

Thacher Montessori School

Learning from Home Handbook

March 2020



Adapted with permission from The Montessori School of Tokyo

Thacher Montessori School graciously thanks the numerous Montessori collaborators worldwide who have helped supply ideas and activities that we could put together for our community. This handbook is a testament to the spirit of cooperation and works in service to the children of the world.

Our Mission

Thacher Montessori School is a diverse, collaborative learning community. Through the Montessori Method, we embrace each child's unique potential and cultivate a passion for discovery. We empower children to achieve academic excellence and become confident, compassionate, and proactive members of the world community.

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A Vision of Learning: 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 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.

Establishing Home Learning

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 guides and families throughout the period of closure is assured. The guidelines throughout this Handbook will outline how Thacher's guides and administration will support our 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 the guides.

For our Elementary students, this will mean all of the above, plus establishing a quiet space, expectations, and routines for any specific assignments shared by guides. 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

It will be important for older students to maintain their routine of handing in work and receiving feedback from their guides. 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. It is part of every Montessori classroom and can be mirrored at home. These activities assist students in developing purposeful life skills for the children's 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
- Planning an outing
- Taking care of pets
- Preparing a snack/meal
- Doing laundry or ironing (find those cloth napkins you have been meaning to iron!)
- Helping with shopping lists/budgeting;
- Repairing a bicycle, dripping sink
- Planting a small urban 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 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. 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: 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. 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!

Responsibility and Contribution to Community and 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 Thacher that they reach their fullest potential and feel that they are a valued part of our community. It was especially gratifying that when we told the children they would be “taking the school home with them”, and asked what the school is made of, we heard:

- Love
- Feelings
- People

And when we asked if these things are weaker when we are separated, one child said, “Actually, feelings are stronger sometimes when you are apart.” We know that our community will be just as vibrant separated by distance and maybe even stronger for this experience. Either way, there isn’t another group of people with whom we would rather live through a pandemic (words you never thought you would say...).

- Community
- Education
- Work

Toddler Community

Suggested Daily Schedule for the Toddler Community

Routine and consistency are very important for your toddler.

Morning	Wake up and assist in making the bed. Use the bathroom, brush teeth. Make breakfast with your child, eat, and clean-up.
Mid-Morning	Snack Break: children can set the table, eat, and clean-up.
Late Morning	Work time (indoor or outdoor) for an hour. Read stories, sing songs, listen to music and singalong.
Lunch	Set up and eat lunch. Clean-up and use the bathroom. Outside playtime if the weather is appropriate for at least 30 minutes.
Afternoon	Use the bathroom and nap for 2 hours. Wake up and use the bathroom. Listen to music and look at books.



Note that you do not need to interrupt their work for a snack break. If they have the materials to make it when they wish to, they will naturally stop for a snack (best to have a second set of snack prep if you put it out first thing though, as they tend to do food prep first and love it!)

It is important to continue toilet independence during this time at home. Your lead guide is available to help guide you with each child's toileting pattern.

Toddler Community Expectations

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 a question, 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

Toddler Lead Guide 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
- Provide pictures and videos of the setup or introduction of activities when possible.
- Share guidelines and suggestions for limiting screen time
- 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
- Provide videos of guides singing and performing hand actions to well-loved class songs

- Share suggestions for practical life activities at home e.g. recipes, food prep, house chores, clothing tips, etc.
- 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



The Toddler Prepared Environment

“A place for everything and everything in its place” is one of the critical principles of Montessori at home. Having a place for everything, on a child-friendly scale, means that children know where to find what they need, and have a place to put things when they're done. This is an essential tool in teaching them to be responsible for their belongings. External order gives the children internal order and security. An ordered environment also has fewer distractions, allowing children to focus on the task at hand.

Have a place in each room for your child's carefully chosen belongings: by the front door have a stool to sit on and a place to hang coats and keep shoes. In the living room have a place for your child's books and toys – neatly and attractively organized. Think out the activities and materials for all living spaces and arrange the environment to include your child's activities.

- Store clothing in low drawers or baskets, as well as move the rod in the closet down to eye-level so your child can reach their clothing.
- Place step stools in both the kitchen and bathroom to enable them to wash their hands and, in the case of the kitchen, help with meal preparation.

- Place toys, games and art supplies on low shelves where your child can easily access them, then separate these toys into various baskets, bins or shelves, so the items stay separate and are easy to find without sifting through piles of other toys.
- Store healthy snacks down low in your refrigerator or pantry so your child can help themselves.
- Keep beverages in small pitchers located on the lower shelf in the fridge, with child-friendly cups nearby. When your child is thirsty, allow them to help themselves — just be sure to keep a sponge/ some rags nearby, so they can clean up any messes they make.
- Don't put out too many toys and books at one time. Those being used by your child at the moment are sufficient. Rotating is a good idea – taking out those books and toys that have not been chosen lately and removing them to storage for a time. Children grow and change, and they need help to keep their environment uncluttered and peaceful.

Activities for Toddler Children at Home

Practical Life

Food Preparation: preparing their own snack

- Cutting half of an apple (cut horizontally) using an apple slicer
- Squeezing orange juice
- Spreading cream cheese or jam on half of a bagel or bread
- Slicing vegetables and fruit for snack and dinner
- Baking: have ingredients pre-measured and in jars - give child small measuring scoop or spoon to scoop ingredients into a bowl
- Care of Self
- Dressing and Undressing: give your child enough time to practice dressing and undressing by themselves
- Toileting: It's important to continue with the toilet learning process.

Care of the Environment

- Mopping, sweeping, or use of a dustpan and dust brush
- Helping with laundry
- Watering plants and leaf washing

- Window washing, dusting, and wood polishing of large furniture in the home
- Taking care of pets
- Loading and unloading dishwasher, dishwashing by hand

Artwork

- Coloring, painting, collage, play dough, sidewalk chalk

Outdoor Activities

It is always fun for children to spend time with their parents in nature, so take some time out of your busy schedule to explore outdoors (away from others) with your child. I guarantee you'd enjoy the experience as well as your children would.

Here are a few ideas for connecting your child with nature:

- **If you have 15 minutes:**
 - Watch the clouds and see what animals you can make out of them.
 - Hug some trees and try to find one that your arms fit perfectly around.
 - Turn over a rock and see what is hiding underneath.
- **If you have 30 minutes:**
 - Do a backyard/nature treasure hunt.
 - Try your hand at rock stacking.
 - Grab some leaves or pieces of bark and race them down a creek.
- **If you have an hour:**
 - Go for a walk and make note of all the sounds you hear.
 - Find a nature trail and help children make up a game or collect bugs or leaves.
 - Pack some food and have a picnic.

Language

- Naming things in both indoor and outdoor environments

- Read together. Let your child choose the books, talk about how the characters might be feeling and wonder together what will happen next. Reading with your child teaches more than literacy and language skills. They are learning that you value their interests and choices and that you love them and enjoy being close.. Studies show that lifelong readers are those who, as children, simply found reading a pleasurable experience.
- Singing songs and do fingerplays
- Narrate what you do as you go through your daily routines. This helps your child connect words with objects and actions. “I’m washing the dishes. I’m squeezing the yellow dish soap into the warm water.”

All these activities will help limit screen time.



Children's House (3 - 6 years)

Suggested Daily Schedule for Children's House

Early Morning	Set up and clean up breakfast, load the dishwasher. Basic chores - collect dirty clothes, sort laundry, help load washing machine. Prepare morning snack (place in an accessible area to be eaten later), clean up.
Mid-Morning	Uninterrupted work cycle. Children should engage in activities to practice skills for practical life, sensorial work, language, or math.
Lunch	Prepare (set up, clean up) lunch. Quiet time - this may include nap, reading books, handwork, reflective time. No screen time.
Afternoon	Afternoon work time. Include time for care of the environment and preparations for the next day's work.

Children's House Program Expectations

Students may be expected to:

- 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 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

Children's House Lead Guides will:

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

Activities for Children's House at Home

Practical Life:

Ages 3 to 4

- Meal or Snack Preparation
- Slicing vegetables, fruit, cheese, etc.
- Baking: measuring and mixing ingredients.
- Kitchen Care: loading and unloading the dishwasher, washing dishes by hand, sweeping floors
- Pet Care: walking, playing with, and grooming
- Dusting: the leaves of plants with a soft cloth or furniture around the house



- Nature walks in the yard or about the neighborhood with a list of things to find
- Walking on the Line: make a masking tape line throughout the house and walk carefully on the line. They will probably guide you in extensions of this activity
- Art: coloring, painting, collage, sidewalk chalk
- Cutting and gluing - for example, find and cut all of the plants in a magazine; glue into a collage
- Sewing shapes/pictures onto napkins, hand/kitchen towels, etc.

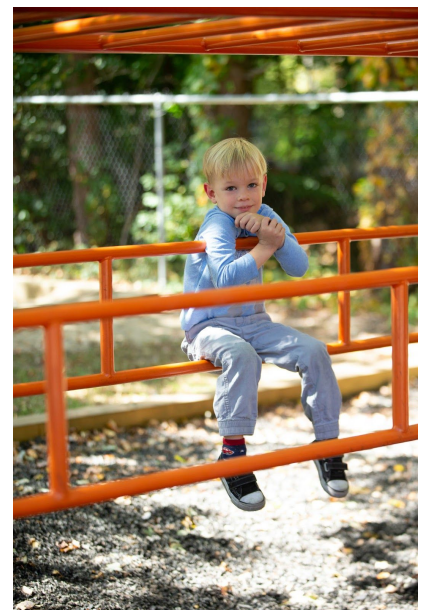
Ages 5 to 6 - Any of the above plus:

- Cutting (advance shapes: mammals, birds, amphibians, etc.)
- Baking: reading, measuring and mixing simple recipes.
- Handwork: crocheting, finger knitting, or sewing words, initials, or pictures on napkins, hand towels, etc.
- Origami

Sensorial

Ages 3 to 4:

- Exploring the home for 2-dimensional shapes (rectangles, squares, circles, etc.)
- Exploring the home for 3-dimensional shapes (spheres, cylinders, cones, cubes, prisms).
- Explore the home for textures that are rough or smooth
- Exploring sound by tapping on different objects (pot, glass, wooden cutting board, etc.) with different objects as well (tap with a metal spoon, then a wooden spoon)



Ages 5 to 6 - any of the above plus:

- Exploring spices and attempting to recognize them by scent
- Comparing the various shapes of leaves found amongst the house plants
- Drawing a picture that includes certain shapes i.e, 1 circle, and 3 rectangles, or 1 square and 4 triangles)

Language

Ages 3 to 4:

- Sound Games/I-spy: Something that begins with the sound /s/
- Question Game: Have a conversation using who/what/when/where/why questions.
- Singing new songs (different languages)
- Tracing shapes, letters in flour (pour flour in a cookie sheet)

Ages 5 to 6:

- Write a letter to a friend or family member to mail.
- Assist in writing a list of things to do for a day or a week.
- Write a story or a play and read aloud or act out when finished (dictated to you or written out by them).
- Read a list of action words and do them.
- Label the house with slips of paper.
- If your child is reading phonetically, here is a list of words that are helpful to memorize. Focus on the ones that are not phonetic. Play games with these.

Mathematics

Ages 3 to 4:

- Scavenger hunt/counting objects collected
- Counting objects (beans, pennies, etc.)
- Sorting laundry
- Sorting silverware
- Cooking with a focus on fractions

Ages 5 to 6: the above plus

- Hopscotch math—all operations can be done, just make your hopscotch go higher than 10
- Multiplication and Division with beans

- Use their favorite doll or figures to make sure everyone gets the right amount or how much it is when everyone contributes the same amount.
- Math facts with dice

When in doubt, stick to practical life, wait, and ask us. Remember that you can do a full Montessori program with all of the benefits to the whole child with just our foundational practical life. It is powerful work!



Lower Elementary (6 - 9 years)

Suggested Daily Schedule for Lower Elementary

Early Morning	Make breakfast and clean up. Complete chores (i.e. pet care, care of self, make the bed, laundry, etc.)
Mid-Morning	Uninterrupted work cycle. Children should engage in activities to practice skills for math, language, geometry, and geography. Guides will send specific instructions. Make sure to make time for snacks and movement.
Lunch	Make lunch and clean up.
Afternoon	<p>Afternoon uninterrupted work cycle. Children should engage in activities for biology and research. Make time for at least 30 minutes of silent reading.</p> <p>Note that usually, they read a half-hour at school in silent reading and a half hour at home. Please continue to include a lot of reading! Pick books that are high interest and slightly below their level for silent reading. Another great thing to start is a family read-aloud if you do not do this already. It will introduce more complex language and concepts and aid comprehension but will also just be something they look forward to each day.</p>



Lower Elementary Program Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Plan and organize work with guidance from parents.
- Follow the 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 and present work to you.

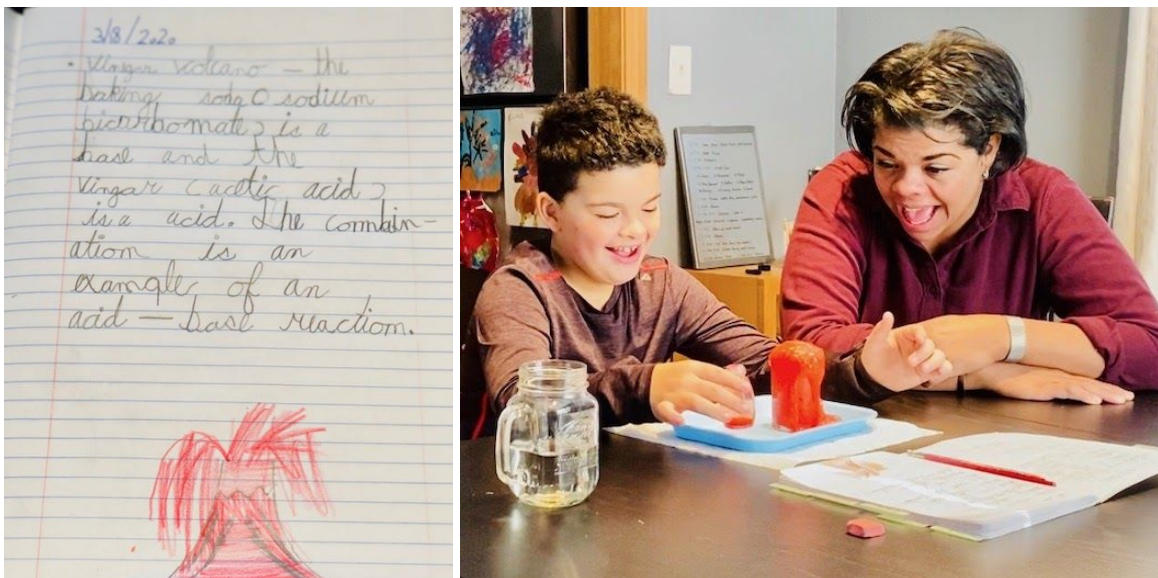
Lower Elementary Guides will:

- 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 within 24 hours.

- Provide activities and suggestions for all areas of the curriculum (and life!) including Art, Music, and PE

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. Guides will suggest 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, Practical Life at home.
- Encourage socialization. Lower Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends when they can’t be physically there.



Upper Elementary (9 - 12 years)

Suggested Daily Schedule for Upper Elementary

Early Morning	Make breakfast and clean up. Complete chores (i.e. pet care, care of self, make the bed, laundry, etc.)
Mid- Morning	Uninterrupted work cycle. Children should engage in activities to practice skills for math, language, and geography. Guides will send specific instructions. Make sure to make time for snacks and movement.
Lunch	Make lunch and clean up.
Afternoon	<p>Afternoon uninterrupted work cycle. Children should engage in activities for biology and geometry. Make time for at least 30 minutes of silent reading.</p> <p>Note that usually, the children read a half-hour at school in silent reading and a half hour at home. Please continue to include a lot of reading! Pick books that are high interest and slightly below their level for silent reading. Another great thing to start is a family read-aloud if you do not do this already. It will introduce more complex language and concepts and aid comprehension and will also just be something they look forward to each day.</p>

Upper Elementary Program Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Plan and organize work as independently as possible.
- Follow guides' guidelines and academic expectations.
- Be their own advocate when assistance or further clarification is required.

Parents are invited to:

- Guide your child to set up a prepared environment at home
- Establish a consistent routine and work schedule
- Follow along with the guide's suggested activities to maintain skills and concepts
- Meet and review your child's assignments; provide opportunities at home for work presentations

Upper Elementary Lead Guides 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 within 24 hours.
- Be available to students through an online platform for virtual learning being set up by Thacher (details to be shared soon)

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics

- Respect the stage of development - many students are still 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, Practical Life at home.
- Upper Elementary students are extremely social. At this time, not being able to see their friends can feel challenging. We strongly encourage parent monitoring of texts, emails, and group chats to ensure that the students are using grace and courtesy towards themselves and others.

Activities for Elementary at Home

Math Facts (Limit to 10 minutes at a time)

- Create flashcards of multiplication math facts 0-9.
- List all the factors of 18, 24, 36, and 54.
- Dice Rolling
- Jump rope while skip counting.

Fractions

- Follow a recipe
- Construct something using measurements less than one inch
- Order fractions on a number line from least to greatest
- Divide figures into fractional amounts and label them.

Decimals

- Have your own “Showcase” and price household items, then add them together
- Look for advertisements in the mail and add prices together
- Create a shopping list and add items together.

Language

- Make a poem book
- Try to write a poem in an author’s style
- Memorize a poem
- Go on a word hunt in a novel: make a list of adjectives on a page and write an antonym and synonym for each one
- Find sentences in your current book, identify the subject and predicate.

Geometry

- Identify shapes around the house
- Identify angles as either: right, acute, obtuse, or straight
- Look for congruent and similar figures
- Measure things in one and two dimensions
- Find the perimeter of things
- Find the area of rectangular figures

Biology

- Spend 15 silent minutes a day in nature and record your observations.
- Sketch plants inside or outside.
- Research an endangered animal. Why is it endangered?



Geography

- Guides will be sending home assignments.

History

- Make a timeline of your life.
- Make a timeline of your day and include it in your work journal.
- Interview a family member in your house or over the phone about their life.

Language:

Students will receive updates on current or upcoming language work from their language guide. Literature discussions and previously assigned writing will move forward. Students may be asked to participate in discussions on online forums. In the meantime, suggested reading has been sent home and when in doubt, find a great book and read together and discuss.

Practical Life

Elementary Program students are encouraged to be active participants in their homes, just as they would be in the classroom. This includes activities like cooking, cleaning, and care of younger siblings (if applicable). Students will be expected to set their own schedules and keep up with all work. Students are asked to reach out to lead guides should they find themselves struggling to schedule their time effectively.

Adolescent Program (ages 12-15)

- Lead guides in the Adolescent Program (Griff, Sally, and Adam) will continue to provide students weekly communications/assignments via Google Suites - this includes Math, Science, Humanities, and Reading Groups
- Mario will continue to send weekly Spanish assignments
- Guides will return parent communications within 24 hours

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Email remains the best way to contact your lead guide. If you wish to speak to your lead guide, please use email to set up a time for a phone call. Be aware that guides calling from their personal cell phones have been asked to block their number for privacy. You may not contact a guide on their cell phone unless they ask you to. Please do not use the cell phone outside of school hours if they do provide it. Please also be understanding if they provided it and have to change their mind. It is hard to know how much it will be used sometimes when multiplied by tens of families.

When can I expect a response?

In most cases, you can expect a response to emails within 24 hours during this first planning week and within the day if it is during school hours and pertains to a child's work. We will have more details as we figure out the timing of guides juggling planning, parent, and student communications.

How much communication can I expect from the school?

Thacher administration will continue to send out Notes Home each Friday. The administration will also 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 lead guide will vary depending on each program but our plan is that you should receive Monday updates from your guide with suggestions for that week's work for your child.

Can I have playdates?

No. Guides 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 (1-to-1 video conferencing is not permitted in adherence to distance learning Child Protection Policies. If a child needs to speak directly with the guide, a parent and another guide will be present).



Social Distancing and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19: One of the main reasons for closing schools is to allow for a period of social distancing to slow or halt community spread of COVID- 19. We strongly encourage families to follow the guidelines of the CDC and the Department of Public Health during school closures to take advantage of this opportunity to allow social interactions to diminish and slow the spread of the virus. While we know how difficult it may feel for families to stay at home and “self-quarantine,” this is a critical step that you can do to help our health system prepare for the likely cases we will see.

How much technology will be used?

The Administration is working with Andrea to implement an **online platform for virtual learning** for our students. This may take a few weeks, and we will keep you updated as we progress.

I don't have access to a computer or printer - what should I do?

Don't fret – students in upper levels were sent home with some work. Do your best to keep your children engaged and limit other screen time.

What is the procedure for students and parents visiting on-site?

Unfortunately, neither families nor staff members are allowed on site. This is in keeping with the Massachusetts Governor's mandate.

How will the school keep me informed of the closure?

Per the mandate by Massachusetts Governor, Charlie Baker, schools may not reopen until April 7 or later (BPS is closed through April 27). This is a fluid situation, and we will continue to follow all mandates by the State and Federal Governments. Any change to this plan will be communicated through email and our Thacher website. We will make a decision to extend Thacher closure based on evolving information and on an abundance of caution to assure the health and safety of our staff and families.

Will we get a reimbursement of tuition fees?

Thacher Montessori School is operating in accordance with local and federal government instructions given these exceptional circumstances of a nationwide, government-initiated, school closure. As such, there will be no reimbursement of tuition fees offered. Guides continue to work remotely to support families and offer the best education services we



can under these challenging circumstances. Our staff is continuing to connect with families/students through instruction, guidance and learning remotely at all levels; Toddler through AP as is appropriate for each developmental level during our closure/social distancing period. We encourage everyone to embrace this challenge as a new and exciting way to stimulate learning and growth even though we are not physically together in our building.

Thacher relies on tuition payments to maintain the operations of the school, therefore, there will be no credits or refunds on tuition. **We have committed to uninterrupted pay to all of our Thacher Montessori staff** and the school's expenses do not cease because of these new pandemic protocols. The school's ability to retain and compensate teachers and support staff is vital to our ability to effectively carry out our school's mission and to be ready for successfully resuming normal operation of the school once the containment period is over.

Will we extend the school year into the summer?

No. We are continuing to provide instruction as ordered by the Massachusetts Department of Education and Public Health Department. We did think of this, but one issue with simply closing and extending the year into the summer is that we do not know how long this will last. Secondly, we are also committed to continuing to pay our staff during this time and supporting their mental health and security. Most importantly, we truly believe that, although this learning will be different and cannot replicate the classroom, we are providing critical structure and learning that will hopefully support all of you in creating a sense of normalcy for the children and yourselves in a very unprecedented time.

Do I need to tell you if someone I know is diagnosed with COVID-19?

If a member of your family, or someone that you know visited the school or interacted with someone in the school community (i.e. grandparent, nanny, etc.) is confirmed positive for COVID-19, please reach out directly to [Nurse Carolyn](#).

Please be assured, **all personal medical information of any nature will be held in the strictest of confidence.** We adhere to the laws governing medical privacy and information. If we need to notify the community of a case or contact with a case under the direction of the Office of Public Health, we will do so by stating only that a member



of the community has been identified as having COVID-19 or being a contact of a case of COVID-19. It is at this point our local board of health will intervene and take over starting with an interview of the possibly subjected individual.

How can I help my child understand what is going on?

How can I support them when I am so anxious?

Just do your best and be kind to yourself. Please note that the best thing you can do for your child is to:

- Set up a routine and be firm about it (even when they don't like it, it is beneficial for them in a stressful time).
- Carefully monitor what the children are hearing and seeing (your conversations, the news, newspapers (especially pictures), empty store shelves, etc.)
- Resist the urge to increase screen time. There is a depressive quality to too much screen time which will be harmful in a stressful situation.
- Encourage connection with others (letters, phone calls, social games, play board games with a friend over the phone- you each have a board and move each other's pieces, etc.). You will notice community connection is going to be built into our plan for learning.
- Please see this resource produced by the National Association of School Psychologists about talking to children about COVID-19 and other resources below.

Useful Links

[CDC Emergency Preparedness and Response Facebook Page](#)

[How to talk to kids about COVID-19](#)

[MA Department of Public Health](#)

[CDC Website](#)

[CDC Handwashing Video](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

[Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#) (information for those with Asthma concerned about COVID-19)

Speaking with Your Child about COVID-19

In the midst of these health concerns, we wanted to let you know what we can do to help maintain a calm, inclusive environment in this time of uncertainty. Children are seeing people outside the school wearing masks, possibly hearing others talking about fatality rates, discussing particular communities and ethnicities who have the virus, and seeing and participating in increased handwashing and hygiene practices. Simply hoping they do not notice will only create anxiety. We, therefore, recommend asking the child what they know about the virus and opening up room for them to discuss it with you and ask questions. Asking the children why they think we wash hands and are so diligent about cleaning is helpful to start a conversation. The message takes different forms depending on the children's questions and developmental age, but we thought it might be helpful for you to suggest what you could say at home if you would like to discuss this with your child.

We don't totally understand the COVID-19 virus, so people are worried. It is also normal to be worried when they see people buying lots of things or wearing masks. Wearing a mask does not mean someone has the virus. They are usually just being careful. When things are different, people get scared. That is normal, and that is when we need to use our powerful human brains to think logically.

In addition, children are very sensitive to the mood in the home. Just do your best, be kind to yourself and know that the best thing you can do for your child is to:

1. Set up a routine and be firm about it (even when they don't like it, it is beneficial for them in a stressful time).
2. Carefully monitor what the children are hearing and seeing (your conversations, the news, newspapers (especially pictures), empty store shelves, etc.)
3. Resist the urge to increase screen time. There is a depressive quality to too much screen time which will be harmful in a stressful situation.
4. Encourage connection with others (letters, phone calls, social games (play board games with a friend over the phone- you each have a board and move each other's pieces, etc.). You will notice community connection is going to be built into our plan for learning.

5. Educate yourself about the virus so that you can convey the facts (when asked) without the fear and hype around it. Embody Mr. Roger's calm, loving, and factual delivery.
6. When a child is worried, draw their attention to the immediate environment around them. Is there a problem? Is everyone fine? Does something need to be done? Fix the issues you can (mop up the spilled water or fold the laundry that needs folding), recognize what is going right, and let the fears float away. Stay here and now. This may be a skill where your child is much more of an expert than you!

COVID-19 Information

[Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#)
[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)
[Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center](#)
[World Health Organization Page](#)

Prevention Measures

[Infection Prevention and Control WHO](#)
[CDC Cover your Cough Handout](#)
[CDC Handwashing Guidelines](#)
[CDC Home Cleaning and Disinfection Suggestions](#)

It is important to wash your hands frequently and to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or with the crook of your arm if tissue is unavailable, when coughing or sneezing to protect yourself and others from the virus, just as you do for the common cold or the flu.



*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.
~ Dr. Maria Montessori*