

The October Danger Zone Toolkit

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The October Check

Eight statements about how visible learning is at your school right now.
Score each from 0 to 3. 0 means not yet, 3 means consistently true.

01 Every family hears from us in ordinary weeks, not only when something is planned.

02 Our updates say what a moment meant for the child, not only what happened.

03 A parent at our school could describe what their child is working on right now.

04 Each teacher can share one story from this week that a family would repeat.

05 We help new families understand what they are seeing in a Montessori classroom.

06 October conferences are set up to build understanding, not just report progress.

07 When a child says “nothing happened today,” families have somewhere better to look.

08 We know what our parents say when someone asks them about our school.

Your total

Out of 24. It adds itself up as you type. Then find your zone on the next page.

illumine helps with all eight of these.
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Where That Puts You

Find your total below. The zone is not a verdict on your school.
It is a measure of how much of the good work is reaching home.

Clear of the zone

Score 18 to 24

Your families can see the learning, and what they repeat to friends is doing your marketing for you.

Next: take the one statement you scored lowest and make it your October focus.

On the edge

Score 10 to 17

Families are getting glimpses, not the picture. The work is happening, the evidence is patchy.

Next: pick your two lowest statements and build them into this month's conferences.

In the zone

Score 0 to 9

The learning is real. It is just not reaching home yet, and October is when that starts to cost you.

Next: start with one story per classroom this week, then use The October Rewrite on the next page.

Scores move. Run the check again at the end of October and see what your families can see.

Wherever you landed, illumine helps the learning reach home.
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The October Rewrite

Take one observation your team wrote this week and write it here exactly as it is. Then answer the four prompts, and write it again, for the family.

The observation, as written

What did the child actually do?

What has changed for this child over time?

Why does it matter for their development?

What happens next?

Now write it for the family

Read it aloud. Would a parent repeat it at dinner?

illumine drafts the first version and your teachers keep the words.
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Three Rewrites to Learn From

The same move, three times: the observation is not the story. The child's development is.

THE OBSERVATION

"Emma poured water."

THE STORY

"Emma spilled the water, stopped, found the sponge, cleaned it up, refilled the pitcher, and tried again, without asking an adult to rescue her."

A story about independence, persistence, problem-solving, and self-confidence.

THE OBSERVATION

"Jack and Henry had an argument."

THE STORY

"Jack and Henry disagreed about who could use a material. Instead of asking an adult to decide, they talked it through and found a solution."

A story about social development.

THE OBSERVATION

"Maya worked with the Golden Beads."

THE STORY

"Maya held a 1,000 cube in her hands and compared it with a single unit bead. She is not memorizing that 1,000 is a large number. She is building a concrete understanding of our decimal system that she will carry into increasingly abstract mathematics."

A story about hands building mathematics.

From "The October Danger Zone: When the Honeymoon Ends" by Tim Seldin, The Montessori Foundation.

Turn every classroom moment into a story like these.
Book a free session with an illumine expert.

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What Are We Giving Parents to Talk About?

What happened in your classroom this week that parents would be excited to tell someone else about?

Ask it at every staff meeting in October. Log one story per classroom, then make sure it reaches the family it belongs to.

CLASSROOM	THIS WEEK'S STORY	SHARED
		☐
		☐
		☐
		☐
		☐

Give every family something to talk about, every week.
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The October Danger Zone is real. But it is also an opportunity. The excitement of September may have faded. Now we have the chance to replace excitement with something much stronger: understanding, confidence, and trust.

Tim Seldin

Author, Educator, and President of The Montessori Foundation

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