

Montessori and the Oregon Registry or How One Woman's Frustration With an Unfair Bureaucracy Fueled Change in Our Professional Development Registry System

Something really awesome just happened in the state of Oregon. The professional development organization that recognizes achievement in the field of Early Childhood Education as a step (known as the Oregon Registry) now officially recognizes MACTE accredited Montessori Teaching Credentials as equivalent to Steps on the Oregon Registry. Hooray!

A little background

When I learned about the Oregon Registry in 2009, I was interested in articulating my education and training primarily because of the financial incentive tied to the Step achievements. Because I hold a BA in Biology from UC Santa Cruz and my AMS Infant Toddler Montessori Credential I reasoned, based on a meeting with someone who didn't advise me of all the requirements, that I would achieve a Step 10. When I received my certificate with a Step 6 and a rejection of all the classes associated with my Montessori teacher education I was confused. Upon further inquiry, I learned that the Montessori Teacher Education Program where I took my training in 2004 was not accredited by one of the Oregon Registry acceptable accrediting agencies. Additionally, the college courses that did count weren't part of a degree from a **related field** (my field is Biology) so the classes that did count counted in a way that articulated lower on the Registry. I felt so confused; the curriculum of my Montessori training could be articulated as credits from CSU Hayward (which is accredited by an Oregon Registry accepted accredited agency) if I wanted to pay the fees associated with doing that - about \$600. I argued to the administrators of the Registry that because a clear relationship exists with an organization that *is* recognized as an acceptable accrediting agency then so should my Montessori training classes. I was told that the Registry 'doesn't assign credits.' I was encouraged to pay the six hundred dollars so that my Montessori training could be translated into a format the Oregon Registry could understand - and that by doing this I would have enough credits to earn a Step 9 in the Oregon Registry.

This didn't feel right to me. The only difference between the me with the credits the Registry *couldn't* understand and the me with ones that they *could* understand is that the me with the higher Step would be six hundred dollars poorer. I argued again to the Oregon Registry that Montessori Teacher Education Programs have their own accrediting agency - the Montessori Accreditation Council of Teacher Education (MACTE) and they are accredited by the US Department of Education. Another dead end - MACTE was not recognized by the Oregon Registry as an acceptable accrediting agency. I felt infuriated. But because I am a pretty busy person and also because I mostly wanted to forget about how angry I felt about my perceived injustice, I let it drop. For about four years, I fumed and forgot. Fumed and forgot. And so on.

And then along came the Quality Rating Improvement Scale - or QRIS. And suddenly the prior issue came back up again, and this time - it had to matter. The QRIS will use the Oregon Step Registry to define teacher and administrator qualifications. Suddenly, this wasn't a petty issue between one woman and the state that could be forgotten. This was about the recognition of

Montessori professionals, educators, and Montessori education in the field of Early Childhood Education. This was a job for (duhn-duh-na-nah) the Oregon Montessori Association! We assembled a task force of three Montessorians; Stacey Edwards-Russo of Child's View Montessori School, Laura Pilkington, the ED of OMA and myself worked with Ingrid Anderson from Portland State University to make this happen.

Why we did it the way we did

Our strategy was to use MACTE (the Montessori Accreditation Council of Teacher Education) as a standard to help guide the articulation of Montessori training in the Oregon Registry. In order to do this, the way that the Registry recognizes 'courses of study' would have to shift a bit. We proposed that the Oregon Registry look at MACTE accreditation as a standard for a course of study. One may wonder *why did we use MACTE as the standard, and not AMI or AMS (or any of the other Montessori teacher training programs available in the United States) or all of the above?*

There were several reasons behind using this rationale to help early childhood professionals in the state of Oregon.

- First, MACTE is accredited by the United States Department of Education. We thought this would have merit when proposing that the Oregon Registry essentially look at MACTE as an accepted accrediting agency. By doing this, we asked the Oregon Registry to ***change their system in order to incorporate Montessori training.***
- Second, every AMS training program in the United States is accredited by MACTE
- Third, Montessori NW's Primary training (AMI) is accredited by MACTE (and has been since 1998). When I started the process, I didn't realize AMI training is not required to be MACTE accredited.
- Fourth, MACTE was willing to work with us in establishing a precedent that will ultimately affect many Montessori practitioners nationally.

How we did it the way we did

After several strategic planning meetings, we developed a crosswalk between the MACTE accredited training requirements and the Core Knowledge Categories of the Oregon Registry for the three levels of teacher trainings. Stacey Edwards-Russo, who is a MACTE evaluator and now on the Board of Directors at MACTE was an invaluable resource for this crosswalk. She did the heavy lifting and created a template using the Early Childhood (or Primary, 3-6) MACTE accreditation requirements. From her example I was able to develop the Infant Toddler (Assistant to Infancy, birth - 3) crosswalk and Gwen Harris, MACTE Board Vice Chair completed the Elementary I and II crosswalk. (It is a convention of many training programs to break out the lower and upper elementary as independent courses of study)

We owe Rebecca Pelton from MACTE a huge debt of gratitude for creating a document that showed what training programs are associated with graduate and undergraduate credits, credentials and degrees.

Ingrid Anderson deserves recognition for helping us navigate the Oregon Registry and being open to think outside the box. Ingrid is a true FOM (friend of Montessori) and we could have not done this without her unfailing support and her translation of Montessori language to Early Childhood Education language we could all understand.

And finally, Laura Pilkington and the Oregon Montessori Association must be recognized. For without Laura's help and support and without the weight of our state's professional association representing over sixty schools and hundreds of Montessori practitioners in the state of Oregon this would not have been possible.

What we did

Here is a copy of the crosswalks that we submitted to the Oregon Registry:

[OR InfantToddler Articulation 2013.pdf](#)

[OR EarlyChildhood Articulation 2013.pdf](#)

[OR Elementary Articulation 2013.pdf](#)

[University Alignments MACTE.pdf](#)

The Process

Our submission was evaluated by the Qualifications, Pathways and Credentials committee. The QPC Committee recognizes there are still issues of inclusion for ECE practitioners in the State of Oregon, particularly for those who have been teachers and administrators for a long time and have degrees outside the field of ECE or Education. The committee is working to make the Oregon Registry Step System, and the Professional Development process as accessible as possible – particularly because of the link between the level of Step and the Quality (star) rating a program will earn. The QPC Committee works on behalf of in-home childcare providers, as well as licensed child care centers. OMA Executive Director, Laura Pilkington, has been attending the meetings to get a feel for issues facing Montessori practices in our state. She will share more information about the QPC as it becomes available.

Hilary Smith, OMA President, and Ingrid Anderson both sat on the Accreditation Review Committee to resolve the MACTE articulation onto the Oregon Step Registry. There were four members total. Hilary said that her experience was very positive. The members of the committee were unanimous in their observation that MACTE accredited Montessori Teacher Education Courses are academically rigorous and obviously equivalent to college level courses. Hilary remarked about the positive feelings all the members expressed towards Montessori teachers and Montessori education. The whole process, from my first contact with Ingrid this fall, took only six months from start to finish.

More good news for Montessori in Oregon

- MACTE credential holders at any teaching level will earn a Step 8.5
- MACTE credential holders at any level plus an AA or AS will earn a Step 9
- MACTE credential holders at any level plus a BA or BS will earn a Step 10

We now know not all AMI training centers are accredited by MACTE and as such will not automatically articulate onto the Oregon Registry. AMI Credential holders should have the recognition they deserve. The next step is to prepare a crosswalk of the AMI training courses. We need individuals who are familiar with AMI Teacher Education to make this happen.

We have a plan:

1. OMA will assemble a task force to articulate AMI training as a course of study, equivalent to the MACTE articulation. Please contact me if you are interested in working on this. mercedes@pdxMC.org
2. Encourage AMI training centers to become MACTE accredited. This would be a service to all AMI accredited teachers nationally, as each state is developing their own QRIS. Now that Oregon has set a precedent by articulating MACTE accredited trainings onto the state professional development registry it will help to pave the way for other states.
3. Continue to advocate for Montessori education and practitioners in the state by maintaining a strong professional organization - the Oregon Montessori Association - to advocate on behalf of all Montessori practitioners in Oregon.

In Conclusion

This recognition is something that feels very personal to me. Achieving my Montessori credential at the Infant/Toddler level felt like a lot of work. I attended two hundred and forty clock hours of direct lecture instruction. Then I clocked fifty hours of observations and about 1,600 practice teaching hours during which I was responsible for maintaining a planning journal (weekly) as well as a reflective journal (quarterly). I was evaluated three times by a field consultant, was responsible for creating five teaching manuals and I wrote over ten thousand words of rationale papers. And that was just my Montessori training. AMS (the American Montessori Society, an affiliate organization) does not fully endorse credential holders without a BA or BS. A lot of work to be told didn't matter - didn't count for more than 'community based training.' Now my Montessori credential and all the academic rigor it embodies is recognized as it should be. Thanks in part to the strength of our Oregon Montessori Association. And while there's more work to do, it feels pretty affirming to have accomplished the articulation of Montessori credentials onto the Oregon Step Registry.