity to examine the conditions surrounding their work.

Rating Scale

1	Rarely true
2	Sometimes true
3	Usually true
4	Consistently true
Not Yet Known	We need more observation

Do not rush to solve every concern as it appears. Notice where the environment is supporting adults well, where it creates unnecessary strain, and where more observation is needed.

1. Readiness and Welcome

School: _____

Completed by: _____

Date: _____

Planned review date: _____

Before teachers can prepare for children, the school must be prepared to receive its teachers.

Rate each statement

	1	2	3	4	Not Yet Known
The administrative team returns early enough to prepare before teachers arrive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staffing assignments, classroom placements, schedules, and student lists are reasonably settled.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
New employees have access to the systems, documents, keys, technology, and information they need.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers receive essential information with enough time to review and use it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In-service week balances shared learning, team collaboration, relationship-building, and classroom preparation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff experience their return as a thoughtful welcome—not simply the beginning of a long task list.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reflect

What communicated: “We knew you were coming, and we made time to be ready for you”?

What remained unsettled when teachers arrived?

What should be prepared earlier next year?

2. Clarity, Roles, and Expectations

Adults should not have to interpret unwritten rules or guess what success looks like.

Rate each statement

	1	2	3	4	Not Yet Known
Staff members understand their primary responsibilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classroom teams have discussed how roles and daily responsibilities will be shared.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members know who makes which decisions and when others should be consulted.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Essential expectations are explained with enough detail to be implemented consistently.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Important procedures are modeled or practiced—not merely mentioned.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leaders determine whether an expectation was clearly taught and supported before moving to accountability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reflect

Where are roles and expectations particularly clear?

Where are assumptions filling the gaps?

Which expectations may have been stated but not fully taught?

What needs to be modeled, practiced, or retaught?

3. Communication and Honest Talk*

A healthy adult environment makes room for questions, feedback, disagreement, and direct conversation.

Rate each statement

	1	2	3	4	Not Yet Known
Staff members know which communication channel to use for different needs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Important information reaches the right people at the right time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers understand what they should communicate directly to families and when administration should become involved.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members can ask questions or request clarification without embarrassment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerns are discussed with the person involved rather than around that person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Difficult conversations are direct, specific, respectful, and grounded in dignity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reflect

What information is moving well?

What information is repeatedly missed?

Where are concerns being discussed indirectly?

What would make Honest Talk easier in this community?

What might currently make openness feel risky?

* Honest Talk is a concept developed by Elizabeth Slade in *Montessori in Action: Building Resilient Montessori Schools*.

4. Relationships and Team Cohesion

Adults need time and structure to become a community—not simply a collection of employees.

Rate each statement

	1	2	3	4	Not Yet Known
Staff members have meaningful opportunities to know one another beyond their assigned roles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
In-service activities include appropriate fun, exchange, and relationship-building.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
New staff members are intentionally included in the larger community.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classroom and level teams have protected time to plan, communicate, and clarify expectations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Team members can disagree without damaging the relationship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Relationship-building efforts respect employees' family, caregiving, and personal responsibilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reflect

Where do we see genuine trust and camaraderie?

Which teams are developing cohesion?

Who may still feel outside the community?

Where might one person be carrying too much?

What kind of relationship-building would feel authentic rather than forced?

5. Systems, Time, and Working Conditions

The environment should make the work easier to carry—not add unnecessary friction.

Rate each statement

	1	2	3	4	Not Yet Known
Staff members can easily locate the information they need.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The school uses clear and consistent systems for recurring work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members are not expected to enter or track the same information in several places.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedures are realistic within the actual pace of the school day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teachers have adequate time for planning, collaboration, and classroom preparation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Meetings and approval processes support the work rather than slowing it down.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reflect

Where does work move smoothly?

Where does it repeatedly slow down?

What workarounds have staff members created?

What are those workarounds revealing?

Which process creates the most unnecessary administrative burden?

6. Observation, Support, and Accountability

Leaders should distinguish among a learning need, a systems issue, a team concern, and a performance problem.

Rate each statement

	1	2	3	4	Not Yet Known
Leaders observe the adult environment without treating every observation as an evaluation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Repeated questions, errors, or delays are examined for patterns.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
New staff members are invited to share what remains unclear.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feedback is offered before a concern becomes severe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reteaching and clarification are provided without humiliation or shame.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accountability is based on expectations that were clear, modeled, supported, and reasonably possible to meet.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reflect

What patterns have emerged?

Which concerns require clarification or reteaching?

Which issues point to the environment or system?

Which concerns may require a direct accountability conversation?

What additional observation is needed before deciding?

What Is the Adult Environment Revealing?

Complete the statements based on what you have observed.

People repeatedly ask:

Staff members have created workarounds for:

Work tends to slow down or accumulate when:

Communication becomes unclear when:

New staff members have helped us notice:

Our strongest area right now is:

The area creating the most unnecessary strain is:

Pause Before You Act

Not every observation requires an immediate solution.

Before deciding what to change, ask:

- ☐ Is this an isolated incident or a recurring pattern?
- ☐ Is the issue temporary, structural, or urgent?
- ☐ Do we understand the cause?
- ☐ Have we heard from the people closest to the work?
- ☐ Does the expectation need clarification?
- ☐ Does the system need revision?
- ☐ Does the team need support?
- ☐ Is direct accountability required?
- ☐ Would continued observation give us better information?

The goal is not to create a long improvement list. The goal is to choose the few changes most likely to improve adults' daily experience and their ability to serve children.

From Observation to Action

Priority One: the change most likely to improve daily experience.

This is primarily a:

☐ Clarity

☐ Communication

☐ Relationship/team

☐ System/process

☐ Time/workload

☐ Performance

☐ Not yet clear

Priority One

What needs attention?

What have we observed?

What is the smallest useful next step?

Who will take responsibility?

By when?

How will we know whether it helped?

From Observation to Action

Priorities Two and Three: keep the list short and useful.

This is primarily a:

☐ Clarity

☐ Communication

☐ Relationship/team

☐ System/process

☐ Time/workload

☐ Performance

☐ Not yet clear

Priority Two

What needs attention?

What have we observed?

Smallest useful next step?

Owner / date

How will we know it helped?

Priority Three

What needs attention?

What have we observed?

Smallest useful next step?

Owner / date

How will we know it helped?

What Should We Protect?

An audit should identify what is working and deserves continued attention.

What is supporting adults particularly well?

What should we be careful not to lose as we make changes?

What practice should become part of our regular way of working?

Revisit and Reflect

We will revisit these priorities on:

At that time, ask: What changed? What improved? What remains difficult? What did we misunderstand? What should we continue observing? What is the next smallest useful adjustment?

We prepare. We observe. We listen. We adjust.

*Through that ongoing work, we create the conditions in which adults
are better able to offer their best to children.*