Mission: To honor each child's individuality, creativity and intellectual potential through an enriched Montessori educational program

Handbook adapted with permission from The Montessori School of Tokyo
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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."

~Dr Maria Montessori

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

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.

How do we establish this at home?

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 students. 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 instills a great sense of ownership and responsibility for the child.

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.

The guidelines throughout this Handbook will outline how teachers and the school’s administration will support all of our families throughout this period of ‘Learning from Home.’
For our younger students, 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 older Elementary students, 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 students, 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 students in developing purposeful life skills for their continued growth and development. This includes refining fine motor and movement skills and practicing 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 urban 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 students, 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-centered 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 (or older) 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 students 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 students 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 Brixham Montessori Friends School that they reach their fullest potential and feel that they are a valued part of our community.
Toddlers (2 - 3 years)

Students 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 questions, share concerns and observations
❖ Be consistent; follow routines and clear sequences for each activity
❖ 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:
❖ Offer individual support and communications based on each child/family’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 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

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<th>Area of Development</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<td>Gross motor skills</td>
<td>Going for a walk (taking time, walking slowly); jumping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine motor skills</td>
<td>Cutting, sewing, pasting, transferring with kitchen tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food preparation</td>
<td>Spreading sunbutter, slicing fruits, pouring milk, peeling hard boiled eggs</td>
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<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Reading to your child, listening to your child</td>
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See also Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics in the Primary (3-6) section
Primary (3 - 6 years)

Students 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

3-6 Teachers will:
❖ Initiate individual communications based on student needs
❖ Give guidance in setting up a daily routine
❖ Make suggestions for appropriate house chores
❖ Offer guidelines and suggestions for screen time
❖ Share a daily “Morning Greeting” via email
❖ Provide both general and individualized suggestions for activities developing
  fine motor skills / gross motor skills / language / mathematics
❖ Be prompt in replying to your emails if you need additional guidance and support

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics
❖ Children aged 2 - 6 years 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 Toddler and 3-6 child, ‘work’ and
  ‘play’ should be interchangeable - a natural, fun and exciting part of life.

Enrichment
Opportunities for enrichment activities have not been overlooked during school closure.
The Resources for Families section of this handbook has an extensive list of activities for
enrichments activities. These areas offer students many opportunities for self-expression,
language and an outlet during stressful times.
Lower Elementary (6 - 9 years)

Students are expected to:
❖ Plan and organize 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

Lower Elementary Teachers will:
❖ Prepare a variety of appropriate tasks and activities for children to complete at home in order to maintain and move their learning forward
❖ Communicate in a consistent fashion with parents, replying to emails promptly
❖ Offer Parent Education resources
❖ Share a daily “Morning Greeting” via email and lead weekly community meetings and small group lessons via Zoom meetings
❖ Offer feedback to students via scheduled Zoom meetings
❖ Collaborate with Specialists to provide activities and suggestions for Art, Spanish, Strings, Chorus (3rd years), and Theater (3rd years)

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics
❖ Respect the stage of development - many Lower Elementary students are at a “concrete level” and require the Montessori materials to complete certain tasks. Teachers will guide you regarding what work makes sense for your child
❖ Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Lower Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home
❖ Encourage socialization via online communication platforms. Lower Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

Enrichment
Opportunities for enrichment activities have not been overlooked during school closure. The Resources for Families section of this handbook has an extensive list of activities for enrichments activities. These areas offer students many opportunities for self-expression, language and an outlet during stressful times.
Upper Elementary (9 - 12 years)

Students are expected to:
❖ Plan and organize work as independently as possible
❖ Follow teachers’ guidelines and expectations
❖ Be own advocate when assistance or further clarification is required
❖ Communicate directly with teachers
❖ 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 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

Upper Elementary Teachers will:
❖ Prepare a variety of appropriate tasks and activities for children to complete at home in order to maintain and move their learning forward
❖ Communicate in a consistent fashion with parents, replying to emails promptly
❖ Offer Parent Education resources
❖ Meet weekly for a scheduled class community meeting via Zoom meetings
❖ Offer daily feedback and support to students via one-on-one Zoom meetings and Google hangouts
❖ Collaborate with Specialists to provide activities and suggestions for Art, Spanish, Strings, Chorus, and Theater

Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics
❖ Respect the stage of development - some students may still be at a “concrete level” and require the Montessori materials to complete certain tasks. Avoid “teaching” shortcuts for subjects such as Mathematics
❖ Develop ideas that allow the opportunity for Upper Elementary students to build from their interests. Examples may include projects, journals, creative writing, geometry constructions, Practical Life at home
❖ Support the need for Upper Elementary students’ group work - working with a friend (if possible) may be very well received
❖ Encourage socialization via online communication platforms. Upper Elementary students are extremely social; they will need to feel connected to their friends

Enrichment
Opportunities for enrichment activities have not been overlooked during school closure. The Resources for Families section of this handbook has an extensive list of activities for enrichments activities. These areas offer students many opportunities for self-expression, language and an outlet during stressful times.
FAQs

When and how can I reach my child’s teacher?
Email remains the best way to contact a teacher. In most cases, you can expect a response to emails within 24 hours. If you wish to speak to a teacher, please use email to set up a time for a phone call. Some staff members are available by text during school hours (and will indicate so by providing a cell number with your remote learning packet).

How much communication can I expect from the school?
The Head of School will communicate with you directly should there be any updates on the COVID-19 situation that might have a direct impact on school operations. The frequency of communication from your child’s teacher will vary depending on each program.

How much technology will be used?
This will vary greatly depending on the age of the students. We may utilize online video conferencing in certain circumstances. Your classroom teachers will share more information with you as they learn different tools for communicating online and research online resources.

I don’t have access to a printer. What should I do?
The school is happy to provide printing assistance and our office will be open daily between 7:30am-3:30pm. Please forward any school work for printing to bmfs@brixhammontessori.org with the subject line: PRINT REQUEST - CHILD’S FULL NAME. All printing tasks received before 1:00pm will be completed by 3:30pm and placed in an envelope for pick up outdoors (a collection box is located to the right of the front door).

How will the school keep me informed on the closure?
Announcement on closures and any changes to the school closure plan will be communicated via the school’s emergency text alert system with a follow up email from the Head of School.

Will we get a reimbursement of tuition fees?
Brixham Montessori Friends School operates in accordance with local government instructions, and follows the guidance of the Maine CDC and the Maine Department of Education to close school in a health pandemic, such as COVID-19. As such, there is no reimbursement of tuition fees offered. Teachers continue to work both on-site and remotely to support families and offer the best education services we can under these challenging circumstances.
Resources for Families

Below is a list of enrichment activities for a wide variety of interests and ages.

Websites for Art, Crafts, Science and other Fun Learning Activities

- Kinderart
- Incredible Art
- Easy Peasy and Fun
- Left Brain Craft Brain
- ChildrensMuseumNH
- NEAquariumVirtual
- Center for Wildlife
- DK Find Out!
- Mystery Science
- Smithsonian Learning Lab: Discover, Create, Share
- Smithsonian National Zoo
- Hidden Worlds of National Parks
- Prodigy: Math Learning Platform
- National Geographic Kids
- Scholastic Learn from Home
- Outschool Brainpop
- Audible Stories
- ChildLight Yoga for Kids and Family

Podcasts for Children and Families

- The Big Life Kids Podcast
- Wow in the World
- Imagine This
- Forever Ago
- But Why: A Podcast for Curious
- Pants on Fire
- Tumble
- Circle Round
- Reading Bug Adventures
- Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls
- The Purple Rocket Podcast
- Fierce Girls
- Sparkle Stories
- Earth Rangers
- Peace Out
- What if World
- Brains On!
- Short & Curly
- Classics Kids
- Classical Kids
- The Unexplainable Disappearance of Mars Patel
Resources for Information regarding COVID-19

General Information

Prevention Measures

Handwashing Steps and Technique
https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IisgnbMfKvI

Social Distancing

Disinfecting Your Home

Managing Anxiety and Stress

We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being.”

- Dr Maria Montessori