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## AMI/USA Administrators meeting 11/11/2020

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

### AGENDA

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1. [Alan Preece](#), AMI/USA's Interim Executive Director, introduction and moderator.
2. Marion Price of [Capitol Hill Montessori at Meyer](#) joins us to share details regarding the blog she created to support parents with at home learning. She has taken individual questions and expanded those into blog posts that are continually updated based on parent feedback and backed up with research-based data to support the strategies and suggestions provided. Marion has taught Montessori from preschool through elementary in Canada, Japan, Virginia and DCPS. She has trained in the Orton-Gillingham method to support reading and writing and has pursued professional development in brain science and culturally responsive teaching.

### MEETING NOTES

<b>NOTICES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Social Justice Webinar Series</a> – November 15 at 4 pm ET: Sheri Bishop, AMI/USA HRSJ advisor, will be speaking. All funds raised will go to the Black Montessori Education Fund. Led by the AMI/USA Human Rights and Social Justice Committee.</li><li>• AMI/USA to announce appointment of incoming ED later today.</li></ul>
Welcome all! Introducing Marion, her work and extraordinary background. She has taught in several parts of the world, and has primary and elementary AMI training. We are happy to have Marion join us to discuss strategies for engaging and supporting parents with at-home learning.
Marion begins by elaborating on her previous roles and experiences. Her current position as Montessori Specialist is at a public charter school, with non-Montessori trained administrators. Currently, the school is offering at-home, online supported learning. Marion was asked to create a power point to share with parents at an informational night. She shares the school's modernization project. Previously the school was housed in a traditional elementary school. In the new building, every classroom will have a courtyard and garden.
The power point that was shared with the parents was simple and focused on helping parents know what they are trying to accomplish with their children.

<p><b>Building the Bridge between the Montessori classroom and your home.</b> The greatest gifts we can give our children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Prepared Environment.</li> <li>2. The Simplified Home.</li> <li>3. The Parent.</li> </ol>
<p><b>The Parent</b></p> <p>“Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe: let your child work and learn without interruption.</li> <li>• Model: invite your child to practice household activities together.</li> <li>• Engage: encourage your child without correcting.</li> </ul>
<p>Parents had many questions regarding the presentation, and the suggestion was made to create a blog to address these topics. The blog is on the school’s website and is accessible for parents via password. Topics on blog regarding creating a prepared environment at home: what does it mean to: create order, facilitate independence, allow self-motivation to develop, organize and limit choices, have books and materials accessible.</p>
<p>Capitol Hill is a very diverse population, administration has ensured that families who could not afford books and materials for their child have been hand-delivered, and that they have everything they need. Support is given to parents also in the form of a check-list to have when working the child is working online. They are also careful not to provide too much so that families are not overwhelmed.</p>
<p>Another blog post is on: What does it mean to make your home child-friendly? The kitchen is a great place for science experiments, food preparation, independence, contributing to the family, and practical life skills. How to ensure that materials are available for the child.</p>
<p>Materials are being made by teachers and sent to the children’s homes. Readers are sent home, as well.</p>
<p>Other topics on the blog: as a parent - how to observe, how to be inobtrusive, how to give yourself some grace (regarding concerns about overload of screen times). Acknowledging that parents are in a challenging situation with work at home and children learning at home.</p>
<p>The blog posts are concise, simple and clear and include research-based articles to provide evidence that these are not just Montessori ideas, that there is research to support the strategies. We know that current research supports many of Montessori’s original ideas.</p>
<p>Acknowledging that there is online fatigue and trauma being experienced by children, COVID cases are spiking, parents are concerned about safety. With access to t.v. and social media, recent events, children are being exposed to and are experiencing trauma. Children are being isolated at home in many situations. Parents are reporting major behavioral and emotional concerns. Reminder to keep supporting children, be aware of these issues and concerns. To respond to Adverse Childhood Experiences, Marion and other resource personnel from the school are meeting with parents and children one-on-one to provide support to the family and to the classroom teacher. Writing social stories, and reinforcing grace and courtesy strategies, finding out what their interests are. She is careful to make it clear that she is not a therapist or psychologist.</p>

<p>The blog will continue and they are planning additional ways to connect with parents online this year as a bridge between the admin, teachers, and parents, and a fun sense of community. The Parent Association hosted an online fall festival with an online event and dance party recently, that was very successful.</p>
<p>Engagement with parents with schools has changed due to the pandemic. Is this sustainable? How can we look at these changes as positive and changes maintained in moving forward? We are realizing that there is a new normal. Parents have had the opportunity to get a glimpse into the child's work and what teachers are doing. It is a new level of trust and engagement that we can embrace and move forward with.</p>
<p>It is agreed that due to the pandemic, there is a deeper appreciation from parents regarding what teachers do. Families are more committed. School are bringing in new children as an opportunity to reaffirm the community. There is a new respect for teachers as frontline workers, wearing a mask all day. It has been great to see the commitment of parents and the renewed respect for the commitment of the teachers.</p>
<p>For those of us with smaller schools and few non-teaching staff, do you have any advice on how to manage a blog of this type? Suggestions for <a href="#">Nido Marketing</a> and Letty Rising facebook group as a resource for this. Email shared: <a href="mailto:kasim@nidomarketing.com">kasim@nidomarketing.com</a></p>
<p>Lise Riet-Lague of <a href="#">Chesterfield Montessori School</a> has invited other schools to share their blog posts, as long as Chesterfield and the author of the blog (if noted) are credited as the source. <a href="https://www.chesterfieldmontessori.org/blog/">https://www.chesterfieldmontessori.org/blog/</a></p>
<p>The willingness of Montessori schools to directly share ideas and materials has been one of the silver linings of the pandemic. The sharing of information and resources through the AMI/USA administrator sessions has been helpful. Resources are on the <a href="#">AMI/USA website</a>, and on <a href="#">AMI training center websites</a>. Also, search for "Parent Supplements" in the <a href="#">AMI/USA bookstore</a>.</p>
<p>There is a concern that the sharing of resources and communication between schools is not structured in such a way to encourage this to continue. We have learned that there is a benefit to being able to meet online from this experience. How do we make sure that this is not lost when we return to a new normal? More people need to be trained, class sizes are shrinking, and school budgets are tight. Technology is being embraced more and more. Hopefully we will continue the sharing and cooperating even when conditions return to normal.</p>
<p>Virtual meetings allow more participation for administrators to attend Montessori organization meetings. One participant noted that they are able to participate in more events due to the online format. Another participant noted they just shifted to a hybrid administrative working schedule which enabled them to attend this session today.</p>
<p>For those of you with toddler and primary programs who are still doing distance learning, have you found a schedule that works for these younger children? For Capitol Hill, there are 5 primary classes. Regarding young children online learning, generally most primary classes are starting at 9 am (a bit later) and giving the children things to do before getting online. There is a checklist (practical life experiences, get up, brush teeth, have breakfast, help with something). The whole class is online for 20-minute sections only. Then, there are sessions for small groups. They come back for another 20 minutes later in the morning and in the afternoon. There is a read-aloud portion</p>

<p>So about 3 or 4 - 20 minutes blocks per day. Acknowledging that online learning is challenging for the toddler age group.</p>
<p>One school shared that for the toddler classes, the teachers created a blog post updated in evenings and presented to parents with ideas for them to think about, for example: how to observe, ideas for activities. And also set up a few interactive times with the children. Predominantly meeting with the family once or twice a week directly to communicate about the at-home learning. The blog is used to share photos and articles.</p>
<p>One school's Primary Guides are working 8 am to 1 pm doing live sessions Tuesday through Friday. During the course of each week, each child has 2 small group sessions (3 children each group) and one additional one on one session with the guide. There is also a chapter book read aloud for extended day. Those sessions are each 45 minutes. They are also sending home weekly individualized packets of materials/activities.</p>
<p>One school reports that the primary teachers are pushing back on engaging with the first year and second years.</p>
<p>Another school reports that the Primary Guides have a morning meeting, group enrichment at end of morning work cycle, and then each child has 1 1:1 lesson and one small group, or 2 1:1 lessons (depending on child) each week.</p>
<p>How schools can continue to cooperate and not get too competitive was discussed. For states with the state Montessori organization, there seems to be more cooperation. It is hoped that schools can continue to cooperate and that the collaboration during this time will let everyone see that the benefits of cooperation far outweigh the opposite.</p>
<p>It was shared that the more good Montessori knowledge is out there, the better it is for all of us who are fighting some of the myths about Montessori, such as 'children do whatever they want all day long' etc.</p>
<p>Alan shares discussions with Lynne Lawrence, the ED of AMI global, regarding Montessori efforts all over the world, and the philosophy of Montessori is inherent in the social movement. AMI encourages teachers and administrators to trust your training and trust and respect in one another. Remember the friendliness with error, and believing that at the heart of this is the fundamental importance of the impact that Montessori can have.</p>
<p>It is thought that the best Montessori teachers are born, not made by training. Anyone can remember how to do a lesson, it is all about truly understanding the purpose of education.</p>
<p>Montessori is more present in the prepared adult, if the prepared environment cannot be realized.</p>
<p>Thank you to all who were able to attend and for sharing your thoughts. Please feel free to share topics and suggestions for future meetings and requests for support needed.</p>
<p>Alan Preece <a href="mailto:Alan@amiusa.org">Alan@amiusa.org</a> Lynne Breitenstein-Aliberti <a href="mailto:Lynne@amiusa.org">Lynne@amiusa.org</a></p>