



STERLING
MONTESSORI
EST. 1997

DISTANCE LEARNING HANDBOOK MIDDLE SCHOOL



Go With the Waves

Life is not always going to go as you had planned - tides change and things go in different directions. You can't stop the waves from happening, but you can learn to move with them. They may not take you in the direction that you had planned, but they will take you exactly where you need to be.

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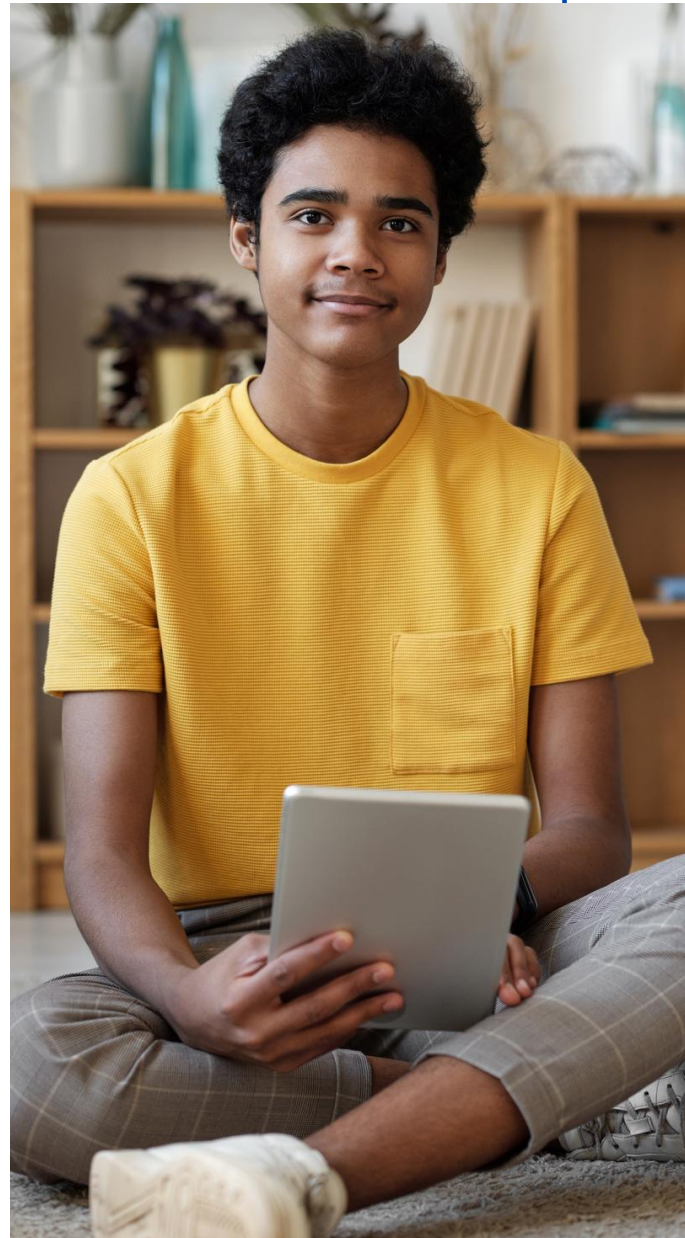


A VISION OF LEARNING

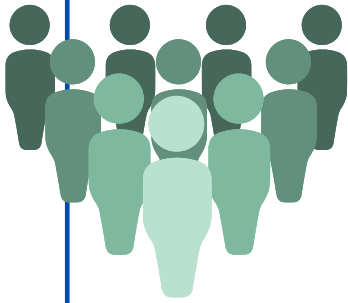
Our vision of learning in the Middle School is to guide the development of each child towards their full and unknown potential. Replicating exactly what happens in our classrooms is not something we can achieve during this period of Remote Learning, but we have created a quality approach to Montessori education from a distance.

Our goal is to work in collaboration with families to keep alive the culture of learning that is unique to Montessori and provide families with support and activities that match the developmental needs and characteristics of each child. We aim to create a Montessori-based framework that serves our students while supporting parents as we all adapt to a different daily rhythm.

Learning together with a sense of exploration, curiosity and discovery results in deeper and more meaningful experiences for students. This instills a great sense of ownership and responsibility in the adolescent. It is also 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 will have continued communication between teachers and families throughout Plan C.



OUR GOALS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

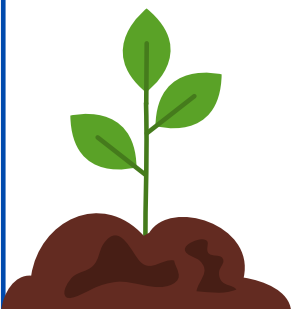


1. **FACILITATE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING:** Our hope is that all teens, families, and staff will look back on this difficult time and feel like they were part of a supportive and loving community that took care of each other. We will work with the school Counselor (Danielle Lamb) to monitor and support the emotional state of our students

2. Develop and implement a robust virtual learning program that facilitates academic growth and includes:

- Consistent lesson sequence across disciplines (Humanities, Math/Science)
- Work of the Head and Work of the Hand - learning will not be done exclusively in front of a screen
- Teachers provide regular guidance and feedback on student work
- Students get extended work cycle time

3. **SUPPORT A STRONG FAMILY SYSTEM:** *All* families will feel like they have the right level of guidance. We will provide guardian/family office hours for support.



4. **Sustain connection and well-rounded growth for students:** *All* students, families and teachers will maintain a strong connection during Plan C, thereby supporting continued social, emotional, and cultural growth

OUTLINE OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Platform Utilized	Google Classroom
Classroom Communication	Google Classroom Zoom Google Meet Email
Group Meetings	Daily in Advisory Groups (15-20 students)
Time for Connection	Morning Meetings 1:1 Student-Teacher Meetings Whole MS Community Meetings Virtual Social Gatherings Teacher Office Hours Afternoon Meetings



DISTANCE LEARNING & THE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT

The Montessori Middle School remote classroom is designed to account for the learning needs and characteristics of students in 7th and 8th grade by integrating into our Distance Learning framework:

- Social engagement between students
- Collaborative and individual work
- Service learning
- Applying work to the "real world"
- Self-expression
- Self-reflection

How will Sterling meet the needs of the Middle School Students in Distance Learning?

We will...

- Maintain a sense of classroom and school community
- Foster the highest level of functional independence at each level
- Create developmentally appropriate structures for the learner
- Hold a balance of freedom and responsibility
- Support skills the students will need to return seamlessly to classrooms
- Offer choice
- Provide equity - all classrooms at the Middle School level are implementing a consistent plan
- Consider and address additional needs of key children
- Offer plenty of off-screen learning opportunities
- Hold components of time management and materials management (work journal and work binder)
- Based on the three types of work: Follow Up, Ongoing, and Big
 - Follow Up Work - Lessons are being given with work to complete independently
 - Ongoing Work - Skills are continuously practiced
 - Big Work - Cosmic Education is alive and inspiring curiosity
- Offer opportunities for peer interactions

SAMPLE MS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Student Orientation and Community Building

Week 2: Student Orientation and Community Building,
Work Cycle, Lessons/Assessments begin

Week 3: Student schedules confirmed

Sample Middle School Schedule for Parents

WHEN	WHAT	HOW
8:30 am	Morning Meeting	Student-led morning meeting in advisory groups
9:00 am	Lessons Work Cycle	Work Cycle Office Hours Feedback/Assessing
12:00 pm	Lunch Physical Exercise Solo Time	Off-Screen Time
1:45 pm	Lessons Work Cycle	Work Cycle Office Hours Feedback/Assessing
3:45 pm	Afternoon Meeting	Closing meeting in advisory groups

MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to:

- Plan and organize work from home consistently during school hours
- Review work expectations for each of their classes
- Work from study guides in all curriculum areas (math/science, humanities)
- Submit assigned work to Google Classroom
- Get at least 45 minutes of physical activity per day
- Dedicate at least 15 minutes to Solo Time

Associate Teachers will:

- Host a weekly zoom meeting with advisees
- Host and take notes on regular 1:1 teacher/student conference
- Host social opportunities (book club, lunch group, game sessions)
- Provide additional check-ins/support for students who need it through office hours
- Assist in parent communication

Parents are invited to:

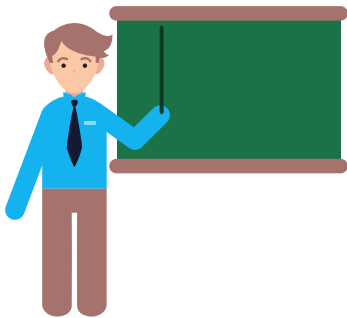
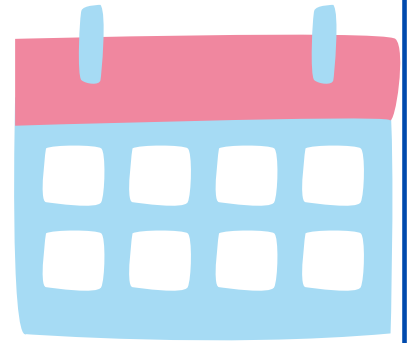
- Support your child in maintaining a daily and weekly work schedule
- Maintain daily conversations about work progress
- Expect your child to contribute to household chores (prepare meals, clean house, tend garden/landscape, help with younger siblings, etc.)
- Meet with teachers as requested for student support

Teachers will:

- Host regular zoom meeting with advisees
- Host regular 1:1 teacher/student conference
- Provide office hours via Google Calendar appointments or zoom drop-in
- Provide unit study guides via Google Classroom
- Post pre-recorded, live, and external video lessons for student viewing
- Assess and grade all work as usual - grades will be updated in Google Classroom
- Answer student and parent emails within 48 hours (except on weekends)
- Take attendance daily

COMMUNICATION & TIMING

All Work Plans/Study Guides for the week will be posted on the designated Google Classroom page by Monday morning at 8:00 a.m.



Classroom teachers will communicate via email, Google Meet, or Zoom to engage students in rich learning tasks.

Classroom teachers will offer office hours for parents to sign up, if support is needed via Zoom or questions via email.

All teachers will be touching base with families during the first weeks of school via email to offer support and gauge individual needs.

Scope and Sequence - found on the [AMS website](#) or on the [Sterling Montessori](#) website under the Middle School Charter program.

Distance Learning Attendance Policy

Teachers will be monitoring student posts each day through Google Classroom. This means that in order to be considered "present" for that day, your child will need to attend the daily morning meeting and their scheduled morning work cycle in order to be considered present.

KEY ELEMENTS OF LEARNING FROM HOME

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. Students are very familiar with this framework from school. In a Montessori classroom, students 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-centered, as opposed to teacher-directed, learning.



KEY ELEMENTS OF LEARNING FROM HOME

Establish a Prepared Environment to meet the needs of the Middle School Student

This means finding ways to support independence, engage in meaningful tasks, and supplement learning through various activities suggested by teachers.

Establishing a routine that works for your family is an essential first step to creating a successful learning environment at home.



Curriculum

Maria Montessori developed the pedagogy of Cosmic Education - that everything in our universe is interdependent and the past, present, and future of our history is interconnected. All bodies of study branch out from this cosmic education plan: life science, earth science, physical science, geography, history, math, and the arts. Students at this age have a deep desire to hone their unique abilities in order to gain confidence and contribute to social change. Montessori is a unique individualized educational approach that nurtures the student's intrinsic desire to learn and focuses on the whole child—their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. We've adapted our instruction to the virtual world with these key concepts in mind.

KEY ELEMENTS OF LEARNING FROM HOME

Freedom & Responsibility



One of the hallmarks of Montessori education is that of freedom and responsibility. Freedom and responsibility are interrelated. A student's work, independence, and concentration develops through engagement with work. Over time, as a student's concentration develops, they are able to make better choices which increase their independence. This leads to a learner being able to handle increasing levels of responsibility. Finding the delicate balance between freedom and responsibility (especially during a time of uncertainty) is crucial for authentic remote learning to occur at home.

"The child who has never learned to work by himself, to set goals for his own acts, or to be the master of his own force of will is recognizable in the adult who lets others guide his will and feels a constant need for approval of others."

-- Dr. Maria Montessori

KEY ELEMENTS OF LEARNING FROM HOME

Grace and Courtesy

In the words of Dr. Montessori, "We must teach the children the elements of social behavior so that their interest is aroused, and as a consequence, their attention directed to these aspects of life." Grace and courtesy are the keys to modeling peace, learning how to act in social situations, showing respect for each other, and are tools students will use their whole lives. In the middle school environment, practicing grace and courtesy includes group problem-solving in community meetings, restorative practice discussions between classmates to help navigate social situations, and using a positive discipline approach to classroom management. These practices will be extended to the Distance Learning plan and we will start with the following lessons on virtual grace and courtesy:

- Arrive on time
- Be in a quiet place
- Create a designated work space (proper lighting, sitting up in a chair, have material available)
- Maintain proper Zoom/Meet etiquette and professionalism (coming in late, muting, sharing screen, background, attire that promotes atmosphere of work)
- Use Raise Hand feature
- Use of Google Classroom
- Organizing Google Drive
- Submitting work
- Safety with technology
- Contacting teachers
- Contacting students



Practical Life

Practical life is an important part of experiential learning. It is part of every Montessori classroom and can be mirrored at home. This element of the Montessori curriculum will be built into the study guides provided by teachers for each unit.

Practical life activities:

- Foster order and sequence
- Develop concentration
- Foster physical independence
- Foster the development of fine motor control
- Provide opportunities for planning and carrying out tasks

Practical Life provides students 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 student's academic learning. 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
- repairing a bicycle, dripping sink, etc.
- planting a garden
- landscaping/yard work