

## The Importance of One Voice: Beginning a Montessori State Organization

by Christine Lowry, M.Ed.



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. As we say in the southeast, "all y'all" are invited to participate. Large schools, small schools, private schools, public schools, even Montessori-sort of-schools.

Steps to consider:

- Choose a name for the group.
- Agree on structure of organization
  - ✓ File Articles of Incorporation. See your Secretary of State website for this one page document
  - ✓ Decide on initial board- Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer (required for A of I).
  - ✓ Apply for 501 (c) 3. IRS EZ Form. This is very easy and quick.
  - ✓ Decide on a source of funds. (One idea is to ask schools if they would like to be "founders" with their logo on your website and social media
- Create a simple website to share your mission and goals- even just a homepage to start is important.
  - ✓ Share the link in your email and on your phone calls.
  - ✓ Start a Facebook page and begin to engage with conversation and support.
- Begin a census of Montessori schools in your state
  - ✓ Check your state Child Care Licensing Office to find childcare centers with Montessori in their name.
  - ✓ Search Montessori schools by city, county, or region.
  - ✓ Look to social media.
- Include in census spreadsheet
  - ✓ 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 census list with your core group and begin to 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.
  
- Continue to build relationships and community
  - ✓ Schedule a simple event such as a Meet and Greet, Make and Take for classroom teachers, Colleague Conversation gatherings.
  - ✓ Share your ideas for mission and goals. Share your enthusiasm and invite participation.
  
- Continue to identify challenges in your state
  - Identify challenges in your state such as navigating child care rules and regulations, understanding state policy, advocating for the recognition of teacher training, etc.

You are on your way!

Christine Lowry, M.Ed., has worked on advocacy and policy efforts for the national Montessori community and has guided the work of several state Montessori organizations on state Validation Projects, recognition of the Montessori credential, and state rules and regulations. Learn more about Christine at [Montessori-Now.com](http://Montessori-Now.com) or reach her at [SoutheastMontessoriCollective.org](http://SoutheastMontessoriCollective.org).

*Upcoming article: Organizational Structure and Models for Communication. [Join our mailing list.](#)*