



August 28, 2020

Greetings SSMCS students and families!

As we adjust to our new way of staying home and being mindful of the part each one of us plays in helping our community stay healthy, we also want to share our deepest intent of nurturing and supporting our Sidewinder family. We are in uncharted territory and the need to stay focused on what matters most is an important challenge for each of us.

We are complex, social mammals (ask your child “what makes a mammal a mammal?”) and the need for contact, reassurance, and sustained interaction is a vital emotional and psychological need for all of us. We have certainly felt the immediate pullback of physical contact with each one of you, yet the heartfelt connection we know between us is strong and growing. The value we place on each student (and their families) is in clear sight of each teacher and administrator at SSMCS. We know the health and well-being of every student, their family, and the SSMCS staff, along with their families, matters most to the long term well-being, productivity, and growth of Silver Sands Montessori School. We are committed to this vision and offer our professional experience, hope, and action towards this aim.

As we do our best to support our students with online instructional opportunities we need to inform and update you about the tools we use and some cautions. Our use of video conferencing is new. We are using a number of tools (Google Hangouts/Meet and Zoom)

We need your help to ensure these tools are being used appropriately by students. Here are some guidelines to help virtual meetings go smoothly for all and help everyone stay cyber safe.

Teacher Safety Steps

To ensure that only class members can join, the Waiting Room feature will be used, which means the teacher has to ‘admit’ each student into the meeting. Teachers can control student microphones and who can share their screen. The student’s camera should be on for teachers to verify student participation and attendance.

Expectations for Students

Parents, please go through these points with students.

- You need to ensure your device is fully charged or plugged in before entering a Zoom session.
- Please dress appropriately when video conferencing and make sure that there are no distracting materials or backgrounds.
- Once you have clicked on the invitation link, you will go into a 'waiting room'. Your teacher will allow access to the session. You will know when this has happened because you will be able to see others on your screen.
- The volume will need to be up on the device you are using and the video activated. When the student first enters the class, we need to see their smiling face.
- Teachers will start admitting students to the meeting five minutes before it starts. Once you are admitted you will be waiting for others to join.
- Once the meeting has started at the set time, no further students will be admitted as this becomes too disruptive for the flow of the meeting and for the teacher running it. The meeting will be recorded for student viewing later.
- Your teacher will lead the session and will be looking forward to having you participate. Video conferencing allows you to see and hear one another, almost as if you are in the classroom together, so you will need to take turns and spend time listening to others or to instructions. Please respect the ideas and opinions of others, just like you do at school.
- If you need to leave the meeting for some reason, please let your teacher know.
- Also, it is very important that in your virtual classrooms you are respectful and follow the same grace and courtesy that you give your teachers in the physical classroom. This will avoid distractions and interruptions to the lesson. If you forget and choose to continue with distracting behaviors, the teachers will mute and turn off that your video. You will still hear the lesson but will be unable to participate. We don't anticipate this to be a problem but wanted to remind you to be courteous.

Expectations for Parents

- Parents/guardians should be mindful about what family activities would potentially be heard or seen during the students' use of video conferencing. This is a great tool to keep students connected, but please have your students use these tools somewhere near enough you can monitor, yet private enough to concentrate on their work.
- Parents will need to monitor students while they are on Zoom, since teachers will be limited in their ability to redirect students who get off-task.

Recording conference sessions:

Our teachers will be recording instructional and non-confidential video conferencing sessions and post them for students who cannot attend the live session. We want and need our teachers to

be efficient and effective when covering material or providing reinforcement. Therefore, here are some guidelines about recordings:

1. These recordings will not be publicly available, only shared within the Google Classroom, or SeeSaw.
2. Faculty will announce their intention to record the session giving students/parents/guardians the opportunity to turn off their camera and/or microphone if privacy is of concern.
3. Students/parents/guardians, should not take photos, screenshots, record any video, or audio, from these conference sessions.

Thank you for your patience, support, and understanding as we learn together what works, what works better, and what doesn't. We will continue to make adjustments as we learn how to best serve the students. Please take advantage of the teachers' office meetings and emails with your questions and concerns.

Also know how much we miss the students' physical presence and interactions. We especially miss greeting them each day with their choice of hugs, high fives, fist bumps, handshakes, and hellos. We are on this journey together and learning new ways of adapting. We have amazing families at SSMCS and feel blessed.

Sincerely,
Ms. Denise
Ms. Marlo
Ms. Danette
Ms. Kim H.