



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY

education that transforms lives

AMS Issue Paper: Montessori and State-Funded Pre-Kindergarten

Across the country, policymakers from both sides of the aisle are supporting prekindergarten as a powerful and cost-effective way to help ensure young children come to school prepared to succeed and to increase our nation's global competitiveness. These results depend upon the availability of high-quality early learning environments. Yet Montessori programs are an overlooked program option in states' pre-kindergarten legislation. Only four states (AL, CT, FL, and GA) officially include Montessori programs as partners in delivering their pre-kindergarten programs.

The Montessori community, from its very beginning in 1907, has been committed to the education of young children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Due to economic and regulatory circumstances, children in today's Montessori programs most often come from middle or upper class families. The American Montessori Society (AMS) is committed to working with state legislators and administrators to expand the number of states that include the Montessori community as a pre-kindergarten partner because this offers a way to increase participation by children who will benefit from the Montessori Approach.

IT MAKES SENSE TO INCLUDE MONTESSORI PROGRAMS IN THE STATE'S PRE-K DELIVERY SYSTEM

- The American Montessori Society endorses the value of publicly funded prekindergarten as an important way to ensure that all young children, especially those from economically disadvantaged environments, are well prepared for success in school and beyond.
- Families want a variety of choices when selecting a pre-kindergarten (pre-k) program for their children. Inclusion of Montessori programs in state legislation expands the options available to families.
- Effective pre-k programs increase children's school success in kindergarten and beyond. Affiliated Montessori programs meet established program standards and are recognized for promoting children's positive development and preparing children to succeed academically. The Montessori individualized curriculum is specially designed to promote children's literacy in reading and math.
- Having a wide range of program partners who deliver the state's pre-k program expands access for families, promotes more efficient use of public and private investments, and improves quality across all settings. Including Montessori programs as part of the state's diverse pre-k delivery system increases the number of partners working together on behalf of young children's success in school and beyond.

It makes sense to incorporate Montessori programs as part of a state's delivery system for pre-k. Montessori programs achieve their strong results by relying on a unique approach to education. This fact necessitates that states modify some of their current legislation and/or rules and regulations in order to accommodate the unique elements of the Montessori Approach into the state's pre-k delivery system.

MAKING IT POSSIBLE FOR MONTESSORI PROGRAMS TO PARTICIPATE AS A PRE-K PARTNER

- The Montessori curriculum has been assessed in multiple evaluation and longitudinal studies. Its well planned curriculum has consistently demonstrated positive impact on children's learning. Consequently, its curriculum should be sanctioned and included as a curriculum option for a state's publicly funded pre-kindergarten.
- The Montessori Approach follows a different model than conventional education programs. Montessori programs achieve their strong results, in part, by grouping children in mixed-age cohorts accompanied by skilled teacher guidance. Group size often exceeds pre-k regulations because children 3- to 6-years of age are grouped together for 3 years so they can learn and grow with each other in the same cohort. When Montessori programs fall outside of the state's program quality standards, legislation can stipulate that Montessori programs are recognized for inclusion in the state's pre-k delivery system based on specified criteria.
- Most Montessori teachers undergo rigorous, specialized training that results in a Montessori credential. We ask that an alternative route to meeting the state certification requirements for pre-k teachers include:
 - An AMS Montessori teaching credential from a Teacher Education Program accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (an accrediting group recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education),
 - And a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education.

As a stand-alone, the AMS Montessori teaching credential should be recognized as meeting the state's pre-k teacher preparation requirements when they are less than a four-year degree (e.g., an Associate's degree or the Child Development Credential [CDA]).

Expanding a state's delivery system to include Montessori programs has challenges. Yet the benefits for the children, families, schools, and communities make the effort worthwhile.

Adopted by the AMS Board of Directors on August 16, 2008