

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

2015-2016 Educator Survey Results Summary

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Survey Highlights

This report presents findings from the Educator Survey, as part of an independent study of Montessori programs in South Carolina's public schools, conducted by the Riley Institute at Furman University and funded by the Self Family Foundation and the Education Oversight Committee. The primary goals of the survey were: 1) to explore how and to what extent public educators across South Carolina are implementing Montessori; and 2) to understand the perception of educators across the country of Montessori impact on students and their schools.

In May 2016, the Educator Survey was administered via email to all Montessori educators within South Carolina public schools. Over 190 educators responded to the survey, which provides for statistically projectable results.

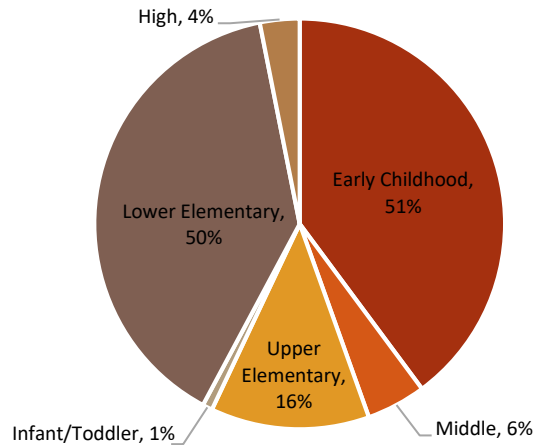
Of the survey's major findings, the majority of educators:

- hold a Montessori credential for the level that they currently teach
- have Master's degree
- make some modifications to Montessori educational classroom practices
- cite testing requirements as having the most impact on their ability to implement an authentic Montessori approach
- are able implement authentic Montessori curriculum/lessons while incorporating South Carolina state standards
- agree that their students are making progress academically, behaviorally, and socially
- agree that Montessori has a positive influence on the development of the skills and characteristics outlines in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, including creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and teamwork, and self-direction
- feel supported by administration and other teachers and staff in their school
- receive sufficient professional development to stay current in the field.
- feel positively towards their job and plan to remain in the teaching profession as a Montessori teacher
- believe that Montessori education in South Carolina has the potential to be sustained and/or grow.

Educator Demographics

- Most respondents are **primary** and **lower elementary** Montessori educators; **58%** have been teaching for 10 years or more; **27%** have been teaching in the Montessori classroom for 10 years or more
- **67%** have master's degrees; **32%** have bachelor's degrees; **1%** have a doctorate degree
- **95%** of educators hold a Montessori credential for the level they currently teach
- **64%** earned their credential from an American Montessori Society (AMS) teacher education program; **31%** through a college or university program; **15%** through Montessori Educational Programs International; **8%** through American Montessori International
- The most credentialed levels are **early childhood** and **lower elementary** (see **Chart 1**)

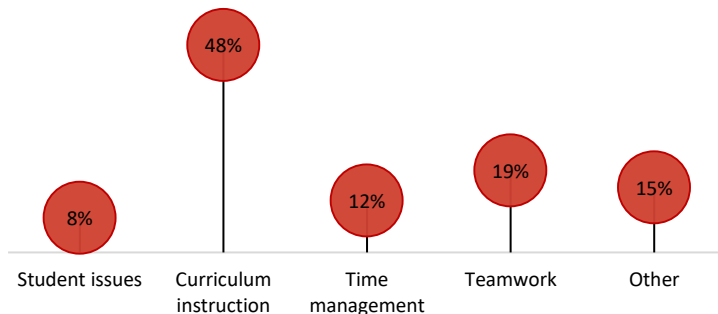
Chart 1: Montessori Credentials by Level



Training and Professional Development

- **83%** report that they are observed in their classroom at least 2 times per school year for at least 30 minutes; **74%** report that they are provided helpful feedback after they are observed

Chart 2: Professional Development Needs

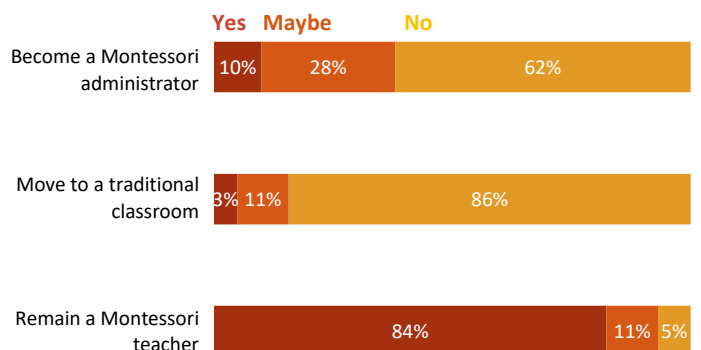


- **48%** report that their school or district implements 2 or more Montessori teacher trainings every year
- **76%** report that they receive enough professional development to stay current in their field
- The majority of educators report that their biggest professional development need is **Montessori-specific curriculum instruction** (see **Chart 2**)

Job Satisfaction and Future Career Plans

- **59%** of educators feel supported to some extent in their school
- **72%** agree to some extent that their principal has adequate knowledge about Montessori
- **64%** report loving their job as a Montessori teacher; **31%** report liking their job
- **84%** plan to remain a Montessori teacher; **3%** plan to move to a traditional classroom; **10%** plan to become a Montessori administrator (see **Chart 3**)

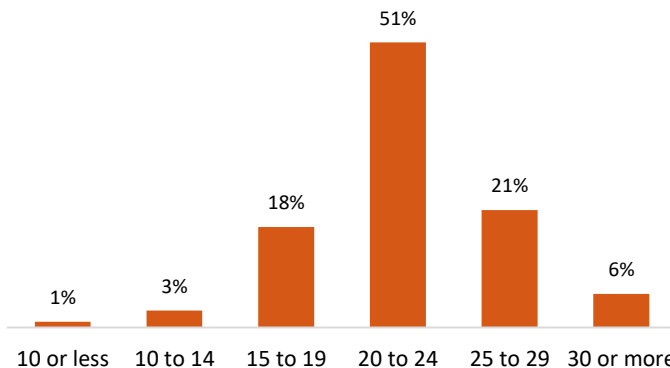
Chart 3: Future Plans of Montessori Educators



Classroom Demographics

- **81%** of primary and elementary level educators report that their classrooms are appropriately multi-aged according to the Montessori Model; **50%** of middle level educators report that all of their classes are appropriately multi-aged according to the Montessori Model
- **85%** agree to some extent that they are able to keep up with the multiple ages/levels of children in their classroom
- **84%** have a full-time teaching assistant; **5%** have a part-time assistant; **11%** do not have an assistant
- The majority of educators report having between 21 and 24 students currently enrolled in their classrooms (see **Chart 4**)

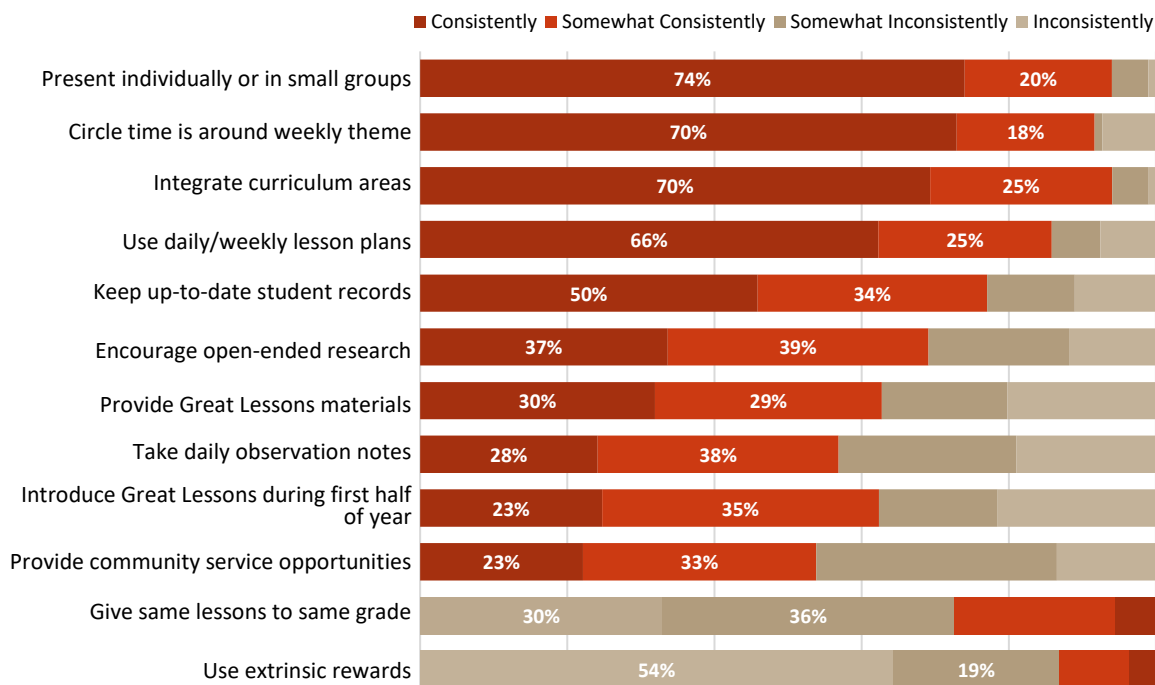
Chart 4: Montessori Enrollment by Number of Students in Class



Educator Practices in the Classroom

- Educators report presenting an average of **6 lessons** during the typical school day
- **69%** report that they have all or most of the key Montessori materials necessary to present lessons
- **80%** use the Montessori curriculum/sequence (training albums) as their foremost teaching guide
- **36%** report that their school makes them use a pacing guide to prepare students for benchmark tests
- **56%** report that their school uses a specially created Montessori report card
- Educators report varying levels of consistency with regards to other specific educational practices within their classrooms (see **Chart 5**)

Chart 5: Use of Educational Practices in the Montessori Classroom

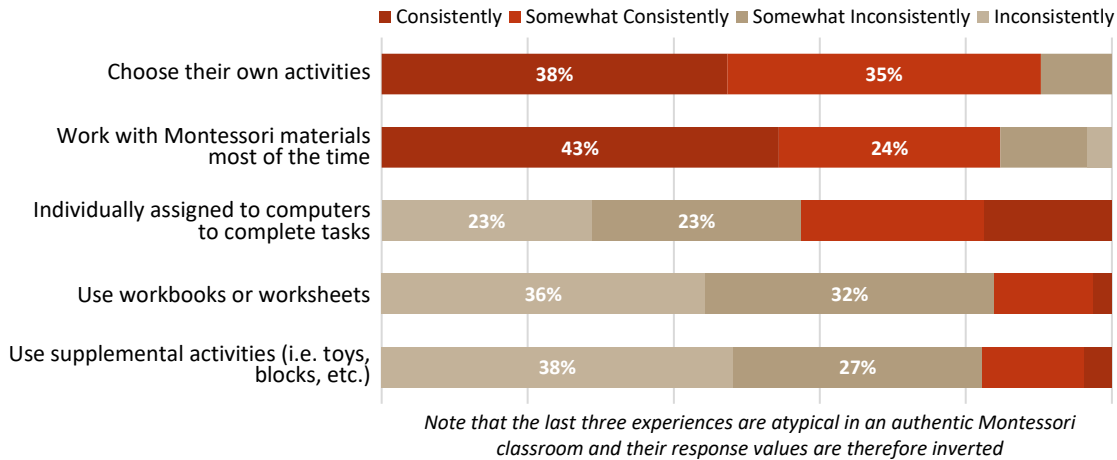


Note that the last two practices are contrary to Montessori principles and their response values are therefore inverted

Student Experiences in the Classroom

- Educators report varying levels of consistency with regards to experience their students typically have in the classroom (see **Chart 6**)

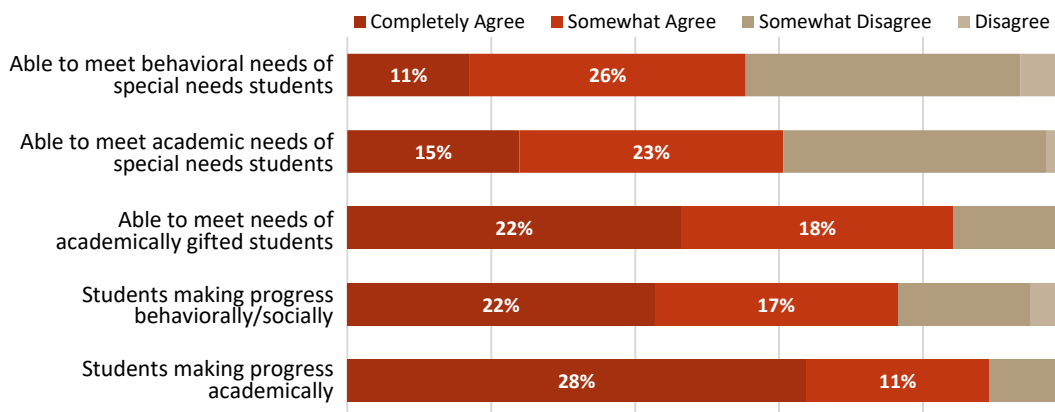
Chart 6: Student Experiences in the Montessori Classroom



Student Learning and Outcomes

- The majority of educators agree to some extent that, on the whole, their students are making steady progress and that they are able to meet the needs of their academically gifted and/or special needs students (see **Chart 7**)

Chart 7: Montessori Student Learning and Outcomes



Montessori and the Skills of the South Carolina Graduate

- Educators agree that Montessori helps students develop many of the characteristics cited in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate



100% completely agree or somewhat agree that Montessori helps develop critical thinking and problem solving skills



99% completely agree or somewhat agree that Montessori helps students develop creativity and innovation



99% completely agree or somewhat agree that Montessori helps students develop collaboration/teamwork

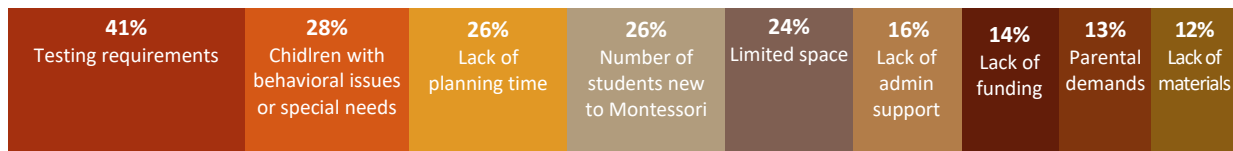


97% completely agree or somewhat agree that Montessori helps students develop self-direction skills

Authenticity of the Montessori Program

- **46%** agree to some extent that their school’s Montessori program authenticity is decreasing each year
- **40%** completely agree that they are able to implement authentic Montessori curriculum/lessons while incorporating South Carolina state standards; **48%** somewhat agree
- **54%** report that they make slight modifications to Montessori educational classroom practices; **28%** make moderate modifications; **6%** make extensive modifications
- The majority of educators report that **testing requirements** have the largest impact on their ability to implement authentic Montessori (see **Chart 8**)

Chart 8: Circumstances that Have an Extensive or Moderate Impact on Authentic Montessori Implementation



Future of Public School Montessori in South Carolina

- **83%** of educators believe that Montessori education in South Carolina has the potential to be sustained and/or grow