

State Advocacy Associate Job Description

The Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI) is a collaboration of the American Montessori Society (AMS) and Association Montessori International/USA (AMI/USA). As state and federal efforts to raise the standards and quality of early childhood and elementary education have increased, many Montessori programs have found themselves needing to compromise their pedagogical standards to meet state requirements. Knowing that a Montessori education offers children an excellent academic foundation along with confidence, problem solving skills, and tools for collaboration, MPPI envisions a policy landscape that ensures children of all ages have access to authentic Montessori education. MPPI's efforts are highly collaborative, aiming to engage not only across national Montessori organizations but also in concert with others advocating for children and high-quality education.

This is a full-time position and considered exempt for federal overtime purposes.

Areas of Responsibility

State Advocacy Groups: The State Advocacy Associate's primary area of focus is the Strategic Plan pillar around empowering state advocacy groups and this individual will work closely with the Director of State Advocacy to provide technical assistance, coaching, resources, and other supports to our state advocacy groups in their efforts to effect policy change.

Responsibilities in this area include:

- Supporting the formation and development of ecumenical MPPI state advocacy groups in all states
- Educating state groups about advocacy in general and MPPI policy goals in particular
- Developing and distributing policy tools and educational resources for state advocacy groups, including crosswalks, webinars, and guides, and conducting trainings and providing technical assistance on these tools as necessary
- Coaching state groups on particular issues and advancing policy goals; researching state policies as needed to provide support
- Assisting with development of content for the annual state advocacy conference
- Developing content for and presenting at national and state Montessori and other educational conferences
- Ensuring correspondence and records of state work are maintained and filed to support board reports, grant reports, and ongoing staff knowledge
- Assisting with ongoing build out of state policy information on website

Coalition Building: MPPI's work intersects both with other Montessori organizations (e.g. MSJ, MACTE, NCMPS) and other education and advocacy organizations (e.g. NAEYC, CAPE, BUILD). The State Advocacy Associate will help develop and nurture relationships with these

organizations, looking for opportunities to collaborate or partner to strengthen our collective voice. Responsibilities include:

- Attending meetings, workshops or conferences to build relationships, increase awareness of MPPI and our objectives, and present on our work.
- Increasing knowledge of projects and areas of expertise within other organizations that may provide opportunities for MPPI
- Proposing collaborative initiatives with likeminded organizations.

Other Duties

- Ensuring state policy work aligns with our organization's commitment to racial equity.
- In coordination with the Director of State Advocacy, ensuring deliverables within areas of responsibility outlined above are met for all active grants; Keeping Executive Director apprised of any obstacles to meeting these goals
- In coordination with the Director of State Advocacy, provide Executive Director with state landscape and successes and other required information for board and grant reports and grant applications.
- Traveling as requested to represent MPPI and/or present at state advocacy gatherings, legislative gatherings, conferences, or events
- Maintaining and organizing all records, resources, reports and other materials generated in connection with MPPI work within the MPPI electronic document storage system
- Other duties as assigned by the Executive Director

Reporting: The State Advocacy Associate will report directly to the MPPI Director of State Advocacy.

Qualifications

The ideal candidate is an individual who is intuitive, proactive, collaborative, self-motivated, and knowledgeable about education policy and practice and Montessori education. Strong research, writing, and communication skills are a must. The individual should possess the following skills, qualifications, and experiences:

- Montessori trained, AMS or AMI preferred
- Experience with state level Montessori advocacy in one or more areas of child-care licensing, QRIS, teacher credential recognition, and verification.
- Other education policy and advocacy, or experience in state level advocacy in another field.

- Knowledge of early childhood and/or K-12 education issues and trends.
- Experience incorporating the perspectives of multiple communities, in the consideration of impacts and outcomes of a decision-making process.
- An understanding of the concepts of institutional and structural racism and bias and their impact on underserved and underrepresented communities.
- Ability to work independently, with minimal supervision, setting priorities to complete multiple projects accurately and on-time.
- Exceptional writing and other communication skills including oral presentation skills
- Exceptional interpersonal skills; ability to collaborate and effectively interact with internal team members and external partners.
- Strong analytical, strategic thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- Organization, efficiency, attention to detail, ability to take initiative, work independently and to juggle several projects at once.
- Comfort working in a small, fast-paced, non-profit environment.
- Flexibility.
- Ability to work remotely.
- Sense of humor.
- Fluency in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, various forms of social media, online communications platforms, such as Mailchimp, and project management software and ability to quickly learn to navigate and utilize various online communications platforms.
- Willingness to travel; this position requires significant travel both on weekdays and weekends to attend and present at conferences. If not based in the DC area, this individual will also need to travel periodically to DC to meet with other team members.

To apply:

Please send your resume, cover letter, and a writing sample to MPPI Executive Director Wendy Shenk-Evans at wendy@montessoriadvocacy.org

Deadline: November 4, 2019.

Start Date: January 6, 2020

Additional Information about MPPI:

MPPI's early work focused on building collaborative relationships and establishing common ground within the broader Montessori community, educating practitioners about existing and potential policy obstacles to Montessori practice, forming coalitions of advocates within each state, and providing advocacy education and technical support to those state-level leaders. We are increasing our capacity to meet the demand for state level support and advance Montessori education advocacy through the four areas of our strategic plan:

- **Defining Montessori:** Public understanding and perception of Montessori suffers from lack of a unified definition. The resulting misconceptions impact policy, research, and implementation.
- **Empowering our State Advocacy Groups:** Most policy obstacles are at the state level. MPPI seeks to create and support effective, state level advocacy coalitions, providing them with technical assistance, resources, and advocacy education to bolster their efforts.
- **Creating a National Unified Voice:** MPPI promotes Montessori education at both the state and federal levels, contributing actively to the development of meaningful policy.
- **Building a Sustainable Organization:** Launched by volunteers, MPPI's ability to improve educational policy and outcomes for children and families necessitates staff, organizational infrastructure, and resources to fund a sustainable organization.

We believe that shifting the education policy landscape in favor of authentic Montessori implementation will increase access to the high-quality education that children deserve but so often do not receive. As educational policy is created, the voice of Montessori must be at the table to champion policies that will allow authentic Montessori programs to thrive and expand. And as Montessori gains a larger presence in the public sector, MPPI seeks to ensure that policies support high fidelity implementation so that children in underserved communities can access the documented benefits of Montessori education.