



**STERLING
MONTESSORI**

EST. 1997

DISTANCE LEARNING HANDBOOK ELEMENTARY V2



Go With the Waves

Life is not always going to go as you had planned - tides changes 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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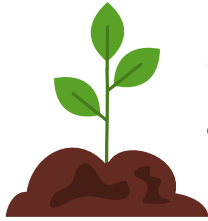
A VISION OF LEARNING

"Our 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

Our vision of learning in the Elementary level is to guide the development of each child towards their full and unknown potential. Replicating what happens in our classrooms is not something we can achieve during this period of Distance Learning. 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 children. This instills a great sense of ownership and responsibility in the child. 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. ACADEMIC GROWTH: *All children will learn, grow and progress academically while away from campus.*

2. SUPPORT A STRONG FAMILY SYSTEM: *All families will feel like they have the right level of guidance: enough to keep children engaged and learning independently but not too much that it feels overwhelming and unmanageable.*

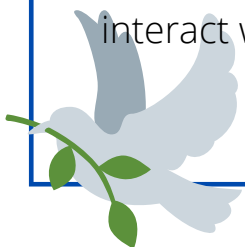


3. SUSTAIN CONNECTION & WELL-ROUNDED GROWTH: *All children and their guides (Leads, Assistants, Administrators, Interventionist, and EC team) will maintain a strong connection during our period of Distance Learning, thereby supporting continued social, emotional, and cultural growth.*

4. FACILITATE COMMUNITY WELL-BEING: *Our hope is that all children, 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.*

5. GRACE AND COURTESY: *One of the main goals of a Montessori education is to prepare students to be contributing and valued members of society. This starts with lessons of Grace and Courtesy, which are key to modeling peace, learning how to act in social situations, showing respect for each other. These are tools our children will use their entire lives! Helping children accomplish these main goals begins with the adults in their lives modeling what Grace and Courtesy looks like when we interact with each other and with our environments.*

Remember they are learning from US!



DISTANCE LEARNING & THE ELEMENTARY STUDENT

The Montessori Elementary remote classroom is designed to meet the learning needs and characteristics of children ages 6 -12 by integrating the following experiences into our remote learning framework:

- 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 children will need to return seamlessly to classrooms
- Offer choice
- Use the Montessori framework to meet standards
- Consider and address additional needs of individual children
- Balance offerings with not too much time in front of screens

How will Sterling meet the needs of the Elementary Aged Children in Distance Learning?

- Student work will hold components of: time management and materials management (Executive Functioning)
- Based on three types of work:
 - Follow up Work - Lessons are being given with work to complete independently
 - Ongoing Work - Skills are continuously practiced
 - Big Works - Interrelated topics provide inspiration for children
- Offers opportunities for peer interactions (herd instinct), group work and collaboration
- Opportunities for mentoring and leadership
- Students are given voice and choice
- Small group lessons

Goal: setting conferences with students to ensure accountability and differentiation.

FOUNDATIONS OF A MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Establishing a Prepared Environment to meet the needs of the Elementary 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. 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. In this day and age of distractibility and addiction to devices, it is more important than ever to teach children how to focus intently and peacefully for appropriate periods of time. This is also the framework that fosters child-centered as opposed to teacher-directed learning.

The Great Lessons and Cosmic Education

During Distance Learning, the Great Lessons will continue to form the keystone of your child's Montessori experience. These Great Lessons are stories which provide students the "big picture" of the world and life. They spark the imagination and lead students to contemplate not only the past, but the future. It is through the telling (and re-telling) of these important Cosmic lessons that students are motivated to further research and work in the Montessori classroom. These stories reveal connections between, such subjects as astronomy, chemistry, geography, history, and biology and form the impetus for further lessons. "Cosmic Education teaches children to recognize the fundamental needs we all share and to respect the cultural differences by which we meet those fundamental needs. Such an education can lead us to a future of true peace such as that sought by Maria Montessori." (Michael and D'Neal Duffy)

FOUNDATIONS OF A MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Freedom and Responsibility



One of the hallmarks of Montessori education is that of freedom and responsibility. Freedom and responsibility are interrelated. A child's work, independence and concentration develops through engagement with work. Over time, as a child's concentration develops, they are able to make better choices which increase their independence. This leads to a child 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

FOUNDATIONS OF A MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Grace and Courtesy

Grace and Courtesy is integrated into the practical life curriculum. Lessons begin in Children's House and continue through Middle School. 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 is the key to modeling peace, learning how to act in social situations, showing respect for each other, and are tools they will use their whole lives. In the elementary distance learning environment, this includes guided role-plays to group problem-solving and community meetings and discussions between classmates to encourage collaboration. A key component of Elementary distance learning is collaboration through zoom. Reinforcing the following grace and courtesy lessons is a good starting point and these will be discussed and reinforced by classroom teachers.

- Ensure that your background is a quiet place with few distractions
- Behavior expectations in a group are the same as those in the classroom eg. taking turns, listening
- Come into meetings quietly
- Use raise hand feature
- Always follow safety guidelines with technology
- We ask that you do not record/share meetings using personal devices

WHAT CAN YOU DO AT HOME?

Routine

Establishing a routine that works for your family is an essential first step to creating a successful learning environment at home. Please see the sample in the Resource Section



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
- Provide opportunities for planning and carrying out tasks

Practical Life 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. 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
- doing laundry or ironing (find those cloth napkins you have been meaning to iron!)
- helping with shopping lists
- repairing a bicycle, dripping sink
- planting a small urban garden

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 experience, belonging, and satisfaction.

Other Ways to Support Your Child

Discuss 'Learning from Home' with your child and include them in some decision-making processes.

Set up a learning space with your child

- Make a schedule together that works for your family
- Post the schedule in a place where it can be easily seen
- Gather ideas for activities and projects
- Organize materials



Establish Healthy Habits

- **Nutritious eating**
- **Adequate Sleep** - Studies have shown that children require a minimum of 9 -10 hours of sleep each night. This improves their focus and ability to self-regulate
- **Provide Unstructured Time** - Research shows that children benefit from daily unstructured free time that does not include technology. This not only benefits the mental health and wellness of children, but also increases their ability to meet their potential.



Sample Elementary Schedule

Sample Home Schedule for Elementary Students

WHEN	WHAT	HOW
Before 8:30 am	Morning Routine (PRACTICAL LIFE)	Suggestions: Make bed, brush teeth, eat breakfast, do dishes, get dressed, help with younger siblings
8:30 - 12:00	Work Cycle and Lessons	Children work on daily academic work and participate in lessons
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch Break/ Free time	Suggestions: Help with lunch tasks: cooking, setting the table, meal prep, picking up/washing own dishes, sweeping, wiping table/counters, outdoor play
1:00 - 3:15	Work Cycle	Children work on daily academic work and participate in lessons
3:15 - 3:45	Snack (PRACTICAL LIFE)	Prepare and eat a healthy snack, clean up after eating. Snack and breaks can be taken by students whenever needed.
3:45 - 4:45	Afternoon Fresh Air	Personal challenge, bike ride, walk the dog, play outside, board/card game, sports challenge, physical exercise, choice work if it is raining
4:45 - 5:30	Choice Time	Student chooses an activity
5:30 - 7:00	Dinner Preparation	Suggestion: Help with dinner tasks- setting the table, meal prep, unloading the dishwasher, picking up/washing own dishes, etc.
7:00- 8:00	Down Time	Suggestion: Family Reading time, puzzles/games, age-appropriate movie or TV show, internet time, social media time, online social time with friends
8:00 - 9:00	Bedtime Routine (PRACTICAL LIFE)	Suggestion: Shower, brush teeth, electronics off, read, lights out

OWNERSHIP OF TASKS & SHARED 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 follow the teachers’ suggestions and guidance when completing work at home. The more children are involved in developing and detailing their activities, the more they can achieve.

Sharing or presenting work: 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 and teachers may replicate through a Zoom class meeting. 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. 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!



EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

Expectations of Lower Elementary Students (6-9 Years)

Students are expected to:

- Plan and organize work with guidance from parents
- Attend lessons
- Follow teachers' guidelines and academic 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

Teachers will:

- Prepare a variety of appropriate tasks and activities for children to complete at home in order to maintain and move their learning forward
- Communicate in a consistent way with parents, replying to emails promptly
- Offer resources for additional learning opportunities in the greater community
- Offer feedback to students
- Respect students stage of development
- Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Lower Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, and Practical Life at home
- Encourage socialization. Lower Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

Expectations of Upper Elementary Students (9-12 Years)

Students are expected to:

- Plan and organize work as independently as possible
- Attend lessons
- Follow teachers' guidelines and expectations
- Be their own advocate when assistance or further clarification is required
- Communicate directly with teachers via email with their Chromebooks

Parents are invited to:

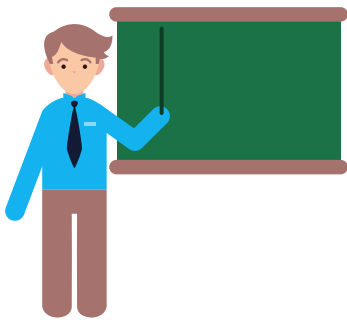
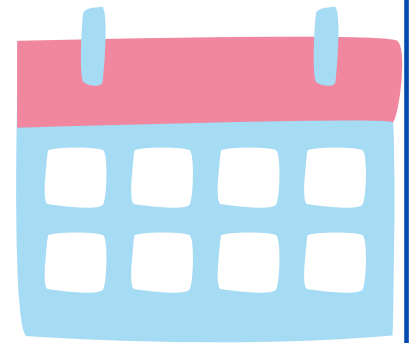
- Guide your child to set up a prepared environment at home
- Establish a routine and work schedule
- Follow along with the teachers' suggested activities to maintain skills and concepts
- Meet and review your child's assignments; provide opportunities at home for work presentations

Teachers will:

- Prepare a variety of appropriate tasks and activities for children to complete at home in order to maintain and move their learning forward
- Communicate in a consistent way with parents, replying to emails promptly
- Offer resources for additional learning opportunities in the greater community
- Provide expectations during the 'Learning from Home' period
- 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. Teachers will guide you regarding what activities are appropriate for your child
- Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Upper Elementary students to build from their interests.
- Support the need for Upper Elementary students' group work - working virtually with a friend (if possible) may be very welcome
- Encourage socialization. Upper Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

COMMUNICATION & TIMING

All Work Plans for the week will be posted on your classroom Seesaw Webpage (LE/UE) or Google Classroom (UE) by Monday morning at 8:00am.



Classroom teachers will communicate with parents via email, Seesaw (LE/UE), Google Classroom (UE) or Zoom to engage students in rich learning tasks. All lessons and activities will be clearly outlined with video tutorials or text instructions.

Classroom teachers will offer weekly office hours for parents to sign up, if support is needed via Zoom or questions via email. Please give our teachers a 24-hour grace period to respond, as they are also conducting conference calls, Zoom class meetings, school planning and managing their own families during the school day.

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

Distance Learning Attendance Policy

Teachers will be monitoring student posts each day through Seesaw and/or Google Classroom. 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. This morning meeting is intended to build classroom community, receive whole group lessons in a variety of curricular areas and to set the children up for success with their daily work plans.

COMMUNICATION & TIMING



In January, children signed up for the Distance Learning Track will be placed in an initial lesson group. If there are any changes to groups which need to be made, the teacher will communicate these changes directly with parents.

Our goal is to create a consistent and predictable schedule for families.

Group meetings will take place every morning and during these meetings, teachers will take attendance.



Specials Schedule will be reflected in your child's class schedule.

SAMPLE ELEMENTARY SCHEDULE

WEEKLY OVERVIEW

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Daily Work	Daily work to be posted on Seesaw/Google Classroom Monday's by 8:00.				
Weekly Work	Practice work from lessons Moby Max Spelling Words Choice Boards				
Weekly/ Monthly Projects	Book Reports Literature Circles Cultural/Science Projects				

ELEMENTARY DISTANCE LEARNING SAMPLE SCHEDULE

There will be several small group lessons each week from all the curriculum areas. Your child's distance learning teacher will communicate your child's schedule, lesson groups and any links needed.

Student schedules will be consistent each week unless occasional changes need to be made to the initial groupings.

Your classroom teacher will communicate any changes to you about child's initial schedule with as much advance notice as possible

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:30 - 9:00	Morning Meetings/ Group Lesson Attendance is taken here				
9:05 - 9:20	Individual conferences/ lessons				
9:30 - 10:10	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
10:15- 10:40	Group A	Group A	Group A	Group A	Individual Conferences And Follow-ups
10:45 - 11:10	Group B	Group B	Group B	Group B	
11:15 - 11:40	Group C	Group C	Group C	Group C	
11:45 - 12:10	Group D	Group D	Group D	Group D	
12:15 -12:30	Lunch Break Free Time				
12:30 - 1:15					
1:15 - 1:55	Study Group A	Study Group C	Study Group A	Study Group C	Group Presentations
	Study Group B	Study Group D	Study Group B	Study Group C	
2: 00- 2:45	Specials	Individual Conferences/ lessons			
2:45 - 3:15		End of Day Class Meeting			
3:15 - 4:00	Teacher Office Hours				