



### General Information

- Who's hiring? Where to find listings
- When to look / Making Connections
- Determining if a school is a good fit
- Alternatives to job listings
- Support Staff positions
- Working internationally or out of area
- Public and Charter Schools

### Resources for the Application Process

- Overview
- General notes on application materials and process
- Cover letter
- Resume
- Additional items for resume (Oregon Registry, safety training, etc)
- References
- Sharing your MNW work
- Following up
- The interview(s)

### Salary Information

- How much does it pay?



## General Information

### Who's hiring?

There is a strong demand worldwide for qualified adults in Montessori educational environments. Schools advertise positions in a variety of ways. MNW students, alumni, and other interested individuals are encouraged to look at Montessori Northwest's online Job Board at [montessori-nw.org](http://montessori-nw.org) as well as the resources below:

#### National and International Montessori Associations:

Association Montessori Internationale: [ami-global.org](http://ami-global.org)

AMI/USA: [amiusa.org](http://amiusa.org)

Elementary Alumni Association

- [ami-eea.org](http://ami-eea.org)
- Members can also view a Yahoo group that has listings

Montessori Administrators' Association: [www.montessoriadmins.org](http://www.montessoriadmins.org)

North American Teachers Association: [montessori-namta.org](http://montessori-namta.org)

Teach Montessori: [teach-montessori.org](http://teach-montessori.org) (additional emphasis on public Montessori)

#### Listings local to a specific region (for example, here are some from the Pacific Northwest)

Oregon Montessori Association: [www.oregonmontessori.org](http://www.oregonmontessori.org)

Pacific Northwest Montessori Association: [www.pnma.org](http://www.pnma.org)

Craigslist: [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)

## **When to look / Making Connections**

Schools advertise throughout the year. We typically see an increase in job listings between February and May, and another peak just after a new school year begins. In the US, very early Spring is when many school communities confirm which teachers will be renewing their contracts; only then does an administrator know if they will be hiring. Job listings do appear throughout the year, however, particularly summer positions or if a teacher is needed unexpectedly. Schools recruiting employees often have a presence at AMI Refresher Courses or the MNW Job Fair.

Any connection you make with a head of school or member of the Montessori professional community has the potential to lead to a position in the future. When volunteering at a MNW event, being hosted for Observation or Practice Teaching etc, take the time to introduce yourself to members of the school community. Later, if you choose to make a contact with that person (ie: Head of School), reference where you have met before.

## **Determining if a school or position is a good fit**

Every school is different. The hallmarks of quality Montessori educational communities include adults who are respectful to one another as well as the children, mixed-aged classrooms, trained teachers, clean attractive learning environments, mixed individual and group lessons and activities, child-based learning, freedom of movement and communication, and long uninterrupted work periods.

There are no “good schools” or “bad schools”; there can be a “good match” or a “less-than-great match” as you decide where you would like to work. What do you value? Is it community or is it a sense of autonomy? Is it freedom or support and structure? Is it being in an established community or being able to find your own way? An urban environment or something more pastoral? Is the school’s mission or vision something that resonates with you?

You can learn so much about a school’s community and perspective by looking closely at how they promote themselves online (their website, Facebook, blog) or at open houses. What a school showcases to parents is likely what they hope their staff will also emphasize. Look closely at their admissions information to determine the school’s hours, admission policies, etc. Observation, school tours, or informational interviews may be possible.

It is not uncommon for a school to invite you to speak on your own with other staff, particularly a fellow MNW alum or other AMI diploma holder, about their experience working at the school.



### **Alternatives to job listings**

#### Contacting a School that has not listed an ad (Broadcast Letter):

Perhaps you would like to work in a very specific part of the world, or there is a particular school that has piqued your interest. Rather than wait for a job listing to be posted, you can send a broadcast letter to a school (emailed cover letter with resume attached is the standard). The broadcast letter includes a resume and a personalized cover letter stating why you are contacting that particular school (why do you want to be there?), who you are, your qualifications and interests, and availability. If you have interacted with the head of school previously, do reference that in your cover letter (body of the email).

#### Substituting

This is a great way to make connections with schools as well while maintaining a flexible schedule. Locally and globally there is a desperate need for Montessori trained substitutes. One way to get the word out is to contact schools directly via a broadcast letter (see above). With your permission, Montessori Northwest can share your name and number if a school calls us in search of a substitute. The Oregon Montessori Association (and no doubt other states' Montessori professional organizations) can run a classified ad with your information or add you to their online listing of substitutes. Sometimes connecting with just one or two big schools can keep you quite busy! To allow many schools to see your availability, set up an online calendar such as [www.keepandshare.com](http://www.keepandshare.com).

#### Creating your own job

Many MNW graduates have gone on to open their own schools, conduct research, engage in advocacy, create Montessori materials, offer services in-home or to schools – the options are endless when you consider all the ways Montessori can benefit the world's diverse communities of children and adults! Some graduates have reported that it is helpful to work part-time or as an assistant so you have time and energy freed up for your own school or enterprise.

#### Sponsorships

Schools and organizations worldwide are so hungry for qualified teachers that some will offer to pay for your Teacher Training. A MNW student might consider approaching a school advertising a sponsorship to explore the possibility of re-imbursement for training costs. Be aware sponsorships typically require the teacher stay with the school for a minimum of 3 years. Sponsorships are advertised along with Job Listings via major Montessori professional organizations.

### **Support Staff Positions, particularly Assistants**

Montessori classroom assistants and support staff come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have worked with children before or in a Montessori environment – yet many have not. Montessori assistants are typically hired not so much because of specific qualifications, but more because they seem to be a good match for the specific Montessori community and guide. Often a school or guide is seeking an assistant that they feel would offer their community a wider body of knowledge (for example, a teacher who has no gardening experience would no doubt love to have an assistant who knows about gardening). Good communication skills, openness to new ideas, responsiveness, flexibility, attitudes about children and family all factor into being an assistant.

If you have no prior knowledge of Montessori, gaining some familiarity would be a plus. Observing in Montessori classrooms, attending MNW Continuing Education programs, and reading about Montessori would build knowledge in this area.

If you have completed a Montessori training, sometimes being an assistant can be a good fit. Assisting can be a great way to become familiar with a school, age group, or new geographical area, and can potentially lay the groundwork for other positions in that same school as time goes on. Some students feel they would like even more time with children or time in Montessori environments before they are completely comfortable taking on their own classroom. Other graduates opt to assist as they maintain other commitments that are very demanding on their time.

In some areas, the position of ‘assistant guide’ might be available. This trained staff member might be helping to grow a program or supporting a teacher with health or family issues that preclude having full responsibility for a class. Some MNW graduates have benefitted from sharing the responsibility with an experienced practitioner, and assistant guide positions frequently sometimes turn into lead guide positions as circumstances have evolved in particular schools.

## Public/Charter Schools

A growing number of schools throughout the United States are seeking out Montessori as an educational approach to include in the public school system. Extensive information and resources are available through the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector - <http://www.public-montessori.org/>.

When determining if a public program is a good match for you, do the same sort of legwork you would usually do when assessing a potential position or school. The programs are often constrained by local school rules.



In terms of hiring requirements for Montessorians in public schools, there is no standardization. The potential employer will be very knowledgeable about what their district/state/charter requirements are. A diploma from a MACTE approved training center, such as MNW, is often a key requirement for employment. Other professional training or certification (such as a state license to teach) may be a qualification. A Master's degree may be helpful, while some schools would prefer something very specific in this regard (for instance, perhaps not an M.Ed or MAT)

### **International or out of area**

Montessori is present on every continent except Antarctica. International job listings are available online as are websites for many schools worldwide. To find more schools in a particular area, you can access professional organizations native to that country or region. It might not hurt to check in with your course's training staff regarding alumni or other connections in that area.

When applying to positions outside of the US, be sensitive to any cultural or professional norms that may come into play - sometimes people from outside the US would actually like you to sound rather humble in your application materials. Also, look very closely at what is required for the position you are applying to - do they actually need you to have a teaching license, etc? Really do some legwork to establish a good understanding of the cultural and monetary norms of that area so that you are prepared to talk about that when the time arises, and are not taken off guard in the interview or when you move to the area.

The school may wish to have an initial interview with you via Skype or by phone. After that, visiting the school in person is a great next step and travel costs may be covered by the school or organization that is hiring. Phone or Skype interviews may be possible, but visiting the school in person is truly invaluable.

When applying to positions outside of the country, also educate yourself in terms of the immigration processes related to this. It is the rare school that has the infrastructure in place to guide you through this process, instead you will be quite possibly be taking the lead on this and only asking the school for very specific items and details once you are hired.



### Application Process

#### Overview

We recommend a professional cover letter and resume, each tailored to respond to the specific aspects of the school and position of interest. The Montessori professional community follows basic conventions in terms of the application process and materials. Cover letter and resume are via email, although paper mail is not frowned upon. Any email or phone contact is formal (well edited), yet friendly in tone. References are made available upon request. One or more interviews are required.

Prior to creating your application materials or going in for an interview, consider what qualities are essential in executing the position effectively and find ways to relay your experience in these areas. If you have no direct experience with children in a Montessori environment, consider what other aspects of your life make you well-suited for this work. Use the Montessori Northwest Teacher Training Criteria for Admission as a guide:

- Academic skills for success in a comprehensive and rigorous course of study
- Clear oral and written communication
- Organization, time management, and attention to detail
- Ability to collaborate within a community
- Commitment to alternative education
- The desire to support human development in positive and life-affirming directions

Everything you've done in your life has led you to want to do this work, tell that story. Know that Montessori professional communities value your life experience, background, and interests and understand that most people come to the training and this work without much Montessori classroom experience.

#### General notes on application materials and process

- In all communications, no matter who you are speaking to at the school, be as gracious and professional as possible. Consider following up a meeting, tour, or interview with a handwritten Thank You card.
- Know your audience and your rationale for approaching this school community. Every position you apply for will have a unique cover letter and resume. Look at their publicity materials. Speak to that school (Do you enjoy that it is large or small? Specific emphasis? etc)

- If at all unclear, confirm with the school whom you should address the materials to and how they should be received (i.e.: mail/hand delivery, email) If emailing, attach documents as pdfs. Body of email should be gracious and brief.
- What role/position are you applying for and why? Are you open to other positions?
- Clearly indicate in your resume anything that makes you an easy fit for the position. For example, if you have an address that is local to the school, use it, indicate if you already are enrolled in the Criminal History registry for that state, current CPR or food handlers' card, etc.
- Do not be afraid to "talk yourself up." Be truthful and specific.

### Cover Letter

The cover letter is typically a paragraph to half a page in length. It indicates a little about who you are, specifically why you are drawn to the specific school, and any other information that is either not on your resume or that you would like to clarify or emphasize. This is the place to make the match between that school, that position, and you. Let them know why you'd like to be there. No need to reiterate your resume; keep the tone pleasant yet resolved, and no more than a couple paragraphs. If the school is somewhere new to you, mention something about what will make it an easy and welcome transition.

Excerpt from cover letter of someone who's been away from the Montessori profession a while

*I have enjoyed applying Montessori principles to non-Montessori work, always finding that observation, responsiveness, flexibility, and respect enhance all environments and interactions.*

Excerpt from cover letter to a larger school

I would relish the opportunity to be a part of your large, established school. What a gift to welcome children to the Casa from the toddler environment, send them into Elementary, and be able to see all the children enjoy the chance to learn from and see a wide range of ages and abilities.

### Resume

The resume is attractive, clear, professional, and informative and provides information relevant to the position to which you are applying. The professional standard is no longer than just one page front and back. Take care to make it attractive and easy to read. Be mindful of white space, use bullets, and 11-12 point fonts. Organize it in a manner that best represents you. If you have a solid work history with more than 1 year in each position and very few gaps, use a chronological organization. Research other organizational options if this is not a good fit for you.



Samples from resumes illustrating relevance to Montessori through past work experience:

*From resume #1*

*Bookseller and Display Coordinator*

- Assumed increasing levels of responsibility at this beloved independent bookstore
- Required excellent customer service and collaborative communication with staff.
- Founded the Display Coordinator position. Created systems for planning, creating, tracking, and maintaining displays. Liaison to general staff. Created and maintained in-store displays.

*From resume #2*

*Youth Program Assistant*

- \* Oversaw daily after school activities of at-risk-youth, ages six to eighteen;
- \* Implemented programs such as tutoring, Youth Council, and USDA Snack Program;
- \* Co-coordinated volunteers from the local community to create and execute additional supplemental activities throughout the year

*From a resume using a section called “Additional Relevant Experience”*

*Mother –*

*Montessori principles have guided our prepared home environment. I have gladly been a Montessori advocate in my interactions with other curious parents, connecting them with resources on making informed decisions. I am also currently enjoying respectfully collaborating with my daughter’s Primary guide.*

### Other relevant items to include on Resume

Many schools require that an employee complete some or all of the following prior to or soon after employment begins:

- Background Check/Child Care Criminal History Registry/fingerprint clearance as indicated by state or organization
- Up to date certification in Infant/Child CPR and First Aid
- Up to date food handler’s permit
- Up to date certification for Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

If you hold certifications or training particularly relevant to the position do include this on your resume.

### Oregon Registry



Individuals who plan to live and work in Oregon will become familiar with the Oregon Registry. The Oregon Registry is a similar rating system to QRIS, but it is used for teachers instead of schools. It places teachers on a 12-step ranking system based on their level of education and professional development. The Oregon Montessori Association has been hard at work articulating MACTE accredited training programs (like ours) into the Registry steps. Here were the exciting results of that work:

- 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
- Masters Degree in the field is a Step 11

### **References**

Unless a school specifically asks for them, it is not necessary to send references with the original application materials. You may ask the school to clarify when they would like these. References are most helpful when they are recent, professional, and are created with this particular job objective in mind.

Please note that MNW staff does not give references, and is only at liberty to confirm that you are or were a student in a MNW Course. More information is available in the MNW Student Handbook section on References.

### **Sharing your MNW student work**

While administrators don't always ask for it, you are more than welcome to offer to share with a potential employer some of what you accomplished while at MNW. A good time to offer this might be after the initial interview. The Head of School can accept or decline your offer.

Consider sharing work that you are particularly proud of. Albums, specific writing samples, or materials might be of potential interest to an Administrator. Also, consider relevant items from your Education Records, such as a Progress Report, Field Supervisor Report(s), or perhaps most helpful of all – the Host Teacher Report with the MNW Assessment Criteria rubric included.

In some cases, a student might consider asking their Practice Teaching host for a letter of reference. This would be proposed only if and when appropriate, and as for all references the student should be open to the possibility that the teacher is not available for this.

### **Following up**



Montessori administrators and program directors are very busy people and might not contact you to confirm that they have received your application materials. Sometimes they do reply and let you know a timeline in which they will get back to you. Err on the side of giving the school space. A handwritten Thank You card after an interview, meeting, or tour is lovely, or perhaps a single confirmation email to them if you apply for a job via snail mail, but schools appreciate not being pressured to get back to you.

## **Interview(s)**

The initial interview may be with just the Administrator or program director. Subsequent interviews are more likely to include other members of the school community. Think of the interview as a two-way discourse that clarifies who you are, what the position is, and whether or not you are a good fit for one another. Another way to think about it is that you are building a relationship with this individual and their school. Listen attentively to what they say about the school, and also share who you are.

Timeliness (arrive a little early), courtesy, professional appearance, and thoughtful replies will be well-received by the interviewer(s). Do come to the interview prepared to answer their questions, and bring some questions of your own. Keep in the back of your mind if you might be open to a position other than the one they have advertised, as their own interviews might yield a new need or better fit for you.

We advise doing the best you can to secure a position, but then decide after an interview if you would like to accept the position if offered to you. You might follow up an interview with a communication indicating your continued interest in the position.

## **Below are some questions to consider or expect in an interview –**

Not every interviewer will ask you every one of these questions. However, if you are prepared to address these questions, you will leave the impression that you were prepared for your job interview, even if additional questions take you by surprise.

Key to good responses: Give specific examples to illustrate and back up what you say about yourself. Don't just speak in vague, general terms. Prepare several anecdotes regarding your experience.

Why did you choose Montessori as a career?

Why do you want to work at our school?

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?



Do you have a special talent that you bring to the classroom?

How do you see yourself overcoming the challenge of inexperience?

How have you handled situations where you have disagreed with a coworker?

What challenges have you had in working with children?

Describe a frustration you had while working with a parent and how did you overcome it?

Have you worked with children who have special needs?

Have you ever had challenges working with an assistant? If so how did you overcome them?

Why this age group?

What is your greatest strength/ weakness?

Would you consider a co-teaching or support position?

What are your salary expectations? (Do your research on this. If the salary range is not stated in the ad you may want to look into the local ranges for Montessori Schools/ Median Income levels. You can also respectfully respond with a question ~ What is the range you would typically pay a first year teacher?)

### **Telling your story, asking your questions**

Who are you? How did you come to this work? What did you enjoy most in your training? What are you passionate about? Why are you excited about this school? You and the interviewer/school are beginning a relationship, and it's key that you get to know one another.

Do ask questions of your own. If they feel like somewhat sensitive questions, you may wish to begin with "Can you tell me more about...?"

Schedule: Daily, anything that is happening weekly?

Adults in the environment:

Will I be co-teaching?

Will I be hiring, inheriting, or being assigned an assistant?

At what age do children join the community? Transition to the next level? How is this decision made?

(A to I, Primary) Toileting/Potty Training

(Elementary) Going Out

Will there be opportunities for Going Out? Are there expectations for Going Out? Is there a budget? Are there camping trips or other overnights expected? Allowed?

***If you'd like to inquire about any of the items below starred \* items, these are best saved for the second interview:***

*\*Salary and Benefits (see next section)*

*\*Classroom budget*

*\*Janitorial expectations*

*\*Level of autonomy*

*\*After school requirements (open houses, conferences, etc.)*

*\*Professional Development*

*\*School policy on student discipline*

*\*How are student admissions decisions made?*

*\*See next section regarding Salary. Benefits fall under this category as well.*

**\*Material Making**

The typical scenario for this is that the teacher owns whatever they bring to the classroom, and the school owns whatever they pay for. Most schools have some kind of budget for new materials, and the occasional school might even have dedicated staff for this. For elementary, in particular, it can be helpful to clarify up from that it's understood that YOU own your charts and timelines. Who will own other materials you make? Is there a material making budget? Is there perhaps a material making helper available, either paid or volunteer?



### Salary Information

Salary and benefits vary from school to school and are dependent upon many factors, such as regional cost of living, size of school, experience of the employees, etc. The individual you interview with will be knowledgeable about the salary and benefits they can offer, and will likely follow a salary structure approved by their Board of Directors. You will find that, as in other educational fields, you will not get rich doing this work, but you can expect a living wage.

Salary is something that occasionally comes up in the initial interview, but discussion of this is often reserved for **after an individual has been offered a position** or later interviews. Prior to any interview, spend some time considering what would be an acceptable wage for you and what aspects of your experience or the school's circumstance might impact where you would fall in a salary range. The school likely has a set pay scale or schedule for raises; it is fine to respectfully ask about this.

Also consider benefits. Benefits are becoming more common for Teachers and Administration, but can be rare for Assistant positions or part time positions. Do ask about coverage for partners/spouses and dependents.

Salary Surveys are often provided by Montessori professional organizations and vary by region. For example, this one from AMI <https://amiusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/2015-Salary-Survey-with-Cover-10.29.15.pdf> , and this older one from NAMTA <http://www.montessori-namta.org/PDF/2009survey.pdf>. Additional anecdotal information suggests that AMI Primary Teachers often make more than other individuals working in early childhood positions. Anecdotal information also suggests that Elementary salaries may be lower in the private sector than in the public sector, but that both kinds of positions have their own advantages.