Montessori Alliance of Tennessee Mission

The Montessori Alliance of Tennessee is an inclusive community of schools, teachers and families supporting high quality Montessori education.

Our goals are to speak with one, united voice, advocating for high quality Montessori education and to provide ongoing education and support to the Montessori community.

** New Overtime Rules Will Affect Schools Starting January 1, 2020 **

Beginning January 1, 2020, the federal Dept. of Labor will begin enforcing new overtime regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) that will affect all Montessori schools, as well as all other schools, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. These new regulations could have a major impact on your school's budget, and since they come in the middle of the school year, it's critical that you address them as quickly as possible.

The new regulations are quite complicated, and the following overview is NOT meant to provide legal guidance. It is very important that your school leadership talk with their
accountant and, if necessary, with an employment lawyer to figure out how the new rules apply to your school and your staff. But we did want to give you a brief overview so you’ll have a general idea what’s going on.

Basically, the new regulations determine who should receive overtime pay and when they should get overtime. The basic change is that the minimum salary threshold to be exempt from overtime will increase to $35,568 annually. So anyone making under that amount will need to be paid overtime if they work more than 40 hours/week, unless exempt. *(This includes work that they do at home or in other locations, as well as at school.)*

In addition, in order to be exempt from overtime, employees must either supervise other employees and/or exercise significant independence and discretion in their work. This is where things get tricky, and rather than try to explain it all here, I urge you to check out the overview provided by the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) at [https://www.sais.org/news/472375/Wage-and-Hour-Law-for-Independent-Schools-Salary-Level-Update.htm](https://www.sais.org/news/472375/Wage-and-Hour-Law-for-Independent-Schools-Salary-Level-Update.htm).

There are several things to note here. According to the SAIS:

1) Lead teachers are exempt from overtime so do not need to be paid above the new minimum. *

2. Classroom assistants are not exempt from overtime (see the final Q&A under “Frequently Asked Questions” at the bottom of the page).

3. Administrative staff may or may not be exempt from overtime, depending on their position (see the sections on “Executive Exemption” and “Administrative Exemption” under “Determining Exemptions from Overtime Eligibility”).

As a general rule, of course, MAT believes that all staff working at Montessori schools deserve to be compensated fairly for the wonderful work they do. But we know that these changes may cause significant financial difficulties for many schools, especially since they come in the middle of the year. So we did want to let you know about them.

Again, this article is NOT intended to be legal advice, and it is critical that your school’s leadership talk with their accountant and, if necessary, with an employment lawyer to figure out how all this will affect your school and how you should deal with it.

Additional information about the new regulations is available on the Dept. of Labor website at [https://www.dol.gov/whd/overtime2019/](https://www.dol.gov/whd/overtime2019/). DOL also has a fact sheet that explains the teacher exemption that is available at [https://www.dol.gov/whd/overtime/fs17d_professional.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/whd/overtime/fs17d_professional.pdf).

(Many thanks to Gillian Denham, Operations Director at the Knoxville Montessori School, for bringing the new FLSA regulations to MAT’s attention!)

~Charlie Biggs, MAT Board Secretary and Chair of the MAT Education Committee

* clarifications

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2020 Census
Who are we? Where are we?
Every 5 years, MAT will take a census of the demographics of each Montessori school and its staff. Heads, Directors and Principals, please fill out our form so we may best serve our growing community.

CENSUS FORM

Validation Project

If your school is interested in becoming Validated, please read this simple handbook and fill out this FORM.

The paperwork takes under 2 hours and the visitation is only 30 minutes per class!

What’s New in Child Development

Using Cosmic Education to Aid the Development of Capable and Conscientious Technology Users in the Late Second Plane

By: Rowan Webster

Full article here.

Featured School

In future issues of the MAT newsletter, we’d like to feature a TN Montessori school. Tell us about your history, culture, demographics, special events, and what makes you special! Interested? Send an email to Brooks.

New Board Members

MAT is thrilled to announce 2 new amazing board members ready to serve our TN Montessori Community!

Sarah Edwards is a Primary guide, Director of Education, and co-founder of Midtown Montessori School in Memphis, TN. She graduated from The Montessori Training Center of St. Louis with an AMI Primary diploma studying under the late Dr. Annette Haines and has been teaching in Montessori for the past...
Melinda Harris, Ed.D., is Principal at Community Montessori School in Jackson, TN. Melinda is a West Tennessee native having lived in Chester County through high school. She attended Lambuth College for undergraduate and Vanderbilt University for graduate school. She started her teaching career at Montessori Academy in Brentwood, TN in 1990 and remained there until moving back to Jackson in 1995. She then became the Curriculum Coordinator at Parkview Montessori Magnet School (now Community Montessori) in 1997 and later became the principal in 2006. Melinda received her doctorate in Educational Leadership from Union University in 2014. She has been with Community Montessori School as an administrator for 22 years. Melinda has been married for 33 years to John Harris and they have two children, Will (28) and Rachel (24).