



homestead school

Online Learning Handbook

April 2020

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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 long-term 'remote learning,' 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 student'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 Homestead School and provides 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 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 instills 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 is assured. The guidelines throughout this Handbook will outline how Homestead School teachers and administrators plan to support Homestead families for the remainder of the semester (barring further unforeseen circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic).

The Prepared Environment

For Early Childhood 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 and lessons offered by teachers via Google Classroom, remote learning kits, general emails to families, specific emails to families, and consultation over phone/ZOOM.

For Elementary to Middle School students, this will mean all of the above, plus establishing a quiet work space, expectations, and routines for daily livestream meetings and classes via ZOOM or Google Hangouts, and assignments outlined on Google Classroom.

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 older students; it will be important for them to maintain their routine of handing in work and receiving feedback from their teachers (as appropriate and specified for each program).

Overall, we can approach this as an opportunity to be creative and collaborative - and 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 (more easily than other parts of the classroom/ school experience). These activities assist students in developing purposeful life skills for their continued growth and development. This includes refining fine motor and movement skills, practicing coordination, planning, and problem-solving. Practical life activities foster order and sequence, develop concentration, promote physical independence, foster the development of fine motor control, and provide opportunities for planning and carrying out tasks.

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 help to form the foundation of a child's academic learning. For example, sequencing a task is a pre-reading skill.

Examples of Practical Life work might include:

- Watering plants
- Tidying and organizing rooms
- Laundry (loading, unloading, simple folding)
- Sweeping/"swiffering" floors (a classic Swiffer handle can be shortened for younger students!)
- Using a spray-bottle, squeegee (or sponge) and washcloth to wash windows
- Preparing a snack/meal
- Set the table for meals. (For younger children, include an accessible place to "bus" dishes and put compost/food waste from snacks and meals. Use an appropriately sized bin with some soapy water for dishes, and a bowl or container for food scraps.)
- Loading/unloading the dish-washer
- Planning an outing
- Helping with shopping lists/budgeting
- Taking care of pets
- Repairing a bicycle
- Planting a 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 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 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, and promotes child-centred as opposed to teacher-directed learning. To the extent that you are able, we highly recommend NOT interrupting a student at work. If they are focussed and concentrating on something productive, we want to foster and encourage this, not interrupt it to impose an adult prioritized schedule.

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 create a deep sense of ownership in a student's own learning, we focus on two things: the developmental needs and the characteristics of the individual 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

Google Classrooms will continue to be the primary way that teachers communicate with students and parents about schoolwork, and visa versa. We encourage families to follow the teachers' suggestions and guidance when completing work at home, with the level of student independence that is appropriate for each child. 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 and Middle School Montessori classroom for children to present their work or projects to one another. Early Childhood students also share work with their friends informally, or at a class circle. 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. Through our ongoing commitment to each child, we will support students in reaching their full potential in a community of valued learners.

Early Childhood

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
- Offer help to your child with the hardest part of a task (not the whole task)
- Initiate verbal communication frequently, ask questions, share concerns and observations
- 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
- Be consistent; follow routines and clear, consistent sequences for each activity
- 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
- Include your child in household chores
- Limit screen time
- Provide opportunities for daily physical activity
- Provide opportunities for outdoor activities and experiences
- Let go of perfection. What you are experiencing now is not the final goal. It is foundational
- Most of all, enjoy and appreciate time with your child!

Early Childhood Teachers will:

- Give guidance in setting up a daily routine
- Offer students a daily greeting, plan for the day, activities, work and online resources via Google Classroom daily
- Prepare a variety of appropriate tasks and activities for children to complete at home in order to maintain and move their learning forward
- Provide individual communications and check-ins based on student needs
- Prepare take-home packets periodically, to include materials necessary to support assignments.
- 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
- Share suggestions for practical life activities at home e.g. recipes, food prep, house chores, clothing tips, etc.

- Schedule conversations over the phone, or via Facetime, ZOOM or Skype
- Be prompt in replying to your emails if you need additional guidance and support
- Be responsive to parent questions and available to offer guidance and tips for activities or any other element of support for your child's development
- Give guidance in setting up a daily routine
- Update Google Classrooms to offer recommendations of activities, further work, and online resources
- Art, Music, and Spanish will be offered by our Specials teachers via videos on Google Classroom and via ZOOM
- Encouragement. At the very least, we hope to extend our encouragement and well wishes!

A few examples to get you started:

- **Gross motor skills** Going for a walk (taking time, walking slowly); jumping, climbing stairs and ladders, throwing a ball, pushing and pulling wagons or wheelbarrows, walking on a balance beam, riding balance bikes or scooters
- **Fine motor skills** Cutting, sewing, pasting, bead stringing, opening and closing small containers or latches, using a lock and key, using tongs to transfer small items (pom poms, tea leaves, acorns) from one bowl to another, pouring from one vessel to another
- **Food preparation** Spreading butter, slicing fruits, pouring milk, making pizza, making tea (with adult's help to pour hot water), peeling eggs, combining ingredients to make salsa or fruit salad
- **Literacy** Reading to your child (sometimes the same book over and over), listening to your child, singing with your child
- **Mathematics** Counting aloud, counting one to one with objects, using everyday objects to practice functions of numbers (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division), building numbers using alternatives to the golden beads (thousands, hundreds, tens, units)

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
- Develop a Peace Area, or a calming corner. If you do not already have one, make a nice quiet place for your child to go to have a quiet moment, or to work towards resolving a problem
- Structure-in a "quiet book time"
- Structure-in reading, or story-time
- Strongly encourage cleaning-up one activity before moving on (the "quiet" area, or Peace Area, is a great place to wait until something is cleaned-up and another activity is chosen)

Early Childhood Sample Schedule:

7:00 - 9:00 Wake, Breakfast, dress, wash up, make the bed, morning chores, etc.
9:00 - 9:30 Morning walk/play outdoors
9:30 - 11:30 Work time/Structured activities
11:30 - 12:00 Lunch
12:00-12:30 Practical Life chore time (lunch cleanup, etc.)
12:30-1:00 Outdoor play
1:00 - 2:00 Quiet time (reading, listening to music, puzzles)
2:00 - 3:30 Work/Academic Time
3:30 - 4:30 Afternoon fresh air and play outdoors
4:30 - 5:00 Dinner Preparation
5:00 - 8:00 Dinner, Time to relax, Bedtime

Family schedules will vary, as at the Early Childhood level, parents will need to assist and supervise the online learning and home projects offered daily by the teachers. Parent schedules of course will need to be taken into consideration. Once a daily routine is established during the school days, please do your best to adhere to it, as your child will need the consistency and regularity of the format and patterns of daily life. Teachers' Zoom Office Hours, Google Meets and/or live Zoom lessons will be offered and will vary from class to class. Notifications and Invitations for these times to meet with the teachers live will be posted into the Google Classroom. Teachers can also be reached via email.

Early Childhood Teacher Contact Information

Ann Steimle annsteimle@homesteadschool.com
Karina King karina@homesteadeducation.org
Jennifer Moss jen@homesteadeducation.org

Lower Elementary

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:

- Offer students a daily greeting, plan for the day, and lessons via videos on Google Classroom daily
- 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
- Come together for weekly meetings with students by grade level on ZOOM
- Offer feedback to students
- Coordinate with the Academic Support Team to ensure that additional learning support lessons continue
- Art, Music, and Spanish will be offered by our Specials teachers via videos on Google Classroom and via Zoom

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 work makes sense for your child and might be available during this learning at home period
- Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Lower Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects (building a treehouse!), journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home, etc.
- Encourage safe socialization. Lower Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends. The TADS Educate classroom directory can be used to initiate texts, calls, FaceTime or ZOOM meetings between children.

Lower Elementary Sample Schedule:

7:00 - 9:00 Wake, Breakfast, dress, wash up, make the bed, morning chores, etc.

9:00 - 9:30 Morning walk/play outdoors

9:30 - 11:30 Work time/structured activities

11:30 - 12:00 Lunch

12:00 - 12:30 Practical Life chore time (lunch cleanup, etc.)

12:30 - 1:00 Outdoor play

1:00 - 1:30 Quiet Reading Time

1:30 - 3:30 Work/Academic Time

3:30 - 4:30 Afternoon fresh air and play outdoors

4:30 - 5:00 Dinner Preparation

5:00 - 8:00 Dinner, Time to relax, Bedtime

Detailed weekly schedules will be provided by individual classroom teachers. Student schedules will vary, as some students at the Lower Elementary level will need more parent supervision and guidance. Parent schedules of course will need to be taken into consideration. Once a daily routine is established during the school days, please do your best to adhere to it, as your child will need the consistency and regularity of the format and patterns of daily life. Teachers general Office Hours are from 9:30 - 3:00 daily. Google Meets and/or live Zoom lessons will be offered regularly, and will vary from class to class. Notifications and Invitations for these times to meet with the teachers live will be posted into the Google Classroom. Teachers can also be reached via email.

Lower Elementary Work Diet:

Math

- Fact practice
- Numeration (number sense, odd and even, counting, skip counting, place value)
- Operations practice (based on your child's level this will include some or all of +, -, x, ÷)
- Problem Solving

Language

- Practice reading each day. New ideas posted each week. First year students reading one on one with a teacher via zoom.
- Language Arts: Lesson videos and activities posted each week
- Writer's Workshop

Cultural: Cultural Lessons are posted weekly into Google Classroom by grade level

Art: Lessons are posted into Google Classroom weekly, supplies provided in home learning packets.

Zoom meetings are also scheduled once weekly for one on one support.

Spanish: Lessons in Spanish language are posted weekly with an additional live Spanish story time via Zoom.

Music: Music lessons are posted once weekly

Outdoor Time: Scavenger Hunts, Projects, etc.

Lower Elementary Teacher Contact Information

Lorraine Racette reachlorraine@yahoo.com

Michelle Ahart-Bosland michelle@homesteadeducation.org

Teressa Steakley teressa@homesteadeducation.org

Upper Elementary

Students are expected to:

- Plan and organize work as independently as possible
- Follow teachers' guidelines and expectations
- Be own advocate when assistance or further clarification is required
- Communicate directly with teachers
- Refer to Google Classroom each morning for daily announcements, weekly ZOOM lesson schedule, and assignments
- Find a balance of online and offline learning: Include the following areas in the weekly 'diet' of home learning activities: math/geometry; language arts; culture/science; art and music; mind and body; stewardship and community service (such as cooking with/for the family, chores-learning to care for a certain aspect of the home, reading to a sibling, gardening, etc.)

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:

- Offer students a daily greeting, plan for the day, and lessons via videos on Google Classroom daily
- Schedule regular weekly meetings with students by subject or grade level on ZOOM
- 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
- Communicate with students and parents about expectations during the 'Learning from Home' period
- Offer live lessons and opportunities to ask and answer questions via ZOOM
- Offer feedback to students
- Coordinate with the Learning Specialist Team to ensure that additional learning support lessons continue
- Art, Music, and Spanish will be offered by our Enrichment teachers via videos on Google Classroom and via Zoom

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. Avoid "teaching" shortcuts especially for Mathematics
- Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Upper Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home, etc.
- Support the need for Upper Elementary students' group work - working with a friend (over FaceTime/ZOOM, if possible) may be very well received
- Encourage safe socialization. Upper Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

Upper Elementary Office Hours:

Upper Elementary teachers have created regular Zoom office hours for students, as shown in the schedule below, and are available to communicate with parents upon request. Please send an email to the appropriate teacher, who will respond to set up a time to meet via telephone, Skype, or Zoom.

Melissa Cahn melissa@homesteadeducation.org

Carla Shannon carla@homesteadeducation.org

Jim Sullivan jim@homesteadeducation.org

Joel Wilkinson joel@homesteadeducation.org

“Working” Upper Elementary Schedule:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Reader's Workshop	Reader's Workshop	Reader's Workshop	Reader's Workshop	Reader's Workshop
Spelling Lesson			Music	Spelling Test
	Grammar	Geometry	Spanish	
Math Lesson			Art	Independent Project
	Writing		Writing	(Kids can share videos/photos of their projects.)
(Teachers will be offering Zoom Lessons and Office Hours each week, so kids can hop on and ask questions.)				

TENTATIVE WEEKLY ZOOM SCHEDULE				
Green - 4th Years; Blue - 5th Years; Red - 6th Years; Black - All Levels				
Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays
9:30 - 4th Math Lesson		10:30 - Jim's Office Hour	9:30 - Melissa's Office Hour	9:30 - Nitrogen Advisory Group
10:00 - 4th Math Lesson	10:00 - Carla's Office Hour	10:30 - Senōra Casablanca's Office Hour	10:30 - Carla's Office Hour	10:00 - Oxygen Advisory Group
10:00 - 6th Math Lesson		11:00 - Voyage of the Frog Reading Group	11:00- Voyage of the Frog Reading Group	10:30 - Uranium Advisory Group
11:00 - 5th Math Lesson	1:00 - Joel's Office Hour	11:45 - Little House in the Big Woods Reading Group	11:45 Little House in the Big Woods Reading Group	11:00 - Vanadium Advisory Group
11:00- Voyage of the Frog Reading Group		12:30 - ZOOM RECESS	12:30 - Joel's Office Hour	12:30 - Jim's Office Hour
11:45 - Little House in the Big Woods Reading Group		1:00 - Jim's Office Hour	2:00 - Art (Ms. Coss) Office Hour	

Middle School

Students are expected to:

- Schedule their own time
- Come to class on Google Hangouts as scheduled on the Middle School 2019-20 Google Calendar (or make other arrangements with teachers)
- Schedule individual meetings with teachers as needed
- Review both individual and group lesson expectations
- Work solidly for roughly 6 hours a day, approximately 4 hours online and 2 hours of project and homework time
- Submit or review assigned work according to guidelines on Google Classroom

Parents are invited to:

- Check in with your child each morning to plan school work time and work space
- 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
- Share and discuss news items/ current events

Middle School Teachers will:

- Set up and lead classes on Google Hangouts from 9:30am - 11:30am and 12:30-2:30pm every week day
- Meet with small groups every Monday for Hero's Journey
- Meet individually with students via Google Hangouts once a week, and additionally as needed
- Maintain an active Google Classroom where all assignments are posted and where students can turn in their work
- Answer student or parent emails within 24 hours to the best of their ability

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 need sleep. Please support your child in getting an appropriate amount of sleep during this transitional time.
- Adolescents crave and require social interaction. We are continuing to incorporate socializing into our remote learning activities and encourage safe socialization after school hours.

Middle School Schedule:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:15-9:30	Hero's Journey Group meeting	1:1 Teacher/ Student meetings	1:1 Teacher/ Student meetings	1:1 Teacher/ Student meetings	1:1 Teacher/ Student meetings
9:30-10:20	L. Arts	L. Arts	L. Arts	L. Arts	Hero's Journey
10:25-11:30	Work Habits/ Current Events	Math	Math Spanish 11:15-11:35	Math	Creative Activities
11:30-12:30	Lunch and Recess				
12:30-2:30	Math	Cultural Studies: Earth Science, Health, Permaculture, or Social Studies			
2:30-9:30	Personal time, homework, family time, time to be outdoors, offering service, absorbing what the day held				

Middle School Office Hours:

Kelly Adams kelly@homesteadeducation.org; 10:30-12 daily

Nisha Gupta nisha@homesteadeducation.org; 9-9:30, 11:30-12:20, and 2:30-3:30 daily

Jack Comstock jack@homesteadeducation.org; 9-9:30, 11:30-12:20, and 2:30-3:30 daily

Working Hours and Contact Information for Administration

Head of School	Peter Comstock	8:00 - 5:00	pcomstock@homesteadschool.com 845-856-6359
Director	Marsha Comstock	8:00 - 5:00	845-856-6359
Asst. Head of School	Jack Comstock	9:00 - 4:00	jack@homesteadeducation.org
Head of Academic & Financial Affairs	Nisha Comstock	9:00 - 4:00	nisha@homesteadeducation.org
Head of Admissions, Faculty & Student Affairs	Lori Zambarano	8:00 - 5:00	lori@homesteadeducation.org cell: 570-878-0400
Director of Educational Services	Ann Steimle	8:00 - 5:00	ann@homesteadeducation.org Cell: (845) 701-2873

FAQs

Q: 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 to connect. Each teacher has also designated "Office Hours" during which they are consistently committed to be readily available.

Q: When can I expect a response from teachers?

You can expect a response to emails within 24 hours, within working hours. (We encourage students, parents, and staff to take the evenings and weekends off. With no physical boundary between school/work and home, we need to provide time to reflect and refresh.)

Q: How much communication can I expect from the school?

You can continue to expect weekly newsletters, which are a great source of information for school- and community-wide updates and information, in addition to summaries and sharings from each program. Administrative staff is available and will respond to emails within their working hours.

Q: My family has technology limitations (computer access, internet limitations, printer access, etc.) and can't participate fully. How can Homestead School help?

Homestead School has made computers available to families who have needed additional hardware. We have also facilitated getting printed materials to families and troubleshooting for Internet access. If anyone needs assistance please communicate this to your teacher who will get you in touch with someone who can help with these resources.

Q: Will there be any end of year ceremonies, such as Open House, Middle School Graduation, etc.?

Currently we are not able to plan such activities due to the uncertainty of the health crisis. If we are allowed to gather in groups, we will. If not, we intend to offer a Virtual Open House in which all students can have videos, slideshows, and work they have done at home displayed for each other to see, among other perks such as videos from teachers and administration.

If you have other questions and we can be of assistance, please contact us for support.