



## Lower School Distance Learning Plan March 2020

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Dear Lower School Parents,

***“In the middle of difficulty, lies opportunity.” - Albert Einstein.*** There are many ways to look at our current challenge, but I choose to see this as an opportunity. Your children have a chance to flex their digital muscles and independence and they just may surprise you with how capable and savvy they are! I have been meeting with the Lower School faculty and staff over the past few days to bring together a plan which will provide our students with some form of normalcy, a sense of connection, and to continue providing the best education and connections possible given the circumstances.

While this may all seem daunting right now, we have been training and preparing for this! Our approach in the Lower School has been to prepare students for a future and careers which have yet to be created. Who would have thought those skills would come in handy so soon? Ideally, it is best to learn in-person in the classroom, but I am confident that our teachers and your children have the skills necessary to continue connecting and learning digitally over the next few weeks.

### **Distance Learning Plan**

Distance learning classes will begin on Monday, March 23. You can expect a communication from your child’s teacher in the afternoon on Friday, March 20 outlining the distance learning plan for your child. This will include a suggested schedule, how your child’s teacher plans to communicate with you, forms of technology which can be used, and any necessary apps to download. We understand that students may have intermittent access to technology on any given day and for a variety of reasons, and we are taking that into account while planning. We are also taking into consideration the ages, abilities, and attention spans of our students and planning accordingly. The teachers have been working hard this week to create meaningful lessons and provide you with necessary resources. Part of the lessons may include documenting activities and exercise. Due to the importance of social distancing at this time, we request that this only be completed with family members and not with friends. We also request that students continue to adhere to the Saint Mary’s Hall Responsible Use Policy and demonstrate high standards of digital citizenship. Also note that students in Forms 2-5 will not participate in ERB assessments the week of March 30-April 3.

Our distance learning plans will not be an exact replication of on campus classes. We will reduce the number of assignments and focus on important concepts and skills for students, giving them plenty of time to complete work, ask questions, and receive help. We expect that all students participate to the extent that they are able, and that they communicate via email with their teacher and division head if circumstances arise where they are not able to be present for classes or complete assignments. We pledge to exercise extreme flexibility and compassion.



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### **Fine Arts and Physical Education Expectations for Lower School Students**

Saint Mary's Hall is extremely fortunate to have dynamic Physical Education, Fine Arts, and Spanish instructors and your child's distance learning educational plan will include components from each of these content areas.

#### **Fine Arts Classes**

- Fine Arts classes, including private lessons and all dance classes, will be taught online.
- The Fine Arts rotation will meet online once per week and have an activity or video that students can access to keep them learning and engaged in the arts.
- Dance, both in-school and after-school, will likewise meet online. The teachers will be providing more information to their students.

#### **Production Updates**

- The Form 1 and 2 Musical and the Montessori & Kindergarten Grand Day concert are canceled and will not be rescheduled. We are saddened by having to cancel these events, because we know how special it is to our students and families, but we know it is the right thing to do at given the circumstances.
- At this point, there are no plans to cancel our May Lower School Dance Production. Please continue to assume students will be performing. We will let you know if anything changes.

### **Physical Education Expectations for Forms 3-5 Lower School Students**

#### Montessori physical activity options for distance learning

- Tiffanie Barta will send out stretching, balance, plyometric, and motor skill development to teachers to be able share with their assignments. Each activity will be about 10 minutes.

#### K-2 physical activity options for distance learning

- Katrina Benoist will send out links to teachers with age-appropriate cardio, stretching, and core strengthening exercises. The students can also participate in other physical activity including 20 minutes of walking, bike riding, swimming, or outdoor activities.

#### 3-5 physical activity options for distance learning

- Katrina Benoist will send out links to teachers with age-appropriate cardio, stretching, and core strengthening exercises. The students can also participate in other physical



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activity including 20-30 minutes of walking, bike riding, swimming, or outdoor activities.

### **Attendance**

Teachers will take attendance when they meet with classes online and by checking assignments turned in via email, Seesaw, and Google Docs. Out of an ethic of care, our Assistant Head of Lower School, Nur Mangalji, will follow up with parents if students are not attending classes to make sure everyone is well and has what they need to participate in classes. We do ask that parents and students be responsible and notify teachers, if they are unable to attend classes, either temporarily or for longer periods if they are ill or taking care of family responsibilities.

We will, of course, be supremely flexible and understanding about attendance since each student's family situation may not allow them to be as present for classes as they normally would on campus. We do expect students to try their best to attend classes and to communicate with teachers regarding any absences.

### **Posting Distance Learning Plans**

Teachers will use S'More newsletters to communicate your child's learning plan regularly, along with any resource materials or links to them that students may need to complete their assigned work. The newsletters will be sent to you via Seesaw and posted on the Parent Portal on each teacher's home page. We ask that students and parents check the portal each morning.

### **Grading**

Our goals for this period of distance learning are for students to continue positive engagement with their subjects and continue necessary skill building to prepare them for the next academic step. Though teacher evaluation and feedback is vital to achieving that goal, students should expect that not every assignment will be graded. Teachers will evaluate students as they deem it appropriate to do so. In short, students will be learning for the sake of learning and, given our unique circumstances. The challenges teachers and students are facing just to transition so abruptly to distance learning provide enough pressure on their own. Our goal, then, is not to add to that stress, but simply to find a way to further our mission to "Prepare Students for Success in College and Fulfilment in Life" in spite of these challenges.

### **Teacher Availability**

Teachers will monitor email as usual throughout each day in order to address student/parent questions and will remain available to all students and parents through 3:30 each day. Students should email teachers directly with questions or concerns. One-on-one video conferencing with students is strictly prohibited, with the sole exception of the wellness team (Dr. Lopez-Morales, Reverend Gunnin, Nurse Baumholtz, and divisional counselors). If at all possible, individualized help should be provided over school email; however, given the extraordinary circumstances,



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faculty will be permitted to provide individualized Zoom meetings in any of the following formats:

- a. With a parent or guardian present
- b. With another SMH employee present
- c. In groups with four or more students

### **Technical Support & Resources**

The SMH Technology Department is available to support your efforts via Support Tickets sent to [support@smhall.org](mailto:support@smhall.org). Teachers will be using a variety of digital platforms including Zoom, which will be the primary source of group interactions. Please take time prior to next Monday to familiarize yourself with Zoom. Click [HERE](#) to learn how to join a Zoom meeting along with information on how Zoom works for future reference.

The Lower School Library has a wealth of resources at your disposal! Click [HERE](#) to access our robust digital learning tools and databases.

### **Wellness and Counseling Support**

We understand these times can be scary and stressful for children and families. Our Wellness Team members listed below are ready and available to check in with students and parents to offer support during this period of distance learning. Dr. Lopez-Morales will be sending out helpful wellness resources to families; Rev. Gunnin will be sharing a weekly video reflection on Mondays for us so that we don't miss Chapel; and Mrs. Moore will be available for consultation and resources for mental health and wellness support. We encourage both students and parents to reach out to them with questions and concerns for support. We are here for you!

- Dr. Sandra Lopez-Morales      [slopezmorales@smhall.org](mailto:slopezmorales@smhall.org)
- Rev. Dr. Cameron Gunnin      [cgunnin@smhall.org](mailto:cgunnin@smhall.org)
- Ms. Susan Moore      [smoore@smhall.org](mailto:smoore@smhall.org)

We look forward to starting school and 'seeing' the students again on Monday. We will all continue to learn and grow together!

Sincerely,

Khristi Bates  
Head of Lower School