

At the Intersection of Quality, Recognition, and Policy Inclusion

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For decades an increased understanding of and interest in supporting high quality care and education have led to higher standards and accountability across policy, practice, and preparation. In 2001, the Good Start Grow Smart Initiative prioritized Early Childhood in ways the Early Childhood field had never experienced. The Federal Government put in motion a policy movement to recognize high quality, support continuous improvement, and educate all care providers. This system is now widely recognized as the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), a multidimensional effort to address keys to quality.

The five common keys to a QRIS include: a) standards used to assign ratings to programs, b) accountability based on benchmarks for self-improvement, c) provider support through a Professional Development System, d) financial incentives for positive growth, e) a framework for consumer education. States across the country are in varying degrees of development of their QRIS; some with advanced systems in which components are mandatory, others still in development and voluntary. How the QRIS system and various components developed, function, and where they are administered varies by state.

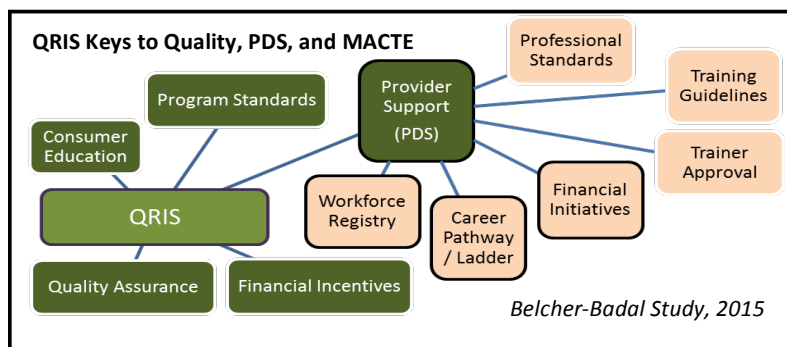
Impact for the Montessori Community, in terms of quality recognition, has been significant; particularly in states with mandatory QRIS participation. Issues around definitions, interpretations, and conformity have made it difficult for the Montessori Community to remain true to their traditions, while simultaneously meeting non-traditional criteria. Slowly, over the past decade, the Montessori Community has rallied, organized and begun to push back against policy that doesn't fit well. There are many examples of state successes to applaud; yet, their efforts have not come without a cost. The resources and manpower required to accomplish policy work is substantial. It requires mastering cross-community languages, articulating similar objectives, and aligning outcomes. One must become effective at translating, as well as collaborating; even then, considerable time is required to persist in persuading policy.

MACTE has organized and identified a strategy to overcome this policy situation. This work has included researching and analyzing policy language, developing supporting documentation, identifying a strategy forward, creating a nationwide database of policy makers, creation of a Policy Maker's Guide to Recognizing Montessori Teachers, hiring an individual dedicated to overseeing and implementing this effort across the country, and initiating contact with policy makers. At this time, we are pleased to share the culmination of our efforts thus far.

With several pilot state successes (WA, OR, NH), MACTE is now prepared to take the request for policy inclusion to every state. While working in collaboration with National Organizations (such as the Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI), National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, and North American Montessori Teacher Association, NCMPS etc.), the Recognized Affiliations (AMI, AMS, IMC, IND, IAPM, MEPI, and PAMS), and Policy Makers in every state, MACTE is pleased to share our current happenings and anticipated outcomes.

In June, MACTE contacted policy makers in New York to begin the process for appropriate articulation of Montessori Credentials from MACTE Accredited Teacher Education Programs. New York provides an example of the importance in using MACTE in this effort. Currently, in New York, Montessori Teacher Credentials are recognized at a level below the Child Development Associate (CDA, a 120 hour training). Policy language in New York also limits the articulation recognition of the credentials. MACTE is pleased to share a request has been submitted for recognition of all credentials received from a MACTE accredited Teacher Education Program, at optimal levels across the NY Career Ladder and in the NY Registry. The anticipated outcome of this effort is increased recognition for Montessori Teachers, higher ratings for the programs they serve, and greater access to financial incentives.

As depicted in the diagram below, QRIS is a massive policy structure that will require the entire Montessori Community to come together, advocate for one another, and stand in solidarity as we push to become hard-wired in the system for recognizing and rewarding high quality care and education. MACTE serves the greater Montessori Community by addressing “Provider Support,” through the Professional Development System (PDS). As state policy systems become inclusive of Montessori Credentials, we can anticipate increased access to and participation in the financial incentives linked to quality and accountability measures.



There are still many keys to quality that will need to be addressed (early childhood program quality and evaluation, early learning standards, consumer education, demonstration of efficacy, etc.). Through collaborative projects across the Montessori Community we expect to see increasing successes. MACTE anticipates nationwide policy inclusion for Infant/Toddler and ECE Credentials by Fall of 2016. Further, MACTE is working towards inclusion of Elementary and Secondary Credentials for Teacher License/Certification in all states by the Summer of 2017. Copies of many of the documents used for policy makers and the community are available on our website or by request. Please visit our website for policy updates or contact us directly with inquiries.