

# ST. MICHAEL'S COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL DISTANCE LEARNING

**THROUGH JUNE 2020**

180 RHODE ISLAND AVENUE  
NEWPORT, RI 02840



St. Michael's  
Country Day School

LEARN WITH CONFIDENCE, LEAD WITH CHARACTER,  
ACHIEVE LASTING SUCCESS

# MESSAGE FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Parents,

Independent schools, such as St. Michael's Country Day School, have long been singled out for their ability to adapt quickly to new situations without the need for lengthy approval processes. This has been succinctly underscored with our response to COVID-19. We have been challenged to shift paradigms from an on-campus, personal instruction model to a highly successful distance learning format that has reinforced our fundamental belief in the capacity for children to learn when inspired and challenged by talented teachers.

Against a backdrop of so much uncertainty and ambiguity, St. Michael's has responded with a thoughtful call to action. I couldn't be prouder!

I would point to three critical advantaged here at St. Michael's that assisted this remarkable pedagogical transformation:

- Our mission Learn with confidence, Lead with character, Achieve lasting success compels us to work together, and take on new challenges with a positive attitude knowing that the outcomes will make us stronger.
- As a laptop school our students as young as six years of age are exposed and trained on how to use technology to further instruction as well as their own learning
- Our teachers are highly experienced, well trained and flexible. I give them all the credit for not only a successful launch, but for their continued adaptability to keep students engaged.

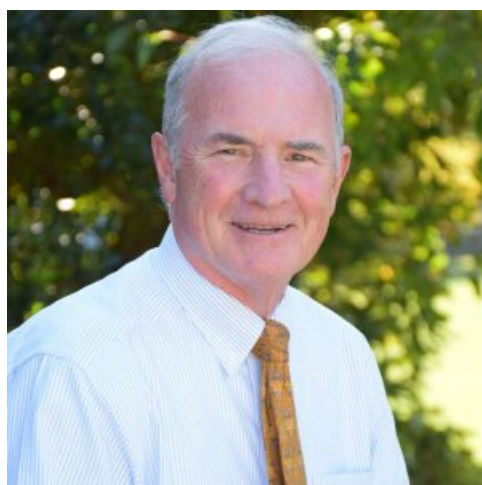
Distance Learning, on the surface, appears antithetical to what we were all trained to do: teach in a highly personalized manner; exploit cooperative learning to its fullest advantage, and teach children--not just deliver content. From Day One we sought to take the 'distance' out of distance learning and I am pleased with our progress. In middle school our thoughtful advisory program is highlighted daily and in preschool/lower school our students treasure their special time with teachers and specialists. That personal touch across a screen-- while initially awkward-- proved to be a lifeline for so many.

The notion of “Teach to the Text” was never our credo, and our on-line instruction remains challenging, diverse and with an increased emphasis on critical thinking and creativity. For example, after several weeks we sensed both teachers and students were beginning to wear down by the end of the week with on-screen learning and decided to launch “Finding the Balance Fridays: Unplugged and Connected!” with each Friday assigned a special theme or challenge. I would argue that some of the best learning have come out of these creative pursuits.

Our parents—particularly of our younger students—played a key role and never before have we witnessed the importance of the partnership among parents, students and teachers. We all needed to adapt as parents learned the value of routine and structure while teachers accommodated different family circumstances such as multiple children in the household. The unexpected silver lining in distance learning has been an increased respect for the learning process and everyone’s role in a child’s education.

Finally, independent schools must remain flexible and adaptable to all possible circumstances. I believe that while distance learning will never be our intended mode of instruction, it will never disappear from our menu of offerings. St. Michael’s has the capacity to pivot --with one foot firmly planted in our core beliefs—while the other points to lasting success.

James P. Heus  
Head of School



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Message from the Head of School**

Pages 1-2

## **Table of Contents**

Page 3

## **Distance Learning Overview**

Pages 4-5

## **Guidelines for Parents + Guardians**

Page 6

## **Online Guidelines + Support**

Pages 7

## **Physical, Mental and Emotional Well-Being**

Page 8

## **Finding the Balance Friday: Unplugged and Connected**

Page 9

## **Early Childhood Distance Learning**

Pages 10-11

## **Lower School Distance Learning**

Pages 12-14

## **Middle School Distance Learning**

Pages 15-18

## **FAQ's + Contact Information**

Pages 19-20



# DISTANCE LEARNING OVERVIEW

The bedrock of a St. Michael's education has always been combining the pursuit of academic excellence with relationships that foster a true sense of being seen and known. Students thrive when they feel connected to their teachers, their school community and each other. They become free to take risks, pursue their passions, try out new ideas, and develop a life-long love of learning. It is this potent combination of a vibrant and engaging curriculum and meaningful connections between students and teachers that fulfills the mission of St. Michael's; Lead with character, Learn with Confidence and Achieve Lasting Success.



This spring, we were challenged with moving into a distance learning program. In our characteristic forward thinking manner, administration and teachers prepared for this eventuality prior to our March break anticipating that we may not be able to return to campus. At the forefront of all of our planning, in addition to assuring our students would continue to progress developmentally and academically, was developing a program that would maintain and strengthen the relationships and connections that are such an integral part of the St. Michael's experience. Lower School and Middle School students engaged in developmentally appropriate asynchronous and synchronous learning.

Early childhood and lower school students crave the familiarity of classroom routines while at the same time require flexibility in their schedule to accommodate the availability of a supervisory adult at home and their need for movement, breaks and rest. To address these needs, lower school teachers provide a daily schedule of asynchronous lessons and activities. Families are free to engage when learning can be optimized. Circle time, show and tell and other key activities that build relationship, empathy, listening skills and familiarity with academic demeanor are provided twice a week synchronously. This combination of asynchronous and synchronous learning is carefully constructed to provide structure and academic and social connection while recognizing the dependence our younger students have on their families to engage in learning. As independent learning skills develop, especially in grades 3 and 4, students are provided with more frequent synchronous learning.

Middle School students participate in a 1-1 laptop program and are facile with utilizing Google classroom & Google Meets video conferencing software to address workflow. This has allowed students to move to a synchronous delivery of instruction for all of their classes. In addition to covering content, teachers have employed methods such as small group work and discussions and office hours to continue to support our ability to differentiate instruction and provide a rich and varied learning environment for all students. Adolescents crave connection with each other and their teachers. Social emotional health and well being continues to be monitored and supported through the continuation of student groups such as student council, regular advisor meetings, twice weekly mindfulness classes and individual teacher-student meetings.

# DISTANCE LEARNING OVERVIEW CONT.

Student academic and social/emotional progress is consistently and thoughtfully being assessed in the distance learning program. Teacher-Parent communication continues in the form of regular progress updates via email, video conferences and phone calls. Each division has addressed assessment to meet grade level and developmentally appropriate standards. More specific information regarding assessment can be found in the division level information provided in this document.

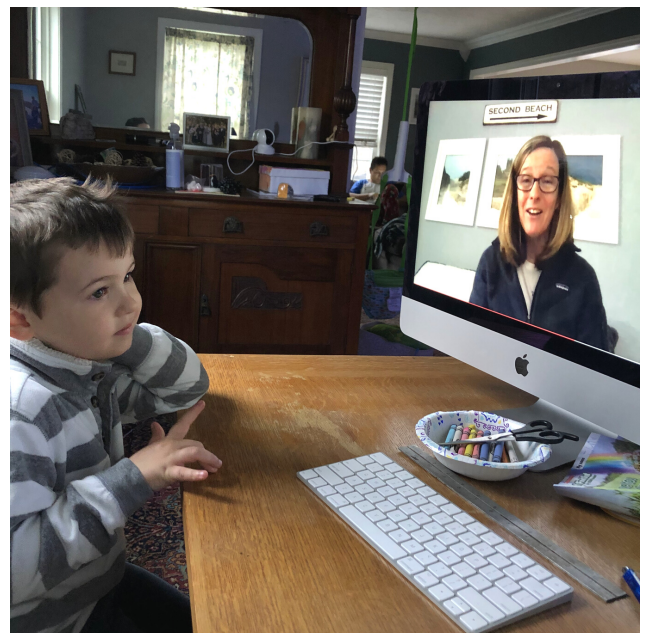
Connection and community continue to grow at St. Michael's regardless of location; on campus or at home. The sense of joy that is evident in the hallways of our school continues to resonate in our distance learning format. Teachers across grade levels reading to other classes, student sponsored social media messages, a virtual talent show, sharing our work from Finding the Balance Fridays, classroom Google meets to share what is happening in our lives, student council sponsored events, virtual field day, Spirit Week, and advisory group challenges are some of the many ways that we continue to grow and laugh together. Teachers continue to touch base with students and their families to check in on progress and address any concerns, needs or questions. At the heart of St. Michael's is relationship and it remains so regardless of physical distance.

As we look to the fall of 2021 and beyond, there are many unknowns. We have already begun to plan for restrictions on social gatherings, physical distancing protocols and enhanced cleaning and sanitizing protocols. We have noted the successes from this spring term and will use these to guide us as we modify and create the distance learning plan to meet future needs. While the specifics of what lies ahead may not be entirely possible to predict, what is certain is that St. Michael's will continue to live its mission. Students will continue to be encouraged, nurtured, engaged, and introduced to rich learning and social experiences that push them to strive for their best self. We will continue to be a nimble and flexible community that responds to the needs of our community. Our students will continue to thrive and become changemakers beyond our walls and in their future communities. We are and will continue to be

## SMS Strong!

Colleen Welsh  
Head of Middle School  
cwelsh@smcds.org

**"The SMS distance learning program is incredible! It has every aspect including plenty of content, very creative, and incredibly well structured, organized and executed!"**  
**-8th Grade SMS Parent**



## Plan Ahead

- Check the emails from your child's teacher and division head as to the supplies needed, and the estimated amount of time each child will be participating in distance learning each day.
- Have a set place for your child to work that allows ample space to work and includes a writing surface. This should be at a table or desk. Be sure the area provides good lighting.
- Contact your child's division head if you need help obtaining supplies or devices.

## Create a Visual Daily Schedule

- Print out a school schedule for the day, including breaks. Review the day's schedule with your child prior to beginning school in the morning or the evening before, whichever works better for your family.
- Talk with your child about how to best plan their time.
- Be sure to include breaks in your child's schedule ranging from a few minutes to 15-20 minute recess periods.
- Check in with your child and contact the appropriate teacher(s) or advisor(s) should your child benefit from additional support.
- [Click here](#) to learn more about creating a visual schedule from Kristi Langslet, SMS consulting Occupational Therapist.

## Encourage Healthy Habits

- [Good sleep habits](#), [healthy eating](#), [daily physical exercise](#), taking breaks, and following [guidelines specific to COVID-19](#) are all important actions to limit stress and maintain good health.
- If you have questions or would benefit from guidance in this area, please contact our school nurse, Megan Buchanan - mbuchanan@smcds.org

## Maintain a Sense of Community

- Promoting social-emotional health is also very important. Help your child maintain connections with their friends and extended family during this time. Virtual play dates, lunches, and study groups are great ways to stay connected.
- Stay tuned to our Distance Learning Support Series to access more resources on supporting the social-emotional health of your child.

## Provide Feedback

- If something isn't working for your child or if something is working, please be sure to tell your child's teachers. We are all in this together, and knowing how your child is responding to distance learning is critical in order to best support your child.
- Please be sure to provide regular feedback via the weekly surveys or by contacting your child's teacher or division head directly.

## Be Patient and Maintain a Sense of Humor

- This requires all of us to step outside of our comfort zone and learn as we go!
- We are all going to make mistakes and learn from our challenges and struggles along the way. Take deep breaths, smile, and know that we are all supporting one another.

# ONLINE GUIDELINES AND SUPPORT

Students at St. Michael's have always had an abundance of technology resources available to them, and they continue to do so during Distance Learning. On the first day of school, our students in grades 3-8 were issued an Apple MacBook Air. This has really paid off during distance learning, as our students were already accustomed to laptop use as a tool to support their learning. Students are accustomed to working in our Google Classroom environment to turn in assignments and collaborate with their classmates. As we are dedicated to our students learning with confidence, when we transitioned into Distance Learning, our students were ready, and they seamlessly joined their teachers in their daily Google Meets video conferences.



During Distance Learning, students in preschool through 4th grade have a website to check into every morning, and their teachers record multiple videos a day for them to engage in and learn from. Parents are encouraged to help their child navigate the web page each morning. Families in these grades are offered a loaned laptop if needed for these assignments.

Student-issued laptops are complete and secure with a website content filter, and this filter protects their device whether they are home or at school, all their web traffic comes back to our on campus servers. It logs their traffic, and it denies access to sites as needed. Additionally, each laptop is preloaded with remote assistance software. Students and parents are able to reach out to me directly for assistance either by email, or the SMS Tech hotline 401-424-1575. In the rare occurrence the device can not be fixed over the phone, I make accommodations to drop the laptop off to campus for a contactless exchange/repair.

Our de Ramel Innovation Lab is full of exciting machines that our students regularly use to create amazing masterpieces. From our collection of 3D printers, our xCarve CNC milling machine, or our Glowforge laser, our students have limitless opportunities to design and create. While there are no students on campus to enjoy these machines, they are not just sitting around collecting dust! Students are always invited and encouraged to reach out to me if they would like me to send their creations over to one of these machines. Their final products can be left on campus for a contactless pickup. Nothing stops our innovation program!

From a technology standpoint, I strive to make Distance Learning as effortless as possible, but some things are out of my control - mainly your WiFi connection at home. Here are some tips to ensure you have a positive, seamless experience: Make sure your WiFi hardware has been updated recently. Consider mesh networks that position access points across your home and extend your WiFi signal. Work with your Internet Service Provider (ISP) to increase your bandwidth speeds to accommodate video conferencing, and other bandwidth heavy applications I am here to help! Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, comments or suggestions you have.

**Jeff Day, Director of Technology [jday@smcds.org](mailto:jday@smcds.org)**



# PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

One of the gifts of an SMS education is that our teachers recognize that social and emotional health are the foundations of academic achievement. This remains a primary focus in our distance learning program. The tension between providing rich opportunities for students to engage and the understanding that too much time in front of a screen is not beneficial for any child remains at the forefront of our planning an online delivery system.

Our Lower School learning program is primarily asynchronous, allowing children to learn at their own pace and take multiple movement breaks through the day. Synchronous class “meet ups” are meant to be more social than academic in nature to provide students with a chance to catch up with the classmates and teachers they miss so dearly and continue class routines such as show and tell, read alouds and circle time.

Middle School learning takes place four days a week from 8:00 - 12:30. Arts, music, PE, and Mindfulness classes take place on specific afternoons and provide synchronous and asynchronous lessons. Students continue to connect and receive academic and social/emotional support from their teachers during scheduled office hours, advisory meetings and one-to-one meetings.

St. Michael's has always been responsive to it's community and continues to seek regular feedback from students, parents, teachers, and families regarding their experiences in a distance learning environment. An example of our ability to be nimble and address community needs is the move to Find Your Balance Fridays: Unplug and Stay Connected. While still considered a day of school, students are encouraged to step away from their screens and participate in school-wide learning opportunities that broaden their experience and develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills. Students are still learning, creating, building and using their brains and hands without having to spend any additional time sitting in front of a screen.

St. Michael's recognizes that distance learning encompasses family time in an entirely new way. Families are asked to assist their children as they learn from home often while navigating their own work from home requirements. Student learning needs and challenges require new ways of being addressed; family schedules, child care concerns, and anxiety concerning employment and world events are part of the shared experience of our community. To provide support and help parents get expert, individualized assistance in addressing these pressing issues, St. Michael's has launched our Distance Learning Support Series. In this Series, parents and teachers have opportunities to engage in live meetings with Dr. Marcy Atkins, PsyD., consulting psychologist, to ask her questions related to supporting the social-emotional health of our students. Parents and teachers also have opportunities to learn from Kristi Langslet, consulting Occupational Therapist, on ways to support time management and creating a productive workspace. Lastly, our Head of School hosts regular Fireside Chats that offer parents and teachers opportunities to ask him questions directly about our school both now and in the future.

**"We love the Finding the Balance Fridays. So far my daughter painted and hid within our community earth themed messages on rocks, built a bridge out of recycled materials, wrote a pandemic play and made blueberry lemon bread and carrot cake. We can't wait to see what this Friday brings! We love the topics and creative freedom."**  
**-5th Grade SMS Parent**

# FINDING THE BALANCE FRIDAYS: UNPLUGGED AND CONNECTED

St. Michael's has always been responsive to its community and continues to seek regular feedback from students, parents, teachers, and families regarding their experiences in a distance learning environment. An example of our ability to be nimble and address community needs is the move to Finding the Balance Fridays: Unplug and Stay Connected. While still considered a day of school it is a time for all of us to turn off the computer and devote the day to connecting with others, being outside, doing something we enjoy, and taking care of ourselves etc. Challenge(s) will be sent to families each week for students (and families) to participate. Families can send pictures of themselves completing the optional challenge(s) and then will earn a point for their respective houses.

**GO BLUE HOUSE! GO WHITE HOUSE!**

Examples:

**BUILD IT!**

Let out your inner architect and choose your preferred building material to create any structure you can imagine. Size, type, and purpose of the structure is up to you. We can't wait to see what all of you budding engineers, artists, architects and builders come up with!

**CREATE IT!**

Whatever brings you joy and expresses your passion, create it! Paintings, sculptures, dances, songs, poems, stories, gardens...the only limit is your imagination!

**COMPOSE IT!**

Create musical instruments out of materials around your house or use instruments you have to play a tune, have your family members form a band and play together. Send pictures or videos

**CELEBRATE IT!**

As we near the end of the school year, we all need to celebrate the resilience, courage, and positive attitude we have displayed as we learned remotely together. Find your favorite way to celebrate and spend some time focusing on all the positive outcomes of this time in our lives and look forward to the days when we will be together again!

**FINDING THE BALANCE FRIDAYS:  
UNPLUGGED AND CONNECTED**  
GO BLUE HOUSE! GO WHITE HOUSE!  
#SMSSTAYSCONNECTED

**FRIDAY'S CHALLENGE:  
DOCUMENT IT!**

A SMS STUDENT HAS INTRODUCED THE IDEA TO DOCUMENT THIS UNIQUE TIME IN OUR SCHOOL'S HISTORY.

"I WAS THINKING TO HAVE ALL THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS, DESIGN AND CREATE A PAGE AS AN EXPRESSION OF THEMSELVES, REPRESENTING THEIR/OUR JOURNEY OR TAKE ON THIS TIME. TEACHERS AND STUDENTS COULD EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, SUCH AS A POEM, A SHORT STORY, A DRAWING, A COLLAGE, A MUSICAL COMPOSITION, NOTES TO OTHERS, THE GOAL IS TO SHOW THAT WE WERE ALL HERE TOGETHER DURING THIS TIME. ONCE WE RECEIVED EACH ENTRY WE COULD COMPILE THE PAGES INTO A BOOK THAT COULD REMAIN IN THE FOUNDER'S LIBRARY FOR ALL TO SEE AND LOOK AT OVER THE YEARS. IT WOULD BE A SYMBOL OF UNITY."

SEND PHOTOS/DOCUMENTS OF COMPLETION TO MRS. KRIEGER TO EARN POINTS FOR YOUR HOUSE BONUS POINTS IF YOU WEAR #SMS GEAR



**SMS St. Michael's  
Country Day School**

**CURRENT HOUSE  
STANDINGS**

<b>BLUE HOUSE</b>	<b>WHITE HOUSE</b>
<b>599 PTS</b>	<b>554 PTS</b>

# EARLY CHILDHOOD DISTANCE LEARNING



Our youngest students participate in a developmentally appropriate Distance Learning program designed to foster their natural curiosity about the world around them. This is accomplished in the context of a familiar routine which begins with a morning meeting led by their teachers. Each day the teachers also present lessons through a shared story and an engaging activity.

We are sensitive to the fact that each child has unique needs and each family different schedules are different. Lessons are presented asynchronously and the videos can be accessed at any time throughout the day.

In addition to the video lessons, students have opportunities to interact live and keep personal connections with their teachers and classmates a few times each week during whole and small group, and one-on-one meetings. During these meetups, they engage in community and skill building activities such as theme shares, sing-a-longs, dance parties, scavenger hunts, or story times. The preschool teachers also scheduled a "driveway visit" with their students.

Students in preschool and prekindergarten stay connected to the larger school community through a daily video greeting from the head of lower school. During this whole division community building time; the success trait for the month is discussed, birthdays are acknowledged, a daily joke is shared, and a positive affirmation is recited then "with a smile on their face and a positive thought in their minds" the children are ready to start their day!



Keeping our school traditions alive during this challenging time is so important and we continue to end each week with our Lower School Morning Meeting. During this time we celebrate the work that students in preschool through grade four have completed that week, sing our SMS birthday song, to those who celebrated one since our last meeting, talk about the Unplugged Challenge for the next day, share announcements and celebrate community milestones.

The amount of screen time during distance learning for our youngest students is intentionally limited to allow plenty of time for the children to move, create and play throughout their day.

**"My daughter's preschool teacher is amazing. Distance learning is not ideal but she is making every effort to make the students feel special. She responds to every picture and email we send. She consistently tells my daughter how proud she is of her. My daughter lights up when we log in for learning each morning."**  
**-Preschool SMS Parent**



# EARLY CHILDHOOD DISTANCE LEARNING CONT.

## Sample Schedule

Example of the "homepage" for each grade to access each students daily work.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start the Day with Mrs. A	Start the Day with Mrs. A	Start the Day with Mrs. A	Lower School Morning Meeting	Unplug and Connect Activity
Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting/	Morning Meeting/	Morning Meeting/	
Whole Class Meet-up	Small Group One on One Meet-up	One on One Time with Teacher	Small Group Meet-up	
Story	Story	Story	Story	
Break	Break	Break	Break	
Activity	Activity	Activity	Activity	
Break	Break	Break	Break	
Special Physical Education	Special Creative Movement	Special Science	Special Art	



Daily Attendance



Homeroom



Science



Art



P.E.



Creative Movement



Music



Friday Family Challenge



Weekly After School Activities



Resources

## Student Responsibilities

- Find joy in learning
- Play and explore
- Exercise
- Be curious
- Connect with teachers and classmates
- Participate in morning meetings and activities

## How Parents Can Help

- Create a consistent routine for your child
- Help your child access the videos, and live meetups
- Support your child in doing the activities
- Let your child guide you as to what they need and are curious about
- Encourage your child to take breaks, move and play outside
- Help your child stay connected with their peers through virtually playdates
- Stay in touch with your child's teacher and reach out for help when needed
- Be kind to yourself



# LOWER SCHOOL DISTANCE LEARNING

Through Distance Learning our goal is to provide rich and engaging learning experiences which foster continued skill development and provide opportunities for students to stay connected to their peers and teachers.

Our Lower School Distance Learning program was designed to keep the right balance between keeping our students on track academically through creative, engaging assignments, and caring for their social emotional health and well-being by providing opportunities for meaningful connections with their teachers and peers and allowing for flexibility in their daily routine.

Keeping in mind the unique situations of each of our families, the majority of lessons are presented asynchronously (are available "on demand") to allow for children to participate at the times that work best for them and engage in and review lessons at their own pace. Children can take breaks as needed from the screen to move around, be active, go outside and play, and engage in offline activities inspired by their natural curiosity.

All information needed to successfully navigate our Distance Learning Program can be found on a website specifically designed for the Lower School. Each grade has their own page with links to Attendance, Homeroom/Academic Subjects, All Specials Classes, Resources for Students and Parents, After School Activities, and Unplugged Activities. Grade level lessons are posted by teachers each night by 9pm.

Students in kindergarten through grade four follow a four day academic schedule and begin each day with a daily video greeting from the head of lower school. During this whole division community building ; the success trait for the month is discussed, birthdays are acknowledged, a daily joke is shared, and a positive affirmation is recited, then "with a smile on their face and a positive thought in their minds" the children are ready to start their day!

The grade level lessons posted follow the same routine as our school day, beginning with a teacher led morning meeting. Through asynchronous lessons, students progress through the academic areas and specials subjects at their own pace.



**"Everything has been great thus far! My children's teachers have been doing a great job communicating, providing clear instructions, and setting us up for success. These are surely uncertain times and you, the faculty and staff, are doing an amazing job navigating uncharted waters."  
-3rd Grade SMS Parent**

## LOWER SCHOOL DISTANCE LEARNING CONT.

We know how important the personal connection is and we stay connected with our students through the synchronous opportunities provided throughout the week. These consist of:

- one on one together time with their teacher where they can talk about/share anything they like, get extra academic or emotional support and just spend time connecting on a personal level with each other
- small group meet-ups used for relationship building and instruction (guided reading lessons, small group math work etc.
- whole class meet-ups used for community building (individual shares, group activities and discussions) and opportunities for class presentations (sharing projects they have been working on, presenting research reports, etc.
- office hours when teachers are available to connect with students and provide additional support (students ask questions, share work or just "Chat" with their teacher)
- live whole class instruction (upper elementary grades in drama, math and theme)

On Fridays we unplug and focus on being connected though weekly challenges posed by the school. The full complement of specials classes are available to students at the start of each week and they can choose when to access them.

Keeping our school traditions alive during this challenging time is so important and we continue to end our academic week with our Lower School Morning Meeting. During this time we celebrate the work that students in preschool through grade four have completed that week, sing our SMS birthday song to those who celebrated one since our last meeting, talk about the Unplugged Challenge for the next day, share announcements and celebrate community milestones.

Teachers and parents have been in close communication throughout distance learning. Student progress was more formally shared during parent conferences held mid-way through our distance learning. At the end of the school year, each child will receive a written report summarizing their work in the classroom up to March break and their experience with Distance Learning. These reports will reflect students strengths, areas for growth and learning goals.



# LOWER SCHOOL DISTANCE LEARNING CONT.

## Sample Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start the Day with Mrs. A	Start the Day with Mrs. A	Start the Day with Mrs. A	Lower School Morning Meeting	Unplug and Connect Activity
Morning Meeting/Asynchronous Lessons Math/Guided Reading	Morning Meeting/Asynchronous Lessons Math/Guided Reading	Morning Meeting/Asynchronous Lessons Math/Guided Reading	Morning Meeting/Asynchronous Lessons Math/Guided Reading	
	Small Group Instruction		Small Group Instruction	
Break	Break	Break	Break	
Asynchronous Lessons Writing/Spelling/Theme	Asynchronous Lessons Writing/Spelling/Theme	Asynchronous Lessons Writing/Spelling/Theme	Asynchronous Lessons Writing/Spelling/Theme	
	1 on 1 Together Time with Teacher			
Whole Class Meet-up		Teacher Office Hours	Whole Class Meet-up	
Break	Break	Break	Break	
Specials Music Science	Specials Art Physical Education	Specials Technology French	Specials Drama Physical Education	

Example of the "homepage" for each grade to access each students daily work.



## Student Responsibilities

- Get a good night's sleep and start your day with a curious mind
- Check website each day
- Organize your space and have your materials ready
- Be responsible and complete asynchronous lessons
- Take breaks when needed
- Establish a daily routine that works for you
- Do your best work
- Advocate for yourself: find a place to work away from distractions and ask for help when needed
- Be persistent. Try to solve a problem on your own before asking for help
- Participate in synchronous opportunities
- Do your best work
- Leave time for fun and find joy in each day!

## How Parents Can Help

- Provide your child with a place to work and the materials they need
- Check-in on their progress frequently and help them stay focused on tasks
- Engage with your child's learning by asking them questions
- Encourage independence and let your child try and solve problems on his/own before stepping in to help.
- Stay in touch with your child's teacher and reach out for help when needed
- Encourage your child to take breaks, move and play outside
- Help your child submit work to their teachers
- Help your child stay connected with their peers through virtual playlets
- Be kind to yourself



# MIDDLE SCHOOL DISTANCE LEARNING

Students in grades 5-8 participate in synchronous classes in all of their core subjects; history, math, science, world language, and English, four days per week. Teachers provide whole class and small group instruction via Google meet. Google classroom is used to support synchronous instruction and as a vehicle for workflow between teachers and students. In addition, all teachers provide scheduled open office hour meetings for students to ask questions and gain any support they require. Students are also invited to email teachers as needed with questions and concerns.

Art, music, art electives, PE, and technology classes have synchronous instruction one day per week. Each of the arts teachers utilizes Google classroom to post assignments, provide feedback and address workflow. PE classes post daily challenges and activities and require students to log their daily activity on Google classroom. Tech classes continue to teach new skills via synchronous instruction and provide technical support during a weekly office hours.

All links to video meetings will be made available by the time designated on the schedule.

## Sample Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
English	Science	Science	World Language	Unplug and Connect Activity
World Language	English	World Language	Math	
Science	History	English	History	
History	Math	Math	Tech Office Hours	
Band/Music	Arts Elective	Art	Arts Elective	
Advisory	Middle School Mindfulness Minutes		Middle School Mindfulness Minutes	

- All Art and Music classes have a Google Classroom page with assignments and due dates for students.
- PE - All middle school students are required to keep a daily activity journal which can be found on the MS PE Google Classroom page. Challenge activities and live meetings will be posted as well.
- All teachers hold at least one hour for office hours per week.
- Advisory groups meet one time per week and advisors are available for meetings as needed.



## Preparing for your video classes:

### Your environment

- Have a set place to work that allows you ample space to work and includes a writing surface. This should be at a table or desk. Be sure the area provides good lighting.
- Be mindful of the background. A darker background is best. Avoid sitting with windows or bright lights at your back. This will cause your face to be shadowed. Also take a look at what is on the walls behind you. Choose a spot that is relatively quiet and free from distractions.

### Appearance

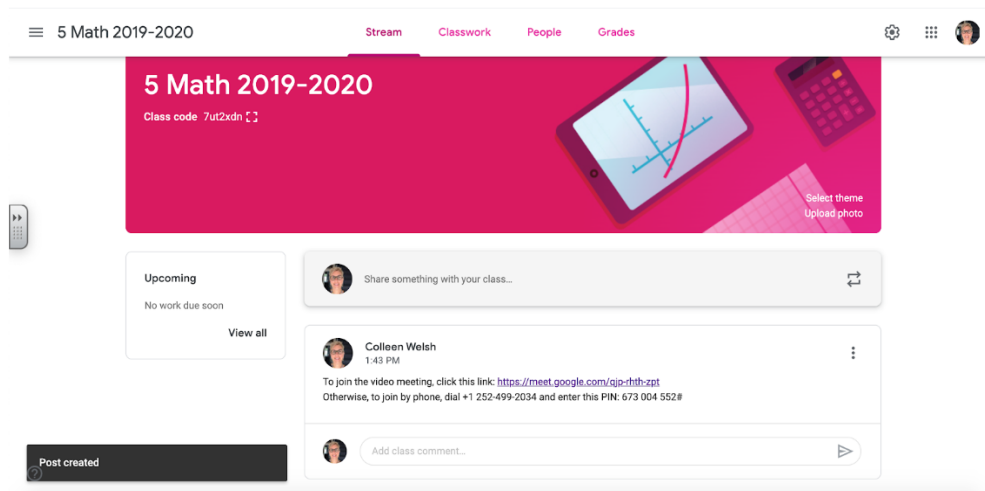
- You should be dressed appropriately for school. While a more casual dress code is acceptable, pajamas are not. Hats, tshirts with large images or writing are also not to be worn during classes.
- You should present yourself in a neat, organized manner; ready to engage in some solid learning with your peers.

### Materials

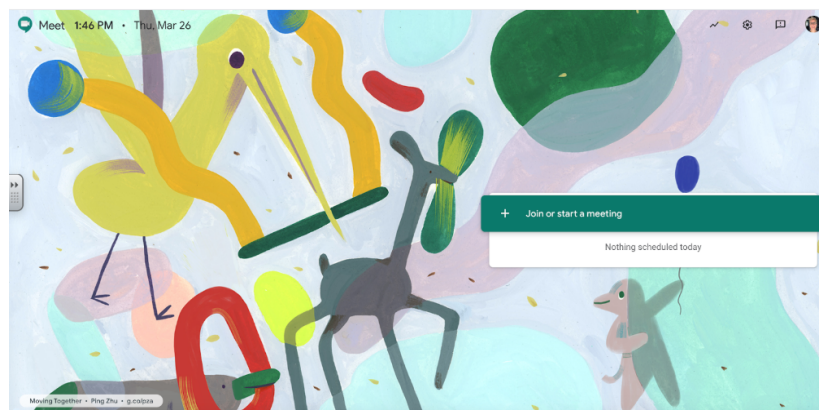
- Please have all needed books, worksheets, assignments, and writing tools at hand. Leaving the area creates lots of movement during classes can be distracting for others.

## How to join a video class:

1. Refer to the **Video Class Schedule** to determine what classes you have for the day.
2. Go to the Google Classroom account for that class. Example:



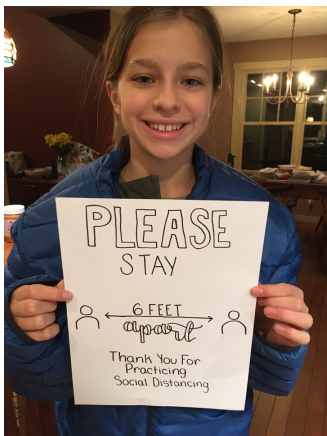
3. Click on the link provided. It will take you to this screen:



# MIDDLE SCHOOL DISTANCE LEARNING CONT.

Once in your video class, please remember the following protocols to help assure successful and productive classes:

- Once you join the class, please mute your computer. You can do this by clicking the microphone on the tool bar at the bottom of the screen. Only unmute the microphone if directed to do so by your teacher.
- Refrain from distracting behavior while online and visible.
- Do not hit the "pin" buttons or the microphone for any other person's image on the screen.
- Engage in the chat function only when directed by the teacher.
- Students who have difficulty following the protocols for the class may be removed from the class and will need to make up the work covered after the class session. Repeated issues will be addressed with Mrs. Welsh and parents.
- If you have difficulty accessing the class or during the class, send an email to your teacher.
- **Be patient** with yourself, your teacher and your classmates. This is new for all of us and we will need to work together to get to a place where we are all comfortable. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your teacher. If you have general concerns that apply to more than one class, contact your advisor or Mrs. Welsh.
- Assessment
  - Students' academic progress continues to be assessed using a variety of online and observational assessment tools. Students are updated regularly regarding their progress. Grades are assigned and summative grades for each subject are reported each quarter and semester end and as needed. Parent/teacher communication regarding student performance occurs formally via student progress update emails and video conferences as requested. Semester and end of the year reports are generated in PowerSchool and made available to families at the end of Semester 1 and year end.
- Leadership and Building Community
  - Maintaining a sense of community is critical during distance learning. The middle school student council continues to meet via Google meet regularly to plan and implement activities to connect the entire school community. Events such as the virtual SMS's Got Talent show provide a much needed sense of fun and school spirit.
  - The middle/lower school buddy program will continue to support connections between older and younger students. Virtual read alouds, Loom videos and supporting White House/Blue House activities will be scheduled in the near future.



"SMS is handling online education wonderfully! They are clear about what they have to do - and completely self-sufficient. They are the ones who are helping ME with my own classes - hats off to the entire faculty for moving their awesome school online. Even though my kids miss the human, in-person connection, what SMS has created is the next best thing!"  
-7th Grade SMS Parent

## **How can I support a successful class experience for my child?**

Online learning requires us to think about areas of our lives that might become public in a virtual setting as well as bringing a more formal activity, like school, into what is usually a casual family space. Each family will need to navigate the particular details for themselves and we would like to offer some general protocols to help with this transition.

- When a student is participating in a virtual class or online group, be aware of the background. Determine ahead of time where this connection will take place. What will others be able to view when they look at their screen? What level of distraction exists in the room? How will this impact the group as a whole? What can be heard in the background?
- Dress appropriately for a public online event. What image is your child's dress portraying? Remember that this is a school event. Is your child's clothing appropriate for a day at school? Meeting others in public?
- Provide a distraction-free and organized space for your child to complete work. Having access to necessary materials and adequate space is ideal.
- Help your child manage their time and log into classes promptly.

## **How can my child get help or support if they have questions or need further explanation about a particular lesson or assignment?**

All middle school teachers will be available during school hours and will continue to be available via email after hours as they have been during the school year. Teachers also conduct online office hours for students for each class and will schedule one-to-one meetings as needed.

### **Student Support:**

Student support is provided synchronously and asynchronously. The Director of Student Support meets with students as needed and continues to serve as a resource for faculty, students and families. Our school nurse is available to students and families to support health and wellness. In addition, Dr. Atkins, our consulting school psychologist, provides support to families and parents on a bi-weekly basis. We also continue to offer the support of our school occupational therapist to address scheduling, organization, and time management challenges presented in a distance learning format.

The middle school advisor program continues to support students in a small group format. Advisors hold weekly office hours in Google meet to address academic concerns, support social/emotional well being and build community. Advisors continue to connect with families regarding student progress and to provide resources and support as needed.

Middle school faculty members meet weekly via Google meet to discuss students of concern, share strategies and resources and plan any needed interventions for students. Action plans are developed by the Director of Student Support and monitored by the advisor.

## **1. What is the best way to get in touch with the school right now?**

Email! Administration and faculty are all regularly checking email so email is likely fastest. Voicemail can also be picked up remotely so your call will be returned if you leave a message.

## **2. Is the school's campus closed?**

Yes, the school building, grounds and playground are closed.

## **3. What are some strategies to support my child's distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic? How can I set my child up for success?**

- Get set up ahead of time. Check the emails from your child's teacher and division head as to the supplies needed, and the estimated amount of time each child will be participating in distance learning each day.
- Put together a daily schedule for each child.
- Set up a designated "learning area" in your home, even if it is just at the dining room table.
- Be patient and keep a sense of humor. This will require everyone (teachers, students, parents) to step outside their comfort zone!

## **4. How can I help manage distance learning if I have multiple children in different grades?**

For the first two weeks, students in preschool through grade 4 will receive instruction through Quick Time and Loom videos which will be emailed to parents each morning by 9am. These are "on demand" meaning that parents can set-up a school day schedule that works for their family. Students in grades 3 and 4 were sent home with their computers and should be fairly independent in their work. Students in grades 2 and younger will need access to a computer and some adult support. The flexibility provided by offering "on demand" instruction will allow families to create a schedule that works for all the children. If Lower School adds a synchronous learning platform to the Quick Time/ Loom videos, live class meetings will be scheduled with siblings in mind and every effort will be made to avoid any conflicts.

Middle School schedules for video classes (Using Google Meets) have been sent to students and all middle school parents. In addition, teachers will be posting assignments on Google Classroom. Students were sent home with the materials they would require for classes that can not be accessed online. Middle School students should be able to work independently on their work. Parents can best support their success by providing a quiet, organized work space for their child and checking in to see if work is completed. Should students have difficulty or need assistance, encourage them to reach out to their teachers directly. Self-advocacy remains a key skill for middle school students.

The school places boundless value on your child's online security. As our distance learning software usage grows, we will be sure to let families know of any changes we have made to our offerings. These offerings will meet or exceed COPPA compliance. (Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule)



## **5. Will there be a dress code for live class meetings?**

Guidelines for behavior will be sent out to parents in advance of the Lower School adding any live class meetings. It is important to also keep in mind, during any distance learning it would be helpful for children to be in a "school mindset". One way to do this is the dress accordingly. Learning might not be taken as seriously if one is in one's pajamas. Middle school student expectations will be sent out to parents in advance of the beginning of classes. Students should dress in appropriate clothing for school. While we recognize that there will be a more relaxed dress code for online classes, students should not attend a video class in pajamas or any other clothing that they would not wear to school.

## **6. What are some helpful resources for managing my child's schedule?**

It is helpful for children to have a set routine. Lower School teachers provided a model schedule of their school day. Parents can use the class schedules as a guide when creating a home schedule.

MS students should attend their video classes each day from 8:00-12:30. Follow up work may be assigned to be completed outside of the scheduled video class. Helping your child manage their time effectively and including needed movement breaks would be helpful.

## **7. Will the school be offering any form of tuition reimbursement during this time of distance learning?**

Our faculty has been trained on distance learning in order to allow us to continue to help students learn and remain connected. We are more committed than ever to providing an excellent education, and these days of distance learning will count as school days. Teaching and learning will continue and therefore SMS will continue to collect the annual tuition.

Our mission is to provide a dynamic curriculum that inspires students to learn with confidence, lead with character, and achieve lasting success, and we are fully committed to living this mission in the midst of a local and global crisis.

## **8. How should I talk with my child about COVID-19?**

There are some great articles online about helping children (and all of us!) understand the changes COVID-19 has brought about. Here are links to a few:

<https://www.ariadnelabs.org/resources/articles/news/social-distancing-this-is-not-a-snow-day/>

<https://www.npr.org/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>

## **9. Whom do I contact with questions about distance learning?**

We send out a feedback tool regularly asking for parents' thoughts and provide a space for them to share what is working and what may need some tweaking. We encourage parents to take advantage of these opportunities. Parents are also welcome to reach out to the division heads directly if there is anything that arises that one may feel needs more immediate attention.

Lower School: Lauren Abraham, Head of Lower School ~labraham@smcds.org

Middle School: Colleen Welsh, Head of Middle School ~ cwelsh@smcds.org

IT/Technology: Jeff Day, Director of Technology ~ jday@smcds.org