



## The Three Components for Change

Education is the foundation of the world of Montessori. For many decades we have reflected, analyzed, discussed, and debated among ourselves what Montessori education really is.

Have we, though, presented a cohesive, consistent and understandable definition and explanation to the public, to policy makers, to state regulators and implementers of policy and initiatives? How many of us have heard comments like “Oh, Montessori, that’s where children get to do whatever they want” or “Oh, Montessori, that’s really rigid and children don’t get to be children.” Comments from state regulators like “There is no such thing as Montessori” (translation: anyone can use the name Montessori, there are no standards) and “Montessori has a real marketing problem” (translation: Montessori educators can’t agree on what a Montessori program is) result in those in decision making positions not taking Montessori education seriously.

From our own colleagues, “We’ve been in our comfortable bubble for too long” and “Montessori education isn’t going to exist in 15 years” helps explain the problem.

If we want to advocate for high quality, if we want to defend, protect and support Montessori education, we have to accept and respect the diversity of our field while still choosing to agree on a consistent “key” message. At the grassroots, local level, Montessori educators are finding common ground and common agreement. As we advocate at the state level, we can present a consistent definition to those outside of the “world of Montessori.”

As we define the issues, their impacts, and plan our action to advocate for quality, we can, and must, work together to speak with a united voice that enables us to share Montessori education beyond our “bubble.”

## **Educate**

Education should start in our own groups- colleagues, schools, regional chapters, state organizations. This internal discussion can focus on defining “Montessori,” learning more about the policies and regulations that impact Montessori, finding common goals, and deciding that we can work together for change.

Education means moving from this internal discussion to creating a message that will be shared externally with the world of parents, educators, state agencies and offices, and policy makers.

- Invite observations at your school. Licensing specialists, directors and managers of local and state agencies and programs, environmental assessment raters, local and state law makers can have an “eye-opening” experience from one visit to a quality Montessori program.
- Engage in community outreach events. Share information about Montessori education in a booth at an education fair.
- Join committees sponsored by your state Office of Early Learning and/or Department of Education. They are looking for input from all segments of the educational community. Just call and ask to join.
- Present at non-Montessori conferences in your city or state.
- Invite non-Montessori educators and state agency people to your school workshops and regional and state conferences

## **Advocate**

Effective advocacy starts with a group of individuals who have made the commitment to protect, defend, and support those aspects of Montessori education which are fundamental to its successful implementation. Think about how you will compromise with integrity.

➤ Key Issues

- Define the problems- the policies, programs, regulations, and accountability measures that make it difficult to implement quality Montessori education
- Identify the specific impacts- why, what, how these problems make quality implementation difficult
- Ponder, analyze and create possible solutions

➤ Key Message

- Identify your talking points- how can you explain the problem and the solution to those who can enact a change?
- Create your action plan

➤ Key People

- Identify the office, agency and specific person to talk to about the problem

## **Act**

There is power in numbers. Acting together gives us a broader perspective and collective input. We need the knowledge, the plan, and the necessary components to engage in action that will be successful.

- Join your state Montessori organization, start a state Montessori organization, form an advocacy committee.
- List the sequenced steps of your action plan.
- Put together the documents, the information, the packet you need to share with those you are trying to influence
- Schedule meetings with your key people
- Collaborate, negotiate, and coordinate
- Be patient, flexible and persistent

The reward of fully implemented Montessori education at the school level, and knowledge and respect of Montessori education at the state and policy levels is worth our time and effort. Educate, Advocate, Act.

