

**Sweet Gum Upper Elementary Community  
Distance Learning Plan & Digital Resources  
Week of April 13, 2020**

Dear Sweet Gum Community,

For Week Three, we are going to reinstate some beloved traditions from the classroom in an effort to support idea exchange and social bonding between the children. Starting this week (see schedule below), Mr. Kendall will offer *History Time* meetings to the class in small groups. If your child would like to participate, they should RSVP to the Google Hangouts invitation in their email and log on for their 30 minute session at the assigned date and time. I will make some guest appearances in these gatherings to enjoy/observe the simulation process from afar.

**History Time Schedule: Monday-Thursday, 2:00-2:30PM**

**Monday:** Justin, Everett, Jasper, McKenna, Bruno, Liam

**Tuesday:** Jamie, Noah, Aodhan

**Wednesday:** Chiara, Hayes, Beatrix, Maria, Katherine, Sophia

**Thursday:** Ivan, Jewel, Estelle, Ale, Nadia

\*Some minor adjustments might be made along the way as groups sometimes interact, but the daily meeting time will stay the same.

Children will also receive an email invitation from me (also through their email) to join a book club for Week Four. This week, if they choose to participate, they will need some help from parents either purchasing or downloading copies of the assigned fiction book to prepare for meetings in Week Four. Meetings will run once per week per group on Mondays or Fridays. The time will be indicated in the emailed invitation.

Please note that the following subjects include new activities and projects this week:

- **Reading** - Character Study Journaling Exercise
- **Writing** - Weathergrams Writing Center by Ms. Navarro and Maria Ridge
- **History** - Study a Decade of the 20th Century
- **Science** - Engineering Design Challenges
- **Geography** - Political Geography Activity and Follow Up Ideas

If your child did not have the chance to try every activity from Week 1 or Week 2, you can find downloadable links to these plans under the “Downloadable Weekly Plans and Resources” panel on the webpage.

In service,

Ms. Isaza and Mr. Kendall

### Daily Reading and Response Journal:

- Read a fiction book for a minimum of 1 hour per day.
- Keep a response journal each time you read:
  - This week, focus on **character** by recording the internal conflicts and external conflicts that a major character in your story is facing. For example, in the book *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen, main character Roy Eberhardt arrives to Florida from Montana where he must get used to a whole new climate, school, and classmates. Externally (publicly and socially), Roy navigates many challenges with the school bully, Dana Matherson. Internally (emotionally and morally), Roy must make some difficult choices in the story, like whether to use common sense and logic or to react emotionally when he is in a tight spot. As the story develops, we see Roy's character develop as he seeks meaningful relationships in his new town, and when he stands up for what he knows is right (saving those burrowing owls!).

### Writing: Weathergrams

Have you seen the stars  
With not a care in the world  
They are beautiful.

These are the words of Maria Ridge, written on a brown paper grocery bag and hung on the tree in front of her home (as seen in the photo below). Why? She is composing a weathergram.



Weathergrams incorporate the ideas of Japanese haiku—known for their focus on a sudden insight or brief moment and use of sensory details—and the Montessori principle of observation. To write one, the original author (Lloyd Reynolds) suggests:

“Let the meaning grow out of things, with some action involved if possible—in the here & now. The meaning is not all on the surface.”

Spend some time observing the world outside your windows. Collect sensory details and small moments. Then, choose one specific image or moment in time that could hint at a larger meaning. One way to think about this is to write about a tiny pebble instead of an enormous mountain.

In Maria’s weathergram, for example, she personifies the stars and suggests that even though we are going through a difficult time right now, forces larger than us are at work and there is still beauty to be found. I don’t know about you, but that’s a message I needed to hear.

Because you have limited space, make sure each word is necessary and the best possible one to use in that spot. Play around with the order to see what sounds best and notice if it changes the meaning at all. After you have revised (hopefully by consulting the Descriptive Writing Checklist), practice writing the poem in your best handwriting. Remember, this is a version of publishing! If you would like, you can try calligraphy or add illustrations.

When you feel ready to create your final draft, write the poem on a strip of brown paper cut from any biodegradable material you have around. Punch a hole and tie a loop of biodegradable string, such as twine. Hang it on a bush, tree, street sign, or anywhere in the neighborhood.

The weathergrams will then be authored both by you and the world; the rain, sun, and wind will alter them until the writing eventually disappears and the paper begins to break down. Before that, though, your neighbors will pass by, perhaps stopping to read your work, and a connection will be forged. Who knows—maybe one of them will even respond with a weathergram of their own.

If you need help during the process, in addition to your teachers you can reach out to Maria, who is now an expert. Soon you will be, too, so pass your knowledge along; teach your family or a faraway friend how to make one. Share a photo with the class!

See the *Weathergram Descriptive Writing Revision and Editing Checklist PDF* for additional guidance..

### **Writing Conferences:**

Please reach out to Ms. Navarro by email at [e.navarro@aidanschool.org](mailto:e.navarro@aidanschool.org) if you would like to schedule a writing conference with her. She would love to hear what you are writing about these days and support your creative work!

## Weekly Spelling List and Activity:

Parents, the lists attached are suggestions for the children. An old fashioned dictionary or independent reading books work fine to scout for new and interesting words instead of using the PDF lists.

Children, choose ten words to learn this week. Ideally these are words you use often but notice that you don't feel comfortable spelling in your own writing, or they can be words that trip you up while reading. As a backup, you can choose words from one of the high frequency lists, or new vocabulary you encounter through your own research.

Remember, new words will only stick if you use them, so practice multiple times and make sure they are going to be applicable in your work.

Once you have chosen words, practice spelling them correctly. Options for this include:

- **Word Wall Card**
- **Tiles**: spell with bananagrams tiles
- **Shaving Cream**: write in shaving cream using a silpat or tray
- **Skin/Air Writing**: trace the letters on your skin with a finger, tap each letter down your arm and then say the whole word, or write them in the sky using your whole arm
- **Stamp**: use an alphabet box to stamp the words with ink or into dough
- **Sand**: trace the words with your finger in a sand tray
- **Word Hunt**: search a book or the environment around you for each word and then record
- **Cirque du Soleil**: form each letter on the rug with your body
- **Chant**: chant each letters in a rhythmic pattern
- **Rainbow**: choose 3-5 colors and write the word in each
- **Story**: write a story/poem that includes all of the words
- **Teach**: teach someone else how to spell the word

Each time, make sure you:

1. Read the word aloud (while looking at it in written form).
2. Spell the word aloud, one letter at a time.
3. Attempt to spell without looking at the word (using one of the above methods).
4. Check that you spelled the word correctly.
5. Create a sentence that uses the word (aloud).

High Frequency Word Lists (see PDF)

Grade 4 List (see PDF)

Grade 5 List (see PDF)

## **Math and Geometry Topics** (via Khan Academy):

Parents, you are encouraged to create an account on Khan Academy for your child. The accounts are FREE. You may click the grade level links below to subscribe your child to a course under my teacher account page, where they can access learning content (video tutorials and activities) and I can view their progress through course content. Content is not lock-step, and it is self-paced. If you do not subscribe your child to the “courses” via the links below, I will not be able to view their progress or work, but the children will still be able to access the various tutorials and content.

Each day, your child should choose an appropriate topic to review/learn and practice. If this is their first experience on the Khan Academy platform, they may need some guidance finding an appropriate topic of study. In general, grade level topics should be familiar territory (e.g. a 4th Year should look through the 4th Grade content and select a topic).

If for any reason your child does not have access to a computer or you prefer to support their work differently, there are plenty of alternative ways to build math appreciation, number flexibility and to practice building skills. Please see the links below with further ideas (I recommend “Numbers Talks” at this [link](#) - once a parent knows how to have a number talk, these can make for fun, spontaneous conversations).

If you have simple tools at home (e.g. geometry compass, ruler, measuring cups, graph paper, protractor, thermometers, etc.) your child is encouraged to put those tools to good use! If you have workbooks at home (e.g. Kumon, Spectrum, Common Core Math) please feel free to use those instead of Khan Academy for skill practice.

Because each child’s math and geometry work is individualized at school, I understand that supporting this work can be a challenge outside of school. Please feel free to drop me a note for some guidance or assistance identifying the best fit for your child.

Khan Academy information letter to parents: [link](#)

Grade 4 Math Essentials Course [link](#)

Grade 5 Math Essentials Course [link](#)

Grade 6 Math Essentials Course [link](#)

If you are nostalgic (as I am) for our Montessori Math Materials, have a try at [extracting the square root or finding common multiples on the pegboard](#) VIRTUALLY, a new resource coded by a Montessori teacher’s husband! This resource might be most fun for parents, to get a glimpse at how our materials work. A little tutorial can be provided if you request :)

## Science: Engineering Design Challenges

These challenges might be extra fun as a family activity, when everyone can share their work and reflect on what materials and strategies worked best and what ideas failed. Don't be afraid to build, test, evaluate, and redesign!

Before we begin, let's think about what it takes to be an engineer. Engineers dream up creative, practical solutions and work with other smart, inspiring people to invent, design, and build things that matter.

**Think creatively.** Engineering is an ideal outlet for imagination and creative problem solving—the perfect field for independent thinkers.

**Work with great people.** Engineering takes teamwork. As an engineer, you'll be surrounded by smart, creative, inspiring people.

**Solve problems and design things that matter.** Engineers improve peoples' lives by tackling problems, improving current designs, and coming up with solutions no one else has thought of.

**Change the world and make a difference.** Among many other pursuits, engineers develop systems that save lives, prevent disease, reduce poverty, and protect our planet.

**Challenge #1:** Can you use found materials to make a catapult that will launch a paper ball three feet?

**Challenge #2:** Using 20 spaghetti noodles, 1 large marshmallow, 1 yard of string, and 1 yard of (preferably masking) tape, how tall of a free standing structure can you make?

### Challenge #3: Testing Different Shapes for Building

Using the following materials, construct two different platforms that can support the weight of a hardcover book (or more than one book). If your platform can support one hardcover book without buckling, shearing, or compressing, see how many books you can add! You might weigh the books with a scale at home first and record how much weight each structure can hold.

Materials:

- 10 sheets of copy paper (okay if has printing on it, such as paper from recycle bin)
- roll masking tape
- 20 drinking straws
- 20 paper clips
- 2-3 pre-weighed hard cover books (give each group similarly weighted books)
- scissors

For more information and history of various building shapes, check out this [website](#).

### Challenge #4: Watercraft

Build a boat that can hold 25 pennies for at least ten seconds before sinking. If metal washers are easier to get, use 15 metal washers [one inch in diameter] instead of 25 pennies.

Materials (per person):

- container filled with water (e.g., bucket, sink, plastic tub)
- duct tape
- paper cups (8-ounce or larger)
- 10-inch strip of plastic wrap
- 10 straws
- towels (paper or cloth)
- 25 pennies (or 15 standard, flat steel washers, at least 1 inch in diameter)

**Other:** Select a science project from this [link](#). Make sure you have the materials at home that are needed for your project of choice. Follow the instructions, collect data and observations, and write down your conclusions. Send photos of your process, or share your conclusions with me by Friday at [j.isaza@aidanschool.org](mailto:j.isaza@aidanschool.org)

### **Geography Activity:**

This week, try the Political Geography game attached. Print out the resource and cut out the individual cards which show the name of a country or the name of a capital city. There are also continent cards included. Mix and match the country to its capital city. This might be a fun family activity, or a great study to try with an atlas nearby. See how many accurate matches you can make, and challenge yourself to learn a few new ones each day. Once you become proficient in the country-city matching activity, you can make more matching cards: perhaps geographical features of various continents (names of mountain ranges, bodies of water, deserts, forests).

You might even want to study one of the countries or cities, or draw a map and label the major cities of various continents (e.g. how many cities can you name and label in Asia?). I look forward to seeing any clever follow up ideas you come up with!

### **History: A Closer Look at the 20th Century**

The 20th century (1900-1999) began without planes, televisions, or computers. These inventions radically changed the lives of people around the world, and many of these changes originated in the United States. The 20th century also witnessed two world wars, the Great Depression, the Holocaust in Europe, the Cold War, revolutionary social equality movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, and the exploration of space. Fashion and recreation changed dramatically (you might be curious why!) and so did homes and modes of transportation and communication.

This week, choose a decade to study and make your own timeline. Think about the scale of your timeline AFTER you've collected lots of interesting facts about your decade. See how much space you might need to include your own drawings or captions of various major events, inventions, and influential people. You might tape computer paper together to make your timeline, and space out each year on the timeline by 5 inches. Make sure you have enough material and space to include at least 10 important facts to share about your decade. Consider presenting your timeline on Friday!

**Decades of the 20th Century:**

- 1900-1909
- 1910-1919
- 1920-1929
- 1930-1939
- 1940-1949
- 1950-1959
- 1960-1969
- 1970-1979
- 1980-1989
- 1990-1999

**Care for the Home and Others:**

- Plan a meal to cook or a recipe to bake. Be sure to clean the kitchen thoroughly upon completion, and return any tools and utensils to their proper home.
- Offer to care for any houseplants or family pets.
- If you have your own bookshelf, organize it by genre (e.g. fantasy, literary fiction, nonfiction, science fiction, poetry, etc.) or by author last name, or help a sibling organize their shelf.
- Wash and fold your own laundry.
- Offer to set the table for a family meal.
- Fix something broken (e.g. darning a sock).
- Ask an adult how you can help with a task (carrying groceries, taking out trash, etc.)
- Write a list of questions on paper slips and have the family draw questions from a bowl or hat to make for some interesting dinner conversation.
- Call someone lonely.
- Play with a sibling.

**Care for Self:**

- Take a mindfulness break
- Do something creative (e.g. paint, draw, write a poem, build something, play music, make a booklet and decorate the cover)
- Prepare a healthy snack or smoothie
- Get some exercise (e.g. practice yoga)
- If you have the resources nearby, try some handwork (kumihimo, knitting, crochet, embroidery, origami, sewing)
- Learn something new from YouTube (see links below)
- Learn something new from someone else!
- Wash your hands often :)



## **Enrichment Websites and Videos:**

Please check back here as we plan to add to the content as we scout for new resources!

## **Current Events:**

\*[Newsela](#) (customizable, child-friendly current events articles. An account is free to access content. Parents can even customize reading level. Quizzes and writing prompts are also an option.)

[IndyKids](#) (a free paper for kids, by kids)

## **History/Geography:**

[NativLang](#) (history of written and spoken languages)

[Primitive Technology](#) (be sure to turn on captions!)

[Native Land](#) (explore an interactive world map to learn more about Indigenous territories, languages, and treaties)

[MetKids](#) (need adult to help child subscribe and access interactive art history site)

[Jas. Townsend and Son](#) (18th century cooking and culture)

[Fashioning a Nation Art History Gallery](#)

[1619 Project](#) (includes link to the podcast from NYT which examines the legacy of slavery in the U.S. - the children have listened to episode 1 of the podcast together and we have discussed it as a class. Any new content should be previewed before sharing with your child, and discussions are encouraged throughout the episodes - recommended for trips in the car!).

[Big History Project](#) (a framework for history exploration - beginning with the origin of the universe - a great complement to our Montessori history studies and full of timelines and videos for inspiration)

[CIA World Factbook](#) (great resource for collecting data and statistics about countries, can use data to make maps, charts, graphs)

[Teaching Tolerance Student Texts](#) (searchable library of short texts offers a diverse mix of stories and perspectives)

## **Science:**

\*[Scientific American's Bring Science Home Collection](#) (science experiments and demos, many easy to replicate at home)

[Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell](#) (well-sourced animations exploring a wide range of scientific ideas)

[SmarterEveryDay](#) (charismatic engineer "explores the world using science")

[Domain of Science](#) YouTube Channel (scientist and children's book author has a channel that some might also enjoy)

[Deep Sea](#) (scroll down and discover the animals living in different zones of the oceans, some you might never see with your own eyes!)

[Super Charged Science](#) (free online science classes at specific times, e.g astronomy)

[Wall of Birds](#) from Cornell Lab of Ornithology (a beautiful mural of all known families of birds and it is to scale. You can explore the mural by zooming in or you can click on the name of a specific bird and it will zoom in on the illustration along with information about the bird)

National Geographic Kids Science Lab (in case you need more ideas for easy experiments at home)

**Math and Geometry:**

\*Number Talks (Parents should watch the video tutorial and can implement quite easily at home for some great logical reasoning and number flexibility work.)

Codecademy (learn to code for free)

TEDEd "The Infinite Life of Pi" Video - Enjoy a Belated Celebration of Pi Day (3.14)

Mathigon (a treasure trove of math and geometry activities and resources. Use class code **U3MW-LECH** to access content)

**Writing:**

The Learning Network NYT (adults should preview content first and can access additional writing prompts, current events, contests, and more curated content)

Mentor Texts NYT (explore a new writing technique from this collection by the NYT - parents should preview content first)

**Cooking:**

Bon Appetit (many different voices and opinions about cooking and food)

**Art:**

Instructables (a maker and crafter gold mine full of project ideas!)

Museums with Virtual Gallery Tours can be found through this link

Join Artist Mo Willems at 1PM daily for his "Lunch Doodles" tutorial videos

**Mindfulness:**

Mindful School Free Mindfulness Practice for Kids Online (1PM on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday)