



*Randburg Montessori*

## COVID-19 SCHOOL SHUTDOWN

Learning From Home Parent Handbook

March 2020

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# Message from the Principal

Dear Parents,

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the President's instruction to close all schools until 14<sup>th</sup> April, we at Randburg Montessori will be complying. We understand that this is a difficult time for parents and we are committed to offering as much support as we are able to.

Some parents have been concerned about academic skill development and have asked for an at home learning programme. The ideas given below are to help parents alleviate boredom through physical and mental stimulation. Please note that the current situation has allowed RMC to exchange June / July and a few December holiday days for this time therefore not impacting academic learning time at school. This in turn takes the pressure off of parents to follow a rigid home school programme. If you do decide to teach at home, please ensure that the children get a mental break from academic work, ideally the week before the Easter weekend to ensure they are returning to school rested and ready to learn.

As we embark on a time of 'Learning from Home,' our aim is to create a Montessori-based framework that serves our children 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.

Routine is the most important thing to maintain with children at this time. Please maintain waking, meal, and bed times as they would be for a normal school day. It is important to be consistent, and for the children to have predictability.

This is going to be a very stressful time for parents and children. Children may become fearful because of things they have heard or seen on television. Arguing with children to do work is not what is needed right now, instead, cuddle up together and read! Have fun together. Here are some ideas to keep the children busy and away from screens:

- Take turns reading if they are able to read themselves
- Build puzzles or play board games
- Build a fort
- Box construction with small boxes
- Art and craft – paint, colour, cut and stick. These all provide great opportunities to develop fine motor skills.
- Play dress up and put on skits (mini plays)
- Bake and cook together
- Play with play dough
- Build Lego and other construction blocks

- Build a race track for cars
- Do simple science experiments, using household products
- Garden – pull weeds and plant seeds
- Feed the birds
- Involve children in household chores (they are capable of doing more than you think)
- Treasure hunts

Create a simple daily routine that everyone can be involved in. Routine is important for the child's emotional well-being as it creates a sense of security and predictability, thereby minimising anxiety.

Please do not take the children to shopping malls, play areas, etc. In order to minimise the risk of spreading this virus, we need to be responsible and self-quarantine.

Thank you for your continued support

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. van Straaten'.

Kym van Straaten  
Principal

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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*

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.

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 children. 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 instils a great sense of ownership and responsibility for the child.

It is important that parents remember that:

- Learning is not a spectator sport and to ensure active participation of the child.
- Learning is a social and not solo experience
- The human brain learns best through collaboration and creating rather than mere consumption of knowledge.
- Positive experiences are vital for learning. Therefore, information must be combined with positive emotion to ensure learning and formation of long term memory.
- Practice = progress and practice makes permanent

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 throughout the period of closure is assured. Please do not hesitate to use our WhatsApp groups to ask questions.

The guidelines throughout this Handbook will outline how the staff at RMC will support our all families throughout this period of 'Learning from Home.'

## THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

For our younger children (0 – 6 years), the learning environment is your home and surroundings. This means finding ways to support independence, engage in meaningful tasks and supplement learning through various activities suggested by teachers.

For our 6 to 12 aged children, this will mean all of the above, plus establishing a quiet space, expectations and routines for any specific assignments shared by teachers.

Where age-appropriate you might like to discuss 'Learning from Home' with your child and include them in some decision-making processes:

- Ask them where 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 our older children, it will be important for them to maintain their routine of handing in work and receiving feedback from their teachers.

Overall, we can approach this as an opportunity to be creative and collaborative - we are here to support you through this process.

## PRACTICAL LIFE

Practical life is an important part of experiential learning. It is part of every Montessori classroom and can be mirrored at home. These activities assist children in developing purposeful life skills for their continued growth and development. This includes refining fine motor and movement skills and practising coordination, planning and problem- solving. Practical life activities:

- foster order and sequence;
- develop concentration;
- foster physical independence;
- foster the development of fine motor control; and
- provide opportunities for planning and carrying out tasks.

The Practical Life 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;
- helping with shopping lists/budgeting;
- repairing a bicycle; or
- 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.

As our children get older, these activities lead naturally to volunteer experiences and beginnings of community work. For our oldest tweens, 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-centred as opposed to teacher-directed learning.

## OWNERSHIP OF TASKS AND SHARING OF LEARNING

Montessori learning environments are often referred to as “optimal learning environments” because of the inherent skills and outcomes that result from being in a rich and interesting classroom, coupled with the dynamic of interactions amongst peers and teachers.

In order to foster a deep sense of ownership in 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 teachers in the coming weeks. We encourage parents to follow the teachers' suggestions and guidance when completing work at home. The more children are involved in developing and detailing their activities, the more they can achieve.

One note regarding sharing or presenting work:

It is a regular occurrence in an Elementary (6 - 12) 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 children 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 children 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 RMC that they reach their fullest potential and feel that they are a valued part of our community.



# Age Appropriate Chores

## CHORES BY AGE

### AGES 2 - 3

- PUT TOYS AWAY
- PLACE BOOKS ON BOOKSHELF
- THROW TRASH AWAY
- SET THE TABLE
- FETCH DIAPERS / WIPES
- WIPE DOORKNOBS
- DUST BASEBOARDS
- PUT DIRTY CLOTHES IN HAMPER
- PUT SHOES AWAY
- UNLOAD DISHWASHER (PLASTIC CUPS, SILVERWARE, PLASTIC PLATES)

### AGES 4 - 5

- CLEAR THE KITCHEN TABLE
- WIPE UP SPILLS
- UNLOAD DISHWASHER (PLASTIC ITEMS)
- FEED PETS
- MAKE THE BED
- PREPARE EASY SNACKS
- MATCH SOCKS
- FOLD DISH TOWELS
- PUT AWAY CLOTHES
- WATER PLANTS
- TAKE OUT RECYCLING
- WEED

### AGES 6 - 7

- SWEEP
- USE A HAND HELD VACUUM
- RAKE LEAVES
- HELP PREPARE DINNER
- WASH PRODUCE
- REPLACE TOILET PAPER ROLL
- WIPE DOWN BATHROOM SINKS & COUNTERS
- WIPE DOWN KITCHEN COUNTER
- COLLECT GARBAGE
- GET THE MAIL
- HELP PUT LIGHT GROCERIES AWAY

### AGES 8 - 9

- SCRAMBLE EGGS
- BAKE COOKIES
- MAKE TOAST & PB&J
- PUT GROCERIES AWAY
- WALK DOGS
- DUST FURNITURE
- WATER THE LAWN
- LOAD & UNLOAD DISHWASHER
- MOP FLOORS

### AGES 10 - 11

- MAKE SIMPLE MEALS
- WASH CLOTHES & MOVE TO DRYER
- TAKE OUT GARBAGE
- CLEAN TOILETS, SHOWER / TUB
- DEEP CLEAN KITCHEN
- SWEEP PORCH & OUT THE GARAGE
- CLEAN UP AFTER PETS

### AGES 12 AND UP

- WASH WINDOWS
- IRON CLOTHES
- CLEAN THE CAR
- SHOP FOR GROCERIES WITH SUPERVISION & A LIST
- MOW THE LAWN
- MAKE FULL MEALS
- CLEAN OUT THE FRIDGE
- SUPERVISE YOUNGER CHILDREN
- BAKE CAKE / BREAD ON OWN
- CHANGE OVERHEAD LIGHTS

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# Toddler Community (12 - 36 months)

Children 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 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 teachers will:

- Initiate individual support and communications based on each child's needs
- Provide detailed updates and consultation (as required) regarding toilet learning/sleeping habits/activities(fine/gross motor)
- Share the current class routine/schedule and then suggest guidance in setting up a daily routine at home
- Share guidelines and suggestions for 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 teachers 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

A few examples to get you started:

Area of Development Activity	
Gross motor skills	Going for a walk (taking time, walking slowly); jumping; climbing up jungle gyms; catching and throwing balls / beanbags
Fine motor skills	Cutting; sewing; pasting; rolling playdough; threading, manipulating locks and keys, nuts and bolts.
Food preparation	Spreading butter; slicing fruit; pouring milk; making pizza
Literacy	Reading to your child, listening to your child; engaging in meaningful conversations; learning nursery rhymes and singing songs

#### PLAY – DOUGH RECIPE:

- 2 cups Flour
- 2 teaspoons Cream of Tartar
- 2 cups of Water
- 2 tablespoons of oil
- ½ cup salt

Mix all ingredients and cook over a (hot) steady heat, stirring continually until it feels like playdough. Soft but not sticky.

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# Preschool Community (3 - 6 months)

Children 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 teachers
- Initiate communication with teachers about questions, ideas, concerns, feedback
- Support your child's independence in daily life activities
- Be mindful of and allow children to continue periods of concentration
- Establish daily routines and expectations
- Limit screen time
- Provide opportunities for daily physical activity

Preschool Teachers will:

- Initiate individual communications based on children's needs
- Make suggestions for appropriate house chores
- Offer guidelines and suggestions for screen time
- Provide both general and individualised suggestions for activities developing fine motor skills / gross motor skills / language / numeracy
- Be prompt in replying to your messages if you need additional guidance and support

Programme-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 Sunshine 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; skipping; obstacle course; climbing up jungle gyms; catching and throwing balls; skipping; hopscotch; folding washing
Fine motor skills	Cutting; sewing; pasting; playdough; drawing; painting; hammering nails into wood; opening and closing bottles, boxes, nuts and bolts; using pegs to hang socks
Food preparation	Making a sandwich; slicing fruit; pouring milk; making pizza, peeling, grating, chopping vegetables.
Literacy	Reading to your child, listening to your child; engaging in meaningful conversations; learning nursery rhymes and singing songs; Playing I spy with beginning and end sounds (phonetic) in words eg ka (for cat)

If you are going to teach letter shapes in any form please use cursive to keep learning consistent.

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# Elementary (6 - 12 years)

## 6 – 9

Children are expected to:

- Plan and organise 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

## 9 – 12

Children are expected to:

- Plan and organise work as independently as possible
- Follow teachers' guidelines and expectations
- Be own advocate when assistance or further clarification is required
- Communicate directly with teachers

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

Elementary Teachers will:

- Prepare a variety of appropriate tasks and activities for children to complete at home in order to maintain and consolidate their learning to ensure they can quickly move forward with new concepts on return.
- Communicate in a consistent fashion with parents, replying to messages promptly
- Offer Parent Education resources
- Offer feedback to children

#### Programme-Specific Needs and Characteristics: \*

- Respect the stage of development - many Elementary children are at a “concrete level” and require the Montessori materials to complete certain task. Teachers will guide you regarding what works makes sense for your child
- Avoid “teaching” shortcuts for subjects such as Mathematics
- Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Elementary children to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home
- Encourage socialisation in a safe way – video calling friends is one idea or small work dates for children to visit each other and collaborate on a project. Lower Elementary children are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

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# Prevention Measures

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 a 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 strongly recommend everyday preventive actions to help keep the virus from spreading.

If you have any of the following symptoms, please consult with the consultation centre for people with potential exposure to COVID-19:

- You have had cold symptoms or a fever of 37.5°C or over for four days or more (including when you need to continue to take an antipyretic)
- You have a strong feeling of weariness (fatigue) or shortness of breath (difficulty breathing).

Please also consult with the consultation centre if you are a senior citizen or have an underlying disease, and you have had the symptoms mentioned above for about two days.



**COVID19 HOTLINE:**

 0800029999

IF YOU DISPLAY ANY SIGNS OF THE COVID19 VIRUS, DON'T GO TO YOUR DOCTOR/PHARMACIST/ NURSE AND INFECT THEM OR EVERYBODY IN THE PRACTICE. BY CALLING THE HOTLINE, SOMEONE WILL COME TO YOU TO HAVE YOU TESTED FOR THE VIRUS. SHARE WITH EVERYONE

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