



MONTESSORI INSTITUTE
OF NORTH TEXAS

Frequently Asked Questions

AMI Blended Primary Diploma Course (3-6)

July 8, 2019 - June 26, 2020

1. What is the AMI Blended Primary Diploma Course (3-6)?

The AMI Blended Primary Diploma Course (3-6) offers AMI training in a new format. It is the result of an 18-month process during which a panel of AMI trainers from all levels of training as well as representatives of the adolescent orientation and administrators took an in-depth look at AMI training and discussed ways in which to make the training more accessible to more people. The format of the course reduces on-site time by half and uses technology to create effective distance learning modules. In addition, this course will also include the Montessori Core Principles Certificate Course (MCPC). The Montessori Core Principles Certificate Course is a new AMI certificate course that offers a panoramic introduction to Montessori fundamentals. Also the outcome of the 18-month review and design process, it provides an overview of human development from birth to adulthood and beyond. It provides a clear understanding of the fundamental principles that guide Montessori practice and their application in Montessori classrooms; in the care of individuals with special needs; for the elderly and individuals with dementia; and in the context of populations in underserved communities. The MCPC course is also offered in a blended format and provides the foundation and the context for the Blended Primary Diploma Course.

2. Is this a MINT initiative?

The Blended Primary Diploma Course (3-6) and the Montessori Core Principles Certificate Course are both AMI initiatives. MINT is piloting the new certificate course and the blended training format on behalf of AMI. This pilot course is the first of what will become a permanent training modality option. As part of this course, you will be asked to complete surveys in various phases of the course, and especially at the conclusion, to ensure that we are providing AMI training in a modality that meets the needs of our students.

3. Will this be a full AMI diploma course?

Yes, the Blended Primary Diploma Course (3-6) will include all elements of the AMI Primary diploma course and successful completion of the Course will lead to the AMI diploma at the 3-6 level. The difference is in the mode of delivery.

4. What are the components of the AMI Blended Primary Diploma Course?

All AMI training focuses on the preparation of the adult to work on behalf of children. The course content is designed to help trainees prepare themselves intellectually, technically, and spiritually. The Blended Primary Diploma Course offers the same content as all AMI training:

- Introduction to Montessori developmental psychology through lectures, discussions, readings and observations
- In-depth study of the psychology and development of the 3 to 6-year-old child through lectures, discussions, readings and observations
- The theoretical and philosophical foundations of Montessori practice; the implications for the role of the adult and their application in creating a prepared environment for the child through lectures, discussions, readings and observations
- Practical demonstration lectures that show the use of Montessori materials
- Supervised practice to develop proficiency in the use of the materials
- Exercises to develop the capacity to observe and reflect
- Classroom observation and practice teaching that integrates skills in observation, reflection, planning and implementation

5. What components of the course will be covered in the on-site and distance blocks?

The on-site blocks will be used for introductory and foundational work in all areas. The distance blocks will be comprised of follow-up work and further study.

6. What will a day of on-site training look like?

Your time in the classroom will be some combination of lecture, discussion, demonstrations and practice. After class every day you will have follow up work on the day's topics and preparatory work for the next day. Depending on the individual, this work can take between three to six hours every day. Your on-site time will be very intense!

7. What kind of work will I be doing beyond the classroom hours?

All assignments are designed to

- help you further explore a topic and develop foundational knowledge that is necessary to work with children and families.
- develop the technical skills necessary to become a primary guide
- develop the skills to communicate your understanding of the child and of Montessori practice

Assignments may involve preparatory or follow-up reading on a topic; reading of Montessori literature; reflections on the readings or participation in discussion forums; and creating outlines and summaries of topics. Periodically there will be formative assessments in the form of quizzes, short-answers or interactive units. There will be a summative assessment at the end of each section.

For practical segments, preparatory assignments may involve watching videos of presentations in preparation for classroom analysis and discussion. Follow-up assignments focus on honing technical skills for handling materials and offering presentations as well as deepening understanding of the guiding principles of our practice. Sometimes you will be required to submit videos of parts or the whole of a presentation of a material with a self-critique for feedback from the training staff.

8. What is the time commitment for course work during the distance blocks?

The distance blocks will be used largely for follow-up work or preparatory work for developing content knowledge about plants, animals, people and places as well as geometry and language. Content will be provided either as reading or as on-line units, webinars, webcasts and tutorials. There will be assignments from this work as well as follow-up from the on-site blocks. You should plan for 10-15 hours per week for course work and assignments. While you will have deadlines to meet, you will have the freedom to structure your time according to your individual needs.

9. How do I access the course, coursework and assignments, and resources?

You will be provided with a login to a Learning Management System (LMS) that will be used to deliver the course content. You will access all documents, videos, and resources from the course through this LMS. Training videos and assistance will be provided to help you become very familiar with navigating the LMS. You are responsible for obtaining all the books from the Required Reading List before the course begins – in fact, you can buy the books now and start reading!

10. What is supervised practice?

Supervised practice is the time that you spend working with the materials to hone your presentation skills. The goal is to reach a level of proficiency with the handling of the material and the sequence of a presentation so that you can focus on the child when you are giving them a presentation without having to think about the lesson itself. A minimum of 140 hours of supervised practice is required as a part of the AMI training. You will have some hours of practice during your on-site training blocks, and some of this practice will be your responsibility to complete during the distance blocks. For this purpose, you will need access to a prepared Montessori 3-6 classroom. You will practice with the materials and will be asked to record and upload videos of specific presentations for review by the training staff. You may be asked to self-critique your presentations as a part of the assignment and this will be the foundation for discussion and feedback from your training staff.

11. What about Observation and Practice Teaching requirements?

You are required to complete 90 hours of Observation in a classroom run by an AMI-trained guide. You will have specific observation tasks to complete and will keep a record of your observations and analyze them. This will be part of the Observation Portfolio that you will submit for assessment.

You are required to complete 120 hours of Practice Teaching in a classroom run by an AMI-trained guide with more than one year's experience in the classroom. You may be allowed to complete a portion of your practice teaching requirement in your own classroom if you are leading a classroom, to be determined by the trainer on a case-by-case basis. As a part of your practice teaching, you will:

- submit a portfolio that includes planning, record-keeping and reflection.
- submit video records of parts of your practice teaching that will be used for discussion and feedback from the training staff. You will be given specific focus areas to record during your practice teaching.
- obtain permission from the administration of your host school to record in the classroom. You will be provided with a letter you for the head of school explaining this requirement for Practice Teaching. In addition, you will need to obtain parental permission from the parents of each child who will appear in your videos, and this permission form will also be provided. These forms must be signed and uploaded into the LMS as part of your Practice Teaching requirements.

12. How will the work done on the course be presented?

Work done on the course will be compiled in one of the following forms:

- Albums including a Digital Portfolio
- Material making
- Observation and Practice Teaching records (including digital components)

Albums cover the following topics:

- Fundamental Elements of Theory and Practice
- Exercises of Practical Life
- Sensorial Exercises
- Language Exercises
- Mathematics Exercises
- Cultural Extensions

Each Album and Digital Portfolio will contain handouts given during the course; your notes from lectures; follow up work on each topic; and video uploads of presentations or parts of presentations.

For theoretical topics, follow-up work will include the creation of outlines, mind-maps and graphic summaries to develop content knowledge and understanding of the topic. There will be application assignments focused on family engagement or exploring Montessori practice in the context of current early childhood research and practice.

For practical topics, follow-up work may include the creation of a visual summary of a presentation; connection to the theoretical basis of the practice; application of the understanding to create your own presentations; material making; and video uploads of presentations or parts of presentations.

Your albums are your reference material and each album will be very individual. However, all albums must meet standards of clear organization, ease of use, functionality and attractiveness.

Material making: A key component of training is learning to make materials for children to use. Functionality, practicality and aesthetics as well as application of principles of our practice are essential elements of materials that meet the standards. Precise, detail-oriented work is a hallmark of Montessori materials.

Observation and Practice teaching records as described in Section 11.

13. What if I need help or have questions when I am not on-site at the training center?

Your trainers are always available to help you succeed. You will be able to email them directly from the LMS. In addition, individual meetings via Zoom can be arranged to meet with the trainers for specific guidance. While much of the distance work is self-guided, with content and assignments provided within the LMS, the trainers are still accessible and available so always reach out to us.

14. Know your trainers:

Uma Ramani

I completed my primary training in India four decades ago with Mr. A.M. Joosten and Mr. S.R. Swamy, who both trained with Dr. Montessori. They imbued the training with a strong sense of social mission – Montessori education as a means of providing each child with the conditions that they need to realize their potential and as the foundation for a non-violent, peaceful world. This social mission continues to inform my work with children and adults.

I have worked in Montessori classrooms in India and in the United States, in both the private and the public sectors. As a trainer, I have enjoyed working with adults in the United States, India, France and the Czech Republic. I am closely involved with the Educateurs sans Frontieres arm of AMI and have designed the EsF CoRE (Community Rooted Education) program. Over the last year, I have guided the implementation of CoRE at the grassroots level in several villages in Andhra in association with the Montessori community in Hyderabad, India and I am now working on developing a sustainable growth model for the CoRE program.

It is the quest to make Montessori education more widely accessible that inspired my design of the blended training format. I am honored to spearhead AMI's expansion into a blended training model. Much thought has been put into the use of technology as a tool to provide robust, rigorous AMI training and I am grateful to be working in partnership with Tiffany Liddell to translate aspects of training into the new modality. I have enjoyed exploring new ways in which to guide and support self-study and independent learning, applying the principles of Montessori education to adult learning. As a trainer, I see my role as the guide who will support the individual learning and development of each student as a prepared Montessori adult. I look forward to working with you!

Tiffany Liddell

I was born and raised in Salem, Oregon and moved to Phoenix, Arizona to pursue my career in Montessori education with Mrs. Nimal Vaz. I have four children who have all attended Montessori school – two are still Montessori students! My husband and I are avid cyclists and enjoy the opportunities the Arizona weather gives us to become connected with the outdoors through biking.

I am currently an AMI Primary Trainer (3-6) at the Southwest Institute of Montessori Studies in Phoenix and the Director of Online Montessori Resources and Program Development for the AMI Blended Primary Course at MINT. I hold the AMI Primary Diploma as well as a Master's in Education with Specialization in Early Childhood and the Arizona State Teaching Credential for Early Childhood. My years of teaching children include being a Primary guide in both public Montessori charter school and private home school settings.

As I worked with children, I also began teaching adults through the local community college integrating Montessori educational principles as part of the early childhood curriculum. As a result, I was provided with many opportunities to be a coach for a national credentialing program for early childhood professionals and facilitate professional development workshops throughout the Phoenix Early Childhood community. I have also had the privilege of delivering Primary components for the Adolescent Orientation course.

Through my career in education, I developed college-level online curriculum for early childhood and instructing adult learners. As part of that work, I transitioned in-person internship programs to digital formats using video and self-reflection engagement for infant/toddler, preschool, adult learning/education, and human development. This innovative approach to internships responded to a need in the field of early childhood to complete degree programs from a distance without compromising essential hands-on experiences in the classroom.

This work and research at the college sparked a new possibility to expand the reach of AMI training beyond the geographical boundaries of training center locations, while maintaining the authenticity of Dr. Montessori's approach through a hands-on learning environment. I am excited to offer this alternative method of delivery for AMI training, adapted to the needs of 21st century learners. I will be your direct contact for questions related to the LMS or technical issues with video assignments and accessing technology tools.