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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 and supports 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 exactly what happens in our classrooms is not something we can achieve at home as the Montessori education involves trained teachers delivering an approach to learning using specific Montessori materials. Therefore, 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 using common household items, some replicated Montessori materials, and a few traditional learning materials.

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 allow a degree of choice, freedom of movement, connect subjects and concepts, and respect the innate desire to learn and developmental needs, learning occurs naturally and joyfully. 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 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 continued communication between teachers and families throughout the period of closure is assured.

The guidelines throughout this Handbook will outline how PMonts' teachers and administration will support our all PMonts families throughout this period of 'Learning from Home.'



The Prepared Environment

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 and 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 they’d like to set up their learning space
- Make a schedule together that works for your family
- 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 and relevant to all age levels. These are life skills that our children will need to master to be successful adults. It is part of every Montessori classroom and can be mirrored at home. This includes refining fine motor and movement skills and practicing coordination, self-care, 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.

The Practical Life experiences 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; or
- planting a small garden

Practical life activities are 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 as a way to help guide your child's interests. Planning and gathering resources to complete the tasks is purposeful work.



These activities foster a sense of contribution, responsibility, shared experiences and satisfaction.

As our children get older, these activities lead naturally to volunteer experiences and the 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. 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.



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 students’ learning, we focus on two things: the developmental needs and characteristics of the children 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.

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 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!



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



Infant/ Toddlers (14 months - 3 years)

Students may be expected to:

- ❖ Enjoy family life with developmentally appropriate contributions

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Remain mindful and respectful about the growing self-esteem and sense of independence that your child is developing
- ❖ Help your child with the hardest part of a task (not the whole task)
- ❖ Initiate verbal communication frequently, ask questions, share concerns and observations
- ❖ Be consistent; follow routines and clear sequences for each activity
- ❖ Limit screen time
- ❖ Include your child in household chores
- ❖ Provide opportunities for outdoor activities (gross motor skill development)
- ❖ Let go of perfection. What you are experiencing now is not the final goal. It is foundational
- ❖ Enjoy and appreciate time with your child

Infant and Toddler Teachers will:

- ❖ Initiate individual support and communications based on each child's needs
- ❖ Provide detailed updates and consultation (as required) regarding toilet learning/ sleeping habits/activities(fine/gross motor)
- ❖ Share the current class routine/schedule and then suggest guidance in setting up a daily routine at home
- ❖ Share general/ individual suggestions for activities for fine/gross motor skills, providing pictures/videos/materials for parent viewing
- ❖ Provide suggestions for books and songs to support language acquisition and practical life activities at home e.g. recipes, food prep, house chores, clothing tips, etc.
- ❖ Provide videos of teachers singing and performing hand actions to well-loved class songs
- ❖ Share suggestions forBe responsive to parent questions and available to offer guidance and tips for activities or any other element of support for your child's development

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 / books on tape

Primary (3 - 6 years)

Students may be expected to:

- ❖ For third-year students, do the weekly work assigned. For first-and second-year students, complete weekly assignments as they choose
- ❖ 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
- ❖ Monitor communication about your child from your teachers
- ❖ 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 screen time
- ❖ Provide opportunities for daily physical activity

Primary Teachers will:

- ❖ Initiate individual communications based on student needs
- ❖ Give guidance in setting up a daily routine
- ❖ Make suggestions for appropriate household jobs
- ❖ Offer guidelines and suggestions for screen time
- ❖ Provide both general and individualized suggestions for activities developing fine motor skills / gross motor skills / language / math
- ❖ 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 a variety of choices, space to explore, and meaningful activity. For the Primary aged child, 'work' and 'play' should be interchangeable - a natural, fun and exciting part of life.

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:

- ❖ 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

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 way with parents, replying to emails promptly
- ❖ Offer resources for additional learning opportunities in the greater community
- ❖ Share a daily "Morning Greeting"
- ❖ Offer feedback to students
- ❖ Collaborate with PMonts 'Specials' staff to provide activities and suggestions for Art & Music

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics:

- ❖ Respect the stage of development - many Lower Elementary students are at a "concrete level" and require the Montessori materials to complete certain tasks. 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, and Practical Life at home
- ❖ Encourage socialization. Lower Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

Upper Elementary (9 - 12 years)

Students are expected to:

- ❖ Plan and organize work as independently as possible
- ❖ 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

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 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
- ❖ Share a daily "Morning Greeting" via email
- ❖ Offer feedback to students
- ❖ Collaborate with PMonts 'Specials' staff to provide activities and suggestions for Art, Music and PE

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics

- ❖ 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

Middle School (12 - 15 years)

Students are expected to:

- ❖ Schedule their own time
- ❖ Review both individual and group lesson expectations
- ❖ Work for approximately 4 hours a day
- ❖ Submit or review assigned work according to guidelines

Parents are invited to:

- ❖ Check in with your child each morning about plans for school work time and work space
- ❖ Maintain daily conversations about work progress and set expectations that work will be done on time
- ❖ Invite your child to prepare a meal for the family once per week
- ❖ Invite your child to contribute more than usual to household chores
- ❖ Help your early adolescent process his/her understanding of and concerns about the pandemic

Middle School Teachers will:

- ❖ Provide weekly work plans
- ❖ Review assignments and provide student feedback
- ❖ Hold meetings and one-on-one connects with students
- ❖ Answer student or parent emails within 24 hours

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 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 be sure online connections beyond the school connects are appropriate in length and content.

Specials

Opportunities for enrichment activities will be included during our remote learning. These areas offer students many opportunities for self-expression, language and an outlet during stressful times.

During this period, all of our Specials faculty will be communicating with each program team to share their plans for activities related to Art, Music, Spanish, Physical Education, Tune In, and After School.

FAQs

When and how can I reach my child's teacher?

Email remains the best way to contact a teacher. If you wish to speak to a teacher, please use email to set up a time for a phone call.

When can I expect a response?

In most cases, you can expect a response to emails within 24 hours.

How much communication can I expect from the school?

School leadership will communicate with you directly should there be any updates on the Covid-19 situation that might have a direct impact on school operations. The frequency of communication from your child's teacher will vary depending on each program.

Can teachers tutor students individually online?

In most cases, no. Teachers will be connecting with families on a 'class level', and also sharing suggestions, feedback, and expectations on an individualized or small group level where necessary. Some video conferencing may be utilized for our older students, always in small groups.

How much technology will be used?

This will vary greatly depending on the age of the students. Teachers will share information with families via email and older children will use Google Docs and other platforms to submit work assignments. We may utilize online video conferencing in certain circumstances. Classroom teachers will share more information with you in due course.

I don't have access to a printer. What should I do?

As remote learning may continue for some time, you may want to consider purchasing a family printer if your child is at the older levels or you see a need to print Montessori materials.

How will the school keep me informed on the closure?

We will update our school website page as to new information about our facility and grounds closure as well as share updates with the community via email.

Will we get a reimbursement of tuition fees?

PMonts is operating in accordance with local government instructions given these exceptional circumstances of a nationwide related, government-initiated school closure. As such, there will be no reimbursement of tuition fees offered. Teachers and administrators continue to work both on-site and remotely to support families and offer the best education services we can under these challenging circumstances.

What support will be provided to children whose parents both work full-time?

It would be unrealistic and counter-productive in the circumstances for PMonts to provide child-care for all working families. We understand that this sudden school closure is an inconvenience for everyone. If any PMonts family finds themselves in an emergency situation or

in truly exceptional circumstances, please feel free to contact us. We may be able to help or connect you with other families who would be willing to do so. Relying on immediate family is best during this crisis.