

An Evaluation of Montessori Education in South Carolina's Public Schools

2015-2016 Implementation Survey Results Summary

Prepared by:

Dr. Brooke Culclasure, Principal Investigator

Dr. David Fleming, Project Statistician

Ms. Alexis Sprogis, Research Specialist

Survey Highlights

This report presents findings from the Implementation Survey, as part of a comprehensive study of public school Montessori education in South Carolina being conducted by the Riley Institute at Furman University and funded by the Self Family Foundation and the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee. The primary goal of the survey, which is administered yearly, is to understand the extent to which public schools in South Carolina are adhering to the Montessori model.

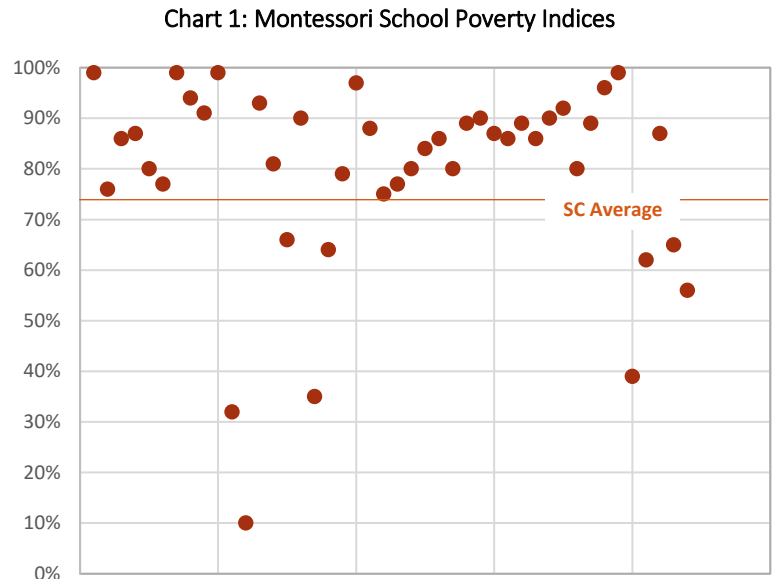
On October 6, 2015 the Implementation Survey was administered via email to all principals of Montessori programs within the South Carolina public school system. Of the 45 programs in the state, 36 responded (80% response rate).

Of the survey's major findings, the majority of principals report that:

- the Montessori programs at their schools have been in existence over 10 years
- nearly all of the teachers at their school have Montessori credentials for the level they teach or are in the process of being credentialed
- almost every Montessori teacher at their school has a teaching assistant or paraprofessional
- all of their Montessori classrooms are equipped with a full complement of level-appropriate Montessori materials
- all of their Montessori classrooms are multi-aged based on Montessori's three-year age span
- all of their Montessori classrooms have at least 2.5 hours of uninterrupted work periods per day
- they have attended one or more Montessori-focused workshop, conference, or training session in the last year
- higher levels of administration (district, state, etc.) always or often demonstrate support for their school's Montessori program
- state and district mandates are the most common barrier to authentic Montessori implementation
- these mandates impact their ability to implement authentic Montessori to some extent

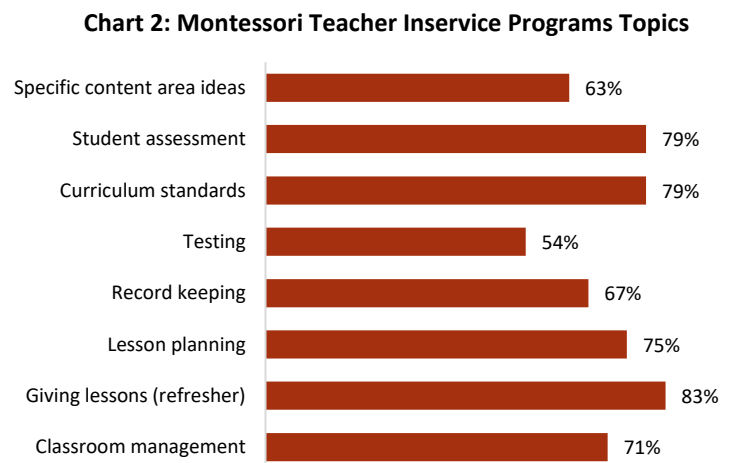
Program Information

- **89%** of principals report that the Montessori programs operating in their schools are school-within-a-school programs and **11%** are whole-school programs
- **34%** have been in existence over 10 years; **11%** are in their first year of operation
- On average, primary and lower elementary levels have the most number of classes
- **62%** are classified as Title I schools
- **70%** of schools with Montessori programs have a poverty index higher than the state average (see **Chart 1**)
- **33%** are located in rural areas; **44%** in suburban areas; **22%** in urban areas
- **54%** have an enrollment waiting list; on average, there are **40 students** on Montessori program waiting lists
- **56%** use another non-traditional curriculum or approach alongside Montessori, including STEM, Balanced Literacy, PBL, and arts or language infusion
- **43%** are accredited by a national or international organization or association; of these, **58%** are accredited by AMS; and **33%** by MEPI
- **44%** are member schools of a national or international Montessori organization or association



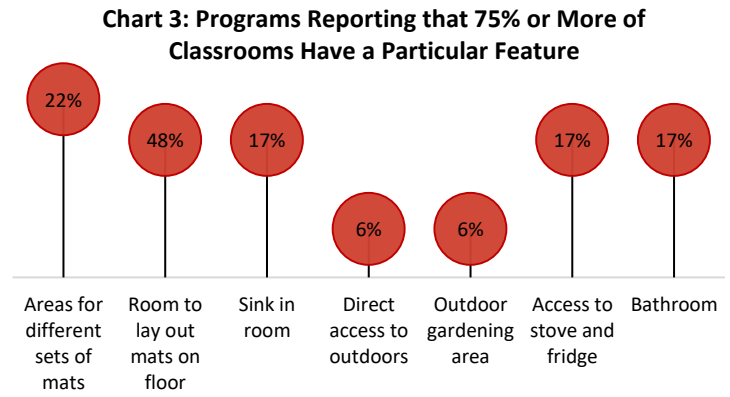
Teachers, Training, and Recruitment

- **74%** of principals report that teachers at their school have Montessori credentials for the level they teach; **22%** are in the process of obtaining credentials
- **58%** report that teachers attend two or more teacher trainings per year that are led by experienced, credentialed Montessori educators; **11%** have one per year; **31%** do not have any (see **Chart 2** for training topic information)
- **25%** of principals currently maintain (either by school or district office) an active and open recruitment for Montessori-credentialed teachers
- **86%** of principals report that teachers have at least one teaching assistant or paraprofessional; **33%** report that teaching assistants and paraprofessionals receive training provided by the school



Classroom Structure and Environment

- **81%** of principals report that **all** of their Montessori classrooms are equipped with a full complement of level-appropriate Montessori materials
- **63%** report that **all** of their Montessori classrooms are multi-aged based on Montessori’s three-year age span
- **72%** report that **all** of their Montessori classrooms have at least 2.5 hours of uninterrupted work periods per day
- See **Chart 3** for an illustration of specific features found in Montessori classrooms across all programs



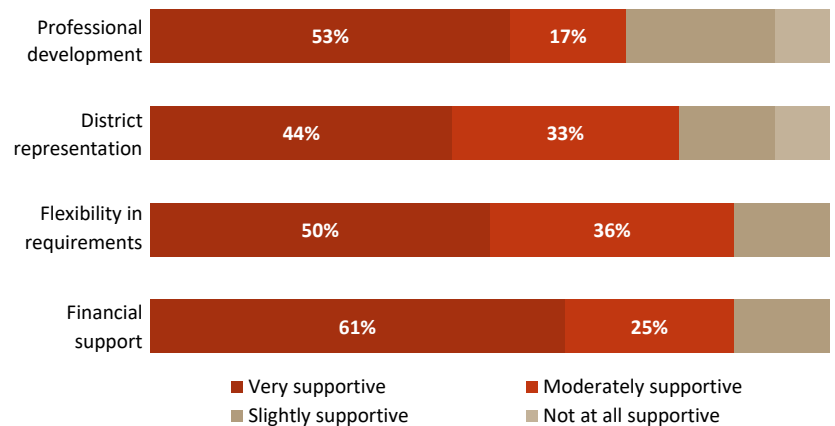
Student Assessment and Communication

- **56%** of principals report that Montessori teachers in their schools never use numerical or letter grades in the classroom; **25%** report that teachers sometimes do
- **92%** report that teachers assess the social-emotional well-being of students at their school; the majority do this through informal observation in the classroom
- **75%** report that each parent has two or more conferences per year with their child’s teacher to review his or her progress
- **75%** report that their school provides two or more on-going parent education programs to promote the understanding of Montessori principles, curriculum, and methods; topics include Montessori materials, Montessori philosophy, and testing/curriculum

Administration, Leadership, and Program Support

- **19%** of principals are in their first year as a Montessori principal
- **14%** have a Montessori teacher certification; **8%** have a Montessori administrator certification
- **100%** have attended one or more Montessori-focused workshop, conference, or training session in the last year
- **64%** report that their school has a curriculum coordinator; of these, **35%** have experience as a Montessori teacher and **74%** have attended one or more Montessori-focused workshop, conference, or training session in the last year
- **87%** report that higher levels of administration (district, state, etc.) always or often demonstrate support for their school’s Montessori program (see **Chart 4** for the levels and types of support provided)

Chart 4: Levels and Types of Support from District Administration



Authenticity of the Montessori Program

- **State and district mandates** are reported as being the most common barrier to Montessori implementation (see **Chart 5**)
- **22%** of principals report that their schools focus a lot on preparation for state-mandated assessments
- **75%** of principals report that state, district, and federal mandates impact their ability to implement authentic Montessori to some extent

Chart 5: Barriers to Authentic Montessori Implementation

