



Beginning a Montessori State Organization: The Importance of One Voice

You have 2-3 committed fellow Montessori educators who understand the importance of a Montessori organization at the state level. You've agreed on an overall mission and goals, including advocacy for quality Montessori in your state. Now what?

To really engage in meaningful advocacy, it takes a community, power in numbers, and shared work. To begin building that community, a great starting place is a census of Montessori schools in your state. The most successful groups are those who take their mission of inclusion seriously. All programs are invited to participate. Large schools, small schools, private schools, public schools, even Montessori-of- schools.

Step One:

- Choose a name for the group.
- Begin your census with online resources.
 - ✓ Check your state Child Care Licensing Office to find “centers” with Montessori in their name.
 - ✓ Search Montessori schools by city, county, or region.
 - ✓ Look to social media.
- Create your spread sheet
 - ✓ Location
 - ✓ Contact information- email, phone number, web address.
 - ✓ Levels, # of classrooms, # of students at each level, # of staff, #Montessori credentialed teachers.
- Email each school
 - ✓ Explain who you are and reasons and goals for starting a state organization.
 - ✓ Asking about their goals, their concerns, what they would like to see in a state group.
 - ✓ Invite them to join in as the organization moves forward. (informal at this point- not about membership)
 - ✓ This should give you an initial sense of those schools, and individuals, who have some interest, those whose addresses aren't active, and hopefully, a sense of what are schools' concerns.

- Divide the list with core group and call each school.

Personal contact is an important step in sharing your enthusiasm, listening to the needs of the community, and as a concrete example of the organization's commitment to bringing the community together. Beginning to form personal relationships with your community is going to be crucial to your growth, sustainability, and any efforts you want to make in support of Montessori.

- Create a simple web site to share your mission and goals- even just a home page to start is important.
 - ✓ Share the URL in your email and on your phone calls.
 - ✓ Start a Facebook page.
- Agree on organization structure
 - ✓ File Articles of Incorporation- Secretary of State website- one page
 - ✓ Decide on initial board- Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer (required for A of I).
 - ✓ Apply for 501 (c) 3. IRS EZ Form- very easy and quick.
 - ✓ Decide on a source of funds.

Boar members can contribute. Ask interested schools to be a “Founding School” for a \$250 contribution and post their logo on website and FB. (It will be deductible retroactively after you apply for non-profit status).

- Build relationships and community
 - ✓ Schedule a simple event- Meet and Greet, Make and Take, Colleague Conversation gathering- just for fun.
 - ✓ Share your ideas for mission and goals. Share your enthusiasm and invite participation.

You are on your way!!!!

Christine was a co-founder of the Colorado Montessori Association, and The Southeast Montessori Collective. She has guided several states in their formation of state Montessori organizations, guided them with all set up and organization, and helped them take next steps in bringing their Montessori community together.

She has worked on advocacy and policy efforts for the Montessori community nationally and worked with several Montessori state organizations on the development/ implementation of state Validation Projects, recognition of the Montessori credential, and understanding state rules and regulations leading to variances and waivers for the Montessori community.