

# Credential recognition for Montessori training

**Five states now recognize the diploma, with more on the way**



BY **DENISE MONNIER**










We have a crisis in Montessori public Schools. There is a shortage of Montessori credentialed teachers.

The Montessori credential is not recognized as a pathway to licensure in most states, and credentials often do not transfer between states. This hampers our efforts to grow and expand to serve more children and communities.

Montessori parents need to experience a classroom led by a Montessori credentialed teacher, properly prepared both to provide an authentic Montessori experience to the children, and to offer critical parent education through events and conferences.

In states where the Montessori teaching credential is not recognized, Montessori public teachers need to have a dual credential to lead classrooms. While many previously licensed teachers are able to attend Montessori teacher training, it is not enough to fill the demand, and those unlicensed who are drawn to public Montessori may need to fully complete both types of teacher preparation before assuming roles as capable leaders of Montessori public classrooms.

The big problem with teachers needing dual credentials, besides the financial burden and time required to complete them both, lies in

	<b>Georgia:</b> A MACTE-accredited credential + three special education credits + content area assessment tests and an ethics test qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.
	<b>Indiana:</b> A MACTE-accredited credential + a level-specific exam qualifies for a full teaching certificate with no restrictions.
	<b>Maryland:</b> Legislation pending for an AMI or AMS credential + special education and reading credits to qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.
	<b>Minnesota:</b> A MACTE-accredited credential qualifies for a three-year temporary certificate. Rule-making is under way to extend this to a full certificate.
	<b>Montana:</b> A MACTE-accredited Montessori credential qualifies for a full teaching certificate with no restrictions.
	<b>Ohio:</b> An AMI or AMS credential qualifies for a four-year provisional certificate, during which time additional requirements must be met.
	<b>North Carolina:</b> Advocacy work is under way.
	<b>South Carolina:</b> A MACTE-accredited credential + the PRAXIS exam qualifies for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.
	<b>Wisconsin:</b> A MACTE or AMI credential + 3 additional courses + EdTPA/PRAXIS qualifies for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.

the misconception that Montessori teacher training is a “specialization” to pursue after completion of a traditional credentialing program. In fact, the Montessori teaching credential requires a program of coursework commensurate with the major portion of a higher education credentialing degree,

with comparable required competencies and clock hours, and considerably more time spent in mentoring and practicum experiences.

The Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education

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(MACTE), recognized by the U.S. Department of Education since 1995, is the national accreditor for Montessori teacher education programs and institutions. MACTE provides the public quality assurance for these programs and also gives our Montessori advocacy community a single unified form of credential language around which to build our requests. We can all advocate for state recognition of Montessori teaching credentials from MACTE accredited programs, and speak with one clear voice. States can have the quality assurance through MACTE, and will still likely require post-secondary degrees in any major area and possibly state specific testing.

Some states have already taken this important step to increasing the possibilities of offering parents the choice of authentic Montessori classrooms, public and private, by recognizing the Montessori credential as a pathway to state teacher licensure. Minnesota, Montana, Ohio, South Carolina, and Wisconsin currently have a provision for the Montessori credential as a pathway to licensure. Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Maryland, and Tennessee have work in progress.

The process to credential recognition can be arduous. As this is labor-intensive work, a coalition or advocacy group can share the responsibilities for the state. The Montessori Public Policy Initiative has representative organizations in 38 states, engaged in advocacy work for favorable public policy supporting authentic Montessori education, and the goal of that opportunity existing for all children.

When a group begins the process towards credential recognition, they first need to establish what, if any, credit is presently given for the Montessori credential, and what the requirements would be for that credential to be a pathway to licensure. Every state has different organizational structures, so it is important to find out exactly who

those decision makers are, and then establish and cultivate relationships with them. Many, even most, legislators and regulatory officials will not have working knowledge of what Montessori is, so offering school tours or educational presentations can be very valuable. Joining committees at the state level to support the work of these officials is a great relationship building tool and may also increase your knowledge of the process.

Start the conversation informally as the relationships grow, to get a sense of what might be acceptable to the decision makers. When you know that, it is time to make your ask. Prepare a written request and carefully articulate your reasoning for the recognition based on what the existing requirements are, in the language that the state has already established.

MPPI has recently been able to hire full time staff and can offer technical assistance and coaching through this process in coordination with MACTE. Once you have your request prepared, it is very important to have someone from MACTE review it to make sure that the language is all correct. Legislation or regulations put into effect with incorrect language could cause problems down the road and possibly decrease effectiveness. Often, there will be a face to face meeting scheduled with state officials, and Rebecca Pelton, president of MACTE, makes it a priority to attend and testify on behalf of the request.

This process is long and complicated, and may have setbacks before success, but when we consider the challenges our Montessori public programs face as they attempt to flourish, it is clear what an important issue recognition of the Montessori credential is to providing authentic Montessori opportunities for families. Communication and relationship building are the two most important components of this type of advocacy work. We can be confident

in the quality and comprehensiveness of the Montessori teacher preparation, and the challenge is to find the language so that policymakers will agree.

For more information about how to join the Montessori advocacy organization in your state, or to start an organization if there is not one, contact Denise Monnier at [denise@montessoriadvocacy.org](mailto:denise@montessoriadvocacy.org)

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