



COUNTRYSIDE MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL

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Embrace the Adventure

March 27, 2020

Dear CMCS families,

I hope this email finds you and your families safe and happy. You continue to be in our thoughts, and we truly do miss you!

Over this week, we have been very busy preparing our Distance Learning Plan, training our teachers, and revving up for this new way of education. I'm very excited about our plan and am also encouraged by our staff's dedication, flexibility, and collaboration through this time.

We understand that this is a difficult time for families. Many parents are trying to manage working, either remotely or still at their worksites, or dealing with loss of employment during this time, all while having their children home. We want to assure you that we are striving to make this transition to distance learning as easy as possible. Our goal for the first week is to get students engaged in the virtual platform. We want to be mindful of the situations that may be happening at home and provide support, encouragement, and connection.

Student participation in distance learning is not optional, and we expect our students to be engaged and learning throughout this process.

As we plan for distance learning, we want to emphasize the importance of making time for play, creativity, social-emotional health, physical health, and for practical life lessons with family (e.g., learning to cook, doing laundry, etc.) in conjunction with the academic instruction that we will be providing. In other words, we do not want to lose sight of the whole child. This is a new experience for staff and students alike; it is also an opportunity to emphasize these aspects of education that are so critical in the lives of our children.

Here is an overview of our Distance Learning Plan. Please note that this plan is subject to change. We will begin distance learning on **Tuesday, March 31st**. At this point, distance learning will be in place until **Wednesday, April 15th**.

Lower Elementary

- At the outset, LE will be using email communication to assign work and check in with students.
- At the beginning of each week, teachers will send an email outlining all work for the week. We are still using the idea of a weekly work plan. Like in school, students have the flexibility to determine when they complete their work over the course of the week.
- Feedback to students will be provided via email.
- Teachers will offer a Google Meet session **for students** for 1-hour a week to communicate with students, answer questions, and provide support. The time/day of the Google Meet session will be posted to the class. Students are not required but encouraged to join. Teachers will be on for the whole hour and students can pop in and out. We kindly ask that parents NOT join Google Meet sessions. These are for students only.

Upper Elementary

- UE will be using Google Classroom to assign work and check in with students. Work will be posted for the week, and students can work on assignments when they choose throughout the week.
- Feedback to students will be provided via Google Classroom.
- Teachers will offer a Google Meet session **for students** for 1-hour a week to communicate with students, answer questions, and provide support. The time/day of the Google Meet session will be posted to the class. Students are not required but encouraged to join. Teachers will be on for the whole hour and students can pop in and out. We kindly ask that parents NOT join Google Meet sessions. These are for students only.

Middle School

- MS will be using Google Classroom to assign work and check in with students. Work will be posted for the week, and students can work on assignments when they choose throughout the week.
- Feedback to students will be provided via Google Classroom.
- Teachers will offer a Google Meet session **for students** for 1-hour a week to communicate with students, answer questions, and provide support. The time/day of the Google Meet session will be posted to the class. Students are not required but encouraged to join. Teachers will be on for the whole hour and students can pop in and out. We kindly ask that parents NOT join Google Meet sessions. These are for students only.

Additional Information

- If you have a question for your child's teachers, please email them first. Teachers will have set office hours in which they will be responding to emails.
- Office staff will be conducting their work from home. You can also email them with questions, just like during the school year.
- Electives will start the first week for MS. Specials will not start until the 2nd week of distance learning for LE & UE.
- Email and Remind will continue to be our main routes to communicate with parents. We will also post updates on our website and Facebook page.
- There will be no Parent/Teacher Conferences at this time. We will try, as best as possible, to communicate via email and voice call.
- We are NOT asking parents to teach skills or present lessons.
- We ask that parents do NOT join class Google Meet sessions. Those are specifically intended for our students.
- As much as possible, we are not asking you to print any items at home. Try to use technology for students to fill out forms and engage in work (i.e., marking up pictures digitally).
- Based on direction from Pasco County Schools, our campus is closed. We have to limit people coming on campus. With the exception of device distribution, we do not have any plans for students to come to campus to pick up materials, books, etc. All materials will be provided virtually.
- Be on the lookout for welcome emails from teachers for distance learning.

Our teachers and staff have been incredible as they have been asked to shift a face-to-face program to a virtual one. They have been resourceful, creative, flexible, and, best of all, excited. We hope that our students are too.

We are all learning how to navigate this situation together. There are so many unknowns and challenges will come up along the way. That is alright. The mental health of our students, families, and staff is our top priority. If things get overwhelming with regard to distance learning, please stop and reach out to your child's teachers.

Again, we appreciate your grace and patience with us as we implement this new way of learning.

Thank you for your continued support.

With gratitude,

Michael Picone
Principal