

AT HOME LEARNING

A Guide to Montessori Lessons at Home Suzuki-Style



The Suzuki School Mission:

“To develop in young children a lifelong love of learning by honoring each child’s natural talent and ability in partnership with the parents.”



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LEARNING FROM A MONTESSORI PERSPECTIVE



When embarking 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 each child in our community.

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 instils a great sense of ownership and responsibility for the child. It is important to us that we maintain a feeling of connectedness through 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 in this Handbook outline how The Suzuki School's faculty, administration, and staff will support all our families throughout this period.

THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT



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.

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.) See below for sample daily schedules.
 - Note-Daily schedules may not match your child's classroom schedule exactly and are not meant to be rigid. They are to provide you with a guideline to create as much of a consistent routine as possible for your young child (as well as allow you to schedule in time to complete your work as well!)
- ▶ Gather ideas for activities and projects
- ▶ Organize materials

SAMPLE INFANT SCHEDULE



8:00-9:00	Breakfast snack
9:00-9:45	Indoor/Outdoor Learning Activities – See list of Infant Toddler lessons below or on our Suzuki Parent Portal
9:45-10:15	Diapers and bottle – You may wish to work towards your infant holding their own bottle!
10:15-11:15	Nap
11:15-12:15	Lunch
12:15-1:15	Indoor/Outdoor Learning Activities – These should include music, PE, and Spanish. See the Suzuki Parent Portal for videos with your infants' favorite enrichment teachers!
1:15-1:45	Diapers and bottle or snack
2:00-3:00	Nap
3:00-4:00	Indoor/Outdoor Learning Activities

SAMPLE TODDLER DAILY SCHEDULE



8:00-8:30	Breakfast – You may wish to try using an open cup with small bits of milk or water as well as encourage your toddler to use utensils!
8:30-10:00	Indoor/Outdoor Activities – See Infant schedule
10:00-10:30	Snack – When possible choose something simple like banana or chips they can serve themselves out of a bowl! Toilet/diaper
10:30-11:30	Outside time
11:30-12:30	Lunch, clean up, and toilet/diaper
12:30-2:00	Nap
2:00-2:30	Wake up, toilet/diaper
2:30-4:00	Art, sensory exploration, storytime, or movement

SAMPLE PREPRIMARY/PRIMARY DAILY SCHEDULE

7:30-8:30	<p>Breakfast - Provide two choices for breakfast when able. Allow child to pick, prepare, and clean up his breakfast.</p> <p>**<i>(Have items such as bowls, spoon, pitcher of milk/water available so he can serve himself. Worried he will take too much? Set out a bowl with only an amount you are comfortable with him eating to serve himself from. Have a towel, broom, and dustpan nearby so he can clean up any spills.)**</i></p>
8:30-10:30	<p>Work Block - Provide a few lessons for your child to choose from. You can find ideas for lessons from your child's teacher, on our Suzuki parent portal, daily newsletter emails sent, or from the list of additional resources at the end of the manual. Rotating the materials/lessons daily or every few days will help keep your child engaged.</p> <p><i>*Note – Primary children may be able to work and explore a bit longer than PrePrimary!</i></p>
10:30-10:45	<p>Storytime – You can find some filmed storytimes from your child's teachers or other Suzuki teachers on the parent portal – even some in Spanish!</p>
10:45-12:00	<p>Outside time, music, or PE – At this age movement is essential! You can find ideas for games to play indoors or outdoors, sing-a-longs, PE videos, and more on the Suzuki parent portal as well as additional resources at the end of this manual.</p>
12:00-12:30	<p>Lunchtime – Involve your child in setting up for lunch. You may choose to leave dishes, bowls, forks, etc. on a low shelf so he/she can set the table. A placemat with appropriate table setting drawn on is a helpful tool for them to complete this work independently! Encourage them to serve themselves out of a prepared serving bowl. Show them how to clean up, scraping their bowl in the trash, wiping the table down, etc.</p>
12:30-2:30	<p>Naptime</p>
2:30-4:00	<p>Outside time, music, PE – See above suggestions</p>
4:00-5:00	<p>Work Block – Afternoon is a great time to try out a new art project. See classroom email and Instagrams for inspiration and ideas</p>

Note: It is important to continue toilet independence during this time at home. The teachers will be in touch with you to help guide you with each child's toileting pattern.

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; 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.

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.

This should help ease your mind that you are expected to entertain your child all day. When we set them up with a variety of interesting, engaging activities, they are able to direct their own exploration and learning.



OWNERSHIP OF TASKS AND SHARING IN 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 teacher suggestions and guidance when completing work at home. The more children are involved in developing and detailing their activities, the more they can achieve.

A note regarding sharing and presenting work: It is a regular occurrence in Primary classrooms for children to present their work or projects to one another. This can be replicated 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! You can also recreate this experience by taking a video of them explaining what they completed and share it online by emailing your classroom teachers who can then share with the rest of the class.



TODDLER/PREPRIMARY PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS



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 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, and activities (fine or gross motor).
- Share current class routines and suggest guidance in setting up daily routines at home.

- Share general and individual suggestions for activities for fine and gross motor skills, providing pictures, videos, and materials for parent viewing as appropriate.
- 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 such as 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.

TODDLER/PREPRIMARY PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

“A place for everything and everything in its place” is one of the critical principles of Montessori at home. Having a place for everything, on a child-friendly scale, means that children know where to find what they need, and have a place to put things when they’re done. This is an essential tool in teaching them to be responsible for their belongings. External order gives the children internal order and security. An ordered environment also has fewer distractions, allowing children to focus on the task at hand.

Have a place in each room for your child’s carefully chosen belongings: by the front door have a stool to sit on and a place to hang coats and keep shoes. In the living room have a place for your child’s books and toys – neatly and attractively organized. Think out the activities and materials for all living spaces and arrange the environment to include your child’s activities.

- ▶ Store clothing in low drawers or baskets, as well as move the rod in the closet down to eye-level so your child can reach their clothing.
- ▶ Place step stools in both the kitchen and bathroom to enable them to wash their hands and, in the case of the kitchen, help with meal preparation.
- ▶ Place toys, games and art supplies on low shelves where your child can easily access them, then separate these toys into various baskets, bins or shelves, so the items stay separate and are easy to find without sifting through piles of other toys.
- ▶ Store healthy snacks down low in your refrigerator or pantry so your child can help themselves.
- ▶ Keep beverages in small pitchers located on the lower shelf in the fridge, with child-friendly cups nearby. When your child is thirsty, allow them to help themselves – just be sure to keep a sponge/ some rags nearby, so they can clean up any messes they make.
- ▶ Don’t put out too many toys and books at one time. Those being used by your child at the moment are sufficient. Rotating is a good idea – taking out those books and toys that have not been chosen lately and removing them to storage for a time. Children grow and change and they need help to keep their environment uncluttered and peaceful.



ACTIVITIES FOR TODDLERS/PREPRIMARY AT HOME

PRACTICAL LIFE

Food Preparation

- ▶ Preparing their own snack: cutting half of an apple (cut horizontally) using an apple slicer, squeezing orange juice, spreading cream cheese or jam on half of a bagel or bread.
- ▶ Slicing vegetables and fruit for snack and dinner.
- ▶ Baking: have ingredients pre-measured and in jars.
- ▶ Care of Self
- ▶ Dressing and Undressing: give your child enough time to practice dressing and undressing by themselves.
- ▶ Toileting: It's important to continue with the toilet learning process.

Care of Environment

- ▶ Mopping, sweeping, or use of a dustpan and dust brush.
- ▶ Helping with laundry.
- ▶ Watering plants and leaf washing.
- ▶ Window washing, dusting, and wood polishing of large furniture in the home.
- ▶ Taking care of pets.
- ▶ Loading and unloading dishwasher, dishwashing by hand.

ART WORK

- ▶ Coloring, painting, collage, playdough, sidewalk chalk, stamping

Outdoor Activities

- ▶ It is always fun for children to spend time with their parents in nature. So take some time out of your busy schedule to explore outdoors with your child. I guarantee, you'd enjoy the experience as well as your children would.

Here are a few ideas for connecting your child with nature:

- ▶ If you have 15 minutes:
- ▶ Watch the clouds and see what animals you can make out of them.



- ▶ Hug some trees and try to find one that your arms fit perfectly around.
- ▶ Turn over a rock and see what is hiding underneath.
- ▶ If you have 30 minutes:
 - ▶ Do a backyard/nature treasure hunt.
 - ▶ Try your hand at rock stacking.
 - ▶ Grab some leaves or pieces of bark and race them down a creek.
- ▶ If you have an hour:
 - ▶ Go for a walk and make note of all the sounds you hear.
 - ▶ Find a nature trail and help children make up a game or collect bugs or leaves.
 - ▶ Pack some food and have a picnic.

Language

- ▶ Naming things in both indoor and outdoor environments.
- ▶ Read together: let your child choose the books, talk about how the characters might be feeling and wonder together what will happen next. Reading with your child teaches more than literacy and language skills. He is learning that you value his interests and choices, and that you love him and enjoy being close to him. Studies show that lifelong readers are those who, as children, simply found reading a pleasurable experience.
- ▶ Singing songs and do finger- plays
- ▶ Narrate what you do as you go through your daily routines.
- ▶ This helps your child connect words with objects and actions. "I'm washing the dishes. I'm squeezing the yellow dish soap into the warm water."

All these activities will help limit screen time.



PRIMARY PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

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, or 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.

Primary 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.
- ▶ Provide both general and individual suggestions for activities developing fine motor skills, gross motor skills, language, and math.
- ▶ Be prompt in replying to your emails if you need additional guidance and support.



Program-Specific Needs and Characteristics

- ▶ Children aged 3 to 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 Primary child, work and play should be interchangeable—a natural, fun and exciting part of life.



ACTIVITIES FOR PRIMARY AT HOME

Practical Life

Ages 3 to 4:

- ▶ Meal or Snack Preparation: slicing vegetables, fruit, cheese, etc.
- ▶ Baking: measuring and mixing ingredients.
- ▶ Kitchen Care: loading and unloading the dishwasher, washing dishes by hand, sweeping floors.
- ▶ Pet Care: walking, playing with, and grooming.
- ▶ Dusting: the leaves of plants with a soft cloth or furniture around the house.
- ▶ Nature walks in the yard or about the neighborhood with a list of things to find.
- ▶ Walking on the Line: make a masking tape line throughout the house and walk carefully on the line.
- ▶ Art: coloring, painting, collage, sidewalk chalk.
- ▶ Cutting and gluing - for example find and cut all of the plants in a magazine; glue into a collage. • Sewing shapes/pictures onto napkins, hand/kitchen towels, etc.

Ages 5 to 6 – Any of the above plus:

- ▶ Cutting (advance searches: mammals, birds, amphibians, etc.)
- ▶ Baking: reading, measuring and mixing simple recipes.
- ▶ Handwork: crocheting, finger knitting, or sewing words, initials, or pictures on napkins, hand towels, etc.
- ▶ Origami

Sensorial

Ages 3 to 4:

- ▶ Exploring the home for 2 dimensional shapes (rectangles, squares, circles, etc.).
- ▶ Exploring the home for 3 dimensional shapes (spheres, cylinders, cones, cubes, prisms).
- ▶ Explore the home for textures that are rough or smooth.
- ▶ Exploring sound by tapping on different objects (pot, glass, wooden cutting board, etc) with different objects as well (tap with a metal spoon, then a wooden spoon).

Ages 5 to 6:

- ▶ Exploring spices and attempting to recognize them by scent.
- ▶ Comparing the various shapes of leaves found amongst the house plants.
- ▶ Drawing a picture that includes certain shapes i.e, 1 circle and 3 rectangles, or 1 square and 4 triangles).

Language

Ages 3 to 4:

- ▶ Sound Games/I-spy: Something that begins with the sound /s/.



- ▶ Question Game: Have a conversation using who/ what/when/where/why questions.
- ▶ Singing new songs (different languages).
- ▶ Tracing shapes, letters in flour (pour flour in a cookie sheet)
- ▶ Ages 5 to 6:
 - ▶ Write a letter to a friend or family member to mail.
 - ▶ Assist in writing list of things to do for a day or a week.
 - ▶ Write a story or a play and read aloud or act out when finished.

Mathematics

Ages 3 to 4:

- ▶ Scavenger hunt/counting objects collected.
- ▶ Counting objects (beans, pennies, etc.).
- ▶ Sorting laundry.
- ▶ Sorting silverware.

Ages 5 to 6:

- ▶ Hopscotch math—all operations can be done, just make your hopscotch go higher than 10.
- ▶ Math facts with dice

**A full list of lesson ideas, videos, and resources can be found our Suzuki Parent Portal



POSITIVE DISCIPLINE QUICK

TIPS FOR A PEACEFUL HOME

ENVIRONMENT

Validate Feelings

- ▶ Allow children to have their feelings heard – or give them the language to express their emotions when they may not have the vocabulary (or be calm enough) to do so. When children have the words to express their emotions they are better able to work through them efficiently and appropriately the next time.

Arrange a Peace Corner

- ▶ Create a “positive time out” space with your child. Let them decide what the space will look like and what’s in it. It should be calm, cozy, and soothing to them. When they are upset ask them if going to their peace corner would help. Model using positive time out by having your own special place.

Special Time

- ▶ During the day we may be physically together but working, cleaning, or otherwise engaged in different tasks. This is expected and okay! Scheduled special

time is dedicated, one-on-one time with one child where you decide on an activity you both enjoy. Knowing they can expect dedicated attention later on will help your child feel more secure and able to complete independent work in the meantime.

Wheel of Choice

- ▶ Brainstorm a list of possible solutions to every day conflicts. On a pie shaped chart write or draw one solution in each section. When a conflict arises use the wheel to find a solution.

Family Meetings

- ▶ Works best with older children
- ▶ Daily, weekly, or monthly meetings where family members sit together (other than at mealtime) to discuss concerns, scheduling issues, disagreements, etc. that may come up in a family. It’s a time to focus on problem-solving and solutions, not to point fingers.

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Podcasts for Children

- ▶ The Big Life Kids Podcast
- ▶ Wow in the World
- ▶ Forever Ago
- ▶ But Why: A podcast for curious kids
- ▶ Pants on Fire
- ▶ Tumble
- ▶ Circle Round
- ▶ Reading Bug Adventures
- ▶ Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls
- ▶ The Purple Rocket Podcast
- ▶ Fierce Girls
- ▶ The Past and The Curious: A History Podcast for Kids and Families
- ▶ Sparkle Stories
- ▶ Earth Rangers
- ▶ Myths and Legends
- ▶ Peace Out
- ▶ Story Time
- ▶ What if World
- ▶ Brains On!
- ▶ Short & Curly
- ▶ Classic Kids
- ▶ The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian
- ▶ The Unexplainable Disappearance of Mars Patel
- ▶ News Time

****Note** – A full list of resources can be found on our Suzuki Parent Portal

