



Dear Parents,

What an incredible first three weeks. We have deployed a whole new style of instruction for our SSMCS family. You as parents and students have been wonderful to work with. And very patient as we all learn together.

Our teachers and support staff have been working so hard to support our families remotely. This is not an easy task! As Montessori educators, online learning is not something that we ever pictured doing. The hands-on approach and human interaction is what we love. I am so impressed with the efforts our staff have put into providing resources to our families and providing support in any way they can, all while tending to their own needs as parents, caregivers, partners, community members, and humans. Thank you for supporting our amazing team and appreciating all that they do.

The excitement of returning to school this fall has been both invigorating and exhausting for all; students, families, and staff. You might feel yourself worried, anxious, or overwhelmed by circumstances outside the scope of your control. Not seeing friends and classmates face-to-face can lead our young people to increase stress levels. These feelings are normal for both adults and children, and it is all-important that we all take the time to practice self-care.

As parents, I'm sure you are experiencing all of the struggles and joys of having your children at home every day while also keeping up with your own responsibilities. Every day seems to be trial and error but also establishes more and more of a routine for your family. Here are some ideas that can make "school" at home easier with your family:

- Reasonable expectations: Yes, your child may normally be in school six hours a day, but that doesn't mean you have to teach them (or even hang out with them) three to six hours a day. In a Montessori classroom, we teach children to build their stamina to work independently. Being at home in a new routine, this will most likely need to be re-established. As your child acclimates to being at home, though, remember that they are capable of learning from and exploring their environment with very little instruction. Take a break after your child's Zoom lesson and activities. Finger paint, play dough, coloring books, dot-to-dot pages, sewing, knitting, crocheting, and many more wonderful, creative hands on activities are calming and centering when we need a break. Get up and move, dance, or take a walk. Focus on quality over quantity.
- Use what you have: No need to invest in hundreds of dollars of homeschooling materials. There are things in your house that you can use! For younger children, puzzles and games are perfect learning tools. For older children, have them write a letter to Grandpa and discuss handwriting, spelling, or grammar with them in the process. Read a chapter book together. Pause and ask questions or have discussions.

- Go outside a lot: Whether your child is having unstructured playtime in the backyard or a more structured activity like a scavenger hunt walk around the block, this is valuable time. Children develop so many skills just from being outside. If your child is having a meltdown from too much math or siblings are arguing over Legos - send them to the backyard immediately!
- It's all about Practical Life: Teach what you know! Do you really want your pre-teen going off to college in eight years not knowing how to do their own laundry or how to clean a bathroom? It's time to give them step-by-step lessons on how to do these important skills. Want to expedite your morning routine? Teach your young child how to get dressed by themselves, prepare their own breakfast, and unload the dishwasher. When children do chores, they are not only learning valuable life skills, but they also feel like an essential part of the family. Build chore time into your family's daily schedule multiple times per day. Helping in the house is just a part of being a family.
- Cook with your kids: Children love to cook, and if you let them practice, someday they may even be preparing your meals! Skills like measurement and multiplying a recipe are great math activities. Over time, these skills add up to self-sufficiency in the kitchen.
- Be good to yourself: Juggling all of this is difficult. Focusing on quality time - whether it is watching a movie together or building a fort.
- Don't panic or give up: Many parents feel they are not natural math teachers or don't have the patience to teach the rules of grammar. Reach out to your child's teacher. Email your child's teacher. Come to their morning office hours and ask questions. Let us know if your child was only able to do 5 problems instead of the whole paper or whatever the challenge is for them. The teachers will definitely help by having an extra small group or one-on-one session with your child. We want them to succeed and to be supportive of all your hard work and efforts.

It certainly has felt like riding a roller coaster. The planning process has been a challenge to say the least, and we certainly know we are not alone! Thank you for the innovation and flexibility you have shown during this time. You are a valued part of our family.

Remember, you are your child's best teacher. Education is a partnership and this is an opportunity to connect with your child, discovering his/her skills and building a foundation that will last for months, even years, to come. This time together, although undeniably stressful, can also be precious. While the world is scary and unpredictable right now, we have the privilege of hanging out with our favorite people for a while. Enjoy it!

Love,
Ms. Denise