

**RILEY INSTITUTE AT FURMAN RECEIVES GRANT
TO EXPAND STUDY OF MONTESSORI EDUCATION**

*New randomized control trial to explore Montessori's potential
for closing achievement gap is among largest of its kind*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GREENVILLE, S.C.—The Riley Institute at Furman University has been selected to join a research team that will explore the potential for Montessori education to advance the academic and social-emotional development of children.

Funded by the Brady Education Foundation, the study will involve sites and participants across the U.S. and will follow a randomized sample of children from the age of three through kindergarten.

“South Carolina has been a leader establishing Montessori programs in public schools, and the Riley Institute’s research has shown that children in public Montessori programs show stronger achievement growth and social-emotional outcomes,” said Brooke Culclasure, research director for the Riley Institute at Furman. “This holds true across students’ socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. We are thrilled to collaborate on this expanded study to explore the potential of Montessori even further.”

Montessori education is unique in that it balances child-directed academic content with an equal emphasis on moral, emotional and behavioral development. Teachers carefully design environments which allow children to be relatively free to explore a variety of hands-on lessons at their own pace based on personal interests within long blocks of uninterrupted time—typically up to three hours.

The Riley Institute released the results of their [five-year Montessori study](#) earlier this year, which was large, but not a randomized control design. Participants included students enrolled in public Montessori programs in South Carolina.

“Our participation in this evaluation is further evidence that the Riley Institute is a leader in education evaluation in South Carolina,” said David Fleming, a senior researcher at the Riley Institute and professor at Furman. “While our earlier study of South Carolina’s public Montessori programs examined many important outcomes, critical questions still remain unanswered.”

The new study is one of the largest randomized control trials of its kind, capitalizing on school lotteries to identify the initial study sample of children. Specifically, the study will focus on determining if Montessori education is equally effective across racial and ethnic groups, and if it reduces the effects of lower family income. The results are expected to be released by the end of 2022.

Joining the Riley Institute on the research team are the KU Center for Montessori Research and Child Trends in Maryland. Data collection is the primary role of the Institute in the collaborative effort. Joining Culclasure and Fleming on the team are Delia B. Allen, a research assistant at the University of Georgia's J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, and Alexis Sprogis, research specialist at the Riley Institute.

For more information on Montessori research at the Riley Institute, visit furman.edu/Montessori.

About the Riley Institute's Center for Education Policy and Leadership

Established in 2005, the Center for Education Policy and Leadership (CEPL) is part of the Riley Institute at Furman. CEPL's work centers on the belief that every child in South Carolina should have access to a quality public education that prepares them for success in the highly competitive knowledge-based economy. The Center works in South Carolina and nationally to promote discussion and understanding of important education issues; to expand research-based, effective education practices; to build leadership capacity among public education supporters and future leaders; and to bring together stakeholders in education, business, politics, and the public to create meaningful and sustainable change on the ground. For more information, riley.furman.edu.

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