
Learning from Home Handbook

Beachside Montessori Village
April 2020



“Our care of the children should be governed not by the desire to “make them learn things”, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within them the light which is called intelligence.”

- Dr. Maria Montessori



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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 Montessori and provide families with support and activities that match the developmental needs and characteristics of the child.

How do we establish this at home?

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 and connection to a "bigger picture" 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 BMV teachers and administration will support our BMV families throughout this period of 'Learning from Home.'

The Prepared Environment

The first aim of the prepared environment is, as far as it is possible, to render the growing child independent of the adult.

—Dr. Maria Montessori

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.

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)
- 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



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.

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.* An additional benefit of practical life is it introduces hobbies for children; sewing, cooking, construction, creating a habitat for a pet, etc.

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.

Examples of practical life might include:

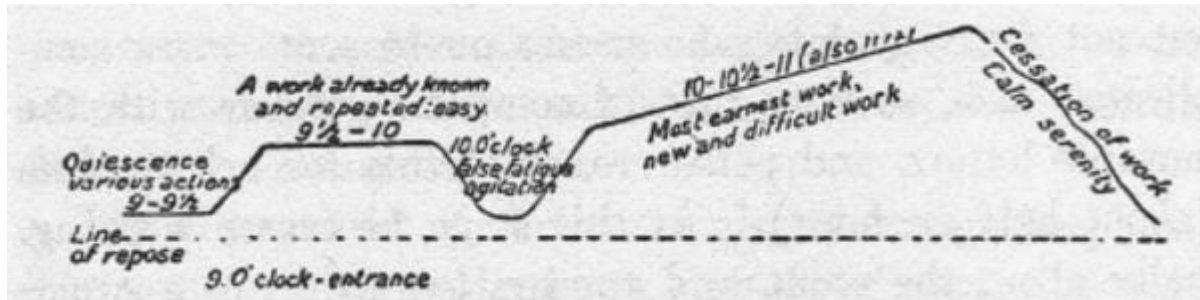
- setting the table
- watering plants
- tidying and organizing rooms
- planning an outing
- taking care of pets
- preparing a snack/meal
- helping with shopping lists/budgeting
- repairing a bicycle
- planting a small urban garden



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 to 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-centered as opposed to teacher-directed learning.

In a Montessori classroom, children are given large blocks of time in order to explore their work deeply. Keeping with the Montessori philosophy of “following the child,” scheduling work periods after your child’s basic needs of self-care, eating, self-driven play, etc. have been met, will result in higher focus and overall success. This contributes directly to the development of concentration and provides opportunities to collaborate and problem-solve.

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 continue to receive regular communications from your child’s classroom teachers. 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.

One note regarding 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. 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!

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 BMV that they reach their fullest potential and feel that they are a valued part of our community.



Early Childhood (3-6 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
- ❖ 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 non- academic screen time
- ❖ Provide opportunities for daily physical activity

Early Childhood Teachers will:

- ❖ Initiate individual communications based on student needs
- ❖ Give guidance in setting up a daily routine
- ❖ Make suggestions for appropriate house chores
- ❖ Offer guidelines and suggestions for screen time
- ❖ Provide both general and individualized suggestions for activities developing fine motor skills / gross motor skills / language / numeracy
- ❖ Be prompt in replying to your emails if you need additional guidance and support

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.

A few examples to get you started:

| Area of Development | Activity |
|---------------------|--|
| Gross motor skills | Going for a walk (taking time, walking slowly); jumping |
| Fine motor skills | Cutting, sewing, pasting |
| Food preparation | Spreading butter, slicing fruits, pouring milk, making pizza |
| Literacy | Reading to your child, listening to your child |

Lower Elementary (6-9 years)

Students are expected to:

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

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Remain mindful about your child's stress or worries during this time of change
- ❖ Initiate communication with teachers about questions, ideas, concerns, feedback
- ❖ 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
- ❖ Follow their own research/ project interests, communicating with their teacher and parent for guidance.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for your child to share/present work to you
- ❖ Limit non-academic screen time
- ❖ Provide opportunities for daily physical activity

Lower Elementary 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 fashion with parents, replying to emails promptly
- ❖ Offer Parent Education resources
- ❖ 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 (substitute hands on materials found in your home, beans, etc.) to complete certain task. Additionally, practical life math (time, money, measurement, utilizing menus for math) is applicable.
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 through Facetime, phone calls, email, etc.

Upper Elementary (9-12 years)

Students are expected to:

- ❖ Plan and organize work as independently as possible
- ❖ Follow teachers' guidelines and expectations
- ❖ Be own advocate when asking for 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
- ❖ Meet and review your child's assignments; provide opportunities at home for work presentations

Upper Elementary 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 fashion with parents, replying to emails promptly
- ❖ Offer feedback to students

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics

- ❖ Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Upper Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions
- ❖ Support the need for Upper Elementary students' group work - working with a friend on-line (if possible) may be very well received
- ❖ Encourage socialization. Upper Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends through Facetime, phone calls, email, etc.

Middle School (12-15 years)

Students are expected to:

- ❖ Schedule their own time
- ❖ Review both individual and group lesson expectations
- ❖ Work solidly for roughly 4 hours a day
- ❖ 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 workspace
- ❖ 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 news items

Middle School 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 fashion with parents, replying to emails promptly
- ❖ Offer Parent Education resources
- ❖ Offer feedback to students

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 meet with other classmates or friends they will need to feel connected to their friends through Facetime, phone calls, email, etc.

Resources for Families

Below is a list of helpful resources for families.

- [100 Ideas for Montessori Early Childhood Students at Home](#) (courtesy of St. Joseph Montessori School faculty and AMS).
- [100 Ideas for Montessori Elementary Students at Home](#) (courtesy of teacher Michelle Jacob and AMS).
- [Audible Stories](#). Free audiobooks for small children and teens for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Find Your 'Virtual Park'](#) with the National Park Service. Online platform with digital opportunities to engage with the parks through multimedia galleries, webcams, virtual tours, and more.
- [Indoor Activities from Motherly.com](#). Montessori-inspired ideas to keep children entertained while inside.
- [The Learning Network](#). Free resources for bringing the world into your classroom, from *The New York Times*. Includes [daily writing prompts](#) using *Times* journalism.
- [National Emergency Library](#). Over 1.4 million books are now available through this digital library. Sign up for a free account (from anywhere in the world) and get reading!
- [National Geographic Kids](#). Games, puzzles, books, videos, crafts and more to engage children around science and adventure.
- [Virtual Museum and Art Gallery Tours](#). *The Guardian* shares breathtaking and interactive tours for cultural experiences from around the world.

Art and Craft Activities

[Easy Peasy and Fun](#)

[Left Brain Craft Brain](#)

Podcasts for Children

[Peace Out](#)

[The Big Life Kids Podcast](#)

[Wow in the World](#)

[Earth Rangers](#)

[Imagine This](#)

[Brains On!](#)

[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](#)

[Myths and Legends](#)

[Story Time](#)

[What if World](#)

[Short & Curly- Ethics](#)

[Classic Kids- Classical Music](#)

[The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian](#)

[News Time](#) – Pre-school new

Resources for information regarding Covid-19

[Coronavirus Advice for the Public](#). The World Health Organization provides regularly updated downloadable materials based on new scientific findings regarding COVID-19.

"[What's New](#)." The latest news about COVID-19 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak](#)

- [Answering Young Children's Questions About COVID-19](#). Age-appropriate responses, from ZERO to THREE, to common questions a toddler might have about coronavirus.
- [A Comic for Kids about COVID-19](#). Author, illustrator, and NPR editor Malakra Gharib created this comic to teach children about coronavirus. It can also be downloaded and printed.
- [Coronavirus and Parenting](#) A 13-minute podcast from NPR about how to deal with school closures, manage screen time, talk to young children, and keep them healthy.
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): How to Talk to Your Child](#). Tips from the Nemours Foundation on managing a conversation with children about coronavirus.
- [Coronavirus: Fact vs Fiction Podcast](#). CNN'S chief medical correspondent, Dr. Sanjay Gupta, breaks down talking to our children about COVID-19 in a 10-minute podcast. This is part of a daily series designed to provide the information you need to keep you and your family safe and healthy
- [How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus](#) PBS Kids provides tips for talking to children and resources from some of their favorite shows, such as *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood*, *Sesame Street*, and *Curious George*.
- [Talking with Children about Coronavirus Disease](#). The CDC provides guidance and facts for talking to children about coronavirus.

"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