

Help for St. Margaret's Families in the Transition to Remote Learning

The transition to remote learning may seem daunting for parents and guardians, especially as many of you are also balancing your own new "work from home" realities.

Scottie girls have learned valuable academic skills at St. Margaret's: time management, self-advocacy and learning styles for success. We hope the guidance outlined below will help you think about what you can do to support your Scottie girl at home.

❑ Establish a routine and expectations on Day One.

This includes a morning, school-day, afternoon and evening routine. Agree on a time for your daughter to start her day and an appropriate time for bed. The first week of remote learning will offer a transition to break the "lazy" habits some have developed over Spring Break. Ms. MacPherson has shared a Suggested Student Schedule for Remote Learning that we encourage all of our students to use as we begin Third Trimester. Become familiar with this schedule so you can respect your daughter's time for school and hold her accountable if needed.

❑ Define a physical space for your daughter to focus on school.

For our day students, this may be the same space where they do their homework in the evenings, but remember we are now asking them to spend more time doing work at home and there may be a better option. Make sure there is a desk or table top and comfortable (but not too comfy!) chair, and good lighting. This space should be an area that is not typically used for other activities like watching tv or sleeping. (Hint, hint - studying in bed is likely counterproductive.) Making sure the space is organized and tidy each morning is a reasonable part of the morning routine.

❑ Adopt the SMS cell phone policy - sort of.

Have your daughters keep their phones away from the "learning zone". Yes, we all know they can do just about everything on their computers that they can on their cell phones, but even the presence of a smartphone can be a distraction. The expectation during "learning time" is that they should not be using any devices for social media or engaging socially. This is time to be focused on learning activities and assignments. Some students, especially younger students in grades 8 -10, may need specific parameters (for example, "You may use your phone for 15 minutes any time the schedule says 'free time'") while older students may be able to self-regulate during unscheduled times.

❑ Encourage your daughter to communicate directly with her SMS "team" of faculty and administrators.

Distance learning will prove difficult for some students to get used to and when they encounter a challenge, they may be more likely to come to you first rather than the teacher or advisor because... well... you're right there! Remember that your daughters are becoming great self advocates. They know how to ask questions and get answers.

Let them exercise this skill before getting involved. Encourage your Scottie girl to reach out to her teachers, adviser, and support team.

❑ **Begin and end each day with a check in and opportunity to process.**

Do you know what your plan is for today? If not, what steps will you take to determine the plan? Do you need anything from me today to accomplish your goals? Do you have all the supplies you need? These check-ins will help identify issues and clarify needs early on. Students learn best when they process what they are learning through real-world application and discussion. Every evening, ask your daughter to share one thing she learned that day. Consider themes, for example, “What was the weirdest thing you learned today?” Or “What is the funniest thing that happened to you today?”

❑ **Reserve school-free/work-free times to connect with your household.**

Connection is vital and it is even more important now that we all maintain face-to-face contacts with individuals in our households. Mealtimes are a great time to use an activity like Table Topics to spark interesting conversation that is entirely unrelated to school, to work or to the COVID-19 pandemic. During other free time, break out board games, card games, craft projects, or work on a home improvement project together. For those brave parents, let your daughter pick the color of her bedroom and get painting!

❑ **Discuss healthy ways to maintain connections outside the household.**

Even though nothing can completely replace our need for physical human contact, we are lucky that we can still connect “face-to-face” through technology. Encourage your daughter to FaceTime or Google Meet her friends, participate in our Sisterhood Forums Monday-Thursday at 5 p.m., or even practice that routine they’re learning from TikTok (again, for the brave parents, maybe ask them to teach you!).

❑ **The unknown is hard and creates stress and worry.**

Be mindful that during these uncertain times your daughter may be experiencing stress or worry and that she may not be verbalizing these feelings to you. Instead you may observe her isolating herself, being more moody than usual, or changes to eating or sleeping habits. You know your child. If you observe something behavioral that is out of the ordinary, ask her about it. Contact Ms. Sgroi (csgroi2@sms.org), Pastor Baker (jbaker@sms.org), or another trusted adult to provide support. If your daughter is experiencing a difficult time adjusting to the expectations of remote learning, contact Ms. MacPherson (cmacpherson@sms.org) for ideas and support.