

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

With every new experience, there are challenges. We learned together. Here are some of the more frequently asked questions and answers for our families.

1) How long will school remain closed?

Although the physical building is closed, our school is not. We had remained optimistically hopeful that our state would rebound from the pandemic and that we could get our children together for a final month of in-school learning. Governor Phil Murphy announced on May 4, 2020, that in-person school learning will not resume for the remainder of the year. Though we wish that we could be back in the classroom, we agree that safety comes first in all matters concerning our children and families. Our last day of school for the 2019-2020 year will be **Tuesday, June 16, 2020**.

2) Will my child fall behind with remote learning?

Remember that children all over the world are affected by this pandemic. All of them are adapting to remote learning methods, which are quite foreign to them. Having to face the same situation, every child is equalized. As a Montessori school, our methodology is to follow the child. Each child's learning— whether in a classroom or, now, online—is at their own pace. When we return to the classroom, we will gauge where each child is on the learning spectrum and pick up at their respective point. If that means there is a need for intensive review to bring them up to speed, then that's what we will do. It may be more challenging for our teachers, but we promise they are well qualified and prepared for it.

3) How important is it for my child to complete all the assignments and do all the homework?

Our motto at Hudson Montessori School is "Fostering the Love to Learn." We sincerely believe that your child should never feel forced to complete work or spend hours laboring over their work, leading to frustration or animosity toward it. All assigned work for our younger students during this remote learning period is encouraged but not forced. If you find your child is having difficulty completing their assignments, please discuss this with your child's teacher. You know your child best and your child's teachers also know your child very well. They can suggest useful methods to give them the information in a way that helps your child. Children in the Lower and Upper Elementary students have work plans to assist them with time management and knowing what is due when. They are expected to complete work and assignments as given in their group. If at any time this becomes difficult, please trigger a conversation with your child's teacher.

4) I am concerned about too much screen time for my child, especially at the younger age levels. What do you suggest?

The video class lessons, video circle time, and individual child sessions are recommended but not required. Although the Montessori approach does not prefer the use of videos and screens for learning, it is the best tool we have right now to bring our teachers into your home during this health crisis. Since our teachers rarely use screens for teaching, they have had to adopt remote learning methods in short order.

We have found, and all the studies suggest, that the key to screen time is finding a balance. For this reason, we are keeping our sessions short. Since most of us are essentially quarantined in our homes, we do not want to cut off our children entirely from their social connections—teachers, classmates, friends. That’s where some of our Specials classes come in, it has been wonderful getting everyone up, moving, singing, playing, and sharing. We gather as a group, we check-in, and we make plans to meet again. Creating a new routine can help our children adjust to the changes we have had to make in our lives. Setting routines help children feel purposeful and accomplished.

5) **My child can't sit still for the screen. How can I make this work for my child?**

As Montessorians, we know that every child is an individual, and every child learns differently. We know that some of our children are visual learners. Some are auditory learners. We understand that some children need manipulatives and close, individualized attention. Each child's needs are unique. In our classroom setting, if a young child is fidgeting during circle time, we ask them to sit in one of our teacher's laps to help them feel our calm and develop that calmness with their body. You can model this behavior for them by having them in your lap a couple of times. Explain to your child that this is the routine going forward. If this does not work for your child, our best recommendation is to schedule a one-on-one discussion with your child's teacher to get some techniques to help you get through this period.

In other cases, a lot of our older children who have already absorbed the Montessori style have adjusted well, are self-directed, and can follow along with their work plan with very little parental intervention.

6) **How secure are the classroom learning sessions?**

We are aware that when schools across the country initially started using the Zoom platform for remote learning sessions, there were "Zoombombing" situations that were experienced by some schools. As far as we can tell, our school did not experience any security breaches. To increase our security, we are requiring that each Zoom session being used by our school is password-protected. That means each participant will be required to input a password to join the session. In some cases, you may note that your child is put into a "waiting room." The host of the class must individually approve each participant to join the class.

7) **What do parents do if they do not have a computer at home or cannot share their computer since it is needed for working from home?**

Zoom sessions and Google Classroom can work from a desktop computer, laptop, Smartphone, or iPad. We realize that people may need their phone or other devices at home and cannot dedicate a device for their children. If you have device issues or failures that make it difficult for your child to attend class sessions or do their work, we have a limited supply of devices that we can loan out to children who have no viable options for getting online.

8) How can my child get more online lessons with the teacher?

All students—toddler to upper elementary—have scheduled class sessions and individual sessions between the children and their teachers. Each child has a regular, routine schedule with a child's lesson periods and Specials classes. The online learning schedule takes into account finding the right balance of screen time for each child per day. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your teacher immediately if your child is struggling with a concept, needs further explanation, or needs a teacher's help with anything. Our teachers are expecting you to reach out if any issue arises.

9) I have more than one child, and each child has class sessions scheduled at the same time. What do I do?

We realize that some families may have more than one child in online sessions, some that are in our school and others who are older or have graduated on to other schools. This may have put a strain on your electronic devices or the class time may not be a feasible time for you or your child. If your child needs a device, please do not hesitate to reach out to us (see question #7, above). And, if the conflict is the time of the class, you can discuss this with your teacher to see if the schedule can be modified, if "make-up" sessions make the most sense, or if the instruction can be given offline. This decision requires a conversation between you and the teacher to come up with the best solution.

10) I need help managing my child's schedule with my own. How can the school help?

Each class has as an established schedule of individual lessons, class lessons, and Specials classes. The teachers keep the Zoom links updated and make that "living document" available to all parents and students on Google Classroom.

11) Where can I find my child/children's work, assignments, and schedule?

All classrooms are using Google Classroom. Anything having to do with your classroom will come via the teachers on Google Classroom or email. Communications that come from the school office or administration will be via the email you provided to the school. You will continue to get a Weekly Message every Friday as a usual weekly digest from the school. Throughout the week, as needed, the school administration will send important updates as things come up. Currently, we are using our HMS360 app as a supplement only. We encourage our parents to use that to post photos of your child's activities at home. As a courtesy, your teachers may post your child's assignments and instructions on both HMS360 and Google Classroom. But, if these multiple channels of information are becoming overwhelming, we suggest turning your attention primarily to Google Classroom.

12) What if I notice my child is having emotional difficulties with this shelter-in-place situation? What do you recommend?

We would recommend that parents talk to their child. The Child Mind Institute is supporting families during COVID -19 and is a good resource for parents who have children that are struggling with this shelter-in-place situation: <https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>. The Worry Woos Program may also help in having your child explain what they are feeling. We encourage

parents to connect with their child. If it continues, we recommend that you reach out to your child's pediatrician for professional guidance.