

Maria Montessori Academy's Learning From Home Handbook

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A Vision of Learning from a Montessori Perspective

"Our aim is not merely to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core."

~Dr Maria Montessori

As we embark on a time of 'Learning from Home,' our aim is to create a Montessori-based framework that serves our students while supporting parents as we all adapt to a different daily routine. It is important to us that the children's activity during this time be enjoyable, thoughtful, challenging and rewarding.

Replicating what happens in our classrooms is not something we can achieve during this period. Our goal is to work in collaboration with families to keep alive the culture of learning that is unique to Maria Montessori Academy and provides families with support and activities that match the developmental needs and characteristics of the child.

How do we establish this at home?

Connection. The fundamental foundation of the Montessori method is connection. Working, parenting, and teaching are all different jobs that are difficult to do well simultaneously. Choose connection. Pick playing a game over arguing about an academic goal. Pick baking together over a math worksheet. Choose having your child help with laundry over getting frustrated with them for leaving clothing on the floor. Choose laughing, cuddling, and snuggling to remind them that they are safe and well – both mentally and physically. Lower your expectations.

The Montessori method is all about the *process*. While completion of work is important, it is our approach that makes all the difference. Learning is most effective when it is within a greater context. When we connect subjects and concepts, we establish meaning which fuels motivation in students. Above all, we want children to feel connected to their learning, not simply "complete assignments" while at home.

Learning together with a sense of **exploration, curiosity and discovery** results in deeper and more meaningful experiences for children. This instils a great sense of ownership and responsibility for the child. It is important to us that we maintain a feeling of connectedness throughout this process. We will be in regular contact in a variety of ways and continued communication between teachers and families throughout the period of closure is assured.

The guidelines throughout this Handbook will outline how our teachers and administration will support our all Maria Montessori Academy families throughout this period of 'Learning from Home.'

The Prepared Environment



For our younger students, the learning environment is your home and surroundings. This means finding ways to support independence, engage in meaningful tasks and supplement learning through various activities suggested by teachers. If possible, it might be worthwhile to set up a small, quiet area of your home to enable your young child to engage in tasks independently.

For our older Elementary to Middle School students, this will mean all of the above, plus establishing a quiet space, expectations and routines for any specific assignments shared by teachers.

Where age-appropriate you might like to discuss 'Learning from Home' with your child and include them in some decision-making processes:

- Ask them where to set up their space (if applicable) and have them participate in the set up
- Remember that at school, students will choose their workspace considering the activity involved, which might mean sitting on the floor. Students will be inclined to do this at home as well.

- Make a schedule together that works for your family (when to take breaks / have time outdoors etc)
- Gather ideas for activities and projects
- Organize materials
- Set out a snack bowl that can be accessed without permission or assistance.

For our older students, it will be important for them to maintain their routine of handing in work and receiving feedback from their teachers.

Overall, we can approach this as an opportunity to be creative and collaborative - we are here to support you through this process.

A quick note/suggestion about the schedule of your day. When we are at school, our whole community starts their day at 8:30 with regular morning exercise. This might be a good way to start the school day at home, too. You can ask your child to envision all of their friends power walking around their neighbourhood and perhaps share photos with one another of creatures seen or nature observed.

Practical Life

Practical life is an important part of experiential learning. It is part of every Montessori classroom and can be mirrored at home. These activities assist students in developing purposeful life skills for their continued growth and development. This includes refining fine motor and movement skills and practicing coordination, planning and problem-solving. Practical life activities:

- foster order and sequence;
- develop concentration;
- foster physical independence;
- foster the development of fine motor control; and
- provide opportunities for planning and carrying out tasks.

The Practical Life area also provides children with opportunities to contribute to family life. Inherent in these activities is the development of key executive functions: decision making, organization, problem-solving, impulse control, collaboration and communication. These skills form the foundation of a child's academic learning. For example, sequencing a task is a pre-reading skill.

Consider developing a list of Practical Life options that a student can choose from. Here at school these tend to be very popular!

Examples of practical life might include:

- setting the table;
- watering plants;
- tidying and organizing rooms;
- planning an outing;
- taking care of pets;
- preparing a snack/meal;
- helping with shopping lists/budgeting;
- repairing a bicycle; or
- working in the garden



Practical life is engaging for children at all stages of development and tasks are designed according to their level of coordination and independence. You can organize a “job chart” or list of family projects as a way to help guide your child's interests. Planning and gathering resources to complete the tasks is purposeful work.

These ideas foster a sense of contribution, responsibility, shared experiences and satisfaction.

As our children get older, these activities lead naturally to volunteer experiences and beginnings of community work. For our oldest adolescents, many of these practical life experiences are the foundation of their sense of belonging and personal vision.

The Uninterrupted Work Cycle

Establishing a routine that works for your family is an essential first step to creating a successful learning environment at home. Children are very familiar with this framework from school. In a Montessori classroom, children are given large blocks of time in order to explore their work deeply. This contributes directly to the development of concentration and provides opportunities to collaborate and problem-solve. It is the framework that fosters child-centred as opposed to teacher-directed learning.

Ownership of Tasks and Sharing of Learning

Montessori learning environments are often referred to as optimal learning environments because of the inherent skills and outcomes that result from being in a rich and interesting classroom, coupled with the dynamic of interactions amongst peers and teachers.

In order to foster a deep sense of ownership in their learning, we focus on two things: the developmental needs and characteristics of the child and their interests. Here are a few key points that aid in cultivating a child's self-direction and attention to their work:

- Choice
- Participation in planning and organizing tasks
- Conversation
- Finding good resources
- Sharing of knowledge

You will be receiving regular communications from your child's classroom teachers in the coming weeks. We encourage parents to find a balance between doing what they can to follow the teachers' suggestions while at the same time doing what works for your family and recognizing that there is so much learning inherent in every day activities like baking, making a grocery list, and real world problem solving. We also recognize that this will look different given your child's age and we want to emphasize that we are placing a far greater emphasis on mental well-being and connection than academic progress.

- Presenting

It is a regular occurrence in an Elementary (or older) Montessori classroom for children to present their work or projects to one another. This is something you can replicate at home. Planning a presentation or sharing time at the end of a project is very exciting for young children and gives our older students an opportunity to use their voice. This can be something as simple as your child walking the rest of the family through what they did to help with dinner or how they planted pea seeds or something as complex as sharing a research project or summary of a novel. It is an essential part of the learning process as it requires synthesis of learning to describe, explain and express yourself clearly. It feels celebratory as well!

Feeling of Responsibility and Contribution to the Community/Family

Being in a Montessori school is often described by students as being part of a big family. All of the aspects detailed above result in a feeling of belonging to a community and with that, we learn that there is a responsibility to ourselves, others and the environment. It is our commitment to each child at Maria Montessori Academy that they reach their fullest potential and feel that they are a valued part of our community.

Toddlers (2 - 3 years)

Children expected to:

- ❖ Enjoy family life with developmentally appropriate contributions

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Remain mindful and respectful about the growing self-esteem and sense of independence that your child is developing
- ❖ Offer help to your child with the hardest part of a task (not the whole task)
- ❖ Initiate verbal communication frequently, ask question, share concerns and observations
- ❖ Be consistent; follow routines and clear sequences for each activity
- ❖ Limit screen time
- ❖ Include your child in household chores
- ❖ Provide opportunities for outdoor activities (gross motor skill development)
- ❖ Let go of perfection
- ❖ Enjoy and appreciate time with your child

A few examples to get you started:

Area of Development	Activity
Gross Motor Skills	Going for a walk (taking time, walking slowly); jumping, hopping, skipping
Fine Motor Skills	Cutting, sewing, pasting
Food Preparation	Spreading butter, slicing fruits, pouring milk or water, making pizza
Literacy	Reading to your child, listening to your child

I would guess that most parents are already doing these things quite naturally!

Early Childhood (2 ½ - 5 years)

Students may be expected to:

- ❖ Enjoy family life with developmentally appropriate contributions

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Remain mindful about your child's stress or worries during this time of change
- ❖ Monitor communication about your child from your teachers
- ❖ Initiate communication with teachers about questions, ideas, concerns, feedback
- ❖ Support your child's independence in daily life activities
- ❖ Be mindful of and allow children to continue periods of concentration
- ❖ Establish daily routines and expectations
- ❖ Limit screen time
- ❖ Provide opportunities for daily physical activity – think about starting your day with morning exercise, just like the students do at school

Early Childhood Teachers will:

- ❖ Initiate individual communications based on student needs
- ❖ Offer guidance in setting up a daily routine
- ❖ Make suggestions for appropriate house chores
- ❖ Offer guidelines and suggestions for screen time
- ❖ Provide both general and individualised suggestions for activities developing fine motor skills / gross motor skills / language / numeracy
- ❖ Be available for ongoing communication

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics

- ❖ Children aged 3 - 6 thrive in environments that promote repetition, routine and the mastery of purposeful movement
- ❖ Allow your child to choose activities and give the opportunity for periods of time without distractions
- ❖ The key to a successful learning environment is order, access to tactile resources, space to explore and meaningful activity.

For the early childhood child, 'work' and 'play' should be interchangeable - a natural, fun and exciting part of life.

Lower Elementary Grades 1-3

Students are expected to:

- ❖ Plan and organize work with guidance from teachers and parents
- ❖ Follow teachers' guidelines and expectations
- ❖ Work with integrity on assigned tasks - do your best!

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Guide your child to set up a prepared environment at home
- ❖ Establish a consistent routine and work schedule together
- ❖ Follow along with the teachers' suggested activities to maintain skills and concepts
- ❖ Provide opportunities for your child to share/present work to you

Lower Elementary Teachers will:

- ❖ Prepare a variety of appropriate tasks and activities for children to engage in at home
- ❖ Communicate in a consistent fashion with parents, replying to emails promptly
- ❖ Offer Parent Education resources
- ❖ Share a daily "Morning Greeting" via email ***Patrick – are we asking LE teachers to do this? I think it's a good idea.*
- ❖ Offer feedback to students

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics

- ❖ Respect the stage of development - many Lower Elementary students are at a "concrete level" and require the Montessori materials to complete certain tasks. Teachers will guide you regarding what works makes sense for your child
- ❖ Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Lower Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home
- ❖ Encourage socialization. Lower Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

Upper Elementary Grades 4-6

Students are expected to:

- ❖ Plan and organize work as independently as possible
- ❖ Follow teachers' guidelines and expectations
- ❖ Be own advocate when assistance or further clarification is required
- ❖ Communicate directly with teachers

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Guide your child to set up a prepared environment at home
- ❖ Establish a routine and work schedule
- ❖ Follow along with the teachers' suggested activities to maintain skills and concepts
- ❖ Provide opportunities at home for work presentations

Upper Elementary Teachers will:

- ❖ Prepare a variety of appropriate tasks and activities for children to engage in from home
- ❖ Communicate in a consistent fashion with parents, replying to emails promptly
- ❖ Offer Parent Education resources
- ❖ Write a letter to the class detailing expectation during the 'Learning from Home' period
- ❖ Share a daily "Morning Greeting"
- ❖ Offer feedback to students
- ❖ Respect the stage of development - some students may still be at a "concrete level" and require the Montessori materials to complete certain tasks. Avoid "teaching" shortcuts for subjects such as Mathematics
- ❖ Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Upper Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home
- ❖ Support the need for Upper Elementary students' group work - working with a friend (if possible) may be very well received
- ❖ Encourage socialization. Upper Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

Middle School Grade 7/8

Students are expected to:

- ❖ Follow the daily schedule as outlined by their teachers
- ❖ Prioritize their own tasks
- ❖ Behave responsibly while engaging online
- ❖ Review both individual and group lesson expectations
- ❖ Submit or review assigned work according to guidelines
- ❖ Compose and maintain a portfolio of work to bring to school when classes resume

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Check in with your child each morning to plan school work time and work space
- ❖ Maintain daily conversations about work progress
- ❖ Invite your child to prepare a meal for the family once per week
- ❖ Invite your child to contribute more than usual to household chores
- ❖ View and discuss suggested movies/web inquiries with your child when possible
- ❖ Share in current events/news items

Middle School Teachers will:

- ❖ Remain in regular communication with both students and parents
- ❖ Review assignments submitted
- ❖ Answer student or parent emails within a reasonable time frame
- ❖ Schedule a weekly conversation with each student via Microsoft Teams, Zoom or some other method.

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics

- ❖ In general, we expect Middle School students to take responsibility for completing their work within the timelines provided
- ❖ There is an opportunity for parents and students to discuss topics of inquiry from their studies. Watching or reading the news together, and otherwise having adult-style conversations is very important
- ❖ While we don't expect parents to review assignments, please do support work completion
- ❖ Adolescents crave and require social interaction. Please facilitate ways your child can virtually meet with other classmates or friends outside of school

High School Omega Grades 9-12

Students are expected to:

- ❖ Check their Canvas and Gmail accounts regularly for updates and announcements
- ❖ Attend any scheduled virtual classes
- ❖ Schedule their own time
- ❖ Behave responsibly, respectfully, and ethically while engaging in online activities
- ❖ Submit work via Canvas

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Access Canvas to stay up to date
- ❖ Regularly check in with child(ren) and maintain daily conversations about work progress
- ❖ Invite your child to prepare a meal for the family once per week
- ❖ Invite your child to contribute more than usual to household chores
- ❖ View and discuss suggested movies/web inquiries with your child when possible
- ❖ Share current events and news

High school teachers will:

- ❖ Regularly communicate with students and parents via email, Canvas and Microsoft Teams.
- ❖ Facilitate home learning using Canvas and Microsoft Teams
- ❖ Review and provide feedback on assignments
- ❖ Be available to support both students and parents

Program Specific Needs and Characteristics

- ❖ In general, we expect high school students to take responsibility for completing their work within the timelines provided
- ❖ Request teacher support when needed
- ❖ There is an opportunity for parents and students to discuss topics of inquiry from their studies. Watching or reading the news together, and otherwise having adult-style conversations is very important
- ❖ While we don't expect parents to review assignments, please do support work completion
- ❖ Adolescents crave and require social interaction. Please facilitate ways your child can virtually meet with other classmates or friends outside of school

Specialty Subjects

Specialty subjects have not been overlooked during the learning from home period. These areas offer students many opportunities for self-expression, personal growth, language, and an outlet during stressful times. During this period, all of our specialty teachers will be in communication with families using the same guidelines for age groups as mentioned above.

Inclusive Education

Students who currently receive support from our Inclusive Education team will receive communication from their team on how learning support will continue for your child.

This will take some time to adapt to but direction will be provided shortly and consistently.

FAQs

When and how can I reach my child's teacher?

Email remains the best way to contact a teacher. We will update you if that changes.

When can I expect a response? In most cases, you can expect a response to emails within 24-48 hours.

How much communication can I expect from the school? The administration team and office team will communicate with you directly should there be any updates on the Covid-19 situation that might have a direct impact on school operations.

Teachers will be in regular communication with both students and parents. They will operate loosely within regular school hours. Teachers need to exercise good self-care at this time and this involves signing off and managing their own families.

Can teachers work with students individually online?

How much technology will be used? As a whole, we will be relying on technology to get us through this crisis. Communication will be done primarily through email and Microsoft Teams. We may utilize Microsoft Teams online video conferencing to maintain a connection with students. That being said, as a staff we are keen to balance students' health by providing activities that encourage Off-line activity.

Will we get a reimbursement of tuition fees? Maria Montessori Academy is operating in accordance with local government instructions given these exceptional circumstances of a nationwide, government-initiated school closure. This closure is limited to the physical building and in person instruction. However, instruction will continue virtually and students will continue to receive information from their teachers and maintain connections. Teachers continue to work both on-site and remotely to support families and offer the best education services we can under these challenging circumstances.

What should I do if I have been laid off and tuition is causing financial strain?

MMA is committed to supporting all staff and families at this time. We have initiated an emergency deferral and bursary program to assist families in need at this time. Please connect with the office and/or Mr. Patrick for more details.

Will you be providing support for ESW children?

We have begun the process of providing support for those on the "Front Lines". At this point this is only applicable to Preschool/K families but we are also looking at families with elementary aged children. This is seen only as a last resort, when both parents are needed for work shifts away from the home.

Resources for Families

Below is a list of helpful resources for families

Learning Resources

Please note there is no expectation surrounding this list – it is simply here if you want to explore, but there is no requirement.

<https://www.salishseacentre.org/scavenger-hunts>

<https://www.vanaqua.org/education/school-programs/virtual-aquaclass>

[Click here for](#) virtual museum tours!

[CBC Kids](#)– (Elementary) Information, videos, and games

[PBS Kids](#)– (Elementary) Videos and games

Khan Academy – (K-12+) Secondary students can navigate this site, but younger kids may want to wait for teacher direction.

[Scholastic](#)– (Mostly Elementary) Includes BookFlix, ScienceFlix, TrueFlix, Shared Reading, and GO! [Free until the end of June]

[Online research for Kids](#) – (Elementary) Online research for beginning readers includes a read-aloud option and vocabulary assistance [Free until the end of June]

[National Geographic for Kids](#)– (Elementary) Most of the site is accessible at no cost.

[Story Time from Space](#)– (Elementary) Astronauts read to you from space!

[Mystery Doug](#)– (Elementary) Science info and videos for K-5. Also available on Facebook.

[Audible](#)– (Elementary) Free audio stories right now

[Highlights Kids](#)– (Elementary) Articles, games, and cool science experiments

[Open Culture](#)– (Intermediate-adult) Free videos, books, lectures, and courses

[Time for Kids](#)– (K-7) Register here for Time’s online magazine for kids. It contains news, worksheets, and quizzes.

The Zone 91.3 is reading a story aloud each day at 1:00 on their Facebook Live

Oliver Jeffers – Stay at Home Storytime - is reading one of his stories aloud M/W/Th at 11:00 via Instagram Live. Also accessible via [here](#) .

[Story Time with Ryan & Craig](#) – (Elementary) Also available on Youtube, Facebook, and other social media platforms.

[Click here](#) for a list of online read alouds – (Primary)

[The French Experiment](#)– (Elementary) Read-alongs in French

[We are Teachers](#)– (K-12) A huge list of authors and celebrities reading and sharing activities. Scroll down the list to see the offerings for older kids and young adults.

[Storyline Online](#)– (Elementary) A large collection stories read by celebrities. Also available as an app.

[Lunch doodles with Mo Willems](#)– (Elementary) Children’s book author/illustrator Mo Willems helps children be creative.

Kenneth Opiel reads [from his books](#) – (Middle Years+) Canadian children’s author Kenneth Opiel reads from his novels.

<https://openschool.bc.ca/COVID19.php>

Podcasts for Children

The Big Life Kids Podcast

Wow in the World

Imagine This

Forever Ago

But Why: A podcast for curious kids

Pants on Fire

Tumble

Circle Round

Reading Bug Adventures

Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls

The Purple Rocket Podcast Fierce Girls

The Past and The Curious: A History Podcast for Kids and Families

Sparkle Stories

Earth Rangers

Myths and Legends

Peace Out

Story Time

What if World

Brains On!

Short & Curly

Classic Kids

The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian

The Unexplainable Disappearance of Mars Patel

News Time

Resources for Information regarding Covid-19

[Safe & Healthy Schools](#)

<https://openschool.bc.ca/COVID19.php>

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/bulletin/20200327/health-and-safety-protocols-guidelines-mar27-2020final.pdf>

BC CDC Updates:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools>

"We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being." - Dr Maria Montessori