

Elementary I (Grades 1-3) Montessori Teacher Education Program

Designation as New Program proposal or Modification and number of credit hours in program or modification and proposed date of implementation:

This proposal is to establish the M.Ed. program for Montessori teacher education for grades 1 through 3 to begin implementation in January, 2007.

The program will include 36 credit hours. 24 credit hours will be in the area of Montessori education and 9 credit hours will consist of core graduate education courses as defined by Lander's catalog. Courses will fulfill academic requirements for certification by the American Montessori Society.

Justification of need for the proposed program:

Interest in Montessori education throughout South Carolina is increasing. In 1991 there were no public Montessori programs in the state. Today, just fifteen years later, thirteen South Carolina public school districts offer Montessori programs, most offering instruction in multiple classrooms or school sites. At least three publicly funded schools in South Carolina have total Montessori programs, Brockman Elementary in Richland District One, The Children's School at Sylvia Circle in Rock Hill District Three and East Cooper Charter School in Charleston County School District. In 2001 Montessori was designated one of the early childhood curricula accepted by the SC Department of Education. In 2005 and 2006 Governor Mark Sanford signed proclamations declaring the last week in February Montessori Education Week in South Carolina.

On a practical level, the greatest limiting factor for increasing Montessori classes is the availability of professionally prepared and certified teachers. The Lander University Montessori Teacher Education Program is the only university-based Montessori teacher preparation in South Carolina. In 2002 its early childhood program became fully accredited and began an affiliation with the American Montessori Society. Accreditation was awarded by the Montessori Accrediting Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) for a seven year term. MACTE is one of only three accrediting agencies authorized by the United States Department of Education to accredit teacher education programs, the other two being NCATE and TEAC.

Anticipated program demand and productivity:

Teacher certification levels in the field of Montessori education are based on the comprehensive theories of human development proposed by Dr. Maria Montessori during her long career. Montessori classrooms are organized, according to her developmental theories, in multi-age groupings according to the similar developmental characteristics children share at various stages or *planes* of development. Montessori identified three planes of development, birth to age six, ages six through twelve and ages twelve through eighteen. Each of these six year spans is further broken into three year groupings for purposes of classroom organization. Three-six classes contain children in the preschool years, incorporating our U.S. kindergarten year. Elementary classrooms enroll children from first through third grade or fourth through sixth grade levels. Montessori teacher certification levels are based on these three year classroom age spans and have been codified over the one hundred year history of Montessori education. Council for Teacher MACTE accredits teacher education programs adhering to these certification levels.

Teacher credentialing agencies in most U.S. states, including South Carolina, have very different certification ranges. South Carolina’s Early Childhood certification level licenses a teacher candidate to teach children from 3 years to third grade, encompassing two Montessori credential levels. Please see the table below.

South Carolina Certification Levels		Montessori Certification Levels	
Early Childhood	Pre-K-Grade 3	Early Childhood	Ages 3-6
Elementary	Grades 2-6	Elementary I	Ages 6-9 (Grades 1-3)
Middle School	Grades 5-8	Elementary II	Ages 9-12 (Grades 4-6)

Lander’s current early childhood Montessori teacher education program does not cover the curriculum and materials required for grades 1-3. Our students receive certification for Pre-K-5K, the designation for MACTE’s early childhood credential.

As SC school districts expand their Montessori programs into elementary grades they are looking for teachers who are trained to implement the curriculum and instruct children in the use of the materials designed for their grade level. Currently there are teachers in many public Montessori elementary classrooms, who may hold a valid SC teaching credential for that level, but lack the specialized Montessori preparation and credential. To provide evidence of a highly qualified teaching staff, schools need to cite Montessori certification as one criterion. Further, in order to receive accreditation from any Montessori agencies, they must demonstrate that teachers are credentialed for the level that they teach.

Assessment of extent to which the proposed program duplicates existing programs in the state:

Lander is the sole university-based Montessori teacher education program in SC.

Relationship of the proposed center to existing programs at the proposing institution:

The proposed program will be a part of the Department of Teacher Education at Lander University.

Relationship of the proposed program to other institutions via inter-institutional cooperation:

The proposed program will be administered solely through Lander University.

Total new costs associated with implementing the proposed program (general estimates only):

The costs associated with implementing the proposed program are the purchase of a set of elementary level didactic materials and expenses (fees and travel) associated with the MACTE accreditation process. Lander has received a congressionally-directed federal grant (P116Z040218) that provides funds for both of these expenses.

**Proposal for a Master of Education in Montessori Education Degree
(Lower Elementary Specialization)**

The program of study leading to the Master of Education in Montessori Education degree consists of 36 semester hours of course work and other learning activities in the following areas *at the 600 level*:

1. Foundations of Education (Core courses 12 hours)
2. Curriculum and Instruction (Montessori core 18 hours)
3. Related Study (6 hours of supervised, field-based practicum)
4. In addition, students seeking certification at the lower elementary level must take EDUC 685 or a 3 credit hour Early Childhood Montessori Methods class to meet Early Childhood overview requirement for the Montessori Accrediting Commission for Teacher Education.