

## Montessori and PreK in Vermont

Good Morning, we are here because draft 3.1 of bill 20-0816 included language that allowed for a PreK program "employing or contracting for the services of at least one teacher to provide direct instruction to prekindergarten student who is either licensed and endorsed in early childhood education . . . early childhood special education . . . , **or has a Montessori early childhood teacher certification.**"

That last part really got our attention.

Tamara Mount – Head of School, Hilltop Montessori School in Brattleboro

- Montessori Elementary Credential from the Princeton Center for Teacher Education (Accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education - MACTE)
- Lower Elementary Montessori teacher for 9 years in New Jersey
- BA from the University of Virginia.

Kristen Martin - Head of School, Montessori School of Central Vermont.

- Montessori Early Childhood Credential from the New England Montessori Teacher Education Center in MA and the Seacoast Training Center in NH (both MACTE Accredited)
- BA in Early Education from University of Hartford.
- Vermont State Early Education Teaching License obtained in 2015 through the Portfolio Review Process.
- 2016 Early Childhood Leadership Institute through the Snelling Center for Government (first cohort graduate)
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We are here in support of language that could enable credentialed Montessori teachers to be the teachers to qualify for this position in Vermont PreK partnership programs.

### Introduce Hilltop Montessori & Other Independent Montessori Schools

- **Hilltop Montessori School** – 124 students Toddler through Middle School - is an Approved Vermont Independent School and has also been recently officially accredited by the American Montessori Society. This is a two year process of self-study and on-site review by the national accrediting body. Only 15% of Montessori schools achieve this and we are the first Montessori school in VT to be AMS accredited. Also a Five STAR program.
- **Hilltop and PreK** - In the past three years Hilltop Montessori School has supported an increasing number of children in the PreK program, 18, 23, 27. Of the 27 3-4 year olds that we have currently in our program 5 receive further state subsidy through the Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance Program and 10 receive additional tuition reductions from the school to cover more than the 10 hours of the PreK program. In partnership with the state, we have been able to expand the economic diversity of our student body in important ways.
- **Montessori School of Central Vermont** - 94 students Toddler through 6th Grade - MSCVT has been a partner program with public schools since 2013 (prior to Act 166), and a Five STAR program since 2015. 75% of our current students are receiving some form of financial aid: Child Care Financial Assistance, Universal PreK or private scholarship through MSCVT.

- **Montessori School of Central Vermont and PreK** - MSCVT has been a partner program with public schools since 2013 (prior to Act 166), and a Five STAR program since 2015. MSCVT moved from leased property in 2015 to purchased and renovated property in 2016. Since that move, 75% of our students are receive some form of financial aid: Child Care Financial Assistance, Universal PreK or private scholarship through MSCVT. Our Primary programs (for children ages 3-6) have increased from 35 children in 2015 to currently 45 children. The number of children who receive CCFAP and who are in the foster care system has doubled since our move to Barre.
- There are currently 8 Montessori schools in the PreK partnership program in VT. The additional 6 include:
  - Green Mountain Montessori School, Essex
  - Maple Leaf Montessori School, St Albans
  - Saxton's River Montessori School
  - West River Montessori School, South Londonderry
  - New Leaf Montessori School, Salisbury
  - Little Red House Early Learning Program, Brattleboro

## **What is Montessori education?**

(From Montessori Public Policy Initiative – MPPI)

Rooted in neuroscience and human development, Montessori education begins with the premise that children are naturally curious, learn from their surroundings, and desire independence. Recognizing that children are intrinsically capable, Montessori teachers create a classroom environment that cultivates confidence and empowers children to master the array of academic and social skills that will serve them not only in future educational settings, but throughout life.

By design, authentic Montessori classrooms incorporate several core elements that work in concert with one another to optimize each child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Because these elements are interdependent, they must all be present and well supported for a classroom to be Montessori.

### **A Prepared Environment**

All aspects of the classroom including furniture, materials, and supplies are thoughtfully designed for and accessible to children, making all elements of the classroom integral components of a child's education. Ensuring that children have what they need to function independently builds confidence and allows them to take ownership in caring for their classroom community. An aesthetically pleasing environment draws children in to explore all that the classroom has to offer.

### **Materials**

A full complement of carefully sequenced and scaffolded Montessori materials allows children to build skills, knowledge, confidence, and mastery of academic concepts consistent with widely accepted educational standards such as Common Core. Children receive lessons individually or in small groups, affording the teacher the opportunity to observe each child's comprehension and offer individualized supports.

Areas of the classroom include: Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, Language, Culture

### **3-Year Mixed Age Groups**

Across certain age bands, children share multiple developmental characteristics. As such, Montessori classrooms intentionally group children together in three-year age groups. Younger children learn from their older peers and are motivated by observing their older peers' activities; older children develop leadership skills and have concepts reinforced as they assist younger classmates. Children are often able to problem solve independent of the teacher because a community of peer support is fostered.

### **Montessori Trained Teachers**

All of the above components can only be well implemented and supported by an individual specifically trained in the Montessori method, namely a person holding a credential from an AMI or AMS affiliated training center, or from a Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) accredited teacher education program. Rigorous coursework rooted in child development combined with student teaching prepare individuals to implement all of the above components. Through record keeping and observation, Montessori teachers follow each child's progress and individualize the curriculum to ensure they are reaching their fullest potential academically, socially, and emotionally.

Any school can call itself "Montessori" and there are many insufficient Montessori teacher training programs. Important to note that a Montessori credential must come from a MACTE accredited program. These MACTE programs are often also either referred to as AMS (American Montessori Society) accredited or AMI (Association Montessori International) accredited.

### **Qualifying as a Montessori Educator**

We want to ensure that children in Vermont's state prekindergarten Montessori programs have appropriately qualified staff. Individuals that have a bachelor's degree plus a Montessori credential from program accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) have completed a program which includes a rigorous graduate level course of study that includes:

- child-development
- level specific subject matter
- curriculum
- instructional planning
- assessment
- family partnership
- supports for learning differences and culturally responsive teaching
- a significant student teaching component.

### **The MACTE Accreditation Process**

MACTE is recognized by the US Department of Education as an accrediting organization for both colleges and universities with teacher education programs and for freestanding institutions with residency programs. Montessori educators who have attended MACTE accredited programs have been prepared in accordance with a set of standards recognized for quality by the U.S. Department of Education, and those standards are in line with the Vermont educator standards as well as the expectations of parents choosing Montessori programs.

## Montessori in Public Programs

Montessori classrooms operate within public schools in some states - now 550 Montessori Public programs in the U.S. and an estimated 5,000 private programs.

<b>10 States have a pathway to state teacher licensure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connecticut</li><li>• Georgia</li><li>• Hawaii</li><li>• Indiana</li><li>• Minnesota</li><li>• Montana</li><li>• Ohio</li><li>• South Carolina</li><li>• Virginia</li><li>• Wisconsin</li></ul>
<b>15 States explicitly recognize a Montessori credential for lead teacher status in child-care licensing regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alaska</li><li>• Delaware</li><li>• District of Columbia</li><li>• Illinois</li><li>• Indiana</li><li>• Massachusetts</li><li>• Michigan</li><li>• Minnesota</li><li>• Montana</li><li>• New Hampshire</li><li>• New Jersey</li><li>• New Mexico</li><li>• Oregon</li><li>• Virginia</li><li>• Washington</li><li>• Wyoming</li></ul>

## Rigor of Montessori Teacher Education

For a MACTE Accredited Program, for the Early Childhood Education Level, ages 3-6

Minimum Academic hours In Class	200
Academic Hours Out of Class	400
Practicum In Class	400
Practicum Out of Class	240
<b>Cumulative Total</b>	<b>1,240</b>
Divided by 37 Hour req. min.	33
College Credit Preparation Equivalency	33 CCPE

Many Montessori certification programs are now coupled with a BA or MA in Early Childhood Education.

### Moving Ahead

If you are considering adding language to be added back in to this bill, I'd suggest that it is important to include that the PreK program require "employing or employing or contraction for the services of at least one teacher to provide direct instruction to prekindergarten student who is either licensed and endorsed in early childhood education under chapter 51 of this title, licensed and endorsed in early childhood special education under chapter 51 of this title, **or has an early childhood teacher credential from a program accredited by Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE).**"

With the shortage of licensed teachers in Vermont, adding these teachers would enable more high quality programs to be able to participate in educating Vermont's PreK children.

- shortage of public programs to serve 3-4 year old students in the state
- private programs are a cost effective way for public schools to have these children served
- shortage of licensed teachers available for the number of PreK programs needed
- shortage of "panelists" available to do portfolio review, and it comes with a cost of \$1,200 for each teacher

Having an outside fully vetted organization (MACTE) helping to certify quality teachers for Vermont will save the state work, and still ensure the high-quality programs we all want for these young children.