
AMI/USA HOS 6.17 Zoom meeting

To share strategies, questions, and concerns regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, school closings and reopening, and remote learning among AMI/USA Heads of School.

6.17.2020

10 am PT / 12 noon CT / 1 pm ET

AGENDA

1. Alan Preece introduction and additional details.
2. Paula Lillard Preschlack, head of school at Forest Bluff School in Illinois, joins the call to share their school's extensive resources for Montessori homeschooling, and also their preparations for returning to Montessori for the fall of 2020.
3. Heads of Schools participant Q & A and discussion.

MEETING NOTES

NAME	INFORMATION SHARED	ACTION ITEMS
	~40 participants	
Alan Preece	Introduces self and his work at AMI/USA. Invitation to share resources you have found helpful or requests for support needed.	Contact welcome: alan@amiusa.org
	Upcoming AMI/USA HOS Zoom call: 6/24/2020: 10 am PT / 1 pm ET: Austin Montessori School's Grae Baker and Dawn Michal join the call to share the Operating plan that was developed for the summer of 2020 and their strategies for reopening. They also host a vibrant parent-child communication workshop that will be discussed.	
	Alan introduces Paula Lillard Preschlack: head of Forest Bluff school, writer, presenter and speaker, holds diplomas at all 3 levels and audited the Orientation to Adolescence.	
Paula Preschlack	Acknowledging that the work presented today is a collaboration between Forest Bluff and many other schools and teachers. Suggestion to view this as a work-in-progress. Acknowledging the significant challenges schools are facing at this time. Using the summer to prepare for what comes next. Paula is sharing the document that she created for this webinar with all the heads of schools.	FBS resources for Montessori Homeschooling
	Today, will share preparations for opening school and also for possible return to online learning. Their school is focusing on community: offering opportunities for virtual events and lots of communication with families.	
	When school closed, teachers wrote activity ideas for home and made individual calls to families. Gave an idea of the routine, principles, themes, what to look for with their children. Started	

	holding zoom group meetings. Parents were saying they needed more – so they started making videos for the families. Ex: primary teacher ‘finding geometric solids’. Different approach for each level. Videos included prompts for further learning.	
	Communication from the head of school increased and focused on how Montessori children have already developed skills that are helpful with at-home learning: independence, inquisitiveness, etc.	
	Children started making materials, taking lessons out into the environment. Made division board with cheerios, made a bead frame with a cereal box. Really amazing and creative work was done. Matrillearning offers templates to make some language materials.	https://www.maitrillearning.com/collections/digital
	The school then found that families still needed more. Each level created homeschooling activity recommendations in a Remote Learning Plan. See Forest Bluff website for more information. The plan includes weekly updates from teachers and the resources shared with families.	
	The school already has a well-developed blog and uses this to guide families working from home with their Montessori children and using Montessori principles. See especially: “Through Darkness to the Light” – by Paula Polk Lillard written on April 12, 2020.	https://forestbluffschool.org/blog/ Link for article – https://forestbluffschool.org/through-darkness-to-the-light/
	Reflections on homeschooling – impressed by their families’ creative and interesting activities done during the Montessori homeschooling period. Pictures were shared and posted on the school’s website.	https://forestbluffschool.org/reflections-on-homeschooling/
	The school’s administration focused on building community – Paula described an event done with the toddler families to create bonds where they shared beads and made necklaces for one another.	
Jennifer Hanna	Appreciates Paula Preschlack’s thoughtfulness. Since the school closings happened so quickly, we were all thrown into this. Need time to reflect on what was done for future planning.	
Paula Preschlack	We are working on technical strategies and appreciate the opportunity to share with other schools and will continue to do so.	
Alan Preece	Noticing that families are mentioning that they need further support with at-home learning/online learning. How much further support did your families need?	
	Parent/Continuing education is already a priority for Forest Bluff. Families shared their concerns more and more. Some families are concerned about their children falling behind. That’s when the school decided to create a more organized approach to Montessori learning at home in case school is closed again in the Fall.	
	The school is planning to reopen in the Fall of 2020. They sent out a questionnaire for families to share concerns for reopening.	

	They found that families want more details about how another school closing and return to online learning is being planned for.	
	Sharing school communications that was sent to families regarding reopening in the fall and possible remote learning plan if it becomes necessary again.	https://forestbluffschool.org/covid19-school-communication/
	Structure/daily schedule: determined that it would be best to provide a similar structure that is followed when school is in session. Also included: how students are accountable, ways of instruction, materials, work plans and weekly meetings with their director, how to give feedback and encouragement with the children's work, director continuing to be available for support and communication with families.	
	Remote learning plans for each level created by classroom directors. Acknowledging that the remote learning plans will help families to be comfortable with reenrolling.	Remote learning plans will be sent in weekly email.
	Primary daily work period for remote learning discussed.	
	Discussed online resources, student work bag, access to Montessori materials. Will be careful and thoughtful regarding what materials are sent home. Will not be the actual Montessori materials but will be replicated or given instructions for how to make them yourself.	https://web.seesaw.me/
	Example of elementary work plans discussed.	
	Discussion of how using screens should be optional – children do have the choice to attend or not. Some children can tolerate only small amounts of screen time. Started using Zoom rooms so that the children can check in as needed. Presentations and checking in with teacher regularly, including read aloud with the teacher.	
	Any questions from the group?	
Shree Malkar	Will these resources be shared?	Yes in this document and in the weekly HOS email.
Paula Preschlack	Yes – these resources will be shared in the weekly email. Please continue to offer feedback, use these resources and adapt as needed according to the needs of your community. Use the parts that are meaningful to the needs of your community.	
Char Baccus	Regarding physical Montessori materials leaving the school: Waypoint sent materials home at every level – all the way to toddler. System of using gloves, masks, wiping everything down. Appreciated by parents and children alike. Lend books from resource library also - using ziplock bags. Items sit out for 3 days when returned. Encourages schools to consider trying this. Parents and children were so appreciative of this link to the school and it was a good experience for them. Had to support the teachers with accepting this as well. Comments from other schools in chat indicate it was a good experience for them as well.	
Paula Preschlack	Does anyone have any thoughts for what they will do the same and what they may change for next year?	

Christa Montague	TX – small school 4 classrooms. Similar class schedule, starting every day with a zoom meeting to begin the day. The children then worked at home or in small groups. Christa also did a facebook live every day with story time at the close of the work cycle. Instead of a website, they used a private facebook page due to parent familiarity and access. Were able to put resources directly on this page, labeled and organized. Videos added – some for parents, some for children. Preparations for return to online learning: One of the classroom assistants is making sewing kits for the children. Printing moveable alphabets to give to families. Suggestion to collaborate on videos – can we all share these within Montessori schools?	
Paula Preschlack	How can we share the videos? Would like to be working with the trainers to do what we can do to consolidate videos. Develop a library for all schools to contribute to. How to organize this? There is a benefit for the child to hear the teacher’s voice and see the teacher but acknowledging that it is not possible for one person to create every video needed.	
	In the remote learning plans, FBS has been careful discussing curriculum so that they are not committing to something that cannot be delivered.	
Peggy Larson	Has this been shared with parents? Did it help with re-enrollment?	
Paula Preschlack	Yes, this was shared and has been helpful with re-enrollment – parents are comparing these plans with other local schools and have seen that this plan is comparing better.	
Peggy Larson	Regarding the stress level of teachers, and amount of screen time. Parents are comparing to other schools, and between classrooms. Teachers need to be able to focus on their relationship with their children.	
Paula Preschlack	Technical challenges for teachers – trying to create a consistent approach between classes. How do we do this without sliding into a more traditional approach to education? Parents can quickly say they want such things as daily lessons, tests, accountability as in the traditional school experience. Committed to including Montessori fundamentals of choice, independence, videos used to give ideas and as a springboard to further work (not as instruction.) This summer the teachers will be working to create presentations that are very much just the suggestion to work and inspiration to the child for further work.	
	Looking forward to hearing more from the AMI trainers – with suggestions and comments regarding these documents.	
Alan Preece	Thanks to Paula for her time and generosity. We appreciate you sharing your work and continued partnership. Regarding other resources – see training center offerings for information about remote learning for families and schools, MINT “idea bank”	https://montessori-mint.org/idea-bank
	Please reach out if you have specific concerns or support needed. Thank you to all who were able to attend! Prepared by Lynne Breitenstein-Aliberti on 6/17/2020	Alan@amiusa.org Lynne@amiusa.org