



The Acorn: Monthly Newsletter for MSO

May 2020

Looking Ahead



The days are quickly moving toward the end of our unforgettable 2019/20 school year. While it is not what any of us ever anticipated, I believe our school community has managed to navigate the situation as well as can be expected - and thus far safely. Kudos to all!

We sincerely hope to open as usual at the end of August with on-site education for all ages. Honestly, at this time I am not positive that will happen. I cannot emphasize enough how critical and dependent on safety our site reopening is. The chance of one child, or parent, or staff member contracting the coronavirus through our site, and all of the ramifications that would entail, is not worth the risk. I know this is not great news for many parents. Few planned on providing homeschooling for their children and yet here you are.

I want to remind everyone MSO has been, since its inception in 1973, a Montessori school. That is our primary focus. Our child care program was instituted as a benefit to our families but is not what we are all about. We will provide child care as soon as we can safely do so.

We are putting a lot of effort into our plans for next year. When we envision a program for the fall that involves distance learning, we anticipate it will differ from the current DL in that it will be more involved and thorough. When we plan for on-site instruction, we have to consider safe distancing, staggered start times or days, etc. I have been in contact with fellow Montessori administrators and other private schools in the Valley to help me in my decisions.

I am open to your questions, concerns or (best option) supportive comments. I can be reached via email janet@montessorischoolofjai.org, or phone 805-649-2525. I miss the students terribly but I am happy all "my" children seem to be well.

Love,
Janet

School Updates

8th Grade Graduates



We are so proud of each of our graduating 8th graders: Phoebe Austin, Shayan Barati, and Luca Falvo. Not only were they all tremendous students in the classroom, they have demonstrated to us their independent motivation for learning as they've continued their studies from home.

Plans for honoring our graduates are in the works. We are disappointed not to be able to hold a traditional graduation ceremony this year, but we are going to make sure that they are each honored and celebrated in the best way possible.

Congratulations Phoebe, Shayan, and Luca!

Online Summer Program Now Available!

We are excited to announce that Room 8 head teacher, Ruby Cossairt, has generously offered to teach two online summer sessions for students in grades 2 – 6, starting June 22. We will be sending out more detailed information next week. Stay tuned!

Main Office

With campus closed, you may be wondering who's handling what in our main office. Our main office staff have continued to run the day-to-day operations of the school from home. Janet and Patrice are guiding the planning and decision-making. Our Financial Administrator, Jania Delgado, has taken on the big task of revising our budget, and applying for COVID-19 federal aid, on top of her routine duties. Karleen Cole is providing valuable assistance on all things financial and general in nature, and is volunteering her time as needed. Lesley Foster has taken on the lion's share of the daily administrative operations, overseeing the launch of our new online enrollment system (FACTS), answering emails and phone calls, cancelling events, managing our website, and handling last minute requests from faculty and staff. As you can see, we may not be in the physical office, but we're here for you whenever you need!

Classroom Updates

This month, we asked the teachers to share what distance learning looks like in each of their classes. Because we are a small, tight-knit community, we have all had to come together to learn new technology, teach each other how it works, and create the best Montessori-based distance learning program possible. Take a look at how each of the classes have handled the transition:

Room 1 – Jenny Schneider

In our Google Classroom we have a set weekly schedule of Monday, Wednesday and Friday videos and Tuesday, Thursday Zoom calls. We are studying insects. We have learned about ladybugs and butterflies. I read books in the videos and do some projects. We read *The Listening Walk* last week and then my children went on their own listening walk.

Room 2 – Renee Warner

The children have been working hard on being able to identify insects and how insects are invertebrates. I have seen pictures of the children working in their gardens, and it is so exciting to see them caring for their environment.

I want you to know how much I appreciate you and the feedback that I have received from you about Google Classroom. I know that you are busy working with maintaining routines for your children during this time. I am here for you and your children! I have provided videos to some of the Google Classroom work along with stories and song links. If there is a specific work that you would like a video of, please let me know. It has been fun to see the children during our Zoom sharing time each Friday!

Room 6 - Liz Cossairt

The children, parents and I have learned to navigate and utilize Zoom meetings and Google Classroom. I look forward to the students' arrival at our daily classroom meetings and enjoy the challenge of trying to teach and incorporate skills while still maintaining Montessori principles. The children seem happy to see one another, are responsive and adapting well to using their new computer skills. They are also learning the rules of etiquette when participating in Zoom meetings

Room 6 children took home packets of work at the beginning of social distancing that included appropriate reading comprehension workbooks, handwriting, math packets, and their journals. Since engaging in Google Classroom and Zoom I have been able to introduce and maintain lessons in Language Arts, Writing, Poetry, Science, Math and Art. Additionally, optional Read-Aloud book time is offered in the afternoons or videos of the same through the classroom. The unit that is providing continuity and tying our lessons together loosely is Animal Classification; for the rest of the year we will focus on Birds and the Backyard Biome.

Room 7 – Lara Horsting

I have set up Google Classroom with lessons on video, group on video, and Zoom meetings (4 days a week). Zoom meetings focus on lessons that I build for students in packets to pick up, facilitating hands-on online learning geared toward younger students.

Room 8 - Ruby Cossairt

Like everyone, we have experienced ups and downs and, most of all, we've learned an incredible amount over the past few months. It was not the curriculum I'd planned for the rest of the year, but if I've learned anything this Spring, it's that plans are (sometimes) made for throwing out.

As a staff, we have done a lot to try to recreate the physical classroom in a virtual space, all the while knowing it to be an impossible task. Even as we know it, we keep trying and in doing so we've discovered just how resilient our students truly are. The work cycle is carried forward into this new environment and I am continually amazed by my students' accomplishments, whether it be figuring out how to check their email or completing a diagram showing the different types of protists.

What else can I say about the work that we have all been doing? Well, as tempted as I am to drone on about the details or complain about technical difficulties, for today I'm content to dwell in our successes, be they large or small. Go Room 8!

Brody's Protist Diagram

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ArMQQtEbb-209_K5X1yIs70cG7yRDWRK/view?usp=sharing

Room 9 – Libby Hawkins and Sage Danch

Over the past couple of months, we (Libby and Sage) have been developing and improving our distance learning platform. While none of us are able to obtain the unique Montessori education that we get when we are present on campus, we are proud to say that we have been able to specialize and individualize each student's course of work as we have moved through the Spring. What has not changed is that we work with the understanding that each student learns in different ways, and so it has been with our tri-weekly Zoom meetings, office hours, and the Google Classroom curriculum.

With this in mind, we have provided our students with a varied set of enrichment activities as well as their regular language arts and math curriculum. The primary focus of our recent morning Zoom meetings has been devoted to our Civil War curriculum, which we are wrapping up within the next week.

It has been a rewarding and deepening experience to go through the distance learning experiment with your kids. Thank you for your patience in this co-creation process, and thank you for your consistent input, feedback, and support. We couldn't do it without the energy of your kids, and the energy that you, as parents, bring!

Important Dates

May 25	Memorial Day – no school
May 30	2020-21 scholarship recipients notified
June 10	Last day of school – You did it!
June 22-July 17	Session 1 – Grades 2-6 summer school
July 20-Aug. 14	Session 2 – Grades 2-6 summer school



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