



AMI's New Montessori Core Principles Certificate Course and Blended Primary Course

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There's no doubt that our comprehensive and rigorous AMI teacher training sets a high standard. It's the reason the AMI diploma is recognized and sought after around the world. But the fact that our training has traditionally required full-time study at a training center means it is often out of reach for those who need to work full-time and those who live where training is not available.

Now all that is changing!

For the first time, we have AMI training that incorporates distance learning components – the Montessori Core Principles Certificate Course and the Blended Primary Course.

The Montessori Core Principles Certificate Course consists of 120 hours of on-site and distance learning. A deep dive into Montessori theory and principles of practice delivered by AMI trainers and lecturers at all levels from birth through adulthood and aging, it is designed for administrators and staff who support Montessori programs in schools; policy makers and education advocates; academicians and researchers studying Montessori education; those working with the elderly, people with special needs, and underserved communities; children's rights activists; and those interested in human development, peace, and non-violence.

The Blended Primary Diploma Course is the AMI teacher training and certification course for teachers of children ages 3-6 – the same AMI content and high-quality teacher training in a new accessible format. It includes all elements of the traditional AMI Primary diploma course – lectures, demonstration of materials, album making, material making, reading discussion, supervised practice, observation, and practice teaching – in alternating blocks of on-site and distance work. Successful completion of the course leads to the AMI Primary diploma in 12 months.

The blended training format is the result of 18 months of work by a panel of AMI trainers from all levels of training as well as representatives of the Adolescent Orientation and administrators. These AMI trainers and educators did an in-depth study of AMI training and discussed ways to make the training more accessible to more people. The resulting model will make AMI training accessible to many



thousands of working professionals, such as public-school educators who can't leave their classrooms to take the training. In fact, it's already happening at the Montessori Institute of North Texas (MINT) in Dallas!

MINT launched the Montessori Core Principles and Blended Primary Course pilot courses last summer with an enrollment of over 70 and a waiting list of more than 60. Now, after the completion of the first Montessori Core Principles Course and midway through the first Blended Primary Course, we're able to reflect on what implementation of the blended approach has shown us and share information with you about this new training modality, which we hope will be adopted by AMI training centers around the world.

The Montessori Core Principles Certificate Course at MINT

The first Montessori Core Principles Course took place in July 2019. With two weeks of on-site attendance followed by self-scheduled distance work, it was a deep exploration of Dr. Montessori's extraordinary life and activism; her great vision of human development across the life span, from birth through adolescence, adulthood, and aging; the implementation of Montessori principles in all planes of development; and Montessori as education for peace.

- Over 70 students came from Texas and 12 other states, Australia, Canada, and Taiwan.
- 48% were public-school educators.
- 48% were persons of color.
- 60% qualified for financial aid and received partial scholarships from MINT.

Students in the course included university professors; education researchers; Montessori trainers and training center administrators; an AMI/USA board member; parents; community activists; and school administrators, teachers and assistants, including educators from public school districts such as Austin ISD, Dallas ISD, Cedar Hill ISD, Grand Prairie ISD, Kansas City Public Schools, and public charter school organization Lumin Education.

Here's a short video (3 minutes) that explains the content of the course – we think it captures the spirit of the course as well!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQs_tRD1dQU

The Blended Primary Course at MINT

With ten weeks of on-site work and two distance blocks of roughly a semester each, the format of the Blended Primary Course reduces on-site time by half and uses technology to create effective distance learning modules. We know this training format is meeting a real need. Applicants have told us so, with statements such as “I’ve been waiting for this course for years,” and “Thank you for offering this course because I’m not sure if I would have experienced this in any other way!”

Of the 70+ students who completed the Montessori Core Principles Course, 39 continued in the Blended Primary Course and are now half-way through their training. All the students are working while taking the training, and all but a handful are teaching in Montessori classrooms. Recent observation visits by an AMI trainer to the classrooms of 12 students who are teaching now in three Dallas-area public schools showed remarkable implementation of Montessori principles in Primary classrooms.

The Technology

People often ask how AMI can deliver authentic training during distance blocks. This is possible through the use of technology proved effective during years of successful application -- the Populi learning management system and the Panopto video management system.

Populi permits delivery of course materials and creation of forums for individual and group work among students. Assignments can be posted, and finished work can be uploaded. Populi also offers an internet work messaging system for private communication among training staff; it includes an activity feed for interaction with each student individually; and it provides a group communication option for dialogue with all students.

Panopto was developed at Carnegie Mellon University. It has been tested and approved by many major universities for on-line learning, lecture recording, screen-casting, video streaming, and video content management, including Brown, Cornell, Columbia, Georgetown, Johns Hopkins, Stanford, Yale, UC Berkeley, UCLA, Johns Hopkins, the University of Michigan, and the University of Pennsylvania, among others.

These platforms were carefully chosen precisely because they are capable of supporting the comprehensive and rigorous nature of the AMI training. They



work with the design of the blended courses to enable deep engagement with course content in both theory and practice. Students create presentations to communicate key theoretical principles, upload videos of material demonstrations, and receive individualized feedback from course mentors, much as they would during supervised practice.

Beyond the work with course content, distance blocks also include observation and practice teaching, live webinars, reading discussion posts, and weekly assignments -- all with an emphasis on developing students' capacity for self-reflection. In essence, these adult students work in a "virtual prepared environment" that fosters self-paced and self-motivated learning.

How the Blended Training Format Supports Our Mission

As an AMI training center, MINT's mission is to better the lives of all children through AMI-accredited teacher training programs and to expand the awareness of Montessori principles in society. What better way to do this than by increasing access to training? The implementation of the blended training format is a major step forward for AMI that will have a huge impact on the availability of highly trained and certified Montessori teachers, especially for children in public schools.

To see more about the Montessori Core Principles Certificate Course, the Blended Primary Course, and other courses involving distance learning components that MINT will offer in 2020, please visit our website at www.montessori-mint.org. We would love to share our experience with you, and we welcome all questions. We hope to see the new blended training model adopted by more training centers around the world.