



# Learning from Home Handbook

*Adapted from The Montessori School of Tokyo*

*March 2020*



*"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."*

*~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."*

*~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 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, continuing communication between guides and families throughout the period of remote learning.

The guidelines throughout this Handbook will outline how Omni's guides and administration will support our all Omni 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 guides.

As you set-up your home environment...

- Make sure your child has a few possible spaces for their work. One should be in the visual range of your work space so you are able to feel comfortable working near each other, but not together.
- Make a daily schedule that works for your family, engaging your child where appropriate.
- Gather materials from around your house to support your child's work
  - i.e. scissors, paper, craft supplies, eraser, pencil, etc.

You 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
- 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 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
- taking care of pets
- preparing a snack/meal
- helping with shopping lists
- planting a small 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.

## 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 guide-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 guides.

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 be receiving regular communications from your child’s classroom guides in the coming weeks. We encourage parents to follow the guides’ 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:* In the Primary classroom, the third years often enjoy sharing their work or project. In addition, it is a regular occurrence in an elementary or older Montessori classroom for children to present their projects to one another. This is something you can replicate at home for any age child. Planning a presentation or sharing time at the end of the day is very exciting for children. 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 Omni that they reach their fullest potential and feel that they are a valued part of our community.



## Primary (Ages 3-6)

Students should be expected to:

- Contribute to the household and family life with developmentally appropriate jobs and responsibilities
- Work independently for age-appropriate periods of time

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 guides
- Initiate communication with guides 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 team will:

- Initiate and maintain communications with families, promptly relying to emails if you need additional guidance and support
- Give guidance in setting up a daily routine
- Make suggestions for appropriate house chores
- Provide suggestions for activities developing fine motor skills, gross motor skills, language, and numeracy

Child's 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 Primary 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, jumping, climbing
Fine motor skills	Cutting, sewing, gluing
Food preparation	Slicing fruits, pouring milk, cracking eggs
Literacy	Reading to your child, listening to your child in conversation or reading if able

A typical day (adjust times as needed):

Time	Activity
8:00 am	Prepare, eat, and clean up from lunch
9:00 am	Independent work time (we will send suggested activities for each age)
10:30 am	Clean up work
11:00 am	Outdoor time
12:00 pm	Prepare, eat, and clean up lunch
1:00 pm	Reading time (either aloud or independent)
1:30 pm	Quiet time in room
2:30 pm	Independent work time
4:00 pm	Clean up work
4:30 pm	Outdoor time
5:30 pm	Prepare, eat and clean up dinner
6:30 pm	Family time...reading, playing games, taking a walk
7:00 pm	Bath, pajamas, tooth brushing, etc .

## Lower Elementary (6 - 9 years)

Students are expected to:

- Plan and organize work with guidance from parents
- Follow guides' 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 guides' suggested activities to maintain skills and concepts
- Provide opportunities for your child to share/present work to you

Lower Elementary team 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
- Communicate regularly via email
- Offer feedback to students

Child's needs and characteristics:

- Respect the stage of development — many Lower Elementary students are still at a more “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
- Lower Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends (this can be done remotely)

## Upper Elementary (9 - 12 years)

Students are expected to:

- Plan and organize work as independently as possible
- Follow guidelines and expectations provided by their guides
- Be own advocate when assistance or further clarification is required
- Communicate directly with guides

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 guides' suggested activities to maintain skills and concepts
- Meet and review your child's assignments; provide opportunities at home for work presentations

The Upper Elementary team 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
- Write a letter to the class detailing expectation during the 'Learning from Home' period
- Communicate regularly
- Offer feedback to students

Child's 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 for subjects such as 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
- Support the need for Upper Elementary students' group work - working with a friend (this can be done virtually) may be very well received
- Upper Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends (this can be done remotely)

## Adolescent Program (12-15 years)

Students are expected to:

- On **Mondays**, students are required to spend at least two hours in a creative endeavor of their choice. This might include drawing, painting, sculpture, poetry, or practice of a musical instrument. They are also required to spend at least two hours in a physical endeavor of their choice. This might include cross training, basketball skills, biking, playing catch, soccer skills, hiking, or walking the family pet(s).
- Work solidly for roughly 4 hours a day
- Schedule their own time, using their planner or another form of organizer
- Review both individual and group lesson expectations each morning
- Check in with their advisor for scheduled appointments
- Be available for group video lessons during pre-determined times
- Request clarification/representation of assignments as needed
- Submit or review assigned work according to guidelines and posted due dates
- Read “non-assigned” books in addition to school assignments
- Compose and maintain a portfolio of work (that can’t be submitted electronically i.e. art work and a log of physical activity) to bring to school when classes resume on March 30th
- In full disclosure, please realize that the work that you do now, in a conscientious manner, will pay off by having minimal summer work. However, those who chose to not submit work in a timely manner will still be held accountable for that work.

Parents are invited to:

- Check in with your adolescent each morning to review their schedule for school work time, and to inform them about your family schedule
- Help your young person find an appropriate work space, free from the distractions of technology and siblings.
- Maintain daily conversations about work progress
- Work with your adolescent to prepare a menu, shopping list, and make some of the actual meals for the family. They have experience doing this at the AP
- Invite your adolescent to contribute more than usual to household chores
- View and discuss suggested movies/web inquiries with your student when possible
- While we don’t expect parents to review assignments, please do support work completion
- Minimize your student’s screen time and maximize outdoor time
- Remember, adolescents require social interaction. Please facilitate ways your student can meet with their friends, as your comfort level of social distancing allows

Adolescent Program team will:

- Provide assignments, resources, and due dates to each student beginning Monday and throughout the duration of our remote schooling
- Review and return assignments within twenty four hours of their submittal
- Be available to schedule student meetings as needed, either via video conferencing or face to face
- Answer student or parent emails within 24 hours
- Advisors will schedule a bi-weekly conversation with each student via video conferencing to check in on academic progress, challenges and needs
- In general, we expect Omni Adolescent Program students to take responsibility for thoroughly completing their work within the timelines provided

Adolescent's needs and characteristics:

- Adolescents are becoming adults, they need opportunities to experience real adult work, with the adult guide working side by side with them
- They are keenly aware of what the adults around them are doing, and will realize hypocrisy quickly
- They are hyper focused on themselves, having the feeling that everyone is always watching them
- They are super social, and have a strong drive to be with their peers
- As it is a time of inner change that can feel like turmoil at points, they need healthy outlets, like the arts or music, for their creative urges
- Physical change is happening at a rapid pace, so opportunities to express themselves physically, through sport or dance for example, are important
- The two key characteristics of the adolescent are the drive towards economic independence, and social justice and equity



## FAQs

**When and how can I reach my child's guide?** Email remains the best way to contact a guide. If you wish to speak to a guide, 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, unless it is a weekend.

**How much communication can I expect from the school?** The administration 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 weekly miniBUS will continue to be published every Wednesday at 5:00 PM. Level Coordinators and/or Guides will be communicating with families on a regular basis, generally every few days.

**How much technology will be used?** This will vary greatly depending on the age of the students. Guides will share information with families via email and older children will use Google Classroom or email to submit work assignments. Your classroom guide will offer more information.

**I don't have access to a printer. What should I do?** Omni Montessori School is happy to provide printing assistance. Please forward any school work for printing to [omni.montessori@omni-montessori.com](mailto:omni.montessori@omni-montessori.com) with the subject line: PRINT REQUEST - CHILD'S FULL NAME. You will receive an email when your printed materials are ready to be picked up.

**Can Omni students have any access to the school campus during the period of remote learning?** Access will be very limited but possible in certain circumstances such as AP farm and garden care. Any access to the Omni campuses will be arranged via email and "drop-in" visits are not permitted. All visits are optional at the parent's discretion, and nobody will be required to be on campus at any time during the remote learning period.

**What support will be provided to children whose parents both work full-time?** It would be unrealistic and counter-productive in the circumstances for Omni Montessori School to provide child-care for working families. We understand that this sudden transition to remote learning is an inconvenience for everyone.



## Resources for Families

Omni Montessori School has created a website page that will be updated with information about COVID-19 as it relates to Omni Montessori School. We encourage you to bookmark this page.

<https://www.omni-montessori.org/about-us/COVID-19.cfm>

Please ensure that your contact information in FACTS Family Portal is up-to-date so that we may reach you via Parent Alert text message and/or email quickly and accurately. Please understand that this sudden transition to remote learning is an inconvenience for everyone.

Additional resources may be found at the links below.

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

[The Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)

[Johns Hopkins Interactive and Updating Outbreak Map](#)

[U.S. State Department](#)

[Southern Association of Independent Schools \(SAIS\)](#)

[How to Talk to Kids About the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

[How to Talk to Kids About Coronavirus](#)

# Prevention Measures

*Taken from [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)*

## ***Know How it Spreads***

- There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
  - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
  - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

## ***Take Steps to Protect yourself***

### **Clean your hands often**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

### **Avoid close contact**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Put distance between yourself and other people if COVID-19 is spreading in your community. This is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

## ***Take Steps to Protect others***

### **Stay home if you're sick**

- Stay home if you are sick, except to get medical care. Learn what to do if you are sick.

### **Cover coughs and sneezes**

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.

- Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

### **Wear a facemask if you are sick**

- If you are sick: You should wear a facemask when you are around other people (e.g., sharing a room or vehicle) and before you enter a healthcare provider's office. If you are not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then you should do your best to cover your coughs and sneezes, and people who are caring for you should wear a facemask if they enter your room.
- If you are NOT sick: You do not need to wear a facemask unless you are caring for someone who is sick (and they are not able to wear a facemask). Facemasks may be in short supply and they should be saved for caregivers.

### **Clean and disinfect**

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

