

Fostering Independence Among in Students during this Remote Learning Period



The greatest gifts we can give our children are the roots of RESPONSIBILITY and the wings of INDEPENDENCE.

— Maria Montessori

In the Montessori world we define 'working independently' in the following ways:

- The student takes initiative
- The student makes work plans
- The student follows through on those plans with minimal guidance
- And if stuck, the student knows when to ask for help, and then returns to continue his/her work.

This Friday marks the end of our 4th week of Remote Learning. Four weeks of a completely new learning platform which has had a steep learning curve for our students, our parents/guardians, our families as a whole, and our teachers.

And in creating and implementing this new platform, we've needed to use a lot of adult support. We are so incredibly thankful for all the time and energy you have committed to this process, and for providing your children with the opportunity to learn in your home environment. You have made this work for your children! THANK YOU!

And now, in true Montessori fashion, it's time for us to reflect on steps we can all take to encourage independence for our students.

*These words reveal the child's inner needs;
'Help me to do it alone'.*

— Dr. Maria Montessori

In our classrooms, independence is nurtured by design, and we see that all of our students wanting to be independent and strive to take ownership of their learning. While this will vary based on your children's age and learning styles, it is a core value of the Montessori approach.

Over the course of the next couple of weeks, your classroom teachers will be providing more recorded lessons that will be introducing NEW content to the children. The idea behind presenting these lessons is so that children can learn new information, but also to bring a sense of normalcy back to the student-teacher relationship. For our teachers to become teachers again!

As you can imagine, our teachers have greatly missed their time to practice their craft – to teach your children about the world. The re-introduction of lessons will provide a means for re-kindling independence energy in your children as they explore new areas of curriculum. At school, our students are used to receiving direct instruction, hearing follow up instructions from their teachers, and then independently following through with the teachers' expectations. We are looking to reconnect with these well-established expectations and steps.

I am aware many of you have felt the societal pressure during this Remote Learning Period to be the teacher. But I am here to tell you, we don't expect that from you! Our teachers are your child's teacher, not you! However, given design of this remote learning model, we do need your partnership to make this work. We provide the instruction; you help ensure that your children focus on their work.

For sure you may need to continue helping with technology and getting your children started on a lesson, but our goal is to have the students independently attend the lessons and follow through with the follow up work from their teachers. When questions arrive on content, we urge you to encourage your students to reach out to their teachers as they would in the in-person model. (Remember, tech questions can be sent to office@millfalls.org.)

I encourage you to find small ways to allow your child to be as independent as possible, such as walking away during classroom meeting time allowing him/her to participate with their teachers and peers on their own.

We hope you have already felt, (or will soon feel) that your child might be ready to take on more responsibility in terms of the tech piece of his/her learning. I have a suggestion for how to set them up for success once you are ready for that: Consider writing a list of steps which will help them sign into Google, log in to classroom meetings and social times, etc. by themselves. Remember to have their log in passwords and such handy for their reference, as well.

It is my hope that as parent, you might find that this will take some burden off of your shoulders, and may also take away some of the potential triggers for power struggles between you and your child.

Finally, looking forward, next week we will be engaging in new ways to celebrate student independence through something called Big Work. This Montessori practice will be an optional way for our students to choose work on Fridays that are engaging, fun and student-driven. This is a very traditional Montessori approach where students take on a task and dive deeply into a topic of interest to them. You'll be hearing more about this from your child's teachers beginning on Monday.

In the meantime, please continue to reference my previous suggestions of establishing your child's prepared environment – a workspace for student success - and developing a schedule that can work for your family and utilizing tools to keep you on track. (see link below)

And of course, please be in touch if there is anything I can help with.

Thank you for your partnership, always, and most especially during this Remote Learning Period.

Warmly,
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