

# Montessori Teacher Education Programs: Do they count?

A Comprehensive Nationwide Study of Early Childhood Professional  
Development Systems' Childcare Workforce Registries.

**Report of Findings (November 2014).**

Kimberlee Belcher-Badal, M.Ed.

PhD Candidate, Indiana University

Curriculum & Instruction and Policy & Leadership

As a preface, Early Childhood Workforce Registries are part of all-encompassing Federal Mandates to raise Quality and reinforce accountability in Early Learning across the country. Every state was provided the freedom to make the definitions and system their own but the predominant objective was to create a structure whereby states could report on quality indicators for the workforce. Variables such as education, training, employment history, wages, turnover, awards, and contributions are tracked in this system. While registries are implemented differently in every state, they share many of the same qualities and serve the same overarching purpose: collecting data, reporting on quality indicators of the childcare workforce, tracking changes over time and identifying which incentives are effective or need modifying. In many states, incentives to increase quality are tied to Registry Recognition through Federally mandated, State defined formalized Career Matrixes (Pathway/Ladder/Lattice).

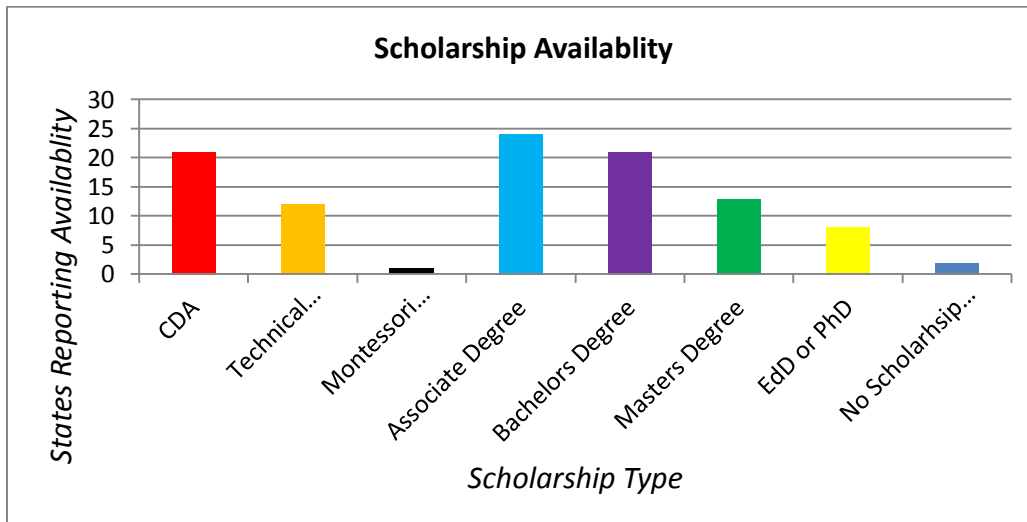
This Career Matrix, identifying the evolution of the Early Childhood Professional from a novice to an expert, is used to recognize and guide professional development; it is also used to reward, retain, and recruit quality individuals to the field of Early Learning. In sum, more and more states are building registries and career matrixes into professional development systems (how that is implemented varies by state); to date, 41 states have a Registry in some form, each with a career pathway or ladder levels identifying where each teacher is recognized. Currently, an extensive network of incentives is linked to Registry Recognition Levels. Participation in Registry Recognition Levels have been tied to a variety of incentives including the following: Professional Recognition, Scholarships, Wage Increases, Stipends, Student Loan Forgiveness, Grants, Insurance Benefits, Refundable Tax Credits, Training, etc. The impact on and interaction with the Alternative Pedagogy Teacher and their Preparation Programs is examined in this study.

In the Fall of 2013 and Spring of 2014, a nationwide study of Child Care Workforce Registries and Alternative Pedagogy Teacher Education (Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Steiner-Inspired) unfolded. There were three phases of data collection in the study; first surveying all Early Childhood Registry Directors (or designated Representative) across the country, 28 participated. The second was interviewing key leadership across diverse communities. There were a total of 12 interviews, five from State Registry Offices in strategic states: Alaska, Georgia, Nevada, New Hampshire, and Oregon. Another seven interviews came from the following representative leadership across the Alternative Pedagogy Communities (Montessori, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia, Lifeways).

Finally, in the last phase of the study, 125 Teacher Education Preparation Directors were contacted, (representing a mixed accredited/member recognized alternative-pedagogy teacher preparation cohort) with an invitation to share their experiences and respond to policies from their state; there were 54 responses, representing 25 states. The attached Policy Brief provides some of the findings as they relate specifically to the MACTE Accredited Montessori Community's Teacher Preparation Programs (Education, Training & Recognition). Recommended Courses of Action for the Montessori Community, from the study, are provided in the closing.

### **Registry Specific Findings:**

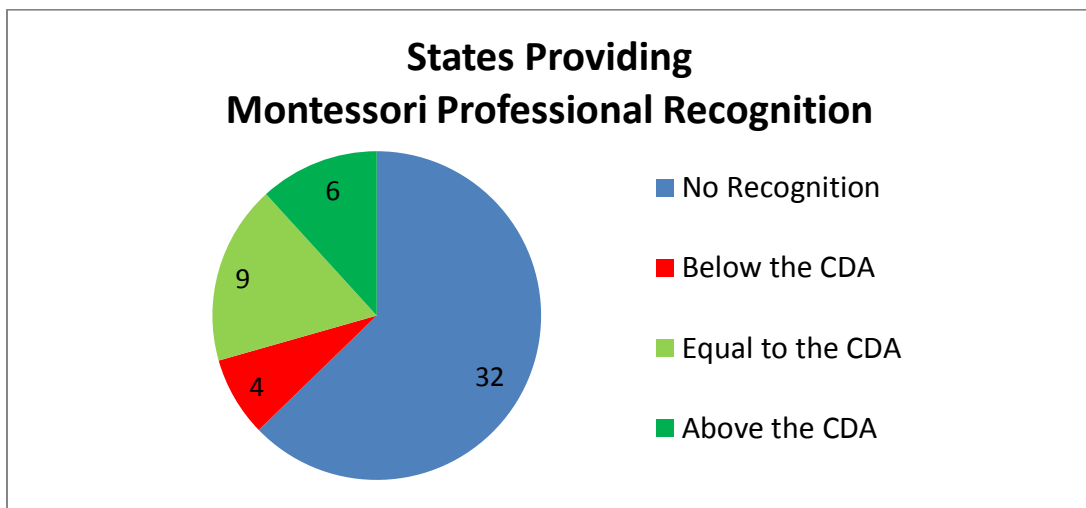
- Nationwide, 16 states (32%) reported using a Career Matrix for Professional Recognition.
- For Scholarship Opportunities, 32% of states (16) reported opportunities linked to placement levels in the Career Matrix and 24% of states indicated free training access.
- Seven states nationwide reported having financial incentives tied to registry recognition levels. Five states had wage supplements, grants or other benefits. Two states indicated they offered wage incentives or stipends.
- Five states indicated they had no benefits or incentives attached to their registry.
- Nearly half the nation, (24 states) indicated Scholarship Opportunities were available for Associate Degree Completion. There were 21 states who reported scholarship availability for the Child Development Associate (CDA) and for Bachelor Degrees. A total of 13 states specified scholarship for Master's Degrees and 12 states for Technical Certificates in ECE or Child Care Apprenticeship Programs. Finally, 8 states also indicated scholarship availability for Doctoral Degrees in ECE.
- Only Alaska offered scholarship dollars for MACTE Accredited Teacher Preparation.



### **Registry Findings specific to the Montessori Community**

- When asked if anyone from the Registry Office had Montessori knowledge, experience, or education, 12 states reported they had Montessori Informed Staff (6 offices said Registry Directors, 7 Registry Staff, 5 Registry Advisory Committee Member).
- When asked who the Registry Office consults with on MACTE Accredited Montessori Certificates, 12 reported using a Non-Montessori Agency such as NAEYC, National Workforce Registry Alliance, Regional Technical Assistance, and the State Early Learning Advisory Council. Only one state indicated they used the training institution in their state to consult with.

- The Child Development Associate (CDA) is the most common form of non-credit recognition found in State Workforce Registries. It is an entry level teacher preparation course for the novice professional. It is 120 hours, covers at least 13 competency standards in the ECE Profession including content areas such as: health, safety, physical, cognitive, social, creative, family, etc. The CDA is commonly a career level 1 or 2 in many states, entry level acknowledgement of a novice professional, followed by Institution of Higher Education degree levels.
- For the 24 states who indicated their state registry used a career matrix, 8 states indicated they recognized MACTE Accredited Montessori Teacher Preparation. Of those, only four states reported Montessori Recognition at a level above the CDA (*aggregate study findings were 6*). All figures include DC in the mention of states.
- Two State Registries reported recognition of MACTE Accredited Montessori Certificates at entry level, equivalent to 40 hours of training or below the CDA (*aggregate study findings were 4*).
- Georgia had the highest recognized equivalency placement levels in the country, with MACTE Accredited Preparation recognized at the same recognition level as the Associate Degree. Five states closely followed course (DE, MN, NV, OR, and WA) providing a level of recognition one level below the Associate Degree but above the CDA and allowed the Montessori Credential to be used in conjunction with a degree, in any field, for recognition at the degreed level (with a specialization).



- A total of 14 states reported having an appeals process, for placement issues.
- Asked about tracking Montessori Teachers in the Registry, six states could provide actual numbers (2 reported over 100, 3 reported 60 or less, and 1 said there were 10 or less).

### *Sample comments from the Phase I Registry Directors Survey included:*

- “We will need to find out if these specialized certifications meet the 120 clock hours of training AND the [State] Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers.”
- “The Oregon registry acknowledges that there are many high quality programs and pathways to working with children. All programs that connect to Oregon's childhood care and education standards, the Core Body of Knowledge, should be represented in the Oregon Registry.”
- “We have had numerous discussions about how to best quantify Montessori training and recently changed the descriptors on the Career Pathways to better recognize those individuals.”
- “Yes. Waldorf and Montessori have contacted the Registry to be recognized. The Montessori credential from an accredited program is recognized as equivalent to a CDA. Waldorf training hours are accepted, but no type of Waldorf credential, is on par with a CDA.”
- “When an applicant with a degree in another field also submits a Montessori diploma, the highest level of formal education obtained will be granted (the Montessori diploma is viewed in the same light as an “ECE Endorsement”).”
- “No one [state staff] has formal certificates of achievement in these alternative pedagogies. Many of the state staff have all taken ad hoc classes that included information about these learning strategies/philosophies.”

### **Cumulative Study Findings as of November of 2014:**

- There were operational Child Care Workforce Registries in 41 States, including DC.
- An estimated 32 states nationwide do not recognize MACTE Teacher Preparation.
- Montessori Recognition in the Career Ladder/ Registry was offered in 19 states and DC.
- *Of the 19 recognizing MACTE Accredited Teachers:*
  - 21% (4) recognized their training at a level below that of the CDA.
  - 47% (9) recognized the Montessori Credential on a level equal to that of the CDA.
  - 32% of Montessori Recognizing states (6) do so at a level above the CDA, typically a level right below the Associates Degree.
- In May of 2014, five non-recognizing states indicated they were in the process of correcting this omission but did not indicate where in their matrix recognition would be.
- There are 17 states currently recognizing Montessori Education **publicly in print**.
- Roughly 19 states have indicated a willingness to work on Montessori Policy Language.

## **Recommendations, from the study, for the Montessori TEP Community:**

- Get really clear and concise in how you describe your training program; help others to do the same. Know the fast facts about your institution. (How many students current, cumulative; How many hours of training/practicum; Average Program Cost for IT/ECE/EL; are you accredited; who are you affiliated with; what does that mean accredited/affiliated; etc.)
- Identify Policy Leaders in your state: begin or develop relationship building.
- Make an effort to know and understand people, without asking for something in return.
- Outreach, reach out to individuals and offices for information and resource sharing.
- Develop Advocacy Agenda for your institution, staff/faculty, students, and community.
- Join or facilitate a state Montessori Work Group in your state.
- Invite policy offices or policy makers to be a relevant guest lecturer in your program.
- Gather information regarding policy: language, makers, and enforcers for your state.
- Make regularly timed attempts to connect your policy makers to your community through site visit invitations, visits to their offices/buildings, or through community events. Examples where your institution can reach out to policy makers (Office of Early Learning, Licensing, Department of Ed, Politicians, Department of Health and Human Services, etc.) include “Worth Wage Day,” “Montessori Anniversaries,” “Peace Day,” “Child Rights,” etc...
- Make concerted efforts to be on the speaking list for local and state conferences. Consider joining those planning committees or organizations (local AEYC chapters, etc.). When possible, join forces with similar alternative pedagogy communities in sharing your unique vision and methods within professional development systems.
- Identify the benefits of being accredited and discuss those with staff, students and the community. Support everyone in using the same language and understand what is included and what is not included.
- Attend and provide feedback in calls for public comment, community and state meetings. If attendance is not an option, you can still submit comments and concerns in writing.
- Check in regularly with national organizations such as MACTE or Affiliations for upcoming opportunities for participation, information dissemination, webinars and the like.
- Identify your stakeholders and work to develop them in leadership efforts, grooming for positive advocacy, and as a support network.